

# THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

News from the Montana Association  
of Conservation Districts

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## Congratulations to Tanner Jorgenson, Transition Agriculture essay contest winner

Tanner Jorgensen grew up in Dagmar, Montana and graduated from Plentywood High School in 2014. He lives on his family farm north of Dagmar in northeast Montana and remains an active part of the operation. Tanner even runs his own small operation as apart of his FFA SAE project and serves as income for his college fund.



Tanner is enrolled as a freshman at MSU Bozeman where he will obtain his Ag business degree. He hopes to take over his family's farming operation in the future and considers a college degree as an important aspect of this endeavor. [READ MORE ABOUT TRANSITION AGRICULTURE](#)



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## Southwest Faces Severe Drought, scientists say

### From the Modern Farmer

A new study published as a joint effort by scientists at Cornell University, the University of Arizona, and the U.S. Geological Survey finds that the chances of the Southwest facing a "megadrought" are much higher than previously suspected.

According to the new study, "the chances of the southwestern United States experiencing a decade-long drought is at least 50 percent, and the chances of a 'megadrought' – one that lasts up to 35 years – ranges from 20 to 50 percent over the next century." Not so crazy, according to Richard Seager, a climate scientist at Columbia University who has helped pen many studies of historical megadroughts: "By some measures the west has been in drought since 1998 so we might be approaching a megadrought classification!" he says. Seager says that the region hasn't had a megadrought in several centuries; the Dust Bowl drought of The Grapes of Wrath, though incredibly severe, was not long enough to qualify. [READ MORE](#)

## Quagga Mussel larvae found in Angostura Reservoir, South Dakota

From South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks- Water sampling performed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has resulted in the discovery of larval quagga mussels in Angostura Reservoir in the southern Black Hills.

At this time, Angostura Reservoir is designated by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) as suspect for quagga mussels. Additional sampling is currently underway by GFP and BOR. A second positive sample must be obtained before the water is listed as positive for the presence of quagga mussels. If no additional quagga mussels are found for a period of three years, GFP would designate Angostura Reservoir as negative for quagga mussels.

Quagga mussels are a small invasive

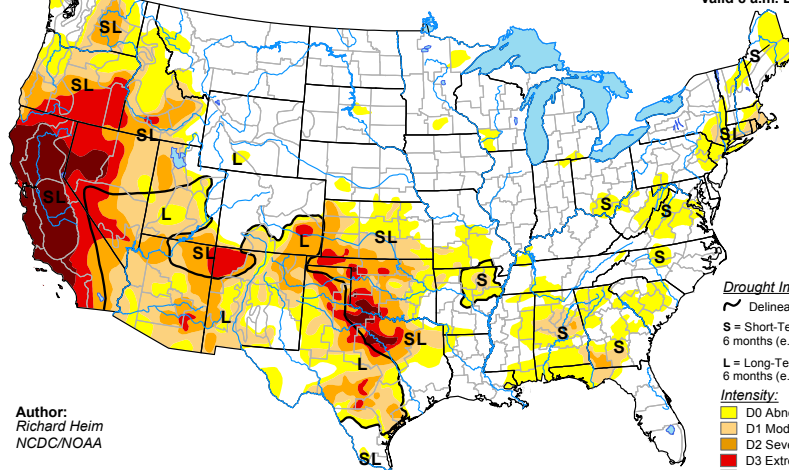
mollusk closely related to the more well-known zebra mussel. These species originated in eastern Europe and arrived in the U.S. in the mid-1980s. Since that time, they have spread to many states east of the Rocky Mountains and to some areas in the western U.S. Although usually less than an inch in size as adults, they can rapidly spread under the right conditions, though it is not known if those conditions exist in Angostura Reservoir. In instances conducive to establishment of quagga mussels, they can form dense clusters that may affect water system infrastructure and aquatic recreational equipment. Effects on the quality of fisheries can be hard to document, as excellent fisheries still exist in many waters with established quagga mussel populations. [READ MORE](#)

## U.S. Drought Monitor

September 30, 2014

(Released Thursday, Oct. 2, 2014)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT





## Best State: Montana's taxes are the fairest of them all.

Taxes are still a pain, but in Montana the burden is distributed more fairly among rich and poor, according to a recent survey.

[READ MORE](#)

## USDA's Small Grains Report: Montana Highlights

All wheat production in Montana, estimated at 213.2 million bushels, is up 6 percent from 2013, according to the Mountain Regional Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. All wheat yield was 37.7 bushels per acre, down 1.3 bushels per acre from a year ago.

All wheat production in the U.S. totaled 2.04 billion bushels in 2014, down 5 percent from the revised 2013 total. Area harvested for grain totaled

46.5 million acres, up 3 percent from the previous year. The United States yield is estimated at 43.8 bushels per acre, down 3.3 bushels from the previous year. The levels of production and changes from 2013 by type are winter wheat, 1.38 billion bushels, down 11 percent; other spring wheat, 601 million bushels, up 12 percent; and Durum wheat, 57.1 million bushels, down 2 percent. [READ MORE](#).

## Department of the Interior asks for full Land & Water Conservation Fund monies

*From The Hill Blog*--The Obama administration is pulling out the stops to renew and expand a little-known program that uses offshore drilling revenue for conservation.

The administration has pushed Congress to triple the amount of money available for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which

officials use to acquire land, build recreation facilities and maintain parks.

The program is likely to be renewed before it expires next year, given the strong bipartisan support for conservation, but President Obama's push for a funding increase is meeting resistance. [READ MORE](#)

## EPA Now Accepting Applications for P3 Grant Program

Do you know any college students interested in solving an environmental challenge? EPA's P3 (People, Prosperity, and the Planet) Program is a unique college competition that inspires solutions for a sustainable future. P3 offers quality hands-on experience that brings classroom learning to life.

For the first phase of the competition, teams are awarded a \$15,000 grant to develop their idea. Teams then compete in the National Sustainable Design Expo in Washington, DC for the P3 Award and a \$90,000 grant to turn their design into a real world application. Apply for P3 by December 16 here:

<http://go.usa.gov/vK5Y>



Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the area meetings. Given the hard year many have had in the field and the multiple demands on our time, we had very strong attendance, which speaks to the dedication we have to conservation. Thank you to the administrators involved in putting the meetings together, we appreciate your effort.

## What do you think of the new Conservationist?

As part of welcoming Kate Arpin to the team as our new communications director, we'll be making changes to the way we present and distribute the Conservationist newsletter. We welcome your feedback, support, and topic ideas!

Email [tmc@macdnet.org](mailto:tmc@macdnet.org)

## Coming Up

October 14: MACD Conference Call. For more information, call 443-5711

October 27: MACD Executive Committee Call. For more information, call 443-5711

November 4: Election Day

November 10: MACD Conference Call. For more information, call 443-5711

**November 18-23: MACD Annual Convention at  
Fairmont Hot Springs**

