

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

There is still time to sign up for training on Montana Wetland and Riparian Maps: This training is free of charge and those interested in attending may click on the links noted below to register. Please note that the dates for training sessions in Kalispell and Miles City have yet to be determined and will be shared with our readers as the information becomes available.

- [Helena](#): July 24, 10 am-12 pm, part of DNRC Floodplain Seminar; free and open to non-conference attendees
- [Bozeman](#): September 26, 9:30 am-12 pm
- [Kalispell](#): October 8, 9:30 am-12 pm, prior to MT AWRA Annual Meeting, free and open to non-conference attendees (registration TBA)
- [Miles City](#): Fall 2014 (registration TBA)

For more information about these training opportunities please contact [Levia Shoutis](#) (406-222-7600 x229). For more information about Montana's wetland program please contact [Lynda Saul](#) (406-444-6652).

The group is also working on hosting additional training sessions during the [Montana Association of Planners annual conference](#) in Hamilton on September 17 and one of the days during the Montana Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting at Fairmont Hot Springs November 18 through 21. Specific times will be published as they become available. These training sessions will only be open to those individuals registered for the conference and/or annual meeting.



MONTANA WETLAND COUNCIL

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) sets public meeting to discuss Montana's bison conservation and management plan. This two-day meeting will be held in Billings, July 14 and 15 at the Big Horn Resort located at 1801 Majestic Lane. The discussion is designed to review issues and possible alternatives that could be considered in an environmental impact statement for bison conservation and management. Discussion group members include conservation and agricultural representatives, state and federal agencies, county commissioners and state legislators; including members of the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission. ***The public comment segment is set for 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on July 14.*** For a full agenda visit "[Bison Discussion Group](#)" on FWP's website. [Read More](#)



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OF INTEREST TO CONSERVATION DISTRICTS:

President Obama signs the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA):

The legislation includes \$12.3 billion in funding for new U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) water infrastructure projects such as the Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water System and the Rocky Boy's / North Central Regional Water System projects in Montana. Other highlights of the WRRDA legislation include:

- ✓ Providing funding for rural communities to comply with federal regulations.
- ✓ Establishing hard deadlines on the time and cost of studies, and eliminating duplicative or unnecessary studies.
- ✓ Maximizing the ability of non-federal interests to contribute their own funds to move studies and projects forward.
- ✓ Expanding the ability of non-federal interests to contribute funds to expedite the evaluation and processing of permits.
- ✓ Establishing a Water Infrastructure Public Private Partnership Program and new options to expand the local role in project implementation.

WRRDA also includes the creation of a Water Infrastructure Finance Innovations Authority (WIFIA). WIFIA will make low-interest federal loans available for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater projects and provide a supplemental funding mechanism to state Revolving Fund (SRF) programs for the completion of projects with costs greater than \$20 million. WIFIA will borrow U.S. Treasury funds to provide low-interest loans, loan guarantees, or other credit support to local communities. [Read More](#)

Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee (ETIC)

Committee publishes guide to help public learn about Montana's energy issues:

[A Citizen's Guide to Montana Energy Law](#) provides an overview of laws related to energy generation, transmission, and consumption. This new guide, similar to the Electricity Law Handbook, incorporate changes in energy law enacted by the 2013 Legislature. The abbreviated summary of state laws is organized by type of energy resource and provides the regulation and taxation of those resources. Laws that provide incentives for the development of energy resources are also included. For more information about the publication or the Committee, please contact [Sonja Nowakowski](#) (406-444-3078) or visit the [ETIC website](#).

Next Committee meeting is Friday,

July 18: On the agenda for discussion is the affect federal carbon pollution rules may have on energy generation in Montana. In particular, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule requiring states to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the energy sector by about 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has until 2017 to develop a plan for Montana to meet the federal target. The meeting begins at 8:30 a.m. in Room 137 of the Capitol. The committee will also develop findings and recommendations related to its study of Montana's renewable portfolio standard. At the heart of the discussion is the draft report released in May. Visit [ETIC's website](#) for more information or contact [Sonja Nowakowski](#) (406-444-3078).

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Latest news in aquatic invasive species: ***Montana News***

Flathead Basin: [Click here](#) to see photos and find out the latest about the pilot project using dogs to sniff out hidden aquatic hitchhikers.

FWP Update: All watercraft inspection stations are operating with the exception of Culbertson, Glasgow Roving, and Swan Roving. Those stations should be up and running by early July.

Regional News and Events:

Wyoming: Inspection stations have decontaminated 78 watercraft and stopped 3 mussel-fouled boats so far this season. For information about Wyoming's program contact [Beth Bear](#).

Manitoba, Canada: [Click here](#) for more news on the treatment of invasive mussels using liquid potash in Lake Winnipeg.

Zequanox: No, not some new age movement, but a combination of approaches including prevention, new science and short-term fixes as needed to deal with invasive mussels. [Read More](#)

Research

Quantifying Ecological Niche Overlap Between Zebra Mussel And Quagga Mussel: [Click here](#) to access the abstract from the Wylie Online Library.

Forecasting the Vulnerability of Lakes to Aquatic Plant Invasions: [Click here](#) to access the abstract from the Weed Science Society of America journals.

Viability of Aquatic Plant Fragments Following Desiccation: [Click here](#) to access the abstract from the Weed Science Society of America journals.

U.S. Senator Dean Heller (NV) introduces legislation to add quagga mussels to the national list of invasive species covered under the Lacey Act:

Senator Dean Heller's bill is called the Protecting Lakes against Quaggas (PLAQ) Act. The [Lacey Act](#) was signed into law in 1900 by President McKinley. More than 100 years later it remains one of the nation's most important conservation statutes and a major enforcement tool for protecting wildlife. Administrative action listing quagga mussels as an invasive species would likely take several years but this legislation would help speed up the process significantly. Passage of the legislation would also allow for prevention and control measures to commence. [Read More](#)

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) cutthroat conservation project in the South Fork Flathead River Drainage is nearing completion:

Over the course of the project, FWP has systematically been removing non-native fish and replacing them with pure westslope cutthroat. The goal - to maintain the world class genetically pure westslope cutthroat fishery. Replacement of the non-native fish involves either chemical treatment or genetic swamping (heavy stocking of pure westslope cutthroat to dilute the nonnative genes). So far, 12 lakes have been successfully chemically treated and an additional 6 are being genetically swamped and may not require chemical treatment. Only three lakes remain on the original list of 21 that encompassed the project. For more information on this project visit [FWP Region One's website](#).



The deadline for submitting an application for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is Monday, July 14:

Applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has established a rigorous timeline for the application process so it's very important that applications be submitted by the deadline for projects to be considered for FY 2015 funds. [Click here](#) to view the Announcement of Program Funding for RCPP and full details on how to apply for funding. For more information on the program, including highlights, funding break-down, archived webinars, and more, visit [NACD's RCPP resource webpage](#).

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Open-topped pipes – the often over-looked danger to birds and wildlife:

Take a walk in an open field and you'll probably find a

pipe sticking out of the ground and note that the end is not covered. These types of pipes are commonly used for fence posts, in irrigation systems, as sign posts, survey markers, and vents on buildings. But they present a danger to cavity nesters that are drawn to tight spaces; only to find they are unable to exit once they've gotten in there. Other critters explore the pipes thinking they might have food or to get in out of the rain. And, there's always the wayward animal that simply fell in by accident. [Click here](#) to read the technical note prepared by the United States Agriculture Service's Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) about ways to remove the danger these pipes present to birds and animals.

Interested in what the Montana Stockgrowers have to say – then check out their newsletter:

"Stockgrowers Update!" is available online with all new content. New this month, are photos, a recap of mid-year meetings in Miles City, and an announcement about a raffle for a Massey Ferguson Tractor Lease! Look for the pulsing phrases as you scroll the through the pages and click to see the interactive content. [Click here](#) to access the latest edition. Reminders from the Association:



- ✓ [Applications are being accepted for the 2014 Montana Environmental Stewardship award!](#)
- ✓ [Listings and Advertising for the 2015 Montana Cattle Directory are due!](#)
- ✓ [Visit the News tab at mtbeef.org for daily blog updates and Calendar of Events!](#)

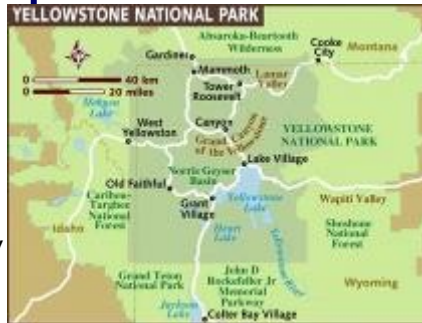
Conservation groups allege U.S. Forest Service (USFS) jumped the gun with logging operation near West Yellowstone:

Under the 2014 Farm Bill, timber sales up to 3,000 acres are allowed without an environmental analysis or public review if the

area is designated as unhealthy due to disease or insect infestation. The suit alleges that the exclusion for the Rendezvous Trails area came before the USFS made a formal designation. This was one of

several projects approved by the USFS on May 20 as part of Montana's forest remediation efforts.

[Read More](#)



News on the suspension of drilling for natural gas and oil near Glacier National Park:

In 2013 Solenex filed a lawsuit over the suspension of a federal oil and gas lease granted in 1982 to owner Sidney Longwell of Baton Rouge, Louisiana for drilling in the Badger-Two Medicine near Hall Creek, which is approximately two miles south of the park. The lawsuit alleges the Department of the Interior has unreasonably delayed action on the lease and seeks to lift the suspension halting the drilling for oil and gas.

Several conservation groups sought to intervene as defendants in the suit to represent the "conservation of the natural and/or cultural environment." District court judge Richard Leon denied the groups' request to intervene as defendants stating that the federal agencies are already representing those interests. There are many other issues surrounding this suit and it probably isn't going anywhere for a while! [Read](#)



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NEWS FROM OUR PARTNERS:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NACD)



NACD's Urban and Community Resource Policy Group (RPG) is seeking input

for the next round of webinars slated to begin in October 2014

The group would like stakeholders to weigh in on the urban and community conservation topics/issues and/or speakers that would benefit them the most. Or, maybe even offer to give a presentation. Please send in a brief paragraph describing ideas or proposals to [Deb Bogar](#) by **August 1**. For those that missed any past webinars, they are available on [NACD's website](#). The site also provides links to PDFs of all presentations and recordings of the webinars.

The North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) and NACD are soliciting nominees for the 2014 Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Conservation Award:

This award recognizes an individual or family in the farm and ranch community who has contributed significantly to pollinator species protection and conservation on working and wild lands. Award recipients will be recognized during an evening reception that opens the 14th Annual North American Pollinator Protection Campaign Conference at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Whitten Patio on Tuesday, October 21, 2014, from 6-8 p.m. in Washington D.C., or in their hometown if they are unable to attend. Completed [nomination forms](#) may be sent to [Vicki Wojcik](#) via email or fax (**415-362-3070**) by **Friday, July 11**. Awardees will be notified no later than Friday, August 1 to allow for travel arrangements. Please include "Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Conservation Award" in the subject line if emailing the nomination.

NACD expresses support of the Wild-fire Disaster Funding Act.

The Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions sent a letter to all members of Congress that included support from NACD and 20 other organizations. This new legislation would fund a portion of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Department of the Interior (DOI) wildfire suppression costs through a budget cap adjustment

much like that used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). To view the Senate version of the bill, [click here](#).

To view the House version, [click here](#).



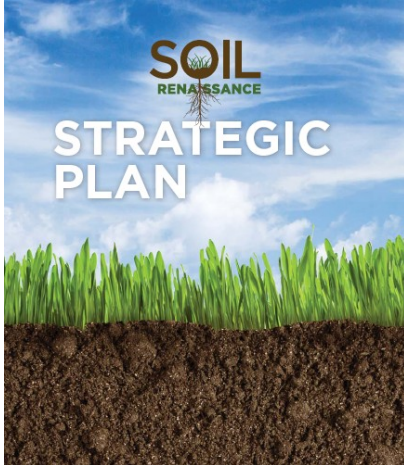
NACD's concurrent resolution supporting conservation gains necessary sponsors to move forward:

The resolution expresses the sense of Congress regarding support for voluntary, incentive-based, private land conservation implemented through cooperation with local soil and water conservation districts. NACD is asking stakeholders or interested parties to ask their legislators to support voluntary, incentive-based natural resources conservation by cosponsoring the resolution. [Click here](#) for the official language and list of cosponsors. Those interested in downloading a PDF version of the resolution to share with others or distribute to Congressional staffers should [click here](#). Those willing to sign on as cosponsors should contact the U.S. Congressional sponsors:

- ✓ Senator Pryor: through [Kelvin Stroud](#) (**202-224-2353**)
- ✓ Representative Hudson: through [Curtis Rhyne](#) (**202-225-3715**)

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Soil Renaissance Strategic Plan released during the World Congress of Conservation Agriculture in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: The [strategic plan](#) is a



framework to advance soil health and was developed with input from a variety of informed leaders, including NACD. The strategic plan outlines goals and strategies in four key areas: measurement, economics, research and education. Full details of the plan are available on the [Farm Foundation](#)

[website](#). The [Soil Renaissance website](#) will go live in early in July and have updates on the organization's work, as well as collaborator projects. Anyone interested in contributing expertise or time to the work teams should contact Soil Health Project Coordinator [Brook Gaskamp](#) (580-223-5810).

Budget cuts and a congressional ban on the sale of excess horses for slaughter leaves Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holding facilities near capacity: The main means BLM has of disposing of excess horses and burros is through qualifying adoptions and sales. Unfortunately, the market for these animals has been declining. Without adoptions or sales, and with the current congressional prohibition on the humane destruction of healthy excess animals, holding facilities are BLM's



only options. BLM estimates show more than 49,000 wild horses and burros roaming free in 10 western states; 45 percent more than the range can sustain. Current holding facilities have more than 48,000 and have a total capacity of about 52,000. The current situation has BLM officials seeking changes in the roundup policy to protect rangelands. [Read More](#)

Tis' the Season – fire season that is:

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is asking the public to be "Fire Smart" and do their part to prevent wildland fires. Make

sure to carry a shovel, bucket, fire extinguisher and have water available when enjoying Montana's outdoors.



The goal is to reduce human-caused wildfires, which typically fall into eight categories.

- ✓ campfires
- ✓ smoking
- ✓ debris burning
- ✓ arson
- ✓ equipment
- ✓ railroad
- ✓ children
- ✓ miscellaneous - fireworks, explosives, ammunition, gas/oil

When necessary, DNRC will place restrictions on open burning in response to unusually high fire danger or burning conditions. Check with DNRC before heading out for that camping trip. Make sure you know if campfires are allowed in the area. For more information on what you can do to help prevent wildland fires visit [DNRC's website](#) and listen to Smokey the Bear – "Only you can prevent forest fires!"

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

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CONSERVATION AROUND THE NATION



Winter of 2013 having a positive effect on the Great Lakes:

An article in a previous edition of [TMC](#) reported on the ice covering the Great Lakes as a result of the bitter cold winter. Last winter ice covered more area and was thicker than it had been in many, many years. For the past 15 years or so, the water level in the lakes has been dropping. But this year, the ice kept the water cool and slowed down evaporation keeping more water in the lakes. Add to that runoff from heavy snow fall and a rainy spring, and you have higher than normal water levels going into July. Lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior are at least a foot higher than they were a year ago, and are expected to rise three more inches over the next month. Lake Ontario and Lake Erie are seven to nine inches higher than a year ago. Those earning a living from the lakes are hoping higher water levels also mean higher economic benefits. [Read More](#)

3-year drought affecting much of the Nation:

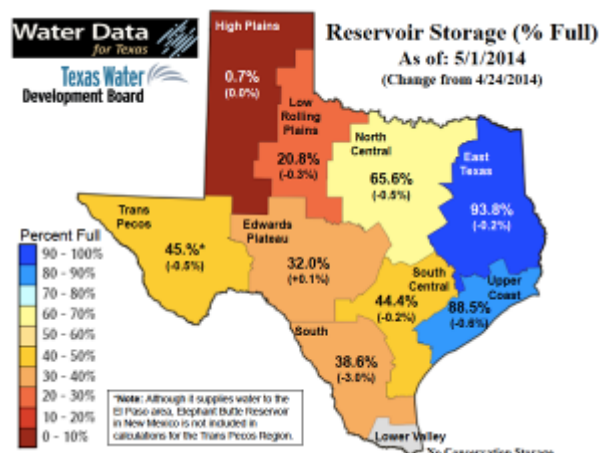
According to reports, more than 30 percent of the country experienced at least moderate drought during the month of June. Seven states reported worse drought conditions that more than half the land area was in severe drought. Severe drought conditions lead to crop loss, frequent water shortages and mandatory water-use restrictions. Now for some perspective, in six of those states, more than 30 percent of the state is experiencing extreme drought. Two of those states, California and Oklahoma, suffered exceptional drought in 25 and 30 percent of the state, respectively. Under exceptional drought conditions crop and pasture loss is widespread,

and water shortages can lead to water emergencies. [Click here](#) to read about the states with the highest percentages of drought, from severe to exceptional. [Click here](#) to access a video showing the impact this long drought is having on the U.S. food supply.



Drought stricken Texas is taking up the charge to find ways to use and conserve underground water:

State lawmakers are taking on the controversial issue of identifying ways and means of conserving underground water. Any issue that touches on property rights and local control over water is touchy and even more so when the state's drought crisis is making everyone a bit twitchy. Landowners and water marketers are seeking uniform standards for groundwater regulation that may include the creation of a central state agency to ensure easier and quicker access to water and permits. Conservationists have concerns about the depletion of a resource from overuse. [Read More](#)



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Calendar

July–September 2014

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July 7 ~ [Montana Youth Range Camp](#), for more information contact [Heidi Crum](#) (444-6619)

July 8 ~ Farm Tour and Workshop with Dr. Clain Jones, for more information contact [Jeff Schahczenski](#) (494-8636)

July 8 ~ Pasture Walk - David Sturman, for more information contact [Ben Montgomery](#) (406-676-2841 x11)

July 13 thru 18 ~ [Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp](#)

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)

New map helps pre-dict warmest days for areas around the nation:

The maps are the creation of the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's](#) (NOAA) [National Climate Data Center](#) (NCDC). The "Warmest Day of the Year" map uses 1981 through 2010 climate normals and 30-year averages of climatological variables including the average high temperature for every day to predict what days will be the warmest, on average. For Montana, it looks like it will be somewhere between the end of July and the first of August.

[Read More](#)



August is Montana Conservation Month. What are you doing to celebrate? Visit www.montanaconservationmonth.org for more information and to discover tools to help make participating easier.



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

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.

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