

TROUT LINE

SPRING
2012



Newsletter from the Montana Council of Trout Unlimited

New Venture Protects Rock Creek Gateway by Bruce Farling and Grant Kier

Rivers, people and communities come together. But only on rare occasions do they merge at once and in one place. A new venture to protect the mouth of the blue ribbon waters of Rock Creek near Missoula is one of those occasions.

Five Valleys Land Trust, with the support of Montana TU, the Westslope Chapter of TU and the Clark Fork Coalition, have launched the Rock Creek Confluence Project in order to protect,

Combined with conservation easements on neighboring properties, the acquisition will permanently protect more than two miles of the Clark Fork River and more than a mile of Rock Creek.

in perpetuity, the gateway to this iconic trout stream. After more than a year of negotiation, the land trust has reached an agreement with LEMB Co, LLC to purchase 201-acres at the mouth of Rock Creek for \$1.6 million. The site, which also includes

frontage along the Clark Fork, had been slated for a controversial 37-lot subdivision with an artificial fish pond at its core. Once the purchase is complete, Five Valleys will work with



Imagine 37 new homes here. Or not. *Grant Kier photo*

the Clark Fork Coalition and Trout Unlimited to develop a common vision for the property.

That vision includes eliminating the
See *ROCK CREEK*, page 7

Partners Fight AIS in Montana

Arguably, Montana's most important resource is water, which drives many of the state's largest industries such as agriculture, hydropower and recreation. Our streams and lakes face a variety of challenges. Among the most pressing and controllable are the threats posed by aquatic invasive species (AIS). AIS are waterborne, non-native organisms that threaten the diversity or abundance of native species and the ecological stability of native waters. They also can threaten commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activities. AIS include clams, fish, mussels, plants, weeds and disease-causing pathogens. AIS can include non-native sport fish such as lake trout and northern pike where they currently occur in inappropriate

settings. However, Montana TU and others are focusing now on problem species that have yet to arrive in the state.

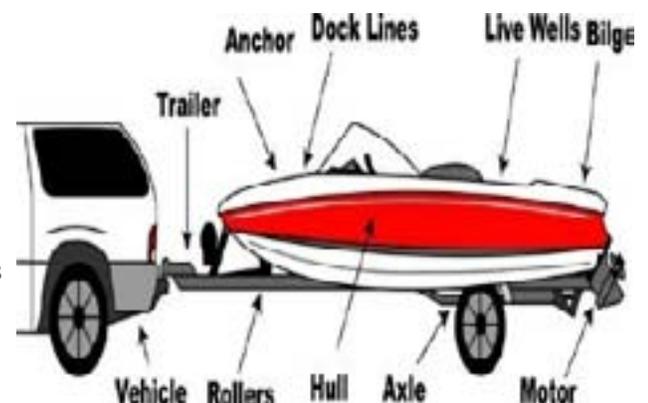
Compared to many states Montana is lucky. Most of the notorious AIS plaguing other states have not been detected here, or, they occur only in isolated populations. We therefore have an opportunity to keep many invaders at bay. Once established, many AIS can cause economic havoc. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services estimate that AIS impacts in the United States already cost more than \$120 billion a year.

In order to prevent the spread of AIS into and within Montana, the State of

Montana has established monitoring and prevention programs. Among state agencies, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has the largest reach. Its main efforts include a boat inspection program at boat ramps, state borders

See *AQUATIC INVASIVES*, page 6

by Morgan Sparks and Mark Aagenes



This Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks illustration shows key areas to inspect, clean & dry on any boat. Make sure your watercraft & equipment is completely drained and dried. Questions? Contact FWP at (406) 444-2449.

MONTANA TU'S MISSION is to conserve, protect and restore Montana's world-class coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.

Founded in 1964, Montana Trout Unlimited is a statewide grassroots organization comprised of 13 chapters and approximately 3,400 TU members.

www.montanatu.org

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On May 5, the day before his 91st birthday, Bud Morris died from complications triggered by a massive stroke. He passed away in Ennis, close to his beloved Madison River. Along with Dan Bailey, Bud Lilly and a few other conservation-minded anglers from Livingston, West Yellowstone and Billings, Bud founded the Montana Chapter of Trout Unlimited in 1963. Most were business people. Bud owned the old Parade Rest guest ranch on Grayling Creek, near Hebgen Lake.

The chapter eventually became the Montana Council, or Montana TU, the umbrella organization for the state's 12 local TU chapters. Few Montanans know of the early work of those TU pioneers, and that's a shame. They twice stopped dams proposed for the Yellowstone near Livingston, and fought similar proposals for the Middle Fork Flathead and North Fork Sun Rivers. They forced cleanup of pollution sources along the Yellowstone, battled the Forest Service over industrial-scale clear-cutting in the upper reaches of the Madison River drainage (one of Bud's personal crusades), introduced Montanans to catch-and-release angling and supported a couple of far-thinking state fishery managers who were getting pummeled for proposing wild trout management instead of continued hatchery stocking in the Madison River – an experiment that proved so successful it was adapted state-wide and has become the national gold standard for trout management.

Some of Bud's Yellowstone-region

Bud Morris, Remembered

TU friends eventually teamed up with Jim Posewitz, a passionate young state fishery biologist, to defend the Yellowstone's trout rich waters from powerful energy companies that coveted the water for coal development.

The fishermen won. Other early TU victories included hard-fought national battles led by Butte anglers George Grant and Tony Schoonen to stop a dam proposed for the Big Hole River near Twin Bridges, and passing laws to stop uncontrolled damage to streams and riparian areas. These guys were lions.

TU was conceived and founded in Grayling, Michigan, by a handful of prescient anglers who knew we could do better than ignore habitat protection while converting the nation's streams into annexes for hatcheries where anglers could be robotically hooked on sluggish, race-way raised protein. The seeds for the TU idea were tilled in Michigan, but the heartbeat has been strongest in Montana, where the Yellowstone, Madison, Big Hole and Flathead needed – and always will – anglers of stout will and passion. Anglers like Bud Morris.

Bruce Farling



Bud Morris on the Big Hole, 1966

Bitterroot Trib Gets Repairs

by Michael Gibson

The Burnt Fork of the Bitterroot, long known for water wars and degraded trout habitat, is getting a makeover. In 2011 Montana TU, the Bitterroot Chapter and TU National fenced off a mile stretch of the creek from cattle grazing on the Ellison Cattle Company, just east of Stevensville.

TU national's Heather Whitely coordinated the project. And now, thanks to volunteers from the Bitterroot and Westslope Chapters of TU, the Bitterroot Water Forum, Sierra Club and others, this section of the Burnt Fork received close to 1,000 riparian plantings. Volunteers planted native cottonwoods, dogwoods, willows, golden currant and chokecherry. Once these riparian plants mature they will help stabilize banks, decrease sediment and provide

shade – thus helping reduce stream temperatures and make a reach of the lower Bitterroot's largest tributary more trout friendly.

This project also became a reality thanks to contributions from the Ellison Family, Trout and Salmon Foundation, TU's Embrace-A-Stream program, Montana TU, the Bitterroot and Westslope Chapters of TU, and the Blackfoot Native Plants Nursery.



Volunteers staging to plant shrubs along Burnt Fork

Casting for Recovery offers Free Clinics

Casting for Recovery provides retreats for women of all ages and in any stages of breast cancer and recovery, and incorporates fly fishing into the program. CFR will be holding 44 retreats in 33 states in 2012, two of which are in Montana. August 24-26 2012 at Dome Mountain Ranch in Eastern Montana (application deadline June 15th) and September 14-16 2012 at Glacier Outdoor Center in Western Montana (application deadline July 13th). Women are selected at random and may apply online at www.castingforrecovery.org.

Anyone interested in volunteering with the Montana programs may do so by going to the website and filling out a volunteer application. Local contact is: Peg Miskin, National Program Director in Hamilton: peg.miskin@castingforrecovery.org.

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CHAPTER NEWS

Flathead Valley Chapter

This spring the chapter provided comments to Montana FWP advocating for continuance of a lake trout suppression project at Swan Lake. Results of this project could inform similar ongoing or proposed projects at Yellowstone and Flathead Lakes. The chapter has several on-the-ground projects in progress, including planting shrubs with FWP this spring to help stabilize a bank on the lower Flathead River. The chapter hosted Montana TU's State Council meeting on May 19, as well as its annual fundraising banquet that night.



bull trout

Big Blackfoot Chapter

Twenty years of TU restoration work on Chamberlain Creek is now complete, thanks to the many partners who contributed to the conservation easements, planting

projects, road elimination work and fish passage improvements that dramatically improved this cutthroat spawning stream. The chapter is now working with its partners installing fish screens and fish ladders in headwaters

tributaries. It is also advocating for responsible clean-up of the Mike Horse Mine area. The board recognized Stan Bradshaw's role as an invaluable steward, watchdog, volunteer and attorney for TU's Montana Water Project, by presenting him with the chapter's Mun McNulty Conservation Award in early June. Check out the chapter's new site at www.bbctu.org.

Bitterroot Chapter

BRTU provided funding and volunteers to the Bitter Root Water Forum for a riparian restoration project this spring on the East Fork Bitterroot River. The chapter is helping the Forest Service decommission unneeded, sediment bleeding roads in the Piquett and Marten Creek drainages of the West Fork Bitterroot. It also helped with a bank stabilization project on Skalkaho Creek. This year's Bitterroot Buggers program was very successful. The chapter is sponsoring

Joel Sartore photo

two participants at Montana TU's Conservation & Fly Fishing Camp in July. BRTU also provided funding and volunteers this spring for a riparian planting project along the lower reaches of the Burnt Fork. See related article, page 3. The chapter's Annual Banquet & Auction will be in Hamilton, Fri., Sept. 28, 2012. The chapter will host Montana TU's next State Council meeting on Sept. 29.

Joe Brooks Chapter

JBTU teamed up with TU's Madison-Gallatin Chapter for the 8th Annual Yellowstone River Clean Up this spring, tackling over 70 river miles with 138 participants. JBTU volunteers have been mapping weeds along the Yellowstone River, and the chapter sponsored a one-day youth fishing camp this spring. A restoration project to improve water quality in Fleshman Creek – near and dear to chapter members – is moving forward after waiting four years for the Park County Commission to approve the engineering design. Join Livingston-area TU members on June 30 at a celebration and fundraiser for river conservation. Details on page 8.



Carlos Miera from TU's Madison-Gallatin Chapter at the Yellowstone cleanup

Magic City Fly Fishers

Chapter President Lyle Courtnage recently announced MCFF's commitment to help save Yellowstone cutthroat trout in Yellowstone Lake. They'll host a program in September with Dave Sweet from Wyoming TU to learn more about a large-scale YSCT restoration effort in the park. Dave's presentation covers history, science and conservation surrounding the non-native lake trout's arrival and resulting decimation of Yellowstone cutthroat in the park. This will be part of MCFF's fall kickoff meeting, free & open to the public, 9/11/12, 6:30 p.m. at the Billings Rod & Gun Club, west of Logan International Airport on Rod & Gun Club Road. MCFF volunteers continue to teach Billings-area kids how to fly fish, and have expanded their fly tying program to include 14 schools. They've also been busy promoting trout habitat

conservation and fly fishing at community events.

West Slope Chapter

Montana TU's Conservation and Flyfishing Camp would not happen this July without the hard working volunteers from the West Slope Chapter, who organize, scrounge, counsel, instruct, chaperone and do most of the heavy lifting for the 5-day event. See Upcoming Events, page 8. WSTU members put on a successful casting clinic in early spring in Missoula. The chapter is now partnering with TU national's Casey Hackathorn on a project in Harvey Creek, an upper Clark Fork River tributary. TU placed fish traps in Harvey Creek and an irrigation ditch to count westslope cutthroats and bull trout migrating into the Clark Fork. Volunteers will help determine what percentage of those fish are being entrained and lost in the irrigation ditch. WSTU is also helping finance and donating volunteer time to a restoration

project along the Burnt Fork of the Bitterroot. The chapter is actively supporting the recently announced Rock Creek Confluence Project. See article on page 1. Contact westslopechapter.tu@gmail.com.



Employee Contributions

Does your company match employee contributions to nonprofits? Many businesses will match charitable donations made by their employees and retirees. Some even double the money. It's an excellent way to stretch your conservation dollars with a gift to Montana TU.

For more information on how you can make a gift to Montana TU, please contact us.

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AQUATIC INVASIVES (from page 1) and roving roadside checks. FWP also has extensive monitoring efforts at more than 600 sites on waters across the state. FWP's educational outreach is anchored to its "Inspect. Clean. Dry." campaign. It also is developing rapid response plans for dealing with new AIS outbreaks. Montana's Department of Agriculture's role is primarily oriented towards preventing the spread of noxious plants, such as Eurasian Watermilfoil. It also helps connect weed prevention districts to private landowners. The agriculture department has a noxious weed trust fund to help fund projects. It also participates in boat inspections. Finally, Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation oversees a large portion of state AIS funding, most of which comes from the Legislature and is used for contracted detection and control efforts.

Montana Trout Unlimited's immediate goal for AIS prevention centers on advocating for establishment of a statewide invasive species council. Ideally, the council would be comprised of individuals from agencies with AIS programs, members of the general public and legislators. It would be responsible for establishing programs that prevent new invasive species from being established, and for ensuring species already here don't spread. Another Montana TU priority is helping secure a permanent trust fund for AIS work, potentially from a combination of industry and recreation sources.

Many of the invasive species plaguing other states, with the exception of milfoil, have yet to be detected in Montana. Only public vigilance will prevent their spread to and within the state. TU members can be part of the solution by supporting establishment of a statewide AIS council and trust fund. And, by making it a habit to inspect, clean and dry your boats and fishing gear after a day of angling.

AIS Threats to Montana by Morgan Sparks

Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) -- "Milfoil"

Milfoil is a non-native aquatic plant that grows in dense mats on the surface of shallow portions of lakes and ponds as well as in slow reaches of rivers and streams. It can impede aquatic recreation and damage aquatic ecosystems by reducing critical dissolved oxygen in the water column and by overwhelming habitat that is crucial for fish and macroinvertebrates.



Milfoil Courtesy HCRC&D

Didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*) -- "Rock Snot"

Didymo is a freshwater diatom -- a form of algae -- that forms as a mass of individual cells on stalks. It can attach to structures such as rocks, sediment or wood on river bottoms. Mats can completely cover stream bottoms causing aesthetic, ecological, and recreational issues. Didymo is within its native range in Montana, but is considered a nuisance species when large blooms appear.



Didymo Courtesy New Zealand DOC

Zebra Mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and Quagga Mussels (*Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*)

Dreissenid mussels are infamous for establishing in dense colonies (as many as 700,000 individuals per square-meter of surface area). They have clogged water intakes on power plants in the Midwest, costing industry millions of dollars. Mussels also filter an inordinate percentage of phytoplankton from the water and release pollutants in their waste.



Invasive mussels Courtesy USGS

VHS (Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia) -- Egtved Disease

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia is a highly contagious and fatal disease for fish. VHS can adversely affect least 50 fish species in the U.S. including popular sport fish such as trout, salmon, bass, walleye and pike. VHS can have an 80-100 percent mortality rate in some species.



VHS die-off Courtesy New York DEC

ROCK CREEK (from page 1)

pond, controlling weeds and restoring native grassland, cottonwood and riparian habitats. Also being contemplated is converting a portion of the property's irrigation water rights to in-stream flow. The confluence partnership plans on working with locals, the Missoula community and recreationists on a long-term public access plan that both protects Rock Creek's blue ribbon fishery while allowing for public recreation and perhaps outdoor education opportunities. Combined with conservation easements on neighboring properties, the acquisition will permanently protect more than two miles of



Rock Creek Mark Aagenes photo

the Clark Fork River and more than a mile of Rock Creek.

Achieving the vision, however, depends on Rock Creek advocates coming together to raise an estimated \$2 million for purchase and restoration. Opportunities like this come along very rarely. Join us and help permanently protect the confluence of two of Montana's greatest waters.

For more information, contact Bruce Farling at bruce@montanatu.org or Grant Kier at grant@fvlt.org.

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Stay informed and help prevent the spread of invasive species. Visit the Clean Angling Coalition, a program of the Invasive Species Action Network, at www.cleanangling.org.

TU Memberships

Need to renew or join? Log on to www.tu.org and be sure to indicate your chapter number, listed on the right side of this page.

To join via phone, call TU's Membership Service Line toll-free at 800-834-2419.

Thank you for your support.



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TROUT LINE Spring 2012

UPCOMING EVENTS

www.montanatu.org

6/30/12

Burgers, Beer & Bluegrass

5-9 p.m. at the band shell in Sacajawea Park, Livingston. Celebrate with Joe Brooks TU on the banks of the Yellowstone. Music, good food, drinks & great raffles. \$25 adults; \$15 kids under 12. Contact Sharon at 406-579-7735 or go to ticketriver.com.

9/28/12

Bitterroot TU's 33rd Annual Banquet & Auction

5 p.m. at the Bitterroot River Inn, Hamilton. Gourmet dinner at 6:30 p.m. Event features live auctions, silent auctions, door prizes & raffle drawings. Reserve \$50 tickets with Marshall Bloom at drtrout@mtbloom.net.

7/8/12

Montana TU's Conservation & Fly Fishing Camp

July 8-12 at Camp Watanopa on Georgetown Lake. Still openings available. Call Kate at 406-543-0054. Details at montanatu.org.

9/29/12

Montana TU's State Council Meeting

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Hamilton, hosted by TU's Bitterroot Chapter. All TU members welcome. Includes lunch. Contact Kate for details at kate@montanatu.org or 406-543-0054.

9/14/12

Casting for Recovery Retreat at the Glacier Outdoor Center

A free, 3-day retreat for women with any stage of breast cancer or recovery. July 13 application deadline. Visit castingforrecovery.org for details, or contact peg.miskin@castingforrecovery.org. See related article, p. 3.

10/1/12

TU Chapter Annual Reports Open

Online forms available for chapters to complete until the 11/15/12 deadline. TU training available for treasurers/chapter leaders 10/17/12. Contact Rob Keith at rkeith@tu.org or 703-284-9425.

9/14/12

Trout Unlimited National's Annual Meeting

Sept. 14-16 in Asheville, N.C.. Details and registration at tu.org/events.

10/9/12

Yellowstone Lake Native Fish Conservation Training

TU offers this free web conference to members, 6 p.m. Mountain Time. Contact Rob Keith at rkeith@tu.org or 703-284-9425.

WANT OVER 3,400 MONTANA TU MEMBERS TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR EVENT?

Contact Montana TU at 888-504-0054 or kate@montanatu.org to get the word out in Trout Line

