

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

**News from the Montana Association Of
Conservation Districts (MACD)**

Education and Outreach Mini-Grants

The Soil and Water Conservations Districts of Montana is seeking application for mini-grants of up to \$2,000 to fund local education and outreach efforts that address nonpoint source pollution and water quality issues in areas with an accepted Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) at the close of the call and proposed activities need to support WRP implementation. Department of Environmental Quality accepted WRPs can be found on the Department's [website](#).

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Applications Due: Thursday, September 25, 2014



Funding is available for local groups working on an education and outreach project that aim to increase awareness of local nonpoint source pollution issues. Examples of previously funded projects include workshops, conferences, training, and student field studies.

For more information and a Call for Grant Applications complete with example budget, please visit [DEQ's 319 Mini Grant webpage](#).

For More Information:



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MACD is accepting applicants for its 2015 Scholarship program

Two \$500 Scholarships are available for Montana students; one for high school seniors and one for students *attending* an accredited post-secondary institution in Montana. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, a Montana resident, a minimum 3.0 grade point average, and be enrolled or plan to enroll in a course of study that involves exploration of natural resource issues. Students may receive a scholarship both as a high school senior and once during their post-secondary career. The deadline for submitting an application is February 18, 2015. [Click here](#) to access the Scholarship Form.

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OF INTEREST TO CONSERVATION DISTRICTS:

Montana Saltcedar Team (MST) forms to take on the flowering, invasive riparian tree:

MST has 2 main purposes: first, to act as the coordinating entity seeking funding for collective saltcedar control efforts in MT; and second, to serve as the communication portal for all the partners to facilitate regional treatment of the invasive tree. MST is comprised of private landowners, conservation district supervisors, county weed coordinators and board members, the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council, and representatives from Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, Musselshell Watershed Coalition, the Lower Missouri Coordinated Resource Management Area, researchers from U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, Montana State University Extension, Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the US Army Corps of Engineers. For information on MST meeting locations, dates and times contact [Rachel Frost](#) (406-454-0056) or visit the [Missouri River Conservation Districts Council website](#).



Clark Fork Coalition hosting an interactive workshop on beaver management in headwaters:

The workshop is Wednesday, October 15 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the LaQuinta Inn & Suites in Butte. Space is limited so please register early by emailing [Ellie Rial](#). Presenters include Lorne Fitch, a retired Alberta Fish and Wildlife Biologist and the Provincial Riparian Specialist for Cows and Fish; Vanna Boccadori, a Wildlife Biologist for Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and Manager of the Mt. Haggin Wildlife Management Area; Jeff Burrell, Northern Rockies Program Coordinator for the Wildlife Conservation Society; Dan Tyers, Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Habitat Coordinator and member of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team of the Northern Rockies Science Center; and Amy Chadwick, Biologist for Great West Engineering.



Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) releases draft 2015 State Water Plan for public review:

The official comment period will begin on September 24 and end October 26. Meetings to take public comments are scheduled for:

- ⇒ October 14 – Roundup – Methodist Church – 7:00 – 9:00
- ⇒ October 15 – Havre – Great Northern Inn– 7:00 – 9:00
- ⇒ October 16 – Glasgow – Cottonwood Inn– 7:00 – 9:00

The meeting format will begin with an open house where the public can learn about and discuss the elements of the draft plan, followed by a short agency presentation, and then an opportunity for public parties to comment on any portion of the plan. More information will be available on [DNRC's website](#) on September 24. An Executive Summary and complete copy of the draft plan are currently available [online](#).

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National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is making Leadership and Advocacy Training Tool available to conservation districts: NACD's new training tool can help district staff become effective leaders and advocate for conservation at the local, state and national level. The training can also assist district officials to learn more about their roles as advocates. The tool is an interactive webcast that explores leadership expectations, political engagement, shaping public opinion, gaining positive media coverage and developing and expanding partnerships. NACD is encouraging districts to use this training at their state, area, or other local meetings. The training is being offered as an on-demand webcast that allows a moderator to facilitate group discussion based on the video segments and training exercises. Contact [Bethany Shively](#) to learn more about how this training could meet your needs.

U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) releases its report regarding U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) management of the Missouri River reservoirs during the 2011 flood and subsequent drought:

The [final report](#) stated that USACE made appropriate release decisions at that time. Experts acknowledged the primary cause of the flood was ex-



treme rain in the eastern part of the state during late spring. They also agreed that existing forecasting tools were not able to accurately predict the extreme rainstorms more than a week in advance. One expert went on to say that USACE would have needed several months to release enough water from the reservoirs for them to accept the amount of runoff in 2011. The report did recommend that new forecasting techniques be examined.

Study finds correlation between the start of a sage grouse clutch and the number of offspring:



The ten-year collaborative study was conducted by the University of Maine and the University of Nevada, Reno. What was discovered is that the earlier in the season the clutch is started, the more eggs will be laid. On average, researchers

found that early season clutches resulted in twice as many eggs as in clutches started much later in the season. [Read More](#)

Now is the time to investigate the use of high tunnels:

These [seasonal green houses](#) offer producers flexibility in their operations to extend growing times or to plant early. High tunnels provide protection from wildlife and the elements; efficiency in the use of soil, water, and air; and a big return on the investment. Not sure if this is for you? Visit the [2014 EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative](#) website to see if this program can help you extend the growing season for your high value crop.



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Wildlife-friendly fences: The trick is to keep livestock inside the fence and allow deer, elk, pronghorn, etc. to migrate

across the property. There is assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) to help replace existing wire fencing into a more wildlife friendly fence with funding from the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#). Those interested in pursuing funding to help replace fencing can get started by visiting their local [USDA Service Center](#) or NRCS's [Get Started](#) website. [Click here](#) to read about a successful project completed on a Wyoming ranch shown in the picture.

The role trees play for pollinators: Trees are at their best when complementing other pollinator-friendly

plant types, such as milkweed, bee balm, lupine, aster, and wild mint. Private landowners need to know how to accommodate insect needs in order to have an effective pollinator plan on their property. A diverse mixture of trees, willow, maple and red bud trees, for instance, will produce a lot of pollen and early in the year to help bee colonies. [Read More](#)

Algae turns Lake Erie green and produces toxins that fouled tap water for 400,000 people in the Toledo area:

With no federal standards on safe levels for drinking algae-tainted water and no guidelines for treating or testing it either, water quality engineers are seeking alternate methods to clean the water. What happened in Toledo is another reason U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) needs to create national standards for microcystin. Some states have set their own standards but most rely on the measurement suggested by the World Health Organization. A national standard, however, could be years away. This picture, courtesy of NASA, shows the Lake Erie algae bloom from space.



Latest News in Aquatic Invasive Species

Montana News

Missouri River Conservation District Council develops AIS signage: Signs were for for the River's Edge Trail system and other boat launches in Great Falls. If there are other places where signs may be useful please contact [Rachel Frost](#).

Regional/National News

Manitoba Canada: Liquid potash treatments in Lake Winnipeg to control zebra mussels were unsuccessful in stopping an invasion. [Read more](#)

Idaho: Over 47,775 watercraft were inspected during the 2014 season. Of those, more than 590 high risk watercraft were hot washed and 13 vessels intercepted with mussels.

Nevada: An infestation of quagga mussels was found in the South Fork State Reservoir in northern Nevada. The reservoir is 90 miles from Idaho and could be a major threat to the region. [Read more](#)

New York State: Governor Cuomo signed legislation prohibiting the launch of watercraft in New York State without individual boaters taking reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. [Read More](#)

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FROM OUR PARTNERS

Natural Resources Conservation Service invests \$6.2 Million for agricultural and wetland easements in Montana:

This funding, from the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) will help Montana landowners protect and restore key farmlands, grasslands and wetlands throughout the state. ACEP was created to protect critical wetlands and keep lands in farming and ranching.

[Read More](#)



Aerial photo of hundreds of small wetlands
Photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has grant funds available through its Small Grants Program for projects that involve long-term protection, restoration and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated uplands habitats to benefit wetlands-associated migratory birds:

The Small Grants Program is a competitive, matching grants program that supports public-private partnerships carrying out projects in the U.S. that further the goals of the [North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#). Funding requests should not exceed more than \$75,000 and priority will be given to grantees or partners new to the Act Grants Program. Those interested in submitting a grant application should contact their area's [Joint Venture Coordinator](#) for assistance. **The deadline for submitting an application is November 7, 2014.** Visit the [Agency's website](#) for full details about this opportunity.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) solidifies commitment to improve America's drinking water:

In a recent announcement, EPA discussed the \$8 million being used to create two national centers for research and innovation for small to medium sized drinking water systems that make up the majority of systems in the nation. Recipients of the funding are the University of Colorado Boulder's Design of Risk Reducing, Innovative Implementable Small System Knowledge (DeRISK) Center, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Water Innovation Network for Sustainable Small Systems (WINSSS) Center. The two centers will develop and test advanced low cost methods to reduce, control, and eliminate groups of water contaminants that present challenges to communities. [Click here](#) to for more information on the grant recipients and centers. [Click here](#) for more information on the water technology innovation cluster.

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) extending public comment period on Clean Power Plan proposed rule:

The new deadline for submitting comments to EPA is **December 1, 2014**. The proposed rule puts forth a commonsense plan to cut carbon pollution from power plants and builds on efforts already being taken by states, cities and businesses across the nation. The rule also reflects the diversity between states noting there are different sources and opportunities depending on the location. Visit [EPA's website](#) to find out more about the Clean Power Plan proposal or to submit a comment.



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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE:

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to host informational agricultural producer meetings in communities across Montana:

The meetings are intended to inform producers of the new programs authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. Meetings will focus on the

Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC), and the Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO). MSU Extension will explain the new online Farm Bill Decision Tool that will be available this fall to assist producers

in understanding their options for their operations. [Click here](#) for more information about the meeting and when they will be held.



Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers of important closing dates to secure assistance under 2014 Farm Bill programs:

Fall Seeded Annual Crops And Perennial Forage And Grazing Crops: Beginning with the 2015 Crop Year, the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) has a new sales closing date of September 30, 2014. This program provides financial assistance to eligible producers affected by a natural disaster. The program covers crops for which federal crop insurance is not available. [Read More](#)

Disaster-related losses: Producers who have suffered eligible disaster-related losses have until September 30, 2014 to secure assistance. After September 30, congressionally mandated payment reductions take place for producers. Producers seeking LFP support that have scheduled appointments with their local FSA office before October 1, even if the appointment will occur after October 1, will not see reductions in the

amount of disaster relief they receive. [Click here](#) to place a name on the Livestock Forage Disaster Program list online. To learn more about USDA disaster relief programs, check out the [2014 Farm Bill fact sheet](#), the [LFP program fact sheet](#), contact the local FSA office, or the [USDA's Farm Bill webpage](#).

USDA awards \$15.7 million in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIGs) to 47 organizations:

The funding is intended to help develop and demonstrate cutting-edge ideas to accelerate innovation in private lands conservation. Grantees are to work with producers and forestland owners to develop and demonstrate the new technologies and approaches. Montana State University was awarded \$50,000 for a project to demonstrate and quantify the influences of incentive based rest rotation grazing on food insects of sage-grouse, rangeland pollinators and vectors of west Nile virus. [Click here](#) to read more about Montana's grant as well as awards to the other 46 grantees. **Congratulations to Montana State University!**

USDA invests over \$518 million in rural electric cooperatives: This investment is geared toward improving the delivery of electric power to communities in 15 states. More than \$23 million of this funding is targeted for smart grid improvements that will allow for better manage of and increased efficiencies in our nation's electric system. Montana's Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc. will receive \$16.166 million to build or improve 144 miles of line, and make other system improvements, including approximately \$3.403 million for smart grid projects.



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Calendar

Sept & Nov 2014

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

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

September 23 ~ Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium, Bighorn Resort in Billings, for more information contact [Jennifer Cole](#)

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

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

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

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

October 1 ~ Area V Meeting, hosted by Lake CD in Polson, for more information contact (443-5711)

October 13 ~ Columbus Day

October 14 (Tuesday) ~ MACD Conference Call, for more information contact (443-5711)

October 27 ~ MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact (443-5711)

October 31 ~ Halloween

November 2 ~ Daylight Saving Time Ends

November ~ Election Day

November 10 ~ MACD Conference Call, for more information contact (443-5711)

November 11 ~ Veterans Day

November 18 thru 21 ~ MACD Convention, Butte, for more information contact (443-5711)

November 24 ~ MACD Executive Committee Call, for more information contact (443-5711)

About 73 million Americans are living in drought affected areas: The [National Water and Climate Center](#) of the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service publishes a [weekly snowpack and drought monitor report](#) the

focuses on precipitation, temperature, and snowpack conditions in the western U.S. and also provides a national drought summary. A new [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) is also available online that produces statistics on the number of people living in the nation's drought-affected areas.



Sweden—the recycling capital of the world: About 99 of the country's trash is incinerated in thirty-two waste-to-energy plants. The plants then generate electricity.

The people of Sweden don't produce less garbage, they just handle it better with only one per cent ending up in landfills. Everyone has their part to play, including sorting personal trash before it gets taken to the plants. [Read More](#)

MIT explores method to desalinate salt water cheaply: Water makes up about 71% of the Earth's surface and about 96.5% of that is salt water. MIT researchers are mixing sunlight and graphite to try to turn salt water into safe drinking water. To try and reduce the energy needed to separate the salt, an MIT engineer suggested concentrating solar energy at "hot spots." [Read More](#)



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.

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

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