

# THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

## **Ray Beck moving on to Deputy Director of**

**DNRC:** Many farmers and ranchers have a sweet spot - a field that they know will grow the best crop or the best grass for their livestock. They pretty much know that this particular soil will almost always do well after most any winter. Some are lucky in that most or all of their land is a sweet spot. It's kind of like that \$20 bill you hide from yourself in your wallet, or that favorite hunting spot where you know you can always find deer, or that old tractor you know will always start. These are just special things in one's life that have a positive glow about them.



Now, most people would not like to be compared to soil. But when a comparison comes from soil and water conservation districts, it can be considered a compliment. In fact, it is a compliment of the highest order. Someone once said that all humans owe our existence to 6 inches of topsoil. That is true, very true.

Ray Beck is healthy soil:

He produces year after year for the Conservation Districts. He doesn't need much, if any, fertilizer. He doesn't need herbicide to kill weeds. He makes it through droughts (low budgets) without much complaining or consternation. When the good rains come he knows how to share the water. And, like soil, he is always there providing support.

As Ray moves to a new place in his career, MACD would like to say thank you for a wonderful, fruitful, and enjoyable ride over the decades. It has had its ups and downs. We almost ran out of gas a few times. It didn't turn out the way Districts wanted sometimes. But, as we look back, it was a great time to be in natural resource conservation, and to have Ray as the leader of a very strong leg on the three legged stool. Ray's leadership, his wise counsel, his quiet manner, and his unassuming personality moved the Districts to some pretty incredible places over decades. He has left Districts with a legacy built on hard work, cooperation, and collaboration.

We ask Ray to look to the Districts if he needs any help in his new position, and we wish him the best of luck. Montana is very lucky to have a dedicated public servant, a very healthy soil, like Ray Beck.

Best of Luck to You on This Next Journey!

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## OF INTEREST TO CONSERVATION DISTRICTS:

***What happened at the 19th Annual Montana Envirothon, held April 28 and 29 in Lewistown?*** There were over 130 high school students that made up twenty-seven teams who had their environmental knowledge tested during the two-day event. The competition is comprised of written exams and an oral presentation. Written exams were conducted at aquatics, forestry, range, soil and wildlife stations. The oral presentation problem focused on sustainable agriculture with the students answering the question, "How would a new restaurant choose one producer over another for their meat and vegetable needs?"

Each written exam station awarded a prize to the top scoring team:

- ⇒ Aquatics – Helena High School;
- ⇒ Forestry – Winnett High School;
- ⇒ Range – Hamilton High School;
- ⇒ Soils – Whitefish High School; and
- ⇒ Wildlife – Helena High School

Whitefish High School scored the highest on the full written exam and each member of the team will be awarded a \$300 college scholarship. When written exam scores were combined with the oral scores for overall competition, Fergus FFA was third; Whitefish High School was second and Helena High School was the first place winner. Each Helena team member will receive a \$700 college scholarship, which is an increase of \$200 as there will be no North American Envirothon this year.

There were six FFA teams competing and the top team was Fergus FFA. This team has the opportunity to go on to the National FFA competition.

If you are interested in sending a team to the 2015 competition (April 20 and 21) in Lewistown please contact Montana Envirothon coordinator Shonny Nordlund (**406-538-7401**).



### Welcome New Administrators!

*March 28, 2014 Administrator's training at Fort Keogh in Miles City. In the picture are: Back row: \*Mary Hendrix, McCone Co. CD; \*Darlene Schwend, Carbon Co. CD; Laurie Zeller, Bureau Chief, DNRC; Julie Goss, Richland CD; Kodie Olson, Little Beaver CD; Bobbi Vannattan, Rosebud CD; Guelda Halvorson, Sweet Grass CD; Carol Watts, Custer Co. CD; \*Penny Shipp, Valley Co. CD, Renee Nelson, Wibaux CD,*

*\*Mike Bjarko, Daniels Co. CD; \*Tara Ostler, Garfield Co. CD; In Front, \*Tanya Lester, Stillwater CD; \*Laurie Young, Roosevelt Co. CD; \*Angela Stahl, Treasure Co. CD; and Carie Hess, Petroleum CD. Attending but not in the picture was Georgia Bruski, Carter Co. CD. \* denotes new administrators. Speakers included: David Martin, DNRC, explaining how partners work together for Montana's Natural Resources; Karl Christians, DNRC, speaking on administrative grants, Water Reservations by Ann Kulczyk and Duane Claypool, DNRC; Laurie Zeller, DNRC spoke on 310 Law. Payroll, and daily duties, meetings and other topics were also on the agenda. David Pratt, NRCS addressed the issue of the MOU between the CDs, MACD, DNRC and NRCS. Also attending were Scott Kaiser, DNRC and LeAnna Johnson, CMB coordinator. Speaking on the LincPass and other IT items were Sheila Hagemeister and Tim Miles. The seasoned administrators offered advice, and encouragement. Many questions were answered and new and old administrators left with an abundance of information. Thanks to Julie Goss for pulling the program together and Carol Watts for hosting it.*

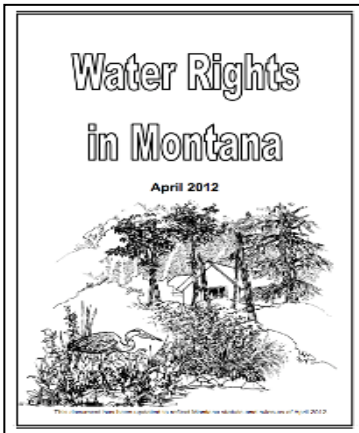
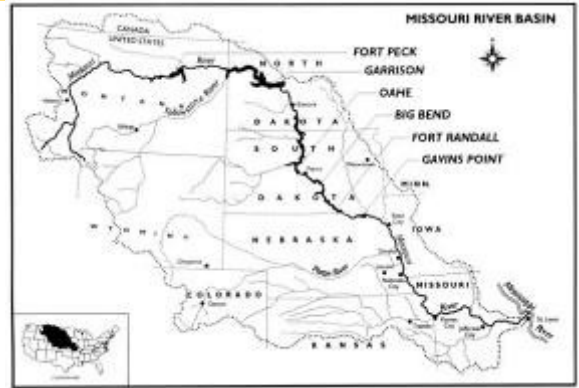
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## ***Lower Missouri River Basin Advisory Council completes draft of recommendations regarding water resource issues of concern to basin residents:***

The recommendations will be sent to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) at the conclusion of phase 3 of the Montana Water Supply Initiative. Resident concerns were gathered last fall during several scoping meetings. From the information gathered, the Council developed a list of the most important issues to be addressed by specific recommendations for action. Another series of public meetings are scheduled for public comment on the draft recommendations. Meetings were already held in Harlowton and Lewistown. The remaining meetings are in Havre on May 6, at the Great Northern Inn and in Wolf Point on May 7 at the Elks Club. The meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. and will last about two hours. Interested parties not able to attend a meeting may **submit written comments by May 19** via [DNRC's website](#). For more information contact [Wendy Beye](#) (406-320-2124), [Bill Milton](#) (406-323-1771), or [Michael Downey](#) (406-444-9748).



## ***The status of and potential changes to Montana's Water Court on tap for discussion during the next Water Policy Interim Committee meeting, May 12 and 13 in room 172 of the Capitol:***

The court was created in 1981 to adjudicate thousands of water rights claims filed in the 1980s and 1990s. The court's main task is to determine the final priority list of water rights holders in every hydrologic basin, as well as other important aspects of each claim, such as place of use or period of use. Also on the committee's agenda will be the proposed water rights settlement for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, including a discussion of water rights claimed off the CSKT reservation lands, and a proposal state Representatives for further analysis of the settlement. For more information on the committee's activities and upcoming meeting, visit the [commit-](#)

***Rolling Rivers needs your help!*** The Lewis and Clark Conservation District is putting out a call for help. There are scheduling difficulties with the trailer this year because there are not enough trained presenters. It appears there are, at this time, only four individuals able to accompany the trailer on it's travels (Dave Martin, Karl Christians, Jennifer McBroom and Chris Evans). If there is anyone in a watershed group or other group that would benefit from a rolling rivers trailer presentation and would like to become a presenter, please contact [Chris Evans](#) (406-449-5000 x112) to get your training started!

***Lake County Conservation District launches Swan Resource Management Study:*** District supervisors met with Lake County Commissioners to discuss the management study that would explore the possibility of establishing a conservation forest initiative. The initiative proposes to manage a forest, to reduce the volume of forest fuels, to support the agriculture community and to expand conservation projects throughout the district. The study would be done in the Lake County portion of the Swan River Drainage on United States Forest Service land. The proposal is to replace the federal management structure currently in place with the district taking over management of the forest. For more information, visit the [District's website](#). Click here to read the article published in the [Valley Journal](#).



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## ***New version of landscape irrigation best management practices available:***

The Irrigation Association and the American Society of Irrigation Consultants released a new version of their [Landscape Irrigation Best Management Practices](#) (BMP). The update reflects sound engineering practices, emerging technologies and recommended techniques for efficient water use. Highlights include:

- ✓ BMPs for landscape irrigation
- ✓ Practice guidelines for effective implementation and adapting the BMPs to local conditions.
- ✓ Recommendations for evaluating potential irrigation water resources, including non-potable sources.
- ✓ Appendices with information on system inspection and commissioning, irrigation scheduling, and water budgeting.

The [updated document](#) is available online at no charge. For more information, contact [Brent Mecham](#) or [Carol Colein](#).

***Iowa Earth Team Volunteers use music to explain why soil is much more than dirt! The video developed by the volunteers is titled "[Don't Treat It Like Dirt](#)" and was uploaded to YouTube. Please feel free to use it and send it on.***

***It's about four minutes of entertainment with a really good message!***



## ***Sage Mountain Center celebrates 25 years of sustainable living!***

The Center is owned and operated by Christopher Borton and Linda Welsh. Originally from California, the partners scouted locations around the nation before settling on a plot of land in the mountains west of Whitehall to begin perfecting a sustainable lifestyle off the grid. Their goal was to create an educational center that demonstrated sustainable living where others could learn about gardening, straw bale and cordwood home construction, and solar and wind energy. Visit the [Center's website](#) to find out more or to participate in a sustainable living course. [Click here](#) to read the article about the Center published in the *Montana Standard*.



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## Judith Basin County RANGE SCHOOL Creating Choice and the Ability to Choose

May 22, 2014

Harley Hughes Jr. & Gordon Hughes



Join us for a day long hands on workshops with Greg Simonds and Jeff Goebel.

Greg Simonds has managed, owns and consulted ranches whose mission was to earn a profit managing livestock while improving the natural resources.

Jeff Goebel states, "future is created how one spends their time and money today". He is an expert of helping people achieve their resource and profitability goals. "Lets make it happen not let it happen.

We've all heard speakers share ideas on how to manage on your ranch. With many principles that are not new, and many of our ranches have been practicing for generations but, have you ever attended a talk and thought "I'd like to try that" or "that just might improve my place" only to go home to attend to the daily tasks and never implement the change?

**Pre-register by:  
May 16, 2014**

(includes snacks, drinks, lunch and dinner)

### 9:00 Registration

**9:30-12:30 Rotating Pastures, Changing Minds- Greg Simonds and Jeff Goebel.**

- \* How do you create a grazing plan when resources are limited and country is tough?
- \* How do you match Cattle to the environment?

**12:30-1:30 p.m.**

**Lunch: Thank You Sponsors !!**

**1:35 p.m. - Stepping Out of the Box, But Not into the \*\*\*\*- with Greg and Jeff**

- \* How do you measure changes to avoid trouble?
- \* How do you direct future operations of the ranch based on things you value?
- \* Lets Make It Happen, Not Let It Happen!

**3:00-5:00 "Pasture Walk"**

**5:00 p.m. Steak Dinner-**

**Thank You Sponsors!!**

Registration information from:

**JUDITH BASIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**121 Central Avenue  
STANFORD MT**

**Look for signs off of Highway  
87 for directions**



**NRCS**

Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service



**Range School presented by:**



**Basin State Bank**  
Stanford • Lewistown • Genesee  
[www.basinstatebank.com](http://www.basinstatebank.com)

USDA & MSU are an equal opportunity provider and employer, in cooperation with the USDA. Jeff Bader, Director, Extension Service, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 5917. NRCS provides reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities to participate in NRCS programs and activities. If you require special accommodations, please contact Teresa at 406-566-2311 ext. 107 by May 20, 2014.

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## NEWS FROM OUR PARTNERS:

### ***U.S. Department of Agriculture reverses stance on closing of Bridger Plant Materials Center:***

The Center wants to thank Senators Tester and Walsh, Congressman Daines for their support and efforts speaking against the closure of the Bridger Plant Materials Center. Joseph Scianna, the Center's Manager/Horticulturist, says, "We greatly appreciate the support you [Jeff Tiberi], Bobbie [Frank], the CDs in Montana and Wyoming, and our congressional delegates have provided these past months, and even years. We're relieved to know how much NRCS and USDA value what we do. We have lots of important work to accomplish, and are thankful we're going to get the chance to do it. Again, our thanks!"



### ***The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) releases enhanced version of "How's My Waterway," app:***

The [app and website](#) help users find information on the condition of thousands of lakes, rivers and streams across the United States using GPS technology or a user-entered zip code or city name. The new version of the site includes data on local drinking water sources, watersheds and efforts to protect waterways, as well as a [map-oriented version](#) of "How's My Waterway" designed for museum kiosks, displays and touch screens.

### ***U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development is making 2014 Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Funds available:***

The REAP program is designed to assist agricultural producers and rural small businesses reduce energy costs and energy consumption by providing Renewable Energy Systems (RES) and Energy Efficient Improvement (EEI) Grants and Guaranteed Loans. Grants are competitively awarded and can be up to 25 percent of total eligible project costs. Guaranteed Loans can be up to 75 percent of total eligible project cost.



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Eligible applicants include agricultural producers or rural small businesses. Grants can be used to purchase and install renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Eligible renewable Energy Systems include: wind; solar; renewable biomass (including anaerobic digester); small hydroelectric; ocean energy; and geothermal.

The application deadline for grants is July 3, 2014. The application deadline for guaranteed loans is July 31, 2014. For more information please contact one of the Montana Field Offices noted below:

Bozeman ~ [Craig Hildreth](#) (406-585-2548)

Billings ~ [Gloria Hawkins](#) (406-657-6297 ext. 124)

Great Falls ~ [Lea McGiboney](#) (406-727-7580 ext. 103)

Kalispell ~ [Lyle Coney](#) (406-756-2005 ext. 110)

Missoula ~ [Heather Handeland](#) (406-829-3395 ext. 106)

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

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## STATE AND LOCAL NEWS

### **Correction from the Editor:**

**~~Two~~ Three Montana projects receive funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA):** Apologies from the editor, it seems we missed one.

**Big Lake Wetland Restoration** ~ Restore two wetlands, totaling 74 acres, which are part of the Big Lake wetland complex, one of the largest wetlands in the relatively arid Northern Great Plains region. In part because of the scarcity of wetlands in the region, these wetlands provide important nesting and brood-rearing habitat for a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, and waterbirds, including northern pintail, mallard, lesser scaup, American avocet, and black-necked stilt. Restoration will involve replacing two rusted, leaking water control structures at Big Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which is owned and managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP). By replacing the structures, FWP will be able to manage water levels to ensure availability of breeding season habitat for wetland-associated birds and to enhance wetland quality through flooding or draw-downs, as needed. Without functional water control structures, the value of these wetlands to migratory birds will be reduced, especially in years with extreme weather events. NAWCA funding will be supplemented with funding from FWP's Migratory Bird Habitat Program to complete the project.

Visit the [NAWCA website](#) to find out more about grant opportunities. [Click here](#) to find out about the other grant recipients.



### ***Bakken fields hit the one billion mark in barrels of crude produced:***

Since drilling first began in Montana in 2000 and then in North Dakota about five years later, North Dakota has generated 852 million barrels of Bakken crude, and Montana has produced about 151 million barrels. Continental Resources Inc., one the oldest and biggest operators in the Bakken, has said that two-thirds of the production was in the past three years. And, development of the area is really just beginning. [Read More](#)

### ***Pacific Northwest Congressional Delegation urges President to make Columbia River Treaty a top priority in 2014:***

Montana's delegation, Senators Tester and Walsh and Representative Daines, all signed a letter sent to the President discussing the importance of the international treaty that governs flood control and hydropower production in the Columbia River Basin in the United States and Canada. Implemented in 1964 the treaty led to the construction of the Libby Dam. While there is no expiration date, the treaty can be canceled or changed beginning in 2024 with at least 10 year's notice – that means notice must happen in 2014. Agencies in both the U.S. and Canada have been reviewing the treaty for the past few years to try and identify ways to modernize the treaty. Recommendations have been forwarded to the U.S. Department of State, which will be the lead agency negotiating any treaty changes with Canada. [Read More](#)



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## WORLD CONSERVATION NEWS

### ***The Center for Advanced Solar Photophysics at the Los Alamos National Laboratory making strides toward development of windows that can double as solar panels:***

The process of turning windows into a solar panel uses quantum dots that harvest solar energy via large-area luminescent solar concentrators. There's also something about color that is way above my understanding. It will be some time before this concept will be marketed to the masses, but once they can be, it will be a less expensive alternative to roof-top solar panels. The truly adventuresome can [click here](#) to learn more about this process and try to understand the technology.



### ***NASA's solar energy concept that never was:*** Almost 50 years ago NASA envisioned a Solar Power Satellite fleet that would provide electricity to the world. The concept, the brain child of Peter Glaser, a Czech-born physicist and engineer, was first published in the *Science* journal in November 1968.

Simply stated, the project was to place satellites in equatorial geosynchronous Earth orbit (GEO) that would use solar cells to convert sunlight into electricity, convert the electricity into microwaves, and beam the microwaves at a receiving antenna (rectenna) on Earth. The rectenna would turn the microwaves back into electricity, and then wires would carry it to the electric utility grid. The problem with the concept was that the fleet of satellites would have to generate gigawatts of electricity to make it viable. The picture, from NASA's project concept drawings, shows what the sky would have looked like in 2015, which would have been about half way through the project. [Read](#)



[More](#)

### ***The next big thing on the horizon – airborne wind energy!***

The University of Delaware thinks airborne wind energy could be a beneficial addition to the existing mix of alternative energy sources. But, what exactly is airborne wind energy? Well, picture an airplane engine fixed to a stationary ground source, its propellers turning full bore, floating in the air like a kite. The University believes these types of mechanisms have a great potential to generate lots of electricity when they reach "wind speed maxima" which occurs within jet streams at certain altitudes. [Read more](#)



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# Calendar

May thru Sept 2014

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**May 12 ~** MACD Conference Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**May 11 ~** Mother's Day

**May 17 ~** Armed Forces Day

**May 26 ~** Memorial Day

**May 27 (Tuesday) ~** MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**June 3-4** MACD Spring Board Meeting in Helena

**July 4 ~** Independence Day

**July 14 ~** MACD Conference Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**July 28 ~** MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**August 11 ~** MACD Conference Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**August 25 ~** MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**September 1 ~** Labor Day

**September 8 ~** MACD Conference Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**September 9 ~** Grandparent's Day

**September 22 ~** MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**September 23 ~** Area VI Meeting, Hosted by Lewis & Clark CD in Helena, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**September 24 ~** Area IV Meeting, hosted by Carbon CD in Joliet, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**September 25 ~** Area II Meeting, hosted by Custer CD in Miles City, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**September 26 ~** Area I Meeting, hosted by Garfield CD in Jordan, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

**September 30 ~** Area III Meeting, hosted by Cascade CD in Great Falls, for more information contact Jan Fontaine (**443-5711**)

### *Are there places on our planet where nobody lives?*

Past newsletters have provided articles on how cities have grown over time or how people have spread across our planet. How about places where there are no people? Is there such a place? A new map created by [mapsbynik](http://mapsbynik) shows that there are still a lot of places in North America where there's "room to roam." Using a block, the smallest unit of measure according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the map's creator uses dark green to indicate all uninhabited blocks. To be clear, if there was only one person living in a block it was disqualified from being shaded. The statistics note that there are 4,871,270 blocks in the U.S. (that's about 1.5 million square miles of land, or 47 percent of the country) that do not have even one inhabitant. But wait; before you get the urge to give up the big city for the wide-open spaces, it would be a good idea to check out where those green blocks are. Some may not be very desirable, like



### *The Xerces Society offers help to Communities to create an effective mosquito management plan:* [Click here](#)

to download a copy of their publication and start taking steps to curtail those pesky pests!



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

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

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.

*The Montana Conservationist is made possible by a 223 Grant from DNRC*



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