

BHWC Monthly Meeting  
December 19, 2007  
Divide Grange Hall  
6:30 pm

- 6:30 Introductions and Review of November Minutes
- 6:45 Weed Committee Report
- 7:20 Break
- 7:30 Preliminary results of Arctic grayling pit tag study  
(By *Adam Peterson, MFWP; Shane Vatland, MSU Graduate Student*)
- 8:10 New Business
- 8:30 Set January Agenda
- 8:45 Adjourn

BHWC Monthly Meeting  
November 21, 2007  
Divide Grange Hall

**In Attendance:** Liz Jones, Steve Armiger, Art Christensen, Garth Haugland, Steve Luebeck, Jill Luebeck and Noor Parwana (*Note to self: no meetings the day prior to Thanksgiving!!*)

Introductions and review of September minutes (October's meeting was canceled)

**Montana's Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Strategy**

This month, the BHWC was invited to participate in a workshop entitled: "Evaluating the Situation and Planning for the Future: Coordinating Habitat Conservation and Restoration in Montana." The workshop was sponsored by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Montana land trust community. The aim of the gathering is to solicit input on a preliminary assessment of the opportunities and barriers to a coordinated approach to habitat conservation and restoration in Montana and to identify next steps. Garth Haugland and Harold Peterson made a presentation about the BHWC. Their presentation was very well received by participants.

The goals of MCFWS are to:

- Identify all Montana's fish and wildlife and related habitat in greatest need of conservation
- Identify management strategies to conserve species and habitats in greatest need
- Develop partnerships to conserve enhance, and protect
- Address funding challenges
- Integrate monitoring and management

The Big Hole stands to benefit from the MCFWS program since our watershed rates very high in the MCFWS prioritization. The Big Hole is rated Tier I (highest priority) in terms of terrestrial habitats (intermontane basin & range), aquatic resources, and by virtue of a number of species including western toad, common loon, trumpeter swan, bald eagle, greater sage grouse, long-billed curlew, flammulated owl, Townsend's big-eared bat, pygmy rabbit, great basin pocket mouse, gray wolf, grizzly bear, Canada lynx western pearlshell, westslope cutthroat trout, lake trout, Arctic grayling, and burbot.

Challenges identified to achieving goals are:

- Land uses and land values in Montana are changing as traditional working landscapes are converted to subdivisions.
- Resistance land use planning and regulation.
- Potential for land use that might conflict with traditional Montana values.
- Water is a critical issue and there are concerns related to stream degradation; dewatering; non-point source pollution; and, the proximity of development to streams.

### **February Conference Update and Reminder**

BHWC is bringing in a nationally renowned speaker, Ed Thomas, to present his "No Adverse Impact" approach to floodplain and riparian area management. The conference will target county commissioners and tribal officers, planners and planning board members, floodplain administrators, emergency service providers, attorneys, builders and developers, realtors, legislators, conservation districts, watershed councils and other grassroots citizen planning groups, etc.

Implementation of the Big Hole River setback ordinance over the past few years has shown us that it has achieved some positive things, but it is no Silver Bullet. You may get someone to build 150 feet from the bank, but local floodplain regulations still allow development to occur in the 100-year floodplain. It's clear that more work needs to be done, to take a more comprehensive approach to protecting stream corridors.

The February 21-22 conference at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort should help to further inform our continuing efforts to implement stream setbacks and better protect floodplains/riparian areas here in the Big Hole and elsewhere around the state. Registration information will be coming out shortly.

### **Progress on Lower Big Hole Irrigation Infrastructure Survey and Prioritization**

This fall, the BHWC received support through the Montana Department of Natural Resources Conservation (DNRC) that permits us to undertake a physical survey of irrigation infrastructure in the Lower Big Hole. This was one of the goals identified through stakeholder meetings held last winter. PBS&J was selected as the engineering firm to undertake the survey. A letter was sent out to landowners and phone calls are also being made to inform people and ask for their permission in gaining access to their property.

We wish to use the information gained from this survey to prioritize potential irrigation infrastructure improvements. With this prioritized list we will be ready to take advantage of funding opportunities as they arise. We see this effort as a chance for us to help improve aging irrigation structure for the benefit of water users AND for the river.

Field data collection will be accomplished by the end of December. A draft report and prioritization scheme will be presented in February. Anyone wishing to participate in the prioritization meeting is invited to contact us to get your name on the list. A final report will be prepared by March and application for an implementation grant will be submitted by May.

**December meeting agenda**

The next BHWC monthly meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2007.

Potential topics include:

- Presentation of Butte Silver Bow County growth plan for the Big Hole
- Paul Siddoway – an interested party from Butte has raised questions regarding potential for a fall fishing closures being instituted through the Big Hole Drought Management Plan for the purpose of protecting fall-spawning brown trout.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm