



THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

U.S. House passes Farm Bill

At nearly \$1 trillion, the bipartisan, [bicameral agreement](#) on a five-year farm bill cuts food stamps and ends direct subsidies to farmers, while expanding government-backed crop insurance programs. The "powers that be" expect that the Senate will also pass the when they vote in the next week or so. Way past due, it is further anticipated that the President will sign the bill as passed by both bodies of Congress. Stay tuned for more details as they come forward.

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Registration is now open for the 2014 Montana Storm Water Conference, April 8 through 10 at the Holiday Inn Grand Montana in Billings:

Over 40 storm water experts are on tap to share their knowledge on the following topics:

- Storm Water Planning and Implementation;
- Storm Water Design and Construction;
- Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure;
- MS4 Compliance;
- Storm Water Education;
- Case Studies;
- Water Quality Monitoring; and
- Floodplain Mapping

Keynote speaker for the event is Chad Pregracke, CNN's 2013 Hero of the Year, and founder of Living Lands & Water. Registration for the full three days is \$200 through March 14. After that, it's \$300. There are also options for attending only one day. Visit [Montana Watercourse's web-site](#) for full conference and registration details.



NACD's "Forestry Notes" offers conservation districts the opportunity to ask timber tax questions:

On the "answer end" is one of the country's leading experts, Linda Wang, the National Timber Tax Specialist for the U.S. Forest Service. Wang will answer selected questions in the March issue of **Forestry Notes**. Questions can be submitted via Twitter @[forestrynotes](#) or by sending an email to forestrynotes@email.nacdnet.org. Please add "Timber Tax" in the subject line. **The deadline to submit questions is February 14.**

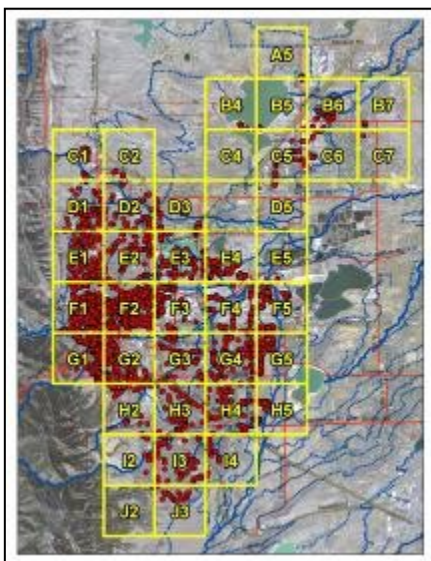
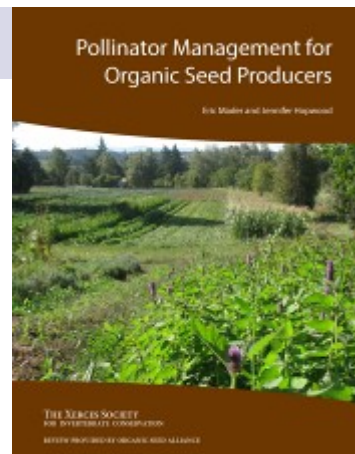
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OF INTEREST TO CONSERVATION DISTRICTS:

Xerces Society and Organic Seed Alliance publish new seed guide: No matter your involvement with seeds, large scale or small, pollination is critical. ***"Pollinator Management for Organic Seed Producers"*** is a new guide providing strategies for conserving pollinators, managing crop isolation distances, and reducing unintended outcrossing between organic and non-organic seed crops. [Click here](#) to download a PDF of the publication or [here](#) to read more about the Xerces Society.

And speaking of pollinators, [bumble bee watch](#) is here! This website helps identify and protect bumble bees in North America. Through the website, interested parties can connect with bumble bee experts and enthusiasts to help track these pollinators. More information is available online through the websites noted below:

- ✓ Learn how to [contribute your photos](#)
- ✓ Learn how to take helpful [photos of bumble bees](#).
- ✓ Meet the [partners](#)
- ✓ Read more about bumble bees at risk on Xerces' [Project Bumble Bee web page](#).
- ✓ Watch the "Bumble Bee Watch" trailer video on [YouTube](#).



Boulder, Colorado continues to survey the city to identify the extent of its Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation:

After identifying the extent of the infestation, the city will use the survey results to also identify a means of containing the infestation to the already quarantined areas. The city of Boulder was broken out into 38 grids, each 1 square mile. To-date, surveys have been completed in 34 grids with five being positive for EAB (Grids E3, F3, G3, H3, and H4). Some samples studied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture have shown that EAB has been present in the area for between 3 to 4 years. The surveys and sampling will continue and **TMC** will continue to report on this as news becomes available.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and the Source Water Collaborative (SWC) unveil new online toolkit to facilitate partnerships to protect drinking water sources:



The toolkit offers effective steps for source water protection professionals working at the local or state level to build partnerships with conservation district staff. The intent is to mitigate contamination of drinking water through agriculture conservation practices, and stormwater and forest management. The toolkit is available online through the [Source Water Collaborative website](#).

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<http://www.macdnet.org/>

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McDonald's announces the use of only sustainable beef for its hamburgers – but what exactly is

"sustainable beef"?

McDonald's recent news release states the company's switch to the use of 100% sustainable beef will take a few years but that the process is starting. Back in 2010, a collection of food-industry stakeholders apparently collaborated on this topic and drafted a list of guidelines for sustainable beef but no definite term exists yet. This collective, called the "Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef," has met since then in Billings and Omaha, Nebraska. So what does all this mean? It might mean that beef production, as it stands today, will not "sustain" the current market needs. Or is it more about their "bottom line" as some others believe? You be the judge. [Read More](#)



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is hosting a free, live broadcast, of the February 18 SARE-sponsored National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health:

Check out the various locations around the state where those interested can join the conversation. There is no cost to participate, but please contact the site you plan to attend to register and confirm both the location and other program details. **Live streaming from the national conference will begin at forum locations at 8 a.m. for those in the Mountain Standard Time zone.**

Bozeman Public Library 510 North Broadway Billings, MT 59101	Evan VanOrder 406-665-3442 ext. 110
Fort Keogh Livestock & Range Research Lab 243 Fort Keogh Road Miles City, MT	Mark Henning 406-232-7905 ext. 115
NRCS 3550 Mullan Road, Suite 106 Missoula, MT	Ben Montgomery 406-676-2841 ext. 111
Montana Electric Coop Association 501 Bay Drive Great Falls, MT	Joyce Trevithick 406-727-7580 ext. 128
Gallatin Conservation District 120 South Fifth Street Manhattan, MT 59741	Justin Meissner 406-266-3146 ext. 103
Red River Inn 410 Montana Ave. West Baker, MT	Ann Fischer 406-778-2238 ext. 109



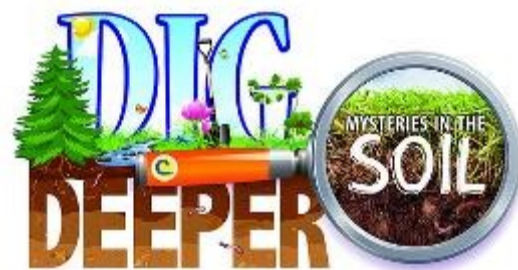
Soil Health in Urban and Community Areas is the topic for the NACD's Urban and Community webinar series:

Please remember that webinars this year are scheduled for **12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. (EST)** on the third Thursday of each month (**February 20**). This webinar will look at threats to soil quality, homeowner practices for enhancing soil health, and programs in Iowa and Ohio to promote soil quality in urban areas. While there is no cost to participate, space is limited to the first 100 registrants. To register, send an email [Debra Bogar](#) that includes your name, title, district or business name and email address. Information to how to access the webinar will be sent via return email.

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NACD's Soil and Water Stewardship week is April 27 through May 4:

Education materials for the 2014 program, entitled **"Dig Deeper - Mysteries in the Soil"**, are available for order online! Products include student booklets, bookmarks, activity sheets/placemats, and an outstanding poster with art work from National Geographic artist Ned M. Seidler. **Those that order \$150 or more by March 15 will receive a 10% discount!!** Customers must enter code **soil2014** during the checkout process to receive the discount. Visit the [NACD Marketplace](#) to place your order today!



Don't forget to visit the [education page](#) for a copy of the **educators guide**. This guide is filled with science standards, vocabulary words, activities, literature connections, worksheets and resources. Additional student worksheets are available along with a viewable sample product section of the page. View the community outreach section for program blanks, program inserts and litanies.



Montana Department of Agriculture releases its 2013 weed list:

The updated list notes whether the noxious weed is present, and to what extent. It also addresses how the weed should be managed: eradicated, contained, turned over to the local weed district, etc. [Click here](#) to access a .pdf copy of the list.

Fish spawning habitat improvement project on Dry Creek Canal:

The local Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) fisheries biologist approached the Boulder River Watershed Association and asked for financial assistance to pursue the opportunity to place a new "waste-gate" structure in Dry Creek Canal. The intent was to allow water to flow back to the Boulder River from November to May at a cubic feet per second rate high enough to keep the spawned brown trout redds (eggs) wet, allowing them to turn into fish in the Spring.



The watershed group, with assistance from Stillwater Mining Company, funded the initial report prepared by a professional engineer. The report proposed the look of the new structure and the best place to locate it in the canal. The new structure allows the canal to serve as a spawning bed for brown trout, without interrupting irrigation and keeping water flow in the canal during the late fall & winter months.

Sweet Grass Conservation District administered the project which was funded by local landowner Skip Herman, Montana FWP's Future Fisheries program and smaller contributions from the canal company and the Boulder River Watershed Association. Check out the [You Tube video](#) developed by FWP showing how it all happened!

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AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES NEWS

Montana News:

AIS Grants Available ~ Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is offering grants for the control of aquatic invasive species. For an application and general information visit the [Department's website](#). **Applications are due March 14, 2014.** For more information contact [Alicia Stickney](#) (406-444-0547).

AIS monitoring permits required ~ Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks is requiring researchers to obtain a scientific collecting permit to conduct invertebrate sampling, including plankton tows for aquatic invasive species. The permit is available on the [Department's website](#) under the "Aquatic Scientific Collectors Permit Application" tab. **Permits should be submitted by April 1, 2014.** Contact [Allison Begley](#) for more information.

Regional News

Idaho ~ Five years of data from Idaho's Watercraft Inspection Program so there are three primary source locations for mussel-contaminated watercraft. They are Lake Mead, Lake Havasu, and Lake Pleasant. [Read more](#)

California ~ Mandatory watercraft inspections required at Donner Lake in the Sierras. [Read More](#)

Wisconsin Big Muddy ~ Aquatic invasive species prevention focuses on the Mississippi River. [Read More](#)

National News:

Appropriators include \$4 million for aquatic plant control The FY 2014 omnibus appropriations bill includes \$4 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Aquatic Plant Control Research Program – the only federally authorized program for research and development of science-based management strategies for invasive aquatic weeds.

In the News

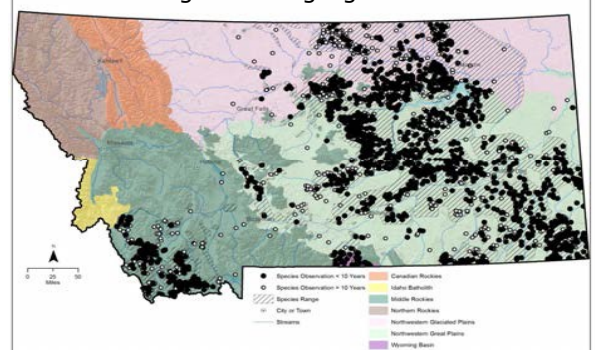
Michigan State University Extension Services says -Do not release invasive species" ~ Water gardens and aquaria are a source of aquatic invasive species. Cost of controlling AIS in the U.S. is more than \$100 billion per year which is approximately \$1,100 per household. [Read more](#)

California Department of Fish and Wildlife ~ The [Department's newsletter](#) includes information on impacts of climate change on native and invasive pondweeds, and an article on the Aquatic Weed Control Program implemented by the state's Department of Parks and Recreation.

Reminder – public comment period ends soon for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP)

State Wildlife Action Plan: The Plan addresses the needs of more than 100 of the state's fish and wildlife species. This update, being led by FWP, revises Montana's initial Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy completed in 2006. The update contains the latest and best information available on the status of species and habitats in greatest need of conservation. The Plan is intended to help direct conservation efforts through 2024. Public Comments on the State Wildlife Action Plan are due **February 9 by 5 p.m.** For more information and to comment, visit [FWP's website](#). Questions may also be directed to Deb O'Neill via the following email: mtswap@mt.gov.

Montana range and observations of the greater sage-grouse



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CONSERVATION AROUND THE NATION

Is the population of monarch butterflies declining?

That's a question Brad Plumer, a reporter at the Washington Post, recently posed. In a typical year, millions of monarch butterflies migrate to the Oyamel fir forests in central Mexico for the winter. Scientists have been seeing a trend over the past few years that indicates monarch numbers are declining. In 2012, it was estimated that about 60 million monarchs wintered in Mexico. New data from the World Wildlife Foundation from 2013 suggests that about 33 million butterflies arrived. Deforestation in Mexico, recent bouts of severe weather, and the growth of herbicide-based agriculture destroying crucial milkweed flora in the Midwest appear to be the major contributors to the decline in numbers. [Read More](#)



What's being called "the largest solar plant in the world" is nearly ready to go online:

Several months ago we reported in [TMC](#) on the [Ivanpah solar plant](#) being built in the Mojave desert. This plant is not like any other solar plant – solar panels have been replaced by mirrors; 300,000 mirrors. Those mirrors are arrayed in rings surrounding three giant towers to reflect sunlight onto vats of water sitting on top of the towers. The water turns to steam, which powers turbines, which are reported to generate enough electricity for 140,000 homes. [Read More](#)

Homeowner opts for a vegetable garden rather than a yard:

Check out this [story](#) about a man that decided to turn his front lawn into a garden. The pictures show the progress from building the frames for the garden to early sprouts to having more veggies than he can eat!



Purple tomato juice – I thought tomatoes were red!

Genetically modified – a topic that is of concern to some, and interest to others. A genetically modified strain of purple tomatoes have been grown in Canada and are on their way to Great Britain in the form of juice - two thousand litres to be exact. The juice is to be tested for its health-promoting properties. The tomatoes, developed by British scientists at the John Innes Centre and Sainsbury Laboratory near Norwich, are the latest in a new [generation of genetically modified plants](#) designed for consumer applications. [Read More](#)

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Calendar

February thru March

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NACD's 2014 Annual Meeting starts February 2

Anaheim, California

For those of you that are unable to attend but who want to stay abreast of what's going on, there's hope! The NACD website [home page](#) will carry reports and newsletters will be posted on Tuesday and Wednesday morning to the [Annual Meeting page](#) of the website. And for you photo enthusiasts, event photos will be available on NACD's [Flickr page](#).



February 10 ~ MACD Conference Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

February 10 & 11 ~ Advanced Supervisor Training, Fort Keogh, Miles City, for more information contact [Karl Christians](#) (**406-444-3022**)

February 11 ~ 310 Administration Workshop, Fort Keogh, Miles City, for more information contact [Karl Christians](#) (**406-444-3022**)

February 12 ~ Lincoln's Birthday

February 15 ~ Valentine's Day

February 17 ~ President's Day (Holiday)

February 18 ~ NRCS National Conference on Cover Crops & Soil Health

February 22 ~ Washington's Birthday

February 24 ~ MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

March 4 ~ Mardi Gras

March 5 ~ Ash Wednesday

March 9 ~ Daylight Savings Time Begins

March 10 ~ MACD Conference Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

March 17 ~ Saint Patrick's Day

March 24 ~ MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

March 27 thru 27 ~ 15th Annual Association Of Montana Floodplain Managers Conference, Billings Hotel & Convention Center

Two ladies in a boat + a camera = an amazing video

Murmuration can be defined as the flight patterns of large groups of birds flying in synchrony. Well, that's just what Sophie Windsor Clive & Liberty Smith captured on film; thousands, maybe even hundreds of thousands, of starlings dancing in the sky. [Click here](#) to see one of the best two-minute You Tube videos.



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Please send your thoughts as to how to improve **The Montana Conservationist** to

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Unless specifically requested, **The Montana Conservationist** is not sent to CD Supervisors. MACD relies on District Administrators to forward **The Montana Conservationist** to the Board Chair, Supervisors, Associate Supervisors and CD Staff. Thank you.

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