

# UPPER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED BASIN

## PARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*General Membership Meeting  
July 6, 2006 at 7:00 PM  
St. Johns Church, Emigrant*

### **-MINUTES-**

#### **Those Present: (21)**

Alan Redfield	Leanne Roulson, Garcia & Associates
Allison Levy, ADC Services	Martha Sites
Bert Otis, UYWB Vice Chair	Martin Davis
Bob DePaso	Marty Malone, Park County Extension Agent
Bruce Malcolm	Nicole McClain, UYWB Coordinator
Douglas Case	Ron Archuleta, Livingston District Ranger
Duane Neal	Sean Murphy
Edwin Johnston	Sharon Neal
Keith Neal	Sunni Knapton, Confluence Consulting
Lance Vines	Svend Andersen
	Tom Arrandale

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER by Vice Chairman, Bert Otis**

#### **2. VISITOR INTRODUCTIONS.**

- ◆ Allison Levy, ADC/Oasis Environmental
- ◆ Leanne Roulson, Garcia & Associates
- ◆ Ron Archuleta, Livingston District Ranger
- ◆ Sunni Knapton, Confluence Consulting

#### **3. APPROVAL OF May 2006 MINUTES**

#### **4. UPDATES**

##### **• Coordinator's Report:**

- ◆ Executive Committee Meeting – June 9<sup>th</sup>.
  - Hard copy minutes available upon request or to those present at the meeting due to the growing number of folks on the hard copy mailing list (100+)
  - Cottonwood Reestablishment Project. Working on DNRC Task Order, selected Confluence Consulting to assist with the project.
- ◆ Sustainability Fair – Saturday, July 8<sup>th</sup>. Park Conservation District and the UYWB will be at the Sustainability Fair this Saturday with the DNRC Rolling River's Stream Trailer. Rotary Park, Livingston. 9 AM – 4 PM.
- ◆ Park County Fair – August 9 - 12. Park Conservation District and the UYWB will be at the fair with the DNRC Rolling River's Stream Trailer.
- ◆ MACD – CD Academy: July 17 & 18<sup>th</sup>. Amy and Nicole will attend this training in Helena sponsored by the Montana Association of Conservation Districts.
- ◆ Capacity Building Grant – approximately 120 hours left of work for NRCS & the Park Conservation District. To be completed by the end of September.
- ◆ Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant. Cost-share funds are still available; please tell your friends and neighbors. Have them contact the Coordinator for more information.

##### **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

##### **• Endangered Species/Wildlife Committee**

- ◆ Bert Otis. Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Bison Quarantine Feasibility Study Phase II/III. Comment: A position statement needs to be unanimous among landowners regarding retiring of grazing permits. Rights to run livestock, even on the subdivisions. Problem is number of bison coming out of the park which will affect our way of life. What happens when they show up on your land? You have the right to shoot, but instead you should call the Department of Livestock if this happens.

##### **• Irrigation Committee**

- ◆ Update by Marty Malone. HB-223: Irrigation Efficiency project. Marty's unit is working really nice, before it rained, the lower level on the meter was dropping even with the pivot going, and then when it rained you could see the levels on the meter come up.

##### **• Range Committee**

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- ◆ Update by Alvin Pierce. N/A.
- **Stream Stabilization Committee**
  - ◆ Update by Roger Nelson. N/A.
- **Weed Committee Update**
  - ◆ Update by Bert Otis. Paradise Valley Weed Fair 2006/Montana Watercourse – Know Your Watershed tour held on Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Approximately 100 people attended and the weed fair and tour went well, many chemical applicators attended, and the DNRC Rolling Rivers Stream Trailer was a big hit with everyone.

### AGENCY UPDATES

- ◆ Scott Opitz, Fish Wildlife & Parks update re: Locke Creek Fish Passage: currently working on design plans, Debris Removal on Yellowstone River -- \$1,000: still looking for ideas/suggestions.

### PROJECT UPDATES

- ◆ A brief PowerPoint by Sunni Knapton, Confluence Consulting regarding the UYWB 2006 Yellowstone River Cottonwood Restoration project.
  - ◆ Presentation Overview
  - ◆ History
  - ◆ Status
  - ◆ Value
  - ◆ Reproduction
  - ◆ Project Goals
  - ◆ Approaches
  - ◆ Timeline
- History
  - Cottonwood (*Populus* species) populations historically dominated floodplains throughout U.S.
  - Used for low grade lumber, pulp, traditional medicines/ceremonies, range cover.
  - Population decreases correspond with flood control, land production, and noxious species invasion.
- Status
  - Present day populations in decline along regulated systems.
  - Populations along unregulated systems prone to other influences.
  - Recent management shifts now attempting to increase recruitment, protect existing populations.
  - Growing interest of general public on value of existing and future populations.
- Value
  - Wildlife Habitat
  - Bank Stabilization
  - Water Temperature
  - Buffer Strip
  - Instream Habitat
  - Stock Cover
- Reproduction
  - Sexual
    - Directly dependent on flooding
    - Seeds numerous, short lived
    - Require bare soil, receding water table
  - Asexual
    - Root or shoot growth
    - Can correspond with disturbance
- Project Goals
  - Promote natural recruitment by identifying and protecting areas of inundation during seed dispersal.
  - Supplement existing relict populations with appropriate plantings harvested from local source.
  - Increase general public and land manager awareness of cottonwood values.
  - Monitor project success.
- Approaches
  - Identify natural recruitment sites and protect as browse/graze exclosures.
  - Use team of volunteers to harvest cottonwood cuttings/poles to dormant plant at sites.
  - Supplement site maintenance with potential irrigation, weed control.

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- Create informational signs and handouts to explain project and values.
- Monitor successes and tour exclosures and planting sites as compared to untreated areas.
- Timeline
  - Summer 2006
    - Site identification
    - Informational flyers/signs
    - Construction of exclosures for recruitment sites
  - Spring/Summer 2007
    - Harvest and plant dormant cuttings/poles
    - Begin monitoring of recruitment sites
  - Fall 2007/Spring 2008
    - Tour sites, continue monitoring

"To me an ancient cottonwood is the greatest of trees because in his youth he shaded the buffalo and wore a halo of pigeons, and I like a young cottonwood because he may some day become ancient."  
Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

◆ **QUESTIONS? Please contact the Coordinator, or:**

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Q: When do we do cuttings? A: In March or April. Not necessary to harvest in fall and store. Best to cut and then plant, key is to keep wet and possibly use rooting hormone.

Q: When good time to plant? A: Depends on where going in, if irrigated or not, but sometime during late spring depending on the water table.

Q: What are we doing about Russian Olive? A: Not sure, but can look into it.

### 5. OPEN ITEMS

### 6. PROJECT IDEAS

- Input from the group on resource needs.

#### **Program: Mr. Ron Archuleta, Livingston District Ranger, Gallatin National Forest**

Tonight we welcome Mr. Ron Archuleta, Livingston District Ranger. For those who don't already know Ron, he earned a degree in wildlife biology from Colorado State University, worked as a wildlife biologist on national forests and grasslands in Colorado, South Dakota, and Oregon, and served as Acting District Ranger in Utah before coming to Livingston in May of 2003. Ron will be providing us with updates on the following activities of the Livingston Ranger District:

- Gallatin National Forest Expanded Food Storage Order (FSO). Right now, all of Gardiner and W. Yellowstone and part of Livingston, Big Timber and Bozeman are under an existing food storage order. The goal of the FSO is human safety, i.e., to reduce the potential for adverse human wildlife interactions, e.g., keep from habituating bears to human food. The existing Order will be expanded to include all the Gallatin National Forest (GNF), including the Crazy Mountains and Bridger Mountains. The FSO will be signed in 2007, and will be in effect March 1 to December 1 annually. People will be required to "acceptably store their food, garbage and other attractants (e.g., toothpaste) e.g., like hanging it or keeping it in their car. Non compliance with the FSO can result in a fine. Many people, including Outfitters are already acceptably storing their food, garbage and other attractants. Usually the casual hiker or camper is unaware of the FSO and is at risk of non-compliance. What is the authority of the Forest Service to do and Order. Will an Environment Assessment (EA) be completed? No EA is required. The FS has the authority to implement Orders for public safety, and the primary goal of the FSO is humans safety. Their haven't been any people killed recently by bears. However, there was a recent incident up Suce Creek where a grizzly bear pinned down three hikers; fortunately,

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no one was injured. The Grizzly Bear is occupying more suitable habitat, i.e., expanding into areas where they have not been seen since the 1900's.

Q: Does this apply to Forest Service land only? A: Yes. Permittees using NFS lands will be required to comply with the Order. If you are with (attending or eating) your food it is ok, but when you walk away it must be acceptably stored.

Q: How will this be regulated? A: Information & Education is the best way to get compliance. An I&E working group is already formed and they will help get the info out to the public. The first year will not be heavy handed; will focus on education. The working group is working with local stores in Bozeman, Big Timber and Livingston to sell certified food storage containers. The FS has spent over \$100K over the past 3 years in infrastructure (bear proof boxes, food poles in back country sites, posters, bulletin boards, portals) over the past 3 years. A big education focus will be during hunting season. History shows this is when there is the biggest food storage problems. FS receives a lot of phone calls about bear encounters – and there are a few areas where bears are habituated to food (e.g., Pine Creek Campground). The point is the FS wants to prevent animals from being habituated to human foods, garbage and other attractants. This is also about other wildlife, deer – skunk – etc., in order to prevent habituation of wildlife.

Q: Can the UYWB help get the word out? A: Yes.

Q: Are these the new metal boxes at Snow bank Campground? A: Yes, the Forest Service installed food storage boxes to make it easier for people to comply with the FSO.

- Fire Suppression Preparedness for this summer. Limited air tankers last summer. This year 16 large air tankers on contract this summer, none assigned to this area. They are a national resource – depending on where the fires are and when. Base is at West Yellowstone and smoke jumpers there. The GNF has two fire zones: East Zone: Gardiner, Big Timber, and Livingston. Initial attack crew of 4 people in Gardiner, Big Timber and Livingston. Two fuels crews located in Big Timber (8) and Livingston (3) people. 25 people total on this zone, 90% of where we want to be in terms of preparedness. Zone resources are moved around depending on where there are needed. Type 2 helicopter repel crew to get people in the back country and 2 fixed wing plans that are on call, spotter aerial plans when lightning strikes. 2 on call helicopter that carry approximately 50-100 gallons of water. If we have a need for suppression resources, the FS coordinates through the FS dispatch office in Bozeman and they work hard to get them here fast as they can. Severity dollars – we get more \$ to get more people here if we are in high fire danger. Single engine air tankers - (Billings, Miles City) we have good access to them if we have a big fire. Agreements with the state and county, forest service and BLM for collaborative suppression efforts if needed.

Q: The large air tankers, do they go all over the west? A: Yes, depends on where they are needed.

Q: Wildland fire use, when the conditions are right we are using fires as a tool in Wilderness Areas. Fire plays an important ecological role and fuels reductions around homes is important.

Q: Regarding Spruce Budworm? Is there a suppression program? A: NO. Tree density reduction is the best tool we have. A good example is the Bitterroot Valley project.

Q: Is anything being done to thin or log areas that have been killed by Spruce Budworm? A: Limited efforts specifically targeted at spruce budworm. The primary focus is fuels reduction projects. Many of these projects also reduce tree stand densities, improving resistance to insects and disease. The Main Boulder is a good example of a Forest Service fuels reduction project.

Statement: New fire management officer in the Livingston office. Ashley Sites will be starting August 7<sup>th</sup>. Ashley has wildlife fire use experience and suppression, he is coming here out of Nez Perce, and his mother is here tonight.

- Grizzly Bear Delisting. Forest Service has completed and EIS to amend existing Forest Plans in the GYA. The EIS to include habitat standards for grizzly bears. Can access the EIA document on the FS website. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) determined that the grizzly population has grown, is stable, and has exceeded thresholds in the recovery plan. The delisting is contingent upon FS amending their plans and the NPS amending their plans. Now FWS needs to sign their rule delisting the grizzly bear. Comment period for delisting ended in March. FS, NPS has done their part, then FWS will do their part and the Grizzly will be delisted and identified as a Sensitive Species. Once FS revises their plan will then be a Species of Concern. Key thing to know is recovery area is now being

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called a primary conservation area (PCA) (ole Recovery area) – most standards and guidelines will apply to the PCA.

Q: What does this mean to livestock grazing on public lands? A: PCA comes from Gardiner, Anderson Ridge, and Rock Creek basin is as far down as it comes. Can't increase the number of allotments within the PCA beyond what was happening in 1998 when thresholds were reached for Grizzly Bear recovery.

Q: Is this US or State FWS regulation? A: FWS. The State of Montana already has their Grizzly Bear Management Plan in place.

Q: How many grizzly bears are there? A: 500 – 600 grizzly bears, up from 200 in the 70's when they were listed. Bears are occupying more suitable habitat since the 1900s indicating their population is stable and expanding. Comment: In 1974 there were only about 30 lactating females in 1974. A: This will be an important benchmark to keep an eye on.

Q: Is the FWS or FS asking folks to relinquish those permits? A: No, the permittee must be willing. However if grizzly bear mortality on cattle is occurring, the FWS, and State will cooperate with the permittee. If there is an allotment where grizzly bear/livestock conflicts are occurring, then one option may be to offer another allotment in a different area to the permittee

- Travel Plan. Decision in August or later. Approximately 8,000 comments plus postcard comments. Trying to address those comments in the final FEIS and Record of Decision. The DEIS alternative 7 will; likely be modified slightly in the final decision. Comment: The postcard sent out wasn't signed by Becky, why didn't she sign on an important issue like that? A: Will pass along that feedback.
- Secure Rural Schools Proposal act of 2000. Payments to the states. 25% of revenues go back to counties for Schools. Will be running out, trying to extend that funding. Administration is proposing to sell off isolated parcels of public lands to generate \$180,000,000 in revenue that would be distributed out to counties over 5 years time. 2 parcels GNF, one on the Crazies (40 acres), then Big Creek drainage (60 acres). Don't know what will happen with that – Senator Burns and Baucus they said "over my dead body." Those two pieces of property are under consideration and a rule will come out determining how it will happen.
  - Q: What about trade, can these properties be traded? A: They are not for trade, but for sale. Other properties yes, but not these. Any land exchange must be in the best interest of the public. If legislation goes through and these parcels won't be available for exchange.
- Livingston Ranger District Program of Work for this summer/fall, including weeds program.
- Smith Creek. Hazardous fuels reduction, public meetings in Wilsall.
- Recreation Facility Master Planning. Administrative Master Planning. Asked to decrease facilities by 20%. Accessing what have, the condition, make determination of what properties they can let go. Questions that are being asked such as do you need Mill Creek Cabin, do you need Snow bank campground, and do you need Porcupine campground? Do you need, keep them, what type of work do they need? These cabins are a great public resource, but some are in pretty bad shape. Keep some of the fees that are paid to work on the maintenance. Anything with 49 miles within each other, is there justification for consolidation? Should other facilities be consolidated?
- Reviewing Upper Shields allotment, decision on that by September. Doesn't seem to be controversial, expecting no problems.
- Working on changing temporary guide permits to permanent 10 year permits. Will be converted soon. Temporary were only supposed to be 1 year, but have been going for 5 years, so they need to be done.
- Forest Service trying to replace old road signs on US Hwy 89. Also, working on the last phase on trail reconstruction on Elbow Lake, reconstruction on Elephant/Baldy Basin trail, reroute of trail near Crazy Mountain ranch in Crazies, and up Mill Creek working of 84 miles of trails cleaning up.
- Q: What is the FS doing about weeds? A: Have about \$80,000 this year to do weed work, including \$20,000 from GYCC in grant funds to target about 432 acres including 81 acres in the wilderness. Focus the rest of time and money on roads and trailheads in the wilderness, a main vector of weeds. Have a workforce, 1 weed contract \$12,000 – 4 seasonal employees, plus volunteers, including some from Montana Wilderness Association.
  - Q: East Dam Creek is a big problem – mechanical pulling and spraying of knapweed. Why not go in and make an aerial drop? A: Would never get that through. Want to work with the Wed Committee

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here to submit for a GYCC grant with the watershed group to get grant funds to collaborate on a project.

Q: Why does every Forest and district have to write their own EIS/EA? A: More site-specific. Gallatin NF has recently completed a Weed EIS.

Q: \$200 an acre to treat 432 acres? A: How does that compare to private? A: About \$26.00 per acre. How much is administrative? 20% approximately.

Q: What about down by the river near Yankee Jim? A: Not sure about the Gardiner Ranger district.

Q: Does the FS use biological control? A: Yes, Lynn Burton from Forest Service has coordinated these efforts.

In closing, if there is anything else folks would be interested in having more information about, please contact us and we will schedule another update. Also, the Travel Plan is available on internet, and CD's available at the office.

**8. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS.** Bert thanked everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules to come to tonight's meeting, especially those who travel quite a ways from home to make it.

### 9. ADJOURN

*Thank you for coming!  
See you in August at the Park County Fair!  
Next Meeting: September 7, 2006*

Key to Commonly Used Acronyms:

DEQ – Department of Environmental Quality	MWCC – Montana Watershed Coordination Council
DNRC – Department of Natural Resources & Conservation	MBMG – Montana Bureau of Mines & Geology
FS – Forest Service	NRCS – Natural Resource Conservation Services
FWP – Fish Wildlife & Parks	Park CD – Park Conservation District
FWS – US Fish, Wildlife Service	TMDL – Total Maximum Daily Load (DEQ)
LEP – Local Empowerment Program (MACD)	UYWB – Upper Yellowstone Watershed Basin
MACD – Montana Association of Conservation Districts	WPA – Watershed Planning & Assistance Grant (DNRC)

Equipment List: (Available to members on loan)

- ◆ Trailer mounted weed sprayer (2)
- ◆ ElectroNet fencing – (9) 35" x 164'
- ◆ 10 Watt Solar Panel
- ◆ IntelliShock 42B battery energizer & 12v 44 amp battery