

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

News from Montana's Conservation Districts

February 15, 2017

Volume 10 Issue 4

In this issue:

2

Valley CD hosts Winter
Grazing Seminar

NW Montana receives
state of emergency
designation

3

RREC Range Leader of the
Year Awards

4

Report: MT outdoors bring
big economic boost

Weed Post: Musk Thistle in
the spotlight

5

Opportunities

6

Calendar

Kristi D'Agati receives
national recognition from
NRCS



Miles City NRCS rangeland specialist wins national award

Kami Kilwine, rangeland management specialist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Miles City, Mont., was recognized by NRCS as the Early Career Rangeland / Pastureland Conservationist for 2016 during the NRCS Family Meeting held at the Society for Range Management 70th Annual Meeting in St. George, Utah, in early February.

The purpose of the award is to recognize NRCS employees who have exemplified outstanding service to NRCS and their customers through implementation of sound technology transfer on rangeland and pastureland resources. This award is presented as an encouragement for outstanding performance by men and women entering the grazing lands profession. One award is given annually. Award winners have less than 10 years of Federal service and demonstrate extraordinary potential and promise as a future leader for rangeland or pastureland conservation issues.

After a successful internship, Kilwine began her fulltime career as a rangeland management specialist in Baker, Mont., in 2009. Shortly after that, she was selected as the Sage Grouse Initiative rangeland management specialist in Forsyth. She is currently the NRCS area rangeland management specialist in Miles City.



1101 Eleventh Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
406-443-5711
www.swcdmi.org

This newsletter is made possible
by a 223 grant from DNRC

Valley County hosts Winter Grazing Seminar

On January 17th & 18th, more than 100 people from around the state met in Glasgow Montana to listen, learn and share about several aspects of livestock management. The two day event was organized by the Valley County Conservation District with support from the Montana Department of Natural Resources, and several local sponsors. The first day was packed with speakers addressing topics of rangeland monitoring, song birds and livestock grazing, improving management efficiency, winter feeding and forage management and Mr. Burke Teichert discussing profitability in the beef cattle business. Participants enjoyed insight from Mr. Aaron Flint as he emceed the event.

The first day concluded with a very inspiring evening banquet. The Horse Ranch family of southwest Valley County were presented the range producer of the year award and Ray Neumiller, Rangeland Management Specialist at the Glasgow BLM Field Office, was the recipient of the agency leader of the year award. Mr. Bruce Vincent, a highly sought after motivational speaker and business man, sparked the group with a highly entertaining speech on understanding society's concerns about environmental issues and animal husbandry issues.

The second day promised to be just as informational with the National Weather Service,

[...Continued on page 3](#)



Check out the snow accumulation on the roof of Kate Arpin's house in Troy, Feb. 6

Lincoln, Glacier Counties & Blackfeet Reservation receive state of emergency declaration

From the Western News:

Governor Steve Bullock issued an executive order on Friday declaring a state disaster to exist on the Blackfeet Nation and in Glacier and Lincoln Counties, and authorized the National Guard and expenditure of funds to assist with community health and safety.

Lincoln County declared a state of emergency this week, and the towns of Libby and Troy have each drafted their own, individual declaration of state of emergency ordinances that were submitted to Governor Bullock, who then declared the state of emergency in the region.

After peak snowfall of 25-30 inches of snow fell on south Lincoln County last weekend, road closures, hazardous driving conditions, building closures and damages infrastructure, left the county and cities to try and manage the heaps of snow as quickly as possible — a costly task.

"This winter storm has proven extremely damaging to

roadways, railways and Montanans relying on access to critical community infrastructure," Governor Bullock said of the declaration. "Thanks to strong partnerships at the local and state levels, communities are keeping their residents safe as record amounts of snow move through our state."

State of emergencies are common at the state, county and city levels in response to natural disasters. They permit authorized personnel to take all appropriate action needed to alleviate the effects of a disaster.

"A local declaration means that counties or municipalities have declared that circumstances of an event (be it weather, fire, flood, etc...) are too great to be done at a normal level of service - therefore declaring an emergency is how counties and municipalities remove snow beyond their ordinances, hire additional help, etc," Emergency Management deputy Lisa Oedewaldt said in an email.

[READ MORE](#)

Winter Grazing Seminar, Continued

...From page 2: MSU Beef Extension Specialist, and the Lead Research Scientists from Fort Keogh Livestock Range & Research Laboratory addressing group. Dr. Angus McIntosh, private property rights expert, concluded the seminar with an in depth and exceptional talk on knowing your rights when federal lands are involved.

The Winter Grazing Seminar is an event that travels around the state every year. Be looking for it next year as it will continue to be an exceptional event brought you to by your local conservation district.

Valley CD chooses Horse Ranch as Producer Range Leader of the Year

From Valley CD: This year's range producer of the year is the Horse Ranch. A great family ranch located in the southwest corner of Valley County. Ron and Rosie Stoneberg along their daughter Sierra, husband Jason and their children Zora and Linden Holt have made in insane commitment to be exemplary stewards of the land. Their love for the land respect for their positions as agriculture advocates shines through in their years of involvement in numerous organizations such as life members of the Society for Range Management, Montana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Valley County Conservation District, Montana Community Preservation Alliance, Valley County Land Use Planning Committee, American Stewards of Liberty, Phillips County Weed Board, MT FWP Region 6 Advisory Council and a few others.

We all know it takes more than just being a member of something to be considered for above and beyond award. The Horse Ranch is active in the

Hinsdale FFA chapter and 4H. The family opens their home to undergraduate classes and local high school classes to further youth knowledge of rangeland ecology, renewable energy, and the importance of agriculture in the future. They are passionate about what they do and want to share it with anyone who will make the trip.

The Horse Ranch has implemented vegetation transects studies that they have religiously monitored for over 10 years. They have watched the land heal, constructed cross fences, as well as many other range improvements. These management practices improved upland health and reduced the frequency and impact of flash floods on their place. They fell managing water, helping streams handle major flood events and rangelands that have higher water holding capacity some of their biggest accomplishments. Congratulations to the Stoneberg Family and the The Horse Ranch the 2017 recipient of the producer Range Leader of the Year Award.

Ray Neumiller chosen for Agency Range Leader of the Year

From Valley CD: Ray, a Wolf Point boy, came to the Glasgow BIM field office in October of 1988. He deserves so much credit for sticking out the constant changes. It's impossible to stick out a job if you don't have the heart and joy to do it every day for 30 years!! Ray knows every permittee personally and understands what they have gone through and will be going through with generational succession.

Ask Ray any question about south Valley County, he'll probably say "well my memory is good, it's just really short" but he can give you the grazing rotation history, the breed of cattle they run, the trail to watch out for, if they get along with their neighbor, and who's related to who (That's an important one). He may not recall the exact year, but he knows every pastures highs and lows in health. He had watched vegetation bounce back or taken it as a personal mission to make an improvement.

Ray really goes to bat for his permittees. Some of his permittees have felt that he cares for them just like a rancher cares for a critter. Ray works out side of that 8am - 5pm window. He has always worked diligently to help ranchers' improve the quality of the allotments while always treating the ranchers with respect. Ray exemplifies the goals in the Taylor Grazing Act to stabilize the livestock industry and protect the rights of the grazers.

Report: Montana's outdoor attractions provide big economic boost

From the Missoulian: In 2016, 12.3 million travelers from out of state visited the Big Sky state, which has a population of just over 1 million.

That means there were 12 times as many tourists as locals here last year. And the main reason they're coming here is because of the state's mountains, rivers, lakes, streams, wildlife, national parks and other outdoor recreation opportunities.

According to Norma Nickerson, the director of the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana, those visitors created 52,630 jobs in the state and spent an estimated \$3.49 billion in the state.

"The outdoors is our business," Nickerson told the crowd during a recent Economic Outlook webinar presented by UM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. "If it weren't for our mountains, lakes and streams – and access to those places – our way of life and the economy here would be different. Our economy wouldn't be the same and there would be less people spending money here."

Because it sits in the nexus between Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park, Missoula sees a fair amount of those travelers.

[READ MORE](#)

Weed Post Spotlight: Musk thistle

By Jane Mangold, MSU Extension

History and status: Musk thistle is native to Europe, northern Africa, and western Asia. It was first reported in North America in 1853 in Pennsylvania and is thought to have arrived in ship ballast.

The first record of musk thistle in Montana was in 1921 in Missoula County. Twenty-five states list musk thistle as a noxious weed, including all states bordering Montana. Alberta and Saskatchewan have also placed this plant on their noxious weed lists. Although it is not a state-listed noxious weed in Montana, it is listed in the following counties: Beaverhead, Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Lewis & Clark, Liberty, Lincoln, Teton, Madison, Pondera, Teton, and Toole.

Biology and identification: Musk thistle typically behaves as a biennial, but it can act as an annual. Seedlings emerge in spring or fall and quickly form a large rosette (up to 2 feet in diameter). Plants commonly overwinter as rosettes and form large flowering stalks in the second year. Plants are often large-statured with adult plants reaching 3 to 6 feet in height. It has a large taproot. Musk thistle has broad triangular bracts, notably wide at the base and bent backwards, unlike any other native or exotic thistle in Montana. Flowers are solitary and often nod at maturity.

Habitat: Musk thistle establishes in a variety of habitats. Disturbed areas with some bare soil are most susceptible to invasion

since seedling establishment is favored by sunlight. In the western U.S., it is not generally considered an invader of intact, undisturbed plant communities.

Spread: Reproduction is only by seed, and each individual can produce 10,000-11,000 seeds. Seeds may remain viable for at least 10 to 15 years.

Seeds can be dispersed by human activities such as movement of hay and crop seeds, or by animals, water or wind. Despite these various vectors, most seeds fall relatively close to the parent plant.

Impacts: In favorable conditions, musk thistle can form dense stands of up to 60,000 plants/acre. Such stands have been described as "self-perpetuating" as they may exclude other vegetation. There is even some evidence that musk thistle produces allelopathic compounds that hinders other vegetation and promotes its own recruitment. Dense stands can restrict livestock movement. Livestock tend to avoid grazing near this species due to its numerous spines, causing a reduction in usable forage.



Grants

223, etc. Grant Deadlines

Deadlines for 223, mini-education, and district development grants from DNRC for FY 2017 are as follows: **July 29**, 2016; **October 14**, 2016; **January 14**, 2017; and **April 26**, 2017. [Grant Info](#)

Watershed Planning Grants

Montana DNRC is seeking applications for watershed related planning and management activities that conserve, manage, develop or protect the state renewable resources and/or support the implementation and development of the state water plan. Due March 15, 2017. [More Info](#)

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

NRCS is asking potential conservation partners to submit project applications for federal funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Up to \$252 million is available to locally driven, public-private partnerships that improve the nation's water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat, and protect agricultural viability. Pre-proposals: April 21. [More Info](#)

Mussel Response Mini Grants

Funds are available for high priority invasive mussel related projects, such as: (1) prevention; (2) early detection and rapid response; (3) control; (4) treatment demonstration, research or design; (5) coordination; or (6) other related actions. Due March 1. [More Info](#)

Events

MT CDs Invited to ND soil health event

Burleigh County Soil Conservation District in Bismarck, N.D., recently received a special grant from the NRCS to complete a series of advanced natural resource training workshops for soil conservation district staff and supervisors. Bismarck, March 1. [More Info](#)

Ranchers Stewardship Alliance Grazing Workshop

Come learn about and discuss: Rangeland Monitoring, Grass Growth and Response to Grazing, and Grazing Systems. Feb. 27, Malta. [More Info](#)

Workshops on Expiring CRP

A partnership of federal and state agencies and resource groups have organized meetings to inform landowners of their options once the CRP contracts expire.

Feb. 22, Scobey | Feb. 23, Froid | Feb. 24, Glasgow | March 1, Choteau | March 2, Shelby | March 8, Havre | March 9, Great Falls

Streambank Revegetation & Bioengineering Workshop

Lewis & Clark and Meagher CDs are hosting a hands-on streambank bioengineering workshop for landowners, contractors, CD personnel, & others. White Sulphur Springs, April 3-5. Limited to 25 participants, register by March 1. wgreen@fs.fed.us.

Grant Writing Workshop

MSU Billings is hosting a grant writing workshop, March 28 & 29. [More Info](#)

Jobs

North Dakota Pollinator Conservation Planner

Xerces Society & NRCS are seeking a statewide Pollinator Conservation Planner. The incumbent located in the NRCS State Office in Bismarck will, in time, help provide assistance on pollinator conservation in eastern MT. Closes Feb. 27. [More Info](#)

Water Quality Mini-Grants Available

SWCDM is seeking applications for mini-grants of up to \$2,000 to fund local education and outreach efforts addressing nonpoint source pollution and water quality issues. A total amount of approximately \$15,000 is available for grant funding this cycle.

Examples of previously funded projects include workshops, conferences, trainings, tours, student field studies, stream monitoring groups, and newsletters.

Closes: February 28.

Visit swcdmi.org/programs/mini-grants for application and more info.

Have something you'd like to see in TMC? Submissions are due every other Friday at 5:00 (visit our website for a calendar), and should be sent to tmc@macdnet.org.

Coming Up:

February

- 22** Expiring CRP Workshop, Scobey
- 23** CMR Working Group Meeting, Malta
Exp. CRP Workshop, Froid
- 24** Exp. CRP, Glasgow
- 26** MACD Scholarship Applications Due
- 27** MACD Executive Committee Conference Call
Ranchers Stewardship Alliance Grazing Workshop, Malta
- 28** Water Quality mini-grant applications due

March

- 1** Soil Health training, Bismark
- 13** MACD Board Conference Call

Have an event to share?
Visit macdnet.org/calendar to add your event to our list!



Kristi poses with her awards and with Ronan NRCS Conservationist Ben Montgomery

BSWC member receives NRCS Volunteer of the Year Award

Kristi D'Agati, a 2016 Big Sky Watershed Corps member at Lake County CD, was recently recognized by NRCS with a bevy of awards.

The awards Kristi won are: 2016 Montana, Western Region and National NRCS Earth Team Individual Volunteer of the Year. Additionally, the Big Sky Watershed Corps Program won the Earth Team Partnership Volunteer of the Year Award for Montana. More than 28,000 NRCS Earth Team volunteers served in 2016, providing over 300,000 hours of service. Congratulations to Kristi for receiving these prestigious awards.

Kristi served as the 2016 Big Sky Watershed Corps member for Lake County Conservation District and has continued on as a staff member for the district through this summer. More info on Kristi's work and the other good work Big Sky Watershed Corps members are doing with conservation districts and NRCS around the state will be featured in TMC throughout the coming year.

MACD Scholarships Now Open

Two \$500 Scholarships are available for Montana students. Eligibility requirements include:

- Minimum grade point average of 3.0, and
- Enrollment or plans to enroll in a course of study that allows students to explore natural resource issues.

Students may receive a scholarship both as a high school senior and once during post secondary career.

Application deadline is **February 26, 2016.**

<http://macdnet.org/programsevents/scholarships/>