

The Montana Conservationist

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News from Montana's Conservation Community



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Montana Association
of
Conservation Districts



Building Rain Gardens to Protect Flathead Basin Waters

Emilie Henry

BSWC Member: City of Kalispell and the Flathead Basin Commission

As development in northwest Montana rapidly expands, the state’s pristine waters are facing increasing threats. One such threat to water quality is a rise in stormwater pollution.

Stormwater is any water that flows across the landscape. As the water flows, it picks up pollutants from the landscape, such as bacteria from pet waste, oil from leaky cars, and excess herbicides from landscaping. Here in Montana, most stormwater discharges into local waterbodies without any treatment, meaning any pollutants picked up in the stormwater are also entering our waterbodies!

To preempt this growing threat of stormwater pollution, the Flathead Conservation District and the City of Kalispell partnered to create the Flathead Rain Garden Initiative (FRGI). Launched in 2020, FRGI seeks to educate residents of Flathead County about stormwater pollution and provide an opportunity to help mitigate it by building rain gardens.

Rain gardens are landscaped depressions, or bowl-shaped features, that capture stormwater runoff, filter out pollutants, and allow it to infiltrate into the ground. FRGI provides landowners in Flathead County with the knowledge, resources, and support to build rain gardens on their property.



Top: Flathead Rain Garden Initiative yard sign in a completed rain garden. (Photo Credit: Emilie Henry)

Bottom: Mikaela Richardson, Flathead Rain Garden Initiative Member, planting a rain garden. (Photo Credit: Emilie Henry)

To do this, FRGI hosts workshops, conducts site visits, and provides financial assistance through a grant-funded homeowner incentive program. In its first year alone, FRGI engaged over 41 residents and built 8 rain gardens that manage an estimated 100,000 gallons of stormwater runoff annually!



Left: : Shannon Freix, Flathead Rain Garden Initiative participant, posing by her newly completed rain garden. (Photo Credit: Casey Lewis)

If you're interested in learning more about rain gardens, please visit our website for more information and to access our resources! If you're a resident of Flathead County, contact us to learn more about what financial assistance may be available.

[Rain Garden Story Map](#)

Shonny Nordlund and 25 years of Envirothon

Letter: Shonny Nordlund



A huge *Thank You* and fond farewell to Shonny Nordlund, the Fergus Conservation Administrator who coordinated the Montana Envirothon for 25 years!

<https://fb.watch/6h7tNPbmlh/>

Shonny's Final Envirothon Report

I want thank conservation districts for supporting the Envirothon over these 26+ years. I believe that the first team 1994/1995 was a mixture of students from different schools and were a pilot team for the first year to learn and see what it was all about. I started helping in 1996, and then was asked to be the coordinator. This program has taken me to many different states and provinces throughout the years. I served as Chairman of the Canon Envirothon for 6 years. We hosted the Big Event, the Canon Envirothon in 2013, which many say has been the best event ever, it was held at MSU, we took the students to Yellowstone Park and they attended a rodeo at West Yellowstone. We had testing up Paradise Valley, and many students had never seen such large mountains.

This is my last year as coordinator for the Montana Envirothon, Cascade Conservation District will take over the coordinator role. A big thank you to them, and to all who help put on this tremendous event. We are one of the strongest programs in the US and Canada. Since 1996 we have had over 3,200 students compete in the program and have had up to 38 teams competing in one year. This year was the 25th year of the Montana Envirothon. We had 21 teams registered, with 20 competing in 2021.

Again, thank you for your support and all the help I have received from the Administrators and Supervisors these past years. I could not have done it without everyone's help. Also to DNRC, NRCS, FSA, MT FWP, Forest Service and all the volunteers who have helped in the past. I hope that I have not missed any agency, or others, but please accept my apologies if I have.

Happy Trails,
Shonny Nordlund

Envirothon Winners

Overall

1. Hamilton Team-1
\$500 Prize
2. Powell Co High School FFA
3. Hamilton Team-2

Test Score Winner

Powell Co. HS FFA Team-8
\$300.00 Prize

Top Oral Presentation team

Corvallis FFA Team-3

Station winners

Wildlife: Powell Co. HS FFA Team-8

Soils: Hamilton Team-1

Range: Joliet FFA Team-10

Forestry: Powell Co. HS FFA Team-8

Aquatics: Hamilton Team-1

Top FFA Winners:

1. Powell Co. HS FFA Team-8
2. Corvallis FFA Team-3
3. Fairfield FFA Team-12

Top-Left: Shonny Nordlund takes a photo with the highest test scoring team during the 2021 Envirothon.

Vermicomposting at Gallatin Conservation District

Gallatin Conservation District

Gallatin Conservation District in Manhattan, MT has a shiny, brand new educational tool- well ok, maybe it's not so shiny. The district, with help from volunteers and funding from a Montana Food Economy Initiative grant (hosted by the Alternative Energy Resources Organization), has constructed a vermicomposting bin for use in its Education and Outreach Center- a space built in 2014 that hosts an outdoor classroom, demonstrative pollinator gardens, native plants, and raised beds. Vermicomposting is a type of composting that uses worms to break down organic waste. The worms, which were provided by Charter Ranch, will help breakdown food and yard waste from Gallatin CD's Education and Outreach center garden. Once the worms are more established there may also be an opportunity for community members to donate food waste to feed the bin. As the worms break down the waste, they produce nutrient rich "castings." The castings can then be scraped out of the bin and added to the center's raised vegetable beds to enhance plant growth.

The community was involved in both building and setting up the bin, and in April, the district successfully hosted its first "Vermicomposting 101" workshop with 20 community members in attendance. The district hopes to continue using the bin to teach about vermicomposting for youth summer education events, and let kids take the lead on painting the sides of the bin to show what is really happening on the inside.

GCD has even made an educational video explaining how the vermicomposting bin works.

[Vermicomposting Video](#)



Top: Vermicomposting 2021 Event with Gallatin CD



Bottom: Vermicomposting Bin



Welcome Cora Knowles! New MACD-NRCS Range Conservationist in Malta, MT

As a range conservationist, Cora works hand in hand with the NRCS in the Malta field office with the soil conservationists. She grew up all over the United States and received a Bachelors in Rangeland Ecology and Watershed Management with minors in Soil Science and Agroecology from the University of Wyoming in the Spring of 2021. She loves to read, quilt, and swing dance as well as explore Montana with her dog Conway.



Welcome Molly Masters! New Coordinator for Missouri River Conservation District Council

Molly Masters, new Coordinator for the Missouri River Conservation District Council. Molly grew up in Big Horn County and earned both a bachelors and a masters degrees from the MSU College of Agriculture. Molly previously spent several years working as an MSU Extension Agent.

You can reach Molly at mrcdc@macdnet.org



Welcome Sandi LaVoy! New Administrator for Sweetgrass CD

Sandi LaVoy, new Administrator for Sweet Grass Conservation District. Sandi was born and raised here in Sweet Grass County. She and her husband have three grown sons and ranch just outside of Big Timber.

You can reach Sandi at sweetgrasscd@macdnet.org



Welcome Rebecca Barney! New Administrator for Madison CD

Rebecca most recently worked with Montana State University as an administrator, but was looking for a more relaxed pace at part-time, and wanted to work a bit closer to home in the Madison Valley.

You can reach Rebecca at rebecca@madisoncd.org



2021 MACD Spring Board Meeting

In Early June, the MACD Board, Staff, and partners met in Helena for MACD’s annual spring board meeting. The event took place over three days and consisted of leadership training excercises, presentations by the Outreach Work Group, reports from partners, and much more. For those that missed the event, the minutes, agenda, recordings and more are available on the [MACD website](#).

If we missed someone, please let us know and we will make sure to feature them in the next TMC!

In The News

Yellowstone Club May Use Recycled Wastewater For Snow Creation

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality in March issued a draft permit for the Yellowstone Club’s proposed project. A permit would let the club direct more than 25 million gallons of highly treated and disinfected wastewater toward snowmaking operations at the base of Eglise Mountain.

[Read the Article](#)

DNRC Art Contest “Keep Montana Green” Finalists Announced

The DNRC art contest provides educators with educational information for teaching students about wildfire safety, prevention and conservation. The students then create posters to help the public be aware of the dangers of uncontrolled wildland fires and to be more careful with fire and fire-causing hazards in forests, campgrounds, rangelands and in everyday life. The artwork will be featured in a special coloring book to commemorate Keep Montana Green’s 75th anniversary.

[Learn More](#)

Upcoming Events

Funding Opportunities

June

June 28/29 Winnett, MT	Nicole Masters North-Central Montana Soil Health Tour
July 10 Malta, MT	World-renown soil health expert and agroecologist Nicole Masters will facilitate five in-person events this summer in Winnett, Malta, Glasgow and Circle. Each location will have unique, in-depth, site-specific topics focused and targeted key take-aways, but all locations will cover an introduction to soil health principles. You may choose to attend one or as many of these events as you can. Learn More
July 12 Glasgow, MT	
July 14 Circle, MT	
June 28-30	406 Grazing Academy
	Location Ennis, MT
	This 3-day, hands-on grazing workshop will include the opportunity for each ranch to create or update a ranch specific grazing plan with the assistance of leading experts. Learn More
June 29	Rural Resilience Meetings - Reducing costs by increasing resilience in Winnett, MT
	World renowned agroecologist Nicole Masters of New Zealand-based Integrity Soils will lead four similar day-long workshops across North-Central Montana on soil biology and carbon levels, nutrient cycling, grazing management, and the economic benefits of soil health. Event Details

July

July 18-23	Summer Camp: Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp Greenough, MT July 18-23
	Campers attending the Montana Extension Service Natural Resources Youth Camp spend one week at the Lubrecht State Forest east of Missoula learning about forestry, water, soils, geology, range, wildlife, recreation and having a lot of fun. The camp is open to all youth entering grades 10-12. Camp fee includes meals, supplies, and lodging. Sponsorship may be available through your local conservation district. More Information
July 24-27	National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Summer Meeting in Chicago
	The 2021 Summer Conservation Forum and Tour will be held July 24-27 in Chicago, Illinois. Meeting Information

July 15
first deadline

ARPA - HB632 Competitive Grants

A Competitive Grant Program that provides grants up to \$25 million on a competitive basis, match required. Conservation Districts are eligible for the Competitive Grants. During the session, MACD worked to change the definition of local government to specifically include CDs.

The [application guidelines](#) provide more detail on eligibility. The first deadline is July 15th, however, there will be a later deadline for a second round of funding.

Contact Autumn Coleman (Autumn.Coleman@mt.gov) (406) 444-6687 for more information.

July 16

Urban Cooperative Agreements for Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Proposals Due

The cooperative agreements support projects that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans and they are part of USDA's broader efforts to support urban agriculture.

[Learn More](#)

July 19

National Conservation Innovation Grants Classic Proposals

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is investing up to \$15 million to support the development of new tools, approaches, practices and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands through the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program.

[Learn More](#)

July 30

Urban Ag and Innovation Production

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [announced](#) the availability of up to \$4 million for grants to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects. USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production is accepting proposals for planning and innovation projects, and these grants are part of USDA's broader efforts to support urban agriculture.

USDA will accept applications on [Grants.gov](#)

August

Aug 7	Pacific Northwest Economic Region, Invasive Species Working Group, Big Sky, MT
	More Information
Aug 15-19	PNWER Annual Summit
	More Information

Aug 3

Water Projects Program Grant | Aug 3

The Sweet Grass CD is calling for the 5th round of applications for their Water Projects Program Grant.

[Learn More](#) | [Application](#)

Aug 12

DNRC Planning Grants Available

DNRC Reclamation and Development Grants Program (RDGP) is now accepting applications for RDGP Planning Grants to fund planning and assessment for natural resource projects. Up to \$50,000 is available per planning project to any city, county, Tribe, conservation district or other local government subdivision in Montana.

[RDG Planning Grant Application](#)

Submit your applications now at <https://funding.mt.gov>

Contact: [Heidi Anderson Folnagy](#)

Looking Forward

Sept 14 8:30am	Riparian Grazing Workshop
	Featuring Dr. Clayton Marlow and Allen McNeal (McNeal Resources), the day will begin with a classroom style presentation at the Augusta Youth Center, lunch from the Buckhorn Bar, and then a field portion on the Converse Ranch. Resource professionals are welcome to be there to talk to landowners. Event

Sept 27 - Oct 5 Statewide	Area Meetings
	Please go to the MACD Area Meetings page for the most up-to-date information.
Oct 20-21 Red Lodge	Statewide Employees Training (SET)
	The dates for the SWAT training will be October 20-21st in Red Lodge!
	Please contact Chris Evans with questions.

Nov 16-19 Great Falls	2021 MACD Annual Convention
	Please go to the MACD Convention Website for the most up-to-date information https://convention.macdnet.org/ We will be posting a draft agenda in the coming weeks!

Rolling
through 2023

HB632 Minimum Allocation Grants

A Minimum Allocation Grant Program that makes funding available to all Montana communities on a non-competitive basis. Grant amount determined by the amount of gas tax the community receives annually (according to MCA 15-70-101). Match is required.

Districts can access the [Minimum Allocation Grant Program](#) by working through towns, cities, and counties.

Contact Autumn Coleman (Autumn.Coleman@mt.gov) (406) 444-6687

Ongoing

Joint Funding by MACD Education Committee and the Montana Watershed Coordination Council

If your CD is looking for funding assistance for trainings or other professional development opportunities, there are two good options for you! The Montana Watershed Coordination Council Watershed Fund has funding available for professional development opportunities that allow our watershed and conservation partners to acquire skills, knowledge, and resources relevant to watershed and natural resource health in their communities. The Lewis & Clark CD also has a grant from DNRC directed by the Education Committee to be used for a variety of things, one of which is training for CD employees and supervisors. Up to \$200 per person per CD can be applied for by filling out a simple request form. Funding is on a reimbursement basis.

MACD Communications Update

Eric Rannestad

MACD Communications Specialist

MACD has been busy on the communications front! Early this month, MACD held its *Spring Board Meeting* where the Outreach Work Group presented it's work to date and their plans to help Montana's conservation districts with their local outreach efforts. With the annual report wrapped up, I've started to shift some effort toward revamping the MACD website and private membership portal. These new products are not yet accessible to districts, but they will be soon.

It was wonderful to meet some of you in-person a couple weeks ago in Helena and I look forward to the next few events at the end of the summer.

As always, please reach out for communications help, requests, or just to chat!

Wishing you well,

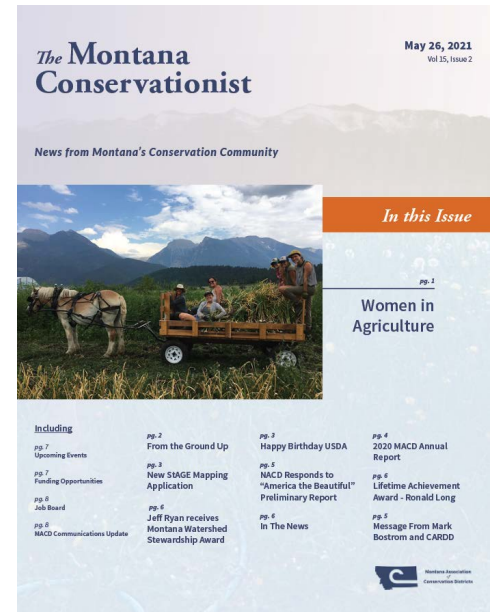
Eric Rannestad

MACD Communications Specialist

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860-391-9518

TMC Submissions



To submit your proposal, please email
MACD Communications Specialist, Eric
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Montana Association of Conservation Districts



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