



**Pondera County
Conservation
District**

Local Common Sense Conservation

406 North Main, Conrad MT 59425

406/278-7611 ext 101

kody.farkell@mt.nacdnet.net

www.pondera.mt.nacdnet.org

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ANOTHER SWIFT DAM SPRAY DAY SUCCESS

By Adele Stenson, Pondera Co. Extension Agent

On June 23 about thirty Dupuyer area landowners and public agency land managers teamed up in an effort to reduce the spread of knapweed in the Swift Dam area. The MSU Extension staff in Pondera County organized the event, in cooperation with the Pondera County Weed District and the Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable.

The beautiful valley that once lay below Swift Dam was turned into a barren field of boulders when the original dam broke during the 1964 flood. The years since have not even begun to create the topsoil necessary to sustain a healthy plant population along the bottom. Some trees and hardy grasses and forbs have managed to take hold, but the one plant that is thriving is knapweed; it has grown insidiously worse over the years.



Seven years ago Swift Dam Spray Day organizers started looking at who had a land interest in the area – both private and public – and began contacting those people to get involved in keeping the weeds contained. Everyone was concerned, and although limited budgets, time and man power had to be dealt with, many were willing to give up a day and the use of their spray equipment.



Besides helping keep the weeds from spreading onto their land, participants can earn pesticide license recertification credits by attending the educational portion of the event. This year, Jane Mangold, Invasive Species Specialist with MSU Extension, discussed methods for controlling cheat grass.

This marks the sixth year that local landowners have worked alongside staff

from Pondera and Glacier Extension offices, Pondera and Glacier Weed Departments, the BLM, the Department of State Lands, the Forest Service, the Nature Conservancy, US Fish and Wildlife Services, the Boone & Crockett Club, the Pondera Canal Company, and the Front Range Weed Roundtable. In addition, the Pondera County Conservation District and the Mountain View Cooperative provided lunch for the work crews.

Thank you to all those who supported this effort in any way. It is a terrific example of what can be accomplished when people from diverse interests and beliefs find a common cause that they are will to work toward together.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

MRW FALL UPDATE 2

DNRC PLANNING GRANT 3

MACD AREA III MEETING 3

PCCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS 4

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 4



Marias River Watershed Fall Update

MARIAS RIVER FLOAT TRIP & WEED TOUR

Marias River Basin Weed Control Association (MRBWCA)/Marias River Watershed Group (MRW) Float Trip & Weed Tour. Before the float began Dan Picard (Pondera Co. Extension Agent) and Steve Becker (Pondera Co. Weed Supervisor) gave a weed ID program. An overview of the Lincoln Ranch was also given by Gary Olson (MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks).

A stop was made along the way for Stan Huhtala (Bureau of Reclamation) and Kenny Keever (Bureau of Land Management) to discuss biological weed control methods along the Marias River. Lee Ohlinger (DowAgroSciences) followed up with weed management options using herbicides.



At the conclusion of the float NRCS staff showed the group a streambank stabilization project taking place at Marias River Farms. Jeannie Olmstead (Toole Co. Extension Agent) taught record keeping for pesticide applicators and Dave Burch (MT. Dept. of Agriculture) gave an update on the department's Noxious Weed Grant program.



To end the day everyone competed in a weed ID contest followed by the distribution of several door prizes and a barbeque catered by TLC Catering.

Sponsors for the event were the MRBWCA and MRW. Contributing sponsors included CPS Distributing, DowAgroSciences, Montana State University, and MRW.

MARIAS RIVER WATERSHED ACTIVITIES

Phase II of the Russian olive removal project has received funding and will entail additional follow-up with chemical application in the demonstration area across from Sanford Park. Several Russian olive in the Sanford Park area are also slated for removal. BOR staff planted some new trees in the area to help provide replacement vegetation. Additionally, some Russian olive infestations downstream will be assessed and removal is planned to begin yet this fall.

The Pugsley Bridge project will be delayed until spring of 2010. Watershed members met with staff from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT). DOT engineers plan to reinforce the north abutment of the bridge at that time. MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks also have a fishery project that will be implemented in the same area, so working closely with these agencies will ensure that one project does not negatively impact the others.

A long-term monitoring program has been initiated by the Marias River Watershed group. Water samples are periodically collected at 10 to 12 sites along the Marias River and major tributaries during various flows throughout the

year. There have also been photo points and riparian vegetation transects established as part of the overall monitoring program. For more information, please contact Warren Kellogg at 444-4490.

Several proposed projects/events have been suggested to the watershed for future consideration. Among these have been other cleanup projects at sites on the reservoir as well as along the river; a festival/educational program on river history and the river influence with the Native American population; and signs for recreationists using the river outlining time/distance to next stopping point. All of these suggestions will be discussed at future meetings of the watershed. If anyone has a suggestion for a potential project on the Marias River, please contact Marlene Moon, Marias River Watershed Coordinator at 759-5778, ext. 102 or by email at marlene.moon@mt.nacdnet.net. Watershed meetings are held on a quarterly basis and are always open to the public. The next scheduled meeting is being planned for October, but the time and place has not been determined. The Coordinator or your local CD can be contacted for updated information.

PLANNING GRANT FUNDS PRIORITIZATION PROJECT

The Pondera County Conservation District (PCCD) was recently awarded a \$20,000 from the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation's (DNRC) Renewable Resource Project Planning Grant Program.

Working with the Pondera County Canal & Reservoir Co (PCCRC) and WWC Engineering of Helena, funds will be used to investigate identified reaches of PCCRC's delivery system exhibiting significant water loss. Once a priority list is created, a \$100,000 DNRC Renewable Resource Grant will be applied for in February 2010.

An increase in demand for water stored within Lake Francis has made improving PCCRC's canal system's efficiency a priority for water drawn from the lake. The PCCRC has recently taken significant steps to improve the

dam and outlet facilities of the lake to ensure its structural integrity and existence for years to come and is focusing its efforts on improving the canal and lateral delivery system to minimize conveyance losses and improve irrigation efficiency.

The participating groups have targeted the aging conveyance system, a significant source of water loss, as the next large water conservation project to undertake. A number of sections of canals have identified for further investigation to develop a prioritized list of rehabilitation measures needed to maximize water conservation. A section of the C-Canal located in Section 27, Township 30 North, Range 4 West, is of primary concern due to the severity of seepage; seepage caused soil salinity problems; and its degradation/saturation of a highly traveled

county road. The main cause for the seepage loss through this section is its location along the edge of an elevated bench.

Approximately 60 acres of irrigated farmland in this area has been lost to soil salinity resulting from the identified seepage.

The severity of the seepage through this section of the C-Canal is also exhibited through other reaches of the delivery system. Creating a Canal Rehabilitation Prioritization List will help the PCCRC and PCCD focus their efforts on areas of the system which will provide the largest water savings and have the most significant impact on improving the delivery system.

The overriding goal of this project is to identify and rehabilitate sections of the PCCRC delivery system to maximize water conservation.

MACD AREA 3 MEETING COMING TO PONDERA COUNTY

On October 6 the Pondera County Conservation District will be hosting the 2009 Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Area 3 meeting.

MACD's Area 3 also includes Districts from Glacier County, Toole Count, Teton County, Cascade County, Fergus County, Liberty County, Judith Basin County, Hill County, Choteau County, Big Sandy, Blaine County, and Phillips County. MACD's Area meetings are held around the state in preparation for the State MACD convention. Reports will be presented by several partnering conservation agencies and organizations. In addition, resolutions outlining concerns and the actions CD Board members would like MACD to take are discussed and may be passed. If passed, these resolutions will be brought before the MACD state convention in November. Area representatives will also be elected at this time.

At this year's Area meeting Dr. Grant Jackson, Supervisor of the Western Triangle Ag Research Center, will give a presentation on his volunteers work in Russia through the Ag Cooperative Development International/Volunteers In Overseas Cooperative Assistance program.

The Pondera County CD is looking forward to hosting this event and bringing everyone to Pondera County for the day.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September

7th - Labor Day (Office Closed)
14th - PCCD Regular Monthly Meeting 7:30pm (*Tentative*)

October

6th - MACD Area 3 Meeting, Conrad
?? - Marias River Watershed Quarterly Meeting (*call CD office for date & time*)
12th - Columbus Day (Office Closed)
12th - PCCD Regular Monthly Meeting 7:30pm (*Tentative*)

November

9th - PCCD Regular Monthly Meeting 7:30pm
11th - Veteran’s Day (Office Closed)
17-19 - MACD Convention, Lewistown
26th - Thanksgiving Day (Office Closed)

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