

# CONSERVATION NEWS

## McCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



"I love fishing. You put that line in the water and you don't know what's on the other end. Your imagination is under there."

~ Robert Altman



## Circle School 4th-6th Graders Visit Ft. Peck Interpretive Center & Go Fishing May 18th

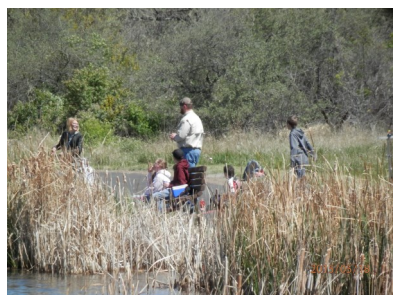
"when you catch and release you've got to kiss the fish; it's good luck for the fish and the fisherman . . . "



... so said Marc Kloker, Information & Education Program Manager for MT FWP Region 6 as he pointed to the puckered lips of a common carp on the screen.

Forty-five 4th, 5th & 6th graders from Circle School spent the morning learning to identify fish and determine if they were native or introduced to Montana. Then it was off to the fishing pond to try their luck. One lucky boy, David caught a fish! Afterwards, it was back to the museum for a scavenger hunt!

Thank you to Principal Helen Murphy and teachers Colleen Stormer, Kim Gebhardt and Amy McCloy for a wonderful day!



### Inside This Issue

- Get Involved p. 2
- Poster Contest p. 3
- No-Till Gardening Workshop p. 4
- Mother's Day Roses p. 4
- DRWA p. 5
- Spotted Knapweed p. 6
- How Grazing Affects Roots p. 7
- Range Monitoring Day p. 7
- Range Committee p. 7
- Dust Bowl Remembered p. 8
- Conservation Month p. 9
- 20th Year—MT Envirothon p. 9



"I had no idea that by attending Range Camp 11 years ago would have led me to a position with NRCS . . ."

By Ashley Kiehl, Soil Conservationist, NRCS

There are many chances for kids to start getting involved in natural resources and conservation and many of them can be found and initiated with local Conservation Districts. When I was younger I was involved in many of these opportunities myself which eventually led me to my career and helped me develop professional relationships that are still maintained to this day.

I was raised on a ranch near Winnett, MT and have been involved with every aspect of ranching my whole life. Anywhere from irrigating, bum lambs, and fencing, I was there. But even though I considered myself a true blue ranch kid, I never fully understood what kind of resource was right underneath my feet and how important it was to keep it healthy.


This started to change when I attended my first MT Youth Range Camp. Here I started learning what rangeland has to offer. I met many friends and professionals that continue to stay in my life. I learned plant anatomy, plant ID, range monitoring, problem solving and so much more. Range camp was a great learning opportunity but it was fun as well. Rock climbing, waterslides, swimming, paintballing, hay rides, team building, hiking, and dancing were just a few of the fun activities we were able to take part in. My local Conservation District helped me to attend this camp by providing me with the necessary information as well as giving me a scholarship to attend.

When I moved on to high school, because of my involvement in Range Camp, I was encouraged by my science teacher and Conservation District to participate in Envirothon. Every year, Montana holds an Envirothon in Lewistown, MT where teams of five come from all over the state to learn, compete and test their knowledge of natural resources. The same professionals and friends I had met at Range Camp also took part in Envirothon and the relationships began to strengthen.

Because I had showed interest in Natural Resources, our local NRCS District Conservationist approached me with the opportunity to apply for the Student Career Experience Program. I applied and was able to work for four summers in four locations and took every opportunity to come home and help on the ranch as well. I gained much experience that has served me well as I transitioned from a summer intern to a Soil Conservationist.

When it came time to choose a college degree, I chose the obvious course for me – Rangeland Ecology and Management. I became a part of Range Club which allowed me to meet friends and have fun but also allowed me to attend three annual Society for Range Management conferences. SRM was by far the highlight of my college career. Professionals from all over the world travel to the annual meeting to learn, socialize, and give their own insight on many important matters. Students from many different universities compete in activities such as exams, public speaking, plant ID and chapter displays. Once again, I found myself visiting with and picking the brains of many of the people I had met in my previous involvement and meeting new people.

No matter what a person's interests are, get involved in them. The possibilities are endless. I learned many valuable concepts and much knowledge that I was able to apply at home on my family's ranch as well as my job. I had no idea that by attending Range Camp 11 years ago it would have led me to a position with NRCS in Circle, MT and I am so happy that it did.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).



**"The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play."**

~ Arnold Toynbee



Don't judge each day  
by the harvest you  
reap, but by the seeds  
that you plant.

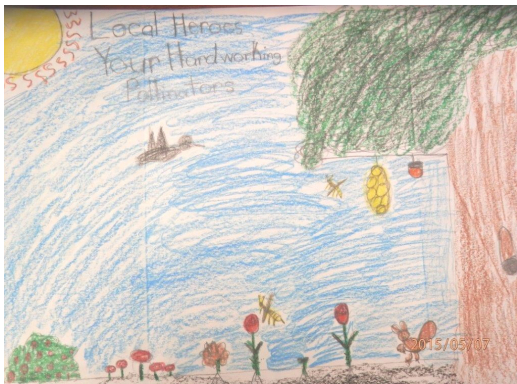
~ Robert Louis  
Stevenson



# POSTER CONTEST



Pollinators are important to all of us. Find out what pollinators are in your area and see what the community is doing to help them.



## Second Grade

1st place

Catalena Kuntz

Poster left

~ ~

2nd place

Renae Kluck

Poster right

## Third Grade

1st place

Kaitlyn Thoeny

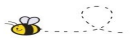
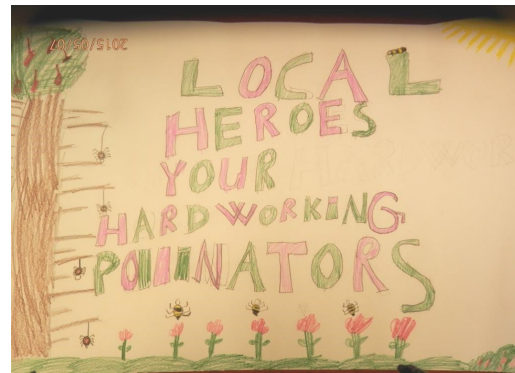
Poster left

~ ~

2nd place

Brayden Hale

Poster right



The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and Auxiliary sponsors an annual poster contest and this year's theme was pollinators. These local school kids participated in the contest and the winning entries will be sent to the state contest in Helena. State winners will then have a chance to have their entries judged at the national level.



The kids enjoying cupcakes



Renae, Catalena, Brayden & Kaitlyn

## Participation Awards go to . . .

**Second Graders:** Tate Arneson, Collin Colter, Jace Curtiss, Audree Deming, Jhace Haynie, Kambrie Kountz, Mallory Larson, Josie Ler, Remy Stempel, Bowen Taylor, Jonica Taylor, Kirsten Wagner, Adisyn Wahl, Breckyn White

**Third Graders:** Grace Gackle, Gibson Grigg, Hailee Heitz, Arley Idland, Taylor Mury

**Winning Entry:** Congratulations to Ms. Catalena Kuntz. Her poster will be sent to Helena for the state contest in June.

**Thank you:** Mrs. Idland, Mrs. Grigg and Mrs. Murphy for all of your support and assistance.



## No-Till Gardening Workshop

Local gardeners met in Circle April 23rd to learn about no-till gardening



“Get rid of the roto-tiller”, said Mark Henning NRCS Area Agronomist. Or “maybe sell it to an unsuspecting neighbor,” he said jokingly.

He began the workshop by mentioning that no-till gardening incorporates the same principles of no-till farming but on a much smaller scale. A successful farm or garden begins with healthy soil. The 4 keys to soil health are minimal soil disturbance, crop diversity, grow living roots & keep the soil covered.

He reminded us that soil is a living system and it is alive. Dirt is dead—it’s what you sweep out of your house. Healthy soils are actually spongy, so you can walk or drive on it and not leave ruts. If you are missing biology (beneficial fungi, nematodes, bacteria etc.) in your soil, you only have geology (clay, silt & sand).

Tillage stirs up weed seeds, creates compaction, damages soil fungi and other biology by destroying their habitat and can cause salinity issues.

Mark discussed how to start your no-till garden either organically or with herbicide usage. He discussed planting seeds with minimal disturbance by making a small valley with a spade and cover it up with soil & mulch. Nature loves diversity—just look at the prairie landscape. Mimic nature by planting a wide variety of plants and inter-seed them such as peas with potatoes or cabbage or hot peppers between garlic rows. Cover crops work, too. Once you have planted your vegetables, keep the soil covered. Soil microbes thrive at 70 degrees and start to die-off above 90 degrees. He explained composting, fertilizers and season extenders using low tunnels. He told us of the different varieties that he likes including a melon “Hannah’s Choice” that he helped to create.

***“You have almost totally destroyed everything I believed about gardening—that is a good thing.”***

***Workshop Participant***

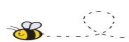
## Mother’s Day Roses

**A Pokey Mess—ah Success! Local Kids gave 150 roses to Area Moms!**



“Let us be grateful to people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.”

~ Marcel Proust







## Questions & Answers

- **WHAT IS DRY-REDWATER REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY?** DRWA is regional water project. Our service area covers McCone, Garfield, Richland, Dawson, and Prairie counties. DRWA is intended to services the communities within the service area, as well as farms and rural residences.
- **WHY IS RURAL WATER IMPORTANT IN OUR AREA?** There are many reasons, but the most important ones include the current water supplies being contaminated, having poor quality, or a lack of adequate quantity.
- **WHAT IS POOR WATER COSTING ME NOW?** It is not difficult to determine what the cost of hauled water is, but we more easily fail to notice the frequent work done on wells and pressure systems. Poor water can shorten the life of pipes, water heaters, and other water-using appliances. New well construction costs, maintenance costs for wells and pumps, and electric bills for pumping are also easily overlooked. And, inadequate water may be causing you the loss of gain on livestock.
- **WHAT WATER QUALITY CAN I EXPECT FROM RURAL WATER?** DRWA water will meet, or exceed, state and federal health standards for public water supply systems.
- **IS RURAL WATER A GOOD INVESTMENT?** We certainly think so! A regional water system means an assured supply of good water. Should you choose to continue using your present water source for livestock, the rural water system is there to serve you during periods of pump or well failure. Real estate values are enhanced, there is no need to worry about staining problems during clothes washing, fixtures stay clean, less soap is used, and you can be assured water is safe for cooking and drinking. Water is delivered with adequate pressure, so cisterns or pressurization units are not required.
- **WILL I BE REQUIRED TO USE ONLY WATER FROM DRWA?** No. You may continue to use your own well if you wish. For example, some users may only want the rural water for their homes but continue to use their existing wells for livestock watering. We must caution you, however, that your private water supply may not be interconnected with the rural water system.
- **WHAT CAN I DO NOW IF I WANT RURAL WATER?** Contact the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority office at (406)485-DRWA. We will be happy to assist you. You may also visit our website, if you like: [www.midrivers.com/~drwa](http://www.midrivers.com/~drwa).
- **IF I DO NOT WISH TO SIGN UP AT THIS TIME, CAN I OBTAIN SERVICE FROM DRWA AFTER IT IS CONSTRUCTED?** Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority cannot guarantee you service after the system is constructed. The system is designed to serve those who subscribe to it first, and sometimes the reserve built in is limited. In order for our engineers to properly design the system and establish accurate costs, it must be known who is serious about being served by the system.

# Featured Noxious Weed: Spotted Knapweed



## Biological Control of Knapweed

- Knapweed Root Weevil (*Cyphocleonus achates*)
- Blunt Knapweed Flower Weevil (*Larinus obtusus*)
- Knapweed Flower Head Weevil (*Larinus minutus*)



Spotted knapweed occurs in all 56 counties in Montana. This plant has a root system comprised of a taproot as well as lateral roots. Some research suggests that the root has allelopathic properties in that it produces a chemical which acts like a natural herbicide killing seedlings that grow nearby.

Young spotted knapweed plants form a grayish-green rosette. After the rosette stage, stems and leaves are blue-green but can appear to be silver-gray due to the tiny hairs that cover these surfaces.

Pink to purple flowers bloom from June to September. Flowers are surrounded by oval bracts that have black tips giving them a “spotted” appearance.

A single spotted knapweed plant can produce as many as 300 flower heads which are capable of generating 140,000 seeds. The seeds can remain viable for up to 5 years in undisturbed soil. The seeds of this plant are oval, tan and 1/8” in length; seeds have a short tufted pappus or mature flower sepals which have a feather or hair-like quality like a dandelion seed.

When mowed repetitively this plant can adjust and grow flowers and seeds close to the ground, so it can range from 2” tall to 4’ tall depending on management.



Knapweed root weevil

## Integrated Weed Management (IWM)

- Learn to recognize knapweeds and report new occurrences to the County Weed Board.
- Eradicate small patches of knapweeds before they have a chance to spread.
- Refrain from driving vehicles through infestations and wash vehicles in a designated area before traveling into non-infested areas.
- Purchase and transport only certified noxious, weed-seed free forage.
- Minimize soil disturbance on range and other non-crop lands.
- Use IWM to contain large knapweed infestations.
- Seed desirable perennial grass species on areas disturbed by construction, mining or other activities.

See Montana Knapweeds, MSU Extension EB0204 2011 for more information

“If dandelions were hard to grow, they would be most welcome on any lawn.”

~ Andrew Mason



www.pinterest.com

## RANGE MONITORING

### Q: What is range monitoring?

A. It's the collection of data to track what happened and/or what is happening on rangelands.

### Q: Why do you monitor?

A. To prevent unintentional consequences; to determine whether you're going in the right direction; and to help attain your goal or objective are few reasons to monitor.

### Q: What data do you collect?

A: What you collect is determined by what your goals are. Trends—change over time; utilization monitoring; and documentation are important data to consider.

### Q: What is Range Monitoring Day?

A. It's a local half day event that helps producers understand how range land is evaluated by the NRCS, BLM and DNRC. Different monitoring protocols will be presented and discussed.



## How Grazing Affects Root Growth



Exhibit: "The Secret Life of Roots" displayed at the U.S. Botanic Garden—[www.usbg.gov/exhibits](http://www.usbg.gov/exhibits)

Overgrazing occurs when more than 50% percent of the grass plant is removed all at once.

Overgrazing stops root growth and reduces grass production.

Look what happens when you try to sneak in another 10 percent "harvest" — 50 percent of the roots stop growing!

Percent Grass Plant Removed	Percent Root Growth Stopped
-----------------------------	-----------------------------

10%	0%
20%	0%
30%	0%
40%	0%
50%	2-4%
60%	50%
70%	78%
80%	100%
90%	100%

Are You Interested  
in Range Health?  
Join the Range  
Committee!

### COMMITTEE GOALS—

These are just a few...

- Promote education and conservation on county grazing lands
- Sponsor educational events, demonstrations and workshops
- Initiate range monitoring program
- Initiate necessary measures to promote / sustain range health

### OPERATION

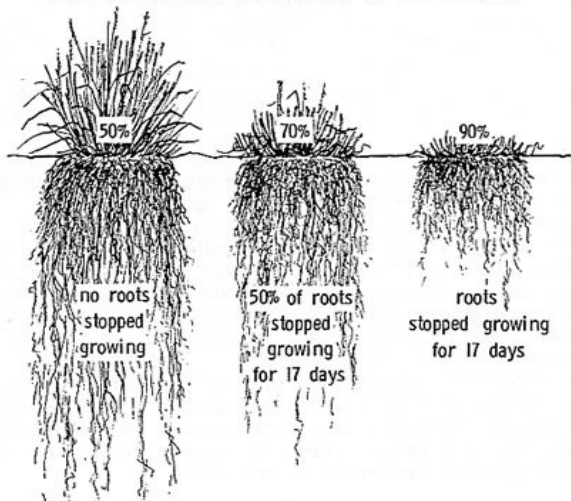
- The Range Committee will be led by a CD Supervisor appointed by the district. The Range Committee may only make recommendations to the board. The CD board would vote to approve any actions or financial expenditures of the range committee.

### MEMBERSHIP

- General public, agency personnel and other individuals interested in Range may be members of the committee

Please contact our office for more information.  
485-2744 x100.

ROOT DEVELOPMENT IN RELATION TO TOP REMOVAL



### Range Monitoring Day

June 19, 2015

1:00pm—until it's over

At the Quick Ranch

Will have liquid libations (water & pop) to wet your whistle.

RSVP by June 18th so we know how many burgers to fry.

485-2744 x100







# DUST BOWL DAYS REMEMBERED

## TIMELINE 1931—1939

1931: Severe drought hits the Midwestern & Southern Plains. As the crops die, the “black blizzards” begin. Dust from over-plowed and over-grazed lands begins to blow.

1932: 14 dust storms reported this year.

1933: 38 dust storms reported this year.

1934: Great dust storms spread from the Dust Bowl area (technically the driest regions of the Plains—southeastern Colorado, southwest Kansas and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas). The drought is the worst ever in the U.S history, covering more than 75 percent of the country and affecting 27 states severely.



May 1934: A major dust storm **started over the northern plains of Montana** and the Dakotas and by night it had reached Chicago dumping an estimated 6,000 tons of dust. By the next morning, the dust had reached Boston and New York where the streetlights came on at midday and cars had to use headlights. The dust cloud was **1,800 miles wide**.

December 1934: The “Yearbook of Agriculture” for 1934 announces, “approximately 35 million acres of formerly cultivated land have essentially been destroyed for crop production...100 million acres now in crops have lost all or most of the topsoil; 125 million acres of land now in crops are rapidly losing topsoil...and 35 million acres cannot grow crops of any kind...”

April 14, 1935—Black Sunday. Twenty of the worst “black blizzard” occurred across the **entire sweep of the Great Plains, from Canada south to Texas** causing extensive damage and turning day to night.

December 1935: Experts estimate that 850 million tons of topsoil have blown off of the southern plains and if the drought continues, the total area affected would increase from 4,350,000 acres to 5,350,000 acres by the spring of 1936.

1937: 134 dust storms reported this year.

1939: The rains finally came to end this drought. In the mid 1950s another severe drought hit the same area and there were dust storms then too. But the lessons learned from the dirty 30s saved the area from having another Dust Bowl.

Timeline sources: Sam Montana, Facts about the Dust Bowl (knoji.com), Timeline. Surviving the Dust Bowl. American Experience (pbs.org)

... not rain or snow ... gusty winds blow up dust north of Circle on Saturday, March 28th



*“The ultimate meaning of the dust storms of the 1930s was that America as a whole, not just the plains, was badly out of balance with its natural environment. Unbounded optimism about the future, careless disregard of nature’s limits and uncertainties, uncritical faith in Providence, devotion to self-aggrandizement—all these were national as well as regional characteristics.” ~ Historian Robert Worster*





## August Designated as Montana Conservation Month

There's a local conservation group working hard in your area.  
... this is your chance to shake their hand

Montana is home to 58 local Conservation Districts and 62 Watershed groups. These local entities, while diverse in activities and regions, focus on a single common theme: **Conserving Montana's natural resources.**

Montana Conservation Month is a statewide effort to tell the story of conservation work being carried out by conservation districts and watershed groups in communities across the state.

Montana Conservation Month program encourages every Montanan to:

- Recognize the work conservation districts and watershed groups do in Montana to address local natural resource concerns through a wide range of projects and programs.
- Witness successful conservation projects and programs carried out by Conservation Districts and Watershed Groups.

- Value the essential role of local conservation projects to solve local conservation problems on a voluntary basis.

In McCone County, we will be busy this summer hosting a Range Monitoring Day in June, Soil Health Tour in July and a booth at the McCone County Fair in August. And...a thousand other things...

## Montana Envirothon



20 Years of Creating Natural Resource Awareness in Youths ... One Competition at a Time

Thirty-five high school, FFA and 4-H teams from across Montana gathered in Lewistown for the 20th Annual Envirothon April 20-21. Team rivalries were renewed as students tested for best scores in forestry, wildlife, aquatics, range and soils. Teams also competed in best overall oral presentations on the current issue selected by the national Envirothon committee for the competition.



The current issue for this event was "Urban & Community Forestry". Urban and Community Forestry can be defined as the planting and care of amenity, or landscape, trees, collectively in human settlements. Urban and community forests broadly include urban parks, street trees, landscaped boulevards, public gardens, river and coastal promenades, greenways, river corridors, wetlands, nature preserves, natural areas, shelter belts of trees and working trees at industrial brownfield sites.

The goal of the Envirothon program is to help students become environmentally knowledgeable, skilled, dedicated citizens who are willing to work individually and collectively toward achieving and maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between the quality of life and the quality of the environment.

Participation in the Envirothon is open to all students enrolled in grades 9-12 in public, private, vocational, technical or home-schooled programs. Each team is comprised of five students.

The state competition offers a \$500.00 college scholarship for each first place team member, plus \$300.00 scholarships for each team member for the highest test score. The same team cannot win both.

This year the first place team was Hamilton High School. The team with the highest test score was Helena High School. The national competition will be held in Missouri later in the year. Congratulations to all the teams who participated. If any McCone County student is interested in being part of an Envirothon team, please contact the District office.

IF YOU WANT TO SEE THIS NEWSLETTER IN COLOR,  
VISIT [WWW.MCCONECOUNTYCD.COM](http://WWW.MCCONECOUNTYCD.COM)

## MCCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

106 10th Street  
P.O. Box 276  
Circle, MT 59215

Phone: 406-485-2744 x100  
Email: [Mcconecountycd@yahoo.com](mailto:Mcconecountycd@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.mcconecountycd.com](http://www.mcconecountycd.com)  
Like us on Facebook! [Mcconecountycd](https://www.facebook.com/Mcconecountycd)

### Conservation District Board & Staff

Steve Wanderaas, Chairman  
Casey Nay, Vice-chairman  
Larry Nagel, Treasurer  
Jenny Garoutte, Rural Supervisor  
Brant Quick, Rural Supervisor  
Josh Murphy, Rural Supervisor  
Dusty White, Rural Supervisor  
Mary Hendrix, Administrator & Editor

### Partners in Conservation

Johnna Blankenship, DC, NRCS  
Ashley Kiehl, Soil Conservationist, NRCS  
Mandi Nay, Coordinator, DRWA



## *Upcoming Events*

### June 2015

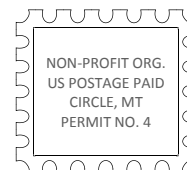
3 Board Meeting, Circle  
19 Range Monitoring  
Day, Circle

### July 2015

1 Board Meeting, Circle  
16 Soil Health Tour,  
Fallon County

### August 2015

5 Board Meeting, Circle  
13-15 McCone County  
Fair, Circle



## MCCONE COUNTY POSTAL PATRON

## MCCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### MISSION STATEMENT

### CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**Mission Statement—**By performing a leadership role in conservation for McCone County, the District will develop a more sustainable and economic resource management plan for the community.

**Conservation District Authority—**MCA 76-15-102. Declaration of policy. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of soil and soil resources of this state, for the control and prevention of soil erosion, for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, and for furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and therefore to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.

## Soil Health Tour to Fallon County

Join us on a Soil Health Tour July 16th to Plevna & Baker. We will be visiting three operations that are already doing what you said couldn't be done in Eastern Montana.

Soil health through cover crops,  
crop rotations and operations using  
no-till disc drills will be few  
of the topics covered.

Tour will start in Jordan with a stop in Circle.

Info postcards will be mailed out soon.

Tour sponsored by McCone & Garfield  
County Conservation Districts

