Free Flows

A Quarterly Publication



Summer 2017 In This Issue

Dinner Invitation Big Hole River Day Educational Activities Mother's Day Caddis Legislative Updates

Upcoming Events

BHRF booth and raffle sales at Anderson & Platt Fly Shop in Dillon - June 17

BHRF booth and raffle sales at Keegs Memorial Volleyball Tournament -McQueen Athletic Club in Butte - June 24

Annual Dinner at Wise River Club - July 15, RSVP by July 1

Big Hole River Day -Wise River - July 15 www.bhrf.org/Events The Big Hole River Foundation's mission is to conserve, enhance and protect the free-flowing character of the Big Hole River, its unique culture, fish and wildlife.

Dear Friends of the Foundation

You are cordially invited to celebrate our 29th Anniversary at our Annual Fundraising Dinner on Saturday, July 15th at the Wise River Club in Wise River, MT.

The evening will begin at 5 PM with social hour and live music followed by the Wise River Club's famous Prime Rib dinner.

The limited number of tickets are \$30 each. Please RSVP by July 1, 2017.

Your support of our mission is deeply appreciated.

Big Hole River Day is an all-day event with pancake breakfast, vendors and artists, fly casting instruction, casting competition, kid's events, brew fest, live music and more.

Come early.

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Operations Manager Corky Logan bhrf@bhrf.org 1.406.560.7089

MailPO Box 3894
Butte, MT 59702-3894

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President's Message

In the last several years we have worked to establish the Foundation as the go-to organization for scientific information concerning the Big Hole River. We are about to take another big step in that process.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a regulatory term in the U.S. Clean Water Act which typically identifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

'Impaired waters' under the Clean Water Act are considered too polluted or otherwise degraded to meet water quality standards set by a state. Montana began collecting TMDL data on the Big Hole in 2004 and several years later listed the River as impaired. In the next month or so we will initiate a water quality monitoring program to update the state's TMDL data. The data will then be used to identify pollutants and to pinpoint their sources which will help us focus our remediation efforts and to 'conserve, enhance and protect' the river, per our mission. Our Executive Director, Brittany, is the moving force behind the monitoring effort. Your support has made the effort possible.

The Foundation is not the only organization at work in the Big Hole valley which often leads to confusion. The Big Hole Watershed Committee is a consensus-based organization dedicated to conservation of the Big Hole River and its watershed. It is committed to (i) involving all interests that are willing to seek practical solutions that benefit all interests and, (ii) promoting a common understanding among individuals and groups with diverse viewpoints.

At first blush it may seem that the two groups have similar purposes, but in fact the two are very different. As you know, the Foundation's mission is to "conserve, enhance and protect the free-flowing character of the Big Hole River, its unique culture, fish and wildlife." Accordingly, the Foundation acts to protect the river, without regard to whether a consensus may support the Foundation's actions.

We will continue to use your donations wisely to further those specific purposes. Thank you for your continued support, and as always, please let us know what you like about what we're doing, and what you think would improve our efforts to further our mission.

Tom

Executive Director's Message

It's spring in the Big Hole and much has happened at the Foundation and in the Valley since our last newsletter. A warm snap in early March caused a rapid ice break up and ice jam on the river, which caused roadway and property flooding around Wise River. In early May, another warm snap, along with heavy precipitation, led to high-water levels and the National Weather Service issued a flood watch for the lower Big Hole River. Even with these brief warm ups, an above-average winter snowpack, a relatively cool spring, and a recent snow event in the Valley has resulted in a favorable hydrologic forecast for the Big Hole Valley in the upcoming months. This is paramount to the health of the River's ecosystem, water availability for the Valley's ranchers and farmers, and summer commerce for outfitters and guides. However, this positive outlook is still dependent upon summer precipitation levels and community members continuing their important collaboration to conserve water and wise use of the Big Hole's resources.

Recently, the Montana legislature wrapped up its 65th session, making positive strides towards water conservation, combating aquatic invasive species, providing economic opportunities for ranchers and farmers, and funding vital programs in the Big Hole. I was thrilled that state lawmakers worked together on pragmatic and common-sense legislation to protect the River, its diverse economies, and its natural resources. I discuss in detail these developments in the "Review of the 65th Montana Legislative Session" section of our newsletter.

The Foundation welcomed a new board member this spring: Wise River proprietor, Tom Davis. I am excited for Tom to lend his expertise as a leader, entrepreneur, and community member to the Foundation. Over the next year, the Foundation will continue adding members to the board, thereby, expanding the Foundation's capacity, programs, and impact - all to better conserve, protect, and enhance the free-flowing character of the Big Hole River, its unique culture, fisheries, and wildlife.

We recently held Kid's Day on the Big Hole in Melrose, Montana. Over 80 area youth ages 7-13 attended the day, learned about the Big Hole's ecology, along with aspects of boating, and fly-fishing. Watching the next generation of community leaders, scientists, and environmental stewards being inspired was as fun as it was motivating. I look forward to our future generations embracing their roles and taking their place as caretakers of the Big Hole River watershed as we embrace the next challenges and changes the Valley will face.

As the Valley relishes in our lengthening sunny days and looks forward to summer, so do we! We are diligently planning for Big Hole River Day on July 15, which will be in Wise River. We are excited for the bands, brew fest, casting competition, vendors, gourmet dinner, boat raffle and auction planned for the day. This important event is the Foundation's largest fundraiser of the year and is paramount to funding our programs.

And as we all hope for a summer forecast that includes ample precipitation and a plethora of beautiful days to fish, camp, and play, the Foundation will be busy at work protecting the river's riparian areas with our fencing and restoration projects, monitoring the health of the Big Hole River, launching our fishing smartphone app, supporting native species restoration, continuing our education and outreach events and identifying novel and vital ways to conserve this incredible river for generations to come. As always, we look forward to involving our supporters, donors, and members in the conservation of this iconic and exceptional place.

Until next time, enjoy your summer!

Brittany

Chank You

We are grateful to the following members and donors who have renewed or made recent contributions and gifts in support of our mission as of May 30, 2017

Every effort has been made to maintain accuracy in our donor lists. If we have made any errors, please call 406-560-7089 or email bhrf@bhrf.org.

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Welcome to the Board - Tom Davis



Tom came to America from Scotland in 1963 and worked in Klamath Falls Oregon as a baker. Never one to miss out on an opportunity during "The British Music Invasion" he spent the next seven years as the lead singer for a rock and roll band touring the Northwest and being the opening act for some major bands.

Settling down in Portland he accepted a position with Reidel Environmental Cleanup Services where his interest in safety allowed him to earn degrees and certification in the safety arena. He is a member in good standing of The

American Society of Safety Engineers.

Tom has worked as Director of Safety for a number of corporations including Sulzer Pumps of Winterthur Switzerland, Johns Manville Roofing, and finished his career with Triangle Petroleum Corporation of Denver Colorado.

He and his wife Lynda currently own The Wise River Club in Wise River, Montana where he is in constant contact with visitors from both near and far who have come to enjoy the fishing and scenic wonders of the Big Hole Valley.

The Big Hole River Foundation launches its new website!

This year, the Foundation did a bit of spring cleaning and designed a new, fresh website! Our new website includes many of the same great aspects of the previous site, including details on our programs, links to our publications and staff and board member bios.

In addition, our site now includes more details about our events, projects, and programs, along with more visuals and easier navigation.

You can still find our secure website at www.bhrf.org and make sure to check back over the next few months, as we continue to add new and informational pages, including a merchandise store, links to our partners and sponsors, updated news stories and information on the Big Hole River and its fisheries.



2017 Rocky Mountain Skiff Raffle



Thanks to Hyde Drift Boats, we have a beautiful red, white and blue Rocky Mountain Skiff for our 2017 raffle.

Tickets are are \$20 each or 6 for \$100 and are available in area shops and by phone or mail.

Sorry but we cannot sell raffle tickets online.

Package includes, boat, seats, braces, anchor system, oars and trailer.

Ticket Outlets

Butte: StoneFly Fly Shop, Mahoney's Bar, Quarry Brewing Co., BHRF

Divide: Great Divide Outfitters

Melrose: Sunrise Fly Shop, Hitchin Post Restaurant, Sportsman Motel & RV

Wise River: Wise River Club

Dillon: Anderson & Platt, Frontier Anglers, Merc Fly Shop

Big Hole River Foundation Drift Boat Raffle Ticket Order Form		
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Educationa



al Activities

Even with a rain storm, Kid's Day was a success!

An afternoon thunderstorm may have cut Kid's Day on the Big Hole a bit short this year, but the day was still fun and educational for over 80 area youth. On Saturday, May 6th kids aged 7-13 gathered to learn about the ecology of the Big Hole River, fly fishing and boating safety. Some families even traveled from as far as Whitefish and Helena so their children could attend!

This year, we teamed up with Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, the Big Hole Lodge, Clark Fork Watershed Education Program, Wal-Mart of Butte, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, area guides and outfitters, and Mile High Motors of Butte to offer fly-tying and fly-casting lessons, aquatic macroinvertebrate and fish identification classes, a boating safety course, and even a float down the river! The event took place on Meriwether Ranch in Melrose, Montana and the weather was beautiful – for most of the day.

A microburst thunderstorm caused us to cut Kid's Day short and we were unable to hand out prizes to the kids who attended. However, parents, bring your kids to Big Hole River Day in this year's yellow Kid's Day t-shirt and we'll give out prizes! Big Hole River Day is on Saturday July, 15th at the Wise River Club in Wise River, Montana. See you there!

Divide School releases schoolroom-raised trout into Gallatin Valley fishing pond

This past year, Divide School participated in Trout in the Classroom, a hands-on program teaching children about river ecology, fisheries and raising fish. In November of 2016, 99 rainbow trout eggs were provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ennis National Fish Hatchery to Judy Boyle's classroom in the Divide School. From November until May, Ms. Boyle's students raised the trout while learning about their life history, fish husbandry and the role of rainbow trout in the Big Hole's world-renowned fishery. Out of 99 eggs, 64 rainbow trout were successfully hatched and raised, a great survival rate! In addition to raising the trout, Ms. Boyle also teaches her students about aquatic macroinvertebrates and water quality in the Big Hole River.

On Friday, May 19th, Ms. Boyle and her students released their trout fingerlings into the fishing pond behind the Gallatin Valley Mall in Bozeman, Montana. We look forward to partnering with Ms. Boyle and the Divide School in the next school year to continue teaching students about aquatic science, fisheries, and the Big Hole River!

Review of the 65th Montana Legislative Session

At the end of April, Montana's 65th legislative session closed, passing several bills that affect the Big Hole River, our ranching and agricultural communities, and recreationists. Montana's legislature meets for 90 legislative days every other year, and these sessions are typically a whirlwind of activity that can have major impact on Montanans and our natural resources.

Below is a summary of the laws passed, awaiting action, and vetoed this session that may impact the Big Hole River Valley.

Bills adopted as laws

Montana Senate Bill 363 and House Bill 622

One of the most pressing topics for Montana's waters is controlling the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). Spurred by last fall's announcement of an invasive mussel in Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs, SB 363 and HB 622 revise existing AIS laws, generate funds to control the spread of AIS (including watercraft check and decontamination stations), and establish councils, commissions, and programs to combat the spread of AIS in Montana. To fund the Montana Mussel Response taskforce (a Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks program; MTFWP), an Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Pass must now be purchased, along with the annual fishing and combination licenses, by residents for \$2 and non-residents for \$15. In addition, hydroelectric power plants and utilities will be assessed an Invasive Species Fee, each year. This law, including the Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Pass requirement, went into effect on Friday, May 19, 2017.



Quagga mussels on a boat propeller. Aquatic invasive species can clog water-intake structures, such as irrigation pipes. Photo credit: National Park Service

As with other waterbodies in Montana, the Big Hole River's ecosystem could be permanently and irrevocably damaged by the introduction of an AIS, with effects cascading through food webs, contributing to algal blooms, and causing fish kills. In addition, invasive mussels can clog irrigation and other water-intake structures, causing millions of dollars in damage. Laws, protocols, and funds to prevent the spread of AIS from other Montana waterbodies are paramount to the protection and health of the Big Hole and its fisheries.

Montana House Bill 342

This agritourism bill provides much-needed legal protection for Montana's ranchers and farmers and can add additional revenue streams into famer's pockets. The bill adds agritourism as a recreational activity for which participants accept the risk and legal liability, providing security to those who host field trips, tourists at guest or "dude" ranches, recreational activities, or farm-to-table meals at their farms or ranches. Advocacy groups tout agritourism as an option for farmers and ranchers to diversify their operations, as rural residents look for new opportunities to engage tourists and generate income.

As the Big Hole Watershed's economy is predominantly agriculturebased, protecting farmers and ranchers from undue litigation and adding avenues to supplement income is in the best interest of the Valley. A Beaverslide hay stacker at work in the Big Hole River Valley. Montana farmers now have additional legal protections for agritourism activities on their ranches. Photo credit: National Park Service



Montana House Bill 424

This bill recognizes source watersheds, or river headwaters, as a water resource; thereby, making source watersheds eligible for state renewable resource grants and loans, which are also eligible to receive matching funds from private loan sources. Montana's renewable resource grant and loan program furthers the conservation and beneficial use of water resources for the economic and additional benefits of Montana's citizens." In addition, the bill recognizes that source watersheds provide both drinking and irrigation water and that as a significant portion of Montana's current and future economy depends on the wise use of our water resources. The bill also clarifies that soil and range health are critical to protecting Montana's renewable natural resources, which benefit our citizens, wildlife, and economies.

As the Big Hole River Watershed is a source watershed of the Missouri River, the Big Hole is eligible for state renewable resource grants and loans, which are now subject to the matching-funds provision. The state now also recognizes the Big Hole's soil and range health are vital aspects to the health of downstream watersheds.

Montana Senate Bill 73 and House Bill 286

This bill revised laws relating to livestock loss and delayed the termination of the livestock loss program, which now runs through 2023. In addition, the bill continues funding for livestock-loss prevention, non-lethal predator management, and livestock-loss reimbursement programs, which are critically important for ranchers who live side-by-side with carnivores, such as grizzly bears and wolves. Also passed this session was HB 286, which added mountain lions to the list of predators for which ranchers could seek reimbursement for livestock loss. The annual budget for this program will need to increase to incorporate the losses from mountain lion predation. As Big Hole Valley ranchers and their livestock cohabitate with predators, these predator mitigation programs as important to assist ranchers to coexist with large predators on the landscape.



Big Hole ranchers and their livestock share the landscape with predators such as mountain lions, grizzly bears, and wolves. Livestockloss reimbursement is a program critical to coexistence between ranchers and carnivores.

Montana House Bill 6 and 7

HB 6 continues funding the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's (DNRC's) renewable resource grant and loan pro-

gram, which funds irrigation, emergency water and wastewater, planning, and watershed projects throughout the state. HB 7 continues funding for the DNRC's reclamation and development grant program, funding planning and reclamation projects, as well as providing funding to control AIS in Montana waters. Collectively, these two programs fund over \$7 million in projects.

Under HB 6, Madison County will receive \$125,000 for a Big Hole Streambank Rehabilitation project. In addition, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, housed at Montana Tech, will receive \$125,000 for improving irrigation efficiencies and domestic groundwater supplies. Under HB 7, Butte-Silver Bow County and City will receive \$185,300 for erosion control and vegetation enhancement projects. The Deer Lodge Valley Conservation District will receive funding for two Big Hole restoration projects: 1) \$74,400 for the Mount Haggin Uplands Restoration Project and 2) \$58,610 for the Oregon Creek Placer Mine Reclamation project. These projects would restore tributaries of the Big Hole River that were left degraded and eroded from Anaconda Copper Mining Company operations during the 1900s.



Anaconda Smelter Stack, now a state park, was once part of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, which left areas of the Big Hole River Watershed polluted, eroded, and degraded. Photo credit: Montana State Parks

Montana House Joint Resolution 9

This joint resolution calls for the U.S. Congress to release seven Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in Montana from possible inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. Although not designated by Congress as a Wilderness Area, these areas have been inventoried for their wilderness characteristics and are managed to preserve natural wilderness. Wilderness Areas have three characteristics: a roadless area of at least 5,000 acres of public land, un-influenced by human activity, and provide opportunities for solitude or primitive forms of recreation. In addition, the resolution asks Congress to manage these areas according to the Forest Management Act of 1897, by drafting of a forest plan for the area and allowing public input into the management and resource extraction planning.

East of Wisdom, the West Pioneer WSA is the largest roadless area in southwest Montana, encompassing 151,000 acres. In 1981, the study of the area resulted in a non-wilderness designation; however, the West Pioneer WSA remains until a Congressional Act is passed.

The West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area encompasses 151,000 acers of roadless area, the largest in southwest Montana. Montana JR 9 asks the U.S. Congress to release the area from possible inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. Photo credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture



Montana House Bill 434

The Wildlife Habitat Improvement Act provides grants for projects to manage invasive weeds, restore wildlife habitat, and improve hunting access across Montana. The Act also creates \$2 million in funds to be distributed by MTFWP. The Act is funded by moneys Montana receives under the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, a federal excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. Also established by the Act, an 11-member council to prioritize projects.

Noxious weeds are a serious problem in the Big Hole River Watershed. Weeds reduce the quality of wildlife and riparian habitats, as well as rangelands. As rivers are a conduit for dispersing noxious weeds, controlling weeds at public access sites and on public lands is key to combating their spread within the Valley.

Awaiting the governor's decision

Montana Senate Bill 337

This bill would eliminate the Montana Board of Environmental Review (BER), an independent citizen- oversight authority that reviews rules, permits, and decisions made by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Created in 1995, the BER adds a level of public involvement into the DEQ's decision-making process, allowing disputes with the agency to go before a citizen-based board, instead of moving through an agency-directed appeals process. The BER hears appeals of DEQ's decisions pertaining to air and water quality, public water and wastewater systems, mining reclamation, and hazardous waste.

Public-led appeals processes provide transparency and legitimacy to agency decisions. Removing these qualities from a state-review process infringes upon agency trust and adds uncertainty to state-led, conflict-resolution proceedings.

Vetoed by the governor

Montana House Bill 339

The bill sought to reopen an exemption for water wells that pump less than 35-gallons per minute and produce less than 10-acre feet of water per year to operate without a Department of Natural Resources water right permit. Such wells are often used in subdivisions and for stock water. The bill would have allowed 8-17 exempt wells per 40-acre subdivision; the current law allows four. The bill also included spacing requirements for new wells in open (i.e., surface water rights are still available for appropriation) and closed (i.e., all water rights have been appropriated) basins, where exempt wells must be 660 feet between other wells in closed basins and 330 feet between exempt wells in open basins. A similar law allowing up to 40 exempt wells per 40-acer subdivision was struck down by the Montana Supreme Court in 2016.

This law could have resulted in senior water right holders near subdivisions experiencing a reduction in the volume of water available for irrigation. Although subdivisions in the Big Hole Valley are currently few, the area is anticipating an increase in residential development in the upcoming years and if passed, this law could have been harmful to irrigators and water right holders.

BHRF Merchandise

The Big Hole River Foundation has books, logo fishing shirts, vests and hats for sale. To order, please visit our website at www.bhrf.org.

Montana's Last Best River: The Big Hole and it's People by Pat Munday. George Grant signed edition \$59.95 + S&H

Dave Whitlock print edition \$49.95



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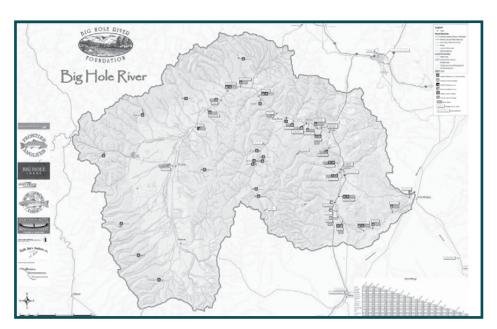
Hats Black, Charcoal & Sage with logo



Montana artist Monte Dolack's "Montana Grayling" posters These beautiful posters of Arctic grayling are worthy of fine framing \$25 each plus S&H



Big Hole River Maps available in local shops or order online at www.bhrf.org for \$9.95 + S&H





Species Spotlight - Brachycentrus occidentalis (Mother's Day Caddis) by Zac Sexton

The Mother's Day caddis hatch is well underway on the Big Hole River, and great angling can be had for those ready to match the hatch. This small, flitting caddisfly looks a bit like a moth when in flight, but has tent-shaped wings, which look like it is camped out in a pup tent, when at rest. This caddis is about ½ to ½ inch long, including the wing length, and has dark, mottled gray to brown wings, with a drab or bright green to brownish body. The larvae make tubular cases out of detritus material, i.e., leaves and bark, which is mostly black, and helps the larvae circulate water around its gills, as well as provides some protection from its environment.

Flip over most rocks in the Big Hole and you will see the black tubes stuck along the rock's edge. It is a very common insect that can make for great fishing early in the year. The hatch generally occurs from about mid-April through May, but will vary significantly de-



pending on water levels and weather patterns. Currently, the Mother's Day caddis can be seen throughout the canyons of the Big Hole, and are more prevalent when the wind dies down. They seek shelter in the willows in inclement weather or when they are not busy mating or laying eggs. These insects can be an important food source for trout and grayling as well as whitefish.

My personal favorite fly pattern to imitate the Mother's Day caddis, has a green dubbing body, on about a size 16 dry fly hook, with an under-wing of dark gray Cul de Canard feathers (feathers from the preen glands of waterfowl), and over-wing of black CDC. Classic Elk Hair caddis fly patterns with green bodies and black-gray elk hair work as well

Big Hole River Day Agenda Full Event Information at www.bhrf.org/Events

8 - 11 am 4-H Club breakfast at the Wise River fire hall
11 am - 12 pm "Adventures of a Woman Angler" by Lexi Sundell
11 - 7 pm Vendors, artists, children's activities
12 - 4 pm Music by Smokestack & the Foothill Fury Band
12 - 6 pm Annual Fly Casting Competition hosted by Sunrise Fly Shop
2- 7 pm Brew Fest with local Montana breweries
4 - 7 pm Music by Heather Lingle Band
5 pm Social hour and auction preview
6:30 pm Prime rib dinner by Wise River Club
7:30 pm Silent auction closes, live auction opens
9 pm Drawing for Hyde "Rocky Mountain Skiff" drift boat
9 pm Music by F.O.G. Band



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