



# Big Hole Watershed Committee

## Monthly Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 17, 2019 – 7:00 pm

Divide Grange – Divide, Montana

### In Attendance

Pedro Marques, BHWC; Ben LaPorte, BHWC; Betty Bowler, Tom Bowler, Butte; Randy Smith, Rancher/BHWC; Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher/BHWC; Roy Morris, BHWC/GGTU; Jarrett Payne, FWP; Paul Cleary, BHWC; Sandy Cleary; Murray Strong/Pioneer Technical; Mark Kambich, BHWC/Rancher; Amber Burch, Beaverhead County Weeds; Kara Maplethorpe, Beaverhead County Weeds; John Whittingham, BBS; David Green, FWP; Peter Frick, BHWC; Jason Brooks, BLM; Lucas Philips; Jessica Phillips, USFS; Stephen Frazee, Water & Environmental Technologies.

**Introductions**      *Attendees introduced themselves.*

**Meeting Minutes**      *March 2019 meeting minutes were reviewed, no additions or corrections.*

### Reports

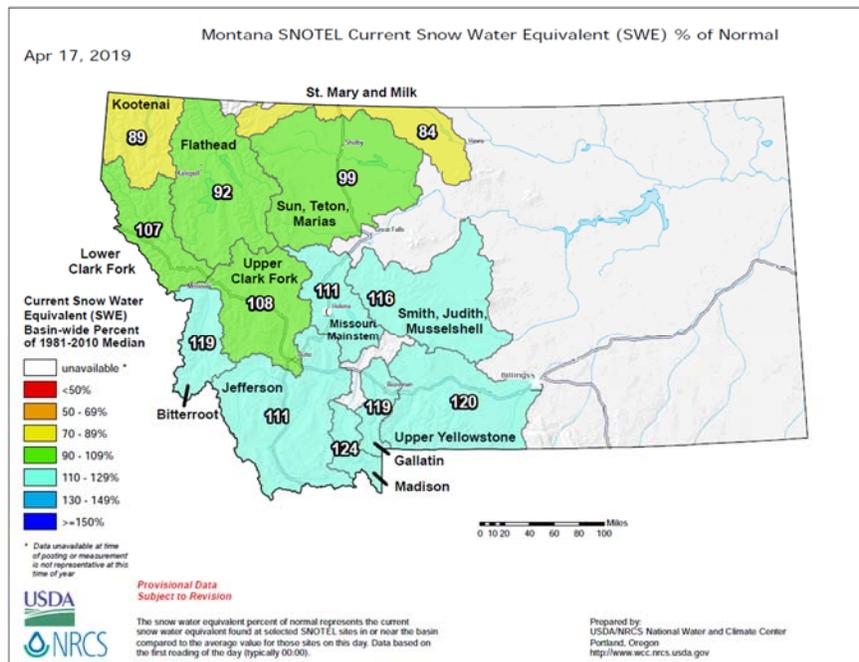
*Streamflow/Snowpack Report – Jacqueline Knutson, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks*

- **Streamflows:** Seasonal gages began transmitting a few weeks ago as ice broke up. Currently flows are above average, likely in response to the precipitation of the last few days. At this point there is very little ice left on the river itself but the banks are still covered in the remnants of the shelf ice. The uppermost gage at Saginaw Bridge is not reporting due to a needed software update and as soon as the road is clear enough to access the gage it will be reporting as well. Streamflow forecasts for the April 1<sup>st</sup> – July 31<sup>st</sup> period are below average for the Big Hole River so please keep an eye on forecasts and be ready for potential shortages if summer precipitation is sparse once again.

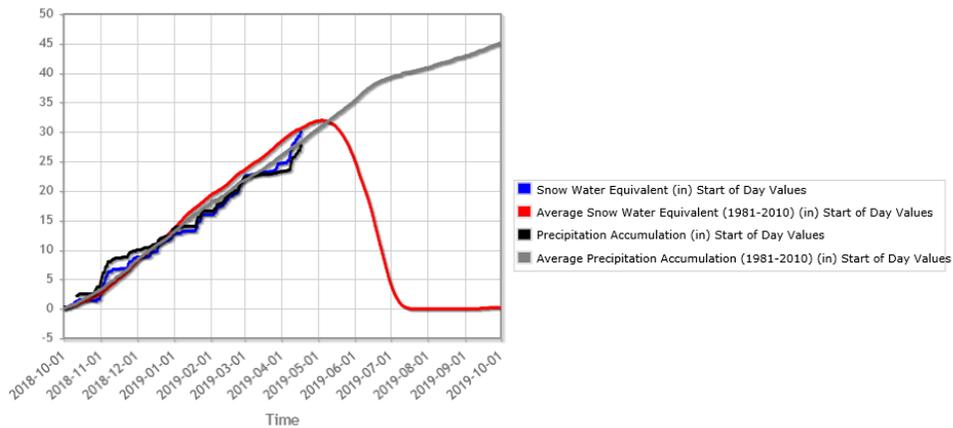
<a href="#">06023500</a>	Big Hole River near Jackson MT	04/07 11:15 MDT	<a href="#">Eqp</a>	<a href="#">Eqp</a>	41.0
<a href="#">06023800</a>	Big Hole River ab Spring Creek nr Jackson MT	04/17 09:00 MDT	1.87	54.6	69.0
<a href="#">06024020</a>	Big Hole River at Miner Creek nr Jackson MT	04/17 09:15 MDT	1.89	273	270
<a href="#">06024450</a>	Big Hole River bl Big Lake Cr at Wisdom MT	04/17 08:45 MDT	3.67	630	377
<a href="#">06024540</a>	Big Hole River bl Mudd Cr nr Wisdom MT	04/17 09:30 MDT	3.85	1,280	828
<a href="#">06024580</a>	Big Hole River near Wise River MT	04/17 09:30 MDT	3.95	1,440	1,310
<a href="#">06025250</a>	Big Hole River at Maiden Rock nr Divide MT	04/17 08:45 MDT	4.27	1,580	1,360
<a href="#">06025500</a>	Big Hole River near Melrose MT	04/17 09:15 MDT	2.93	1,630	1,380
<a href="#">06026210</a>	Big Hole River near Glen MT	04/17 09:30 MDT	3.57	1,750	1,360
<a href="#">06026420</a>	Big Hole R bl Hamilton Ditch nr Twin Bridges, MT	04/17 08:30 MDT	<a href="#">Ssn</a>	<a href="#">Ssn</a>	1,230

- **Snowpack:** At this time the Big Hole Basin is at 97% of average. The Jefferson Basin in its entirety is at 111% of average. With an average snowpack this year our streamflow and irrigation will most likely rely on precipitation later this season and we'll be watching runoff timing closely this year. With the long-range forecast indicating warmer temperatures over the next few months we may see that high elevation snowpack come off more quickly than we'd like.

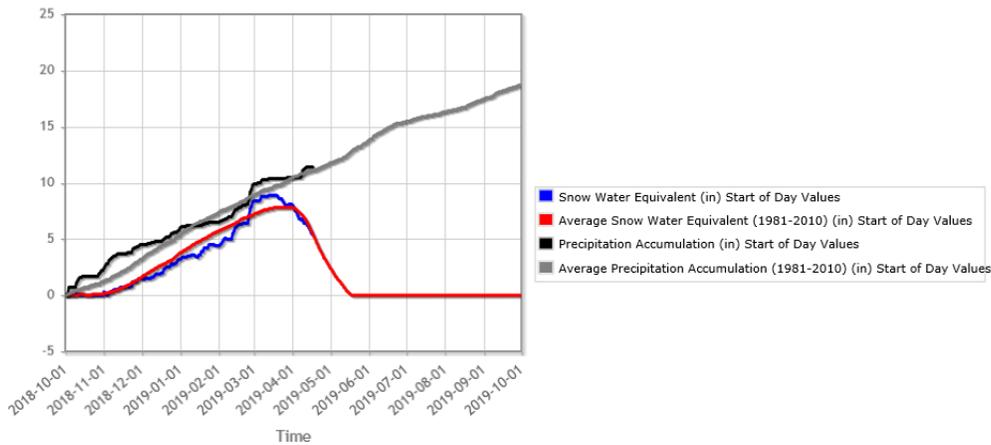
		17-Apr 2018	17-Apr 2019	1981-2010 median	2019 % avg
Station	elevation	inches	inches	inches	
Barker Lakes	8250	22.4	15.5	15.4	101
Basin Creek	7180	12.4	8.4	9.2	91
Bloody Dick	7600	17.8	11.7	11.3	104
Calvert Creek	6430	10	5.4	5.4	100
Darkhorse Lake	8600	39.7	30	30.6	98
Moose Creek	6200	20.1	12.8	15.4	83
Mule Creek	8300	24.2	16.4	15.8	104
Saddle Mtn.	7940	<u>35.7</u>	<u>23.4</u>	<u>24.6</u>	95
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>182.3</b>	<b>123.6</b>	<b>127.7</b>	
<b>BASIN AVERAGE %</b>			<b>97</b>		



Darkhorse Lake (436) Montana SNOTEL Site - 8945 ft Reporting Frequency: Daily; Date Range: 2018-10-01 to 2019-09-3



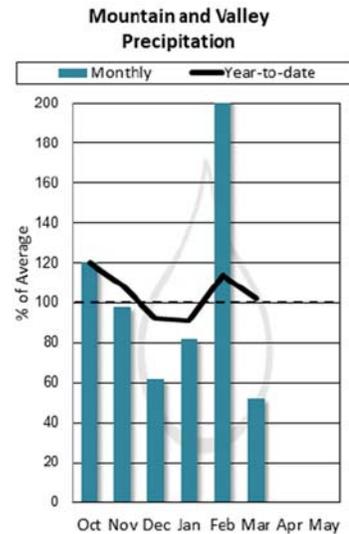
Darkhorse Lake (436) Montana SNOTEL Site - 8600 ft



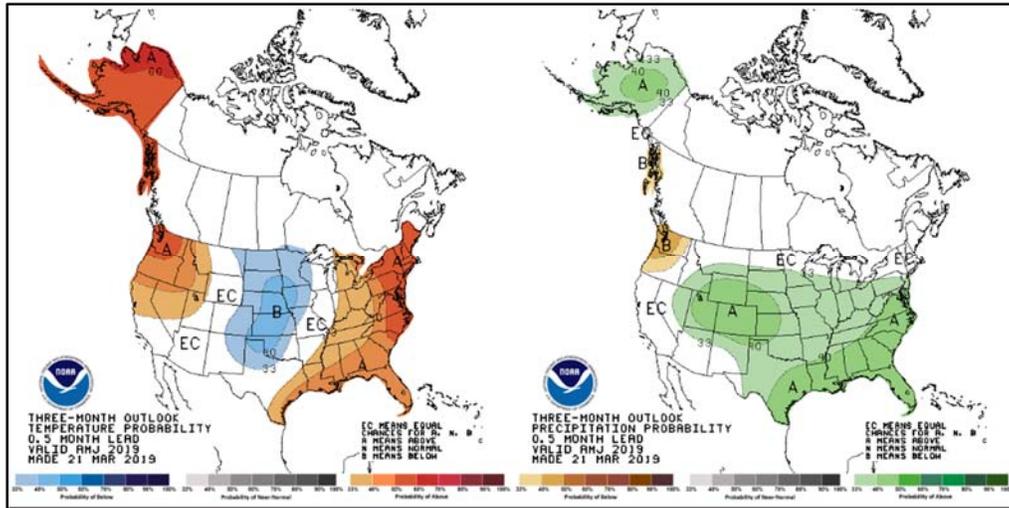
### Calvert Creek (381) Montana SNOTEL Site – 6430 ft

**Precipitation:** Precipitation slowed down in March and we have relied heavily on the snows from February to get to snowpacks that are hovering around 100%. The Big Hole and Jefferson basins received more precipitation than almost any other part of the state but overall Montana precipitation in March was well below average.

- **Temperatures:** March was another cold month across Montana but following a bitter February it felt downright balmy for many. April has been a bit above average but not by much and we'll see how the rest of the month rounds out. The forecast for the rest of April is for above average temperatures.
- **Forecast:** There has not been a change to the El Nino advisory still in effect for this spring and the most recent forecast has the chance for El Nino continuing through the summer at 65% and even now through the fall at 50-55%. The wet weather of the past few weeks and back in February are anomalous to normal El Nino patterns in Montana and as we saw in March it is just as easy for us to return to warm and dry conditions rapidly.
- **The three-month outlook:** currently favors normal to slightly above average precipitation depending on the flow of incoming weather systems through the rest of the spring and a continuation of the average to above average temperatures we've seen over the last month. It is likely that precipitation will come a rain rather than adding anything to our snowpack.



**Jefferson Basin monthly precipitation for the 2019 Water Year (beginning in October 2018)**



NOAA 3-month outlook for April, May, and June is for average to slightly wetter than average and normal to above normal temperatures through June

*Director's Report – Pedro Marques, Executive Director*

- Happy to announce the birth of the newest member of the watershed, Tana's baby, Lyla Marie Lynch, born 3/31/19.
- HB 260 is in conference following an amendment that caps the exemption of community service organizations from state procurement at \$12,500. Bill has high likelihood of passing
- SB 32 was tabled in the House Natural Resource committee and revived under the Drought and Water Supply Committee and is gaining support.
- HJ 40 sponsored by Ray Shaw to study weather modification looked to be proceeding
- BHWC is working with a group (TNC, TU, and an attorney from Arizona) to develop a guidance document for the Army Corps of engineers to push the adoption of streamlined permitting for low-tech restoration techniques
- Pedro participated in a training by the Montana Nonprofit Association on managing for change and looks forward to engaging all our board members
- BHWC has received \$29,000 in contributions toward the Burma project, a great testament to the solidarity of this group.
- BHWC received a capacity grant from MWCC to develop our forestry program

*Steering Committee – Randy Smith, Chairman; Jim Hagenbarth, Vice-Chairman; Steve Luebeck, Treasurer; and Roy Morris, Secretary*

- Steering Committee is happy with the progress BHWC is making.

*Wildlife Report – Jim Hagenbarth, BHWC Vice-Chairman and Ben LaPorte, BHWC Program Manager*

- Carcass removal services are available March 1 – middle of May. Call John Costa. Carcasses are hauled to our livestock carcass compost site near Wisdom. Removing carcass attractant from local ranches can help prevent conflict with predators like bears and wolves.
- Carcass removal update:
  - 32 adults
  - 53 calves
  - 1 horse
  - 1 sheep
- Current number of carcasses is already higher than last year's totals.

*Restoration/People and Land Use Planning Report - Ben LaPorte, Program Manager*

- The Burma “Plug” project was a success. The easternmost side channel of the Big Hole River below Glen has been taking on more water in recent years. A natural channel plug has been increasing in size and by winter 2019, most of the flow of the river was in this side channel, leaving the main western stem nearly dry. Ben visited the construction site last week and showed construction site photos. The completion of this project will help reduce flow stress on the downstream stabilization project on the Mahaney bank.
- Construction of the Mahaney bank stabilization project started today. Contractors have begun to remove a point bar downstream of the bank to alleviate pressure on both sides of the river. This removal of deposition will also help straighten the flow path to reduce bank stress. Construction of the Garrison bank stability project will begin directly after the Mahaney project is complete. If mother nature cooperates the Garrison bank project will follow directly.
- Lower French Creek and Oregon Creek projects: Final designs are about 90% done. Ben showed project designs of both projects. Invitations to bid for both projects are out now in the Montana Standard and in the Dillon Tribune.
- The Morris Ranch BDA (Beaver Dam Analog) Project will begin the week of April 29<sup>th</sup>. 60 BDA structures will be installed in three separate reaches in the East Fork of Divide Creek on the Morris Ranch property. This project is very similar to the what we have been doing on the North Fork of Divide Creek. Installing these structures into the stream holds back sediment, slows down water and spreads water out into the previously unreachable floodplain.
- If anyone is interested in being a part of this project and would like to volunteer, get in contact with Ben. Your participation is encouraged!

#### **New Business**

- None

## **Meeting Topic: Invasive Weeds in the Big Hole Watershed**

*Presentation by: Amber Burch, Beaverhead County;  
 Jessica Phillips, Beaverhead-Deer Lodge NF-Wisdom District  
 Lucas Phillips, Butte Ranger District  
 Lacy Decker, Bureau of Land Management – Butte Office;  
 John Whittingham, Basic Biological Services; and  
 Dave Green- FWP*

*Background:* Local weed control groups will present the results of several Big Hole watershed weed control efforts, discuss new species of concern & available cost-share programs, provide dates for 2019 community spray days & the Weed Whacker’s Ball, and reveal plans for 2019 projects.

#### **Amber Burch, Beaverhead County:**

- Profit from 2018 WWB (Weed Whackers Ball) was \$13,707.85
- 2017 Projects Supported from WWB
  - \$8000-Hired a contractor to treat noxious weeds along Big Hole River-370 acres treated and over 3500 acres monitored for noxious weeds
  - \$3,000-Herbicide for Wise River Area
  - \$454.03- Cost share for Big Hole River Landowners
  - Total projects supported- \$11,454.03
- Ask us about Cost Share
  - Beaverhead:683-3790
  - Madison:842-5595

- Butte Silverbow:497-6460
- Anaconda/Deer Lodge:563-4071
- Mark Kambich:267-3335
- You can help by attending cooperative weed days, attend the Weed Whackers Ball, Donate to the silent or live auctions or donate your timer and talents!
- We would love to have you involved in the Weed Whackers Ball planning and Big Hole Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area group!
- **Beaverhead County Weed Days 2019**
  - June 4- Glen: 7:30- Glen Bar Parking Lot
  - June 5- Maiden Rock: 7:30- Fishing Access
  - June 6- Burma: 8:00- Stack Yard
  - June 13- Melrose: 7:30-Melrose Bar
  - June 15- Wise River: 8:00- Wise River Fire Hall
  - June 26- Wisdom: 8:00- County Road Shop
  - June 28- Dewey Cemetery: 8:00- Quartz Hill Turn-Off
  - July 20- Wise River Pull/Deep Creek: 8:00- Ralston's
  - August 13- Wisdom: 8:00- County Road Shop
  - September 21- Wise River: 8:00 Wise River Fire Hall
- **2018 Summary of Treatment-Beaverhead County Weed District**
  - BLM (Dillon and Butte Field Offices) treated 710.75 acres, monitored 8104
  - Bureau of Reclamation (Clark Canyon Dam) treated 10.75, monitored 540
  - County (roads, gravel pits, etc.) treated 106.75, monitored 3205
  - MTDOT (state highways and I-15) treated 229.25, monitored 5744
  - FWP (fishing access sites) treated 9, monitored 245
  - Forest Service treated 49.25, monitored 3268
  - Private (National Guard, Dell Airport) treated 10.5, monitored 320
- **2018 Beaverhead County Projects**
  - Big Hole/Wise River-treated 307 acres
  - Beaverhead River-treated 657 acres
  - Grasshopper-treated 409 acres
  - Argenta-treated 200 acres
  - Clark Canyon-treated 488 acres
  - Blacktail/Sweetwater-treated 1401
- **2019 Beaverhead County Projects**
  - Big Hole/Wise River
  - Beaverhead River
  - Grasshopper
  - Argenta
  - Clark Canyon
  - Blacktail/Sweetwater
  - Medicine Lodge/Horse Prairie
- **Upcoming Events**
  - Lima private applicator training/Lima Fire Hall: April 30- 1:00-4:30
  - Rangeland Restoration Seminar/4-H Building: April 30- 6:30-8:00
  - Houndstounge Seed Removal @ Poindexter Slough: April 26- 1:00-3:00
  - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Environmental Summit @ Red Rock Ranch: May 9
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Outdoor School @ Birch Creek: May 24
  - Weed Days May-September
- Rush Skeleton Weed found along River Lake road. In BLM timber sale and adjacent to a DNRC timber sale. Beaverhead County is working with both agencies to control the weeds

- Forest service helicopter work
- Keep your eye out for Ventanata: Invasive annual grass that out competes cheat grass. Not palatable to livestock. Found outside of Wisdom. Working on getting this weed listed.
- *Discussion:*
  - *How are you handling your new fame?*
    - *I guess you've seen me in the news recently. Union Pacific has a noncompliance on Dyers Wood. They are not taking responsibility for controlling weeds on their right-of-way. Mary Beth from Union Pacific wants the weed districts to use the non-compliance process to get them to act on their R-o-w. She has her hands tied.*

### **Jessica Phillips, Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF-Wisdom District**

- Wisdom District has 878,563 acres to treat
- **2018 Program**
  - Five temporary seasonal employees
  - Two permanent employees (Range/Weeds)
  - Volunteers
  - Agreement with Beaverhead County
  - Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Project
  - Treated approximately 900 acres
- 2018 Cooperative Aerial Spray Contract
  - 155 Acres Completed in July through Beaverhead County Agreement and RMEF funding
- **2019 Program**
  - 4 Temporary Seasonal Employees
    - 2 Wisdom
    - 2 Wise River
  - 3 Permanent Employees (Range/Weeds)
  - Volunteers
    - County Cooperative Spray Days
    - Locals, grazing permittees
  - 2 UTV sprayers
  - RMEF funded Johnson Creek Project in Silver Bow County
  - Consider Cooperative Weed Management in Toomey Creek Area- possible SRS proposal and fall MDF and RMEF proposals
- Johnson Creek Spray Units
  - 126 acres funded for aerial
  - Treatment through RMEF
- Beaverhead County Aerial Spray Proposal
  - 900 Acres Proposed for Treatment, not awarded by RMEF in 2019.
  - Considering SRS, MDF and RMEF proposals during next funding cycle
- *Discussion:*
  - *How do we get in touch with you guys? Mudd Creek has a lot of Hounds Tongue.*
    - *Call me at my Wisdom office-689-3243*
  - *Tim Reynolds allotment has a lot of Hounds Tongue on it and that area is a major thoroughfare for elk. Needs to be addressed. Maybe RMEF can contribute?*
    - *That is on our radar and on our maps. We know about it. Thanks*
  - *Bio-control for Hounds Tongue:*
    - *Currently listed as a pest status*
    - *New need for that species to be used*
    - *Working to get it off the pests list*

- *Very successful in Canada*
- *Jim Hagenbarth has had good results with the St. Johnswart bio-control*

### **Lucas Philips, Butte Ranger District**

- **2018 Overview**
  - 848 acres mapped on Fleecer
  - 1,000 acres of aerial spray on Fleecer
  - Very successful spray year. They had a hard time finding Knapweed within the aerial spray project area. This year they will send a ground crew back in for a secondary treatment sweep. We may do a fall aerial application.
  - First time in 20 years they've had such a concentrated effort.
  - Alyssum is on the game range but not yet on the forest
- *Discussion:*
  - *You guys did a very good job with your aerial spray. There is not a whole lot of knapweed up there anymore. Job well done.*
  - *Is there a seed bank still present?*
    - *Yes, the seed bank is still there. We are going to have conversations with FWP to get ground crews up there and continue to re-visit the seed bank.*
  - *This is an important area to focus on, due to winter habitat for over wintering elk.*
  - *We might start using bio-control in the third year of treatments. Bio-control will help contain the knapweed. We are never going to get rid of all the weeds, but bio-control treatments will help.*

### **Lacy Decker, Bureau of Land Management – Butte Office**

- Butte BLM office is responsible for 300,000 acres and only has 4 seasonal workers. We are spread very thin. Last year we had 3 seasonals.
- We have 2 trucks, 2 ATV's and 2 boom-spray trucks
- Had trouble with assistance agreements. 60% of our budget went to into assistance agreements. We are hoping to get new Washington level assistance agreements. Hopefully these will come out next week.
- Our priority areas will be the same as last year in the Big Hole. New burn piles will get hit
- \$10,000 for sage grouse habitat
- This year we will be hiking into the Humbug Spires to spray weeds. This is a part of adopt a trail head program. Spray day will be June 12<sup>th</sup>.
- *Discussion*
  - *What would it take to get Tordon shakes back?*
    - *That formulation for Tordon does not exist anymore. Ill check on that.*

### **John Whittingham, Basic Biological Services**

- My wife Linda is the co-owner. We started working with the BHWC in 2007.
- Doing business from Dillon, Montana. Serving South West Montana/Eastern Idaho Montana since 1999
- Ag plant pest, right-of-way, aquatics, and research and development licenses
- Certified, licensed, bonded, well-insured
- We do noxious/nuisance weed and brush control. Herbicide applications are done by expert personnel with decades of experience. Mechanical control treatments are also done with modern, powerful, and effective heavy equipment.
- Rapid and re-control activities are very important. Cutting/controlling plants will help control seed banks.

- Montana Noxious Weed List Effective: February 2017
  - **PRIORITY 1A These weeds are not present or have a very limited presence in Montana.** Management criteria will require eradication if detected, education, and prevention.
  - **limited presence in Montana.** Management criteria will require eradication or containment and education.
  - **PRIORITY 2A These weeds are common in isolated areas of Montana.** Management criteria will require eradication or containment where less abundant. Management shall be prioritized by local weed districts.
  - **PRIORITY 2B These weeds are abundant in Montana and widespread in many counties.** Management criteria will require eradication or containment where less abundant. Management shall be prioritized by local weed districts.
  - **PRIORITY 3 Regulated Plants: (NOT MONTANA LISTED NOXIOUS WEEDS)** These regulated plants have the potential to have significant negative impacts. The plant may not be intentionally spread or sold other than as a contaminant in agricultural products. The state recommends research, education and prevention to minimize the spread of the regulated plant.
- **Centaurea maculosa (Cm)**, aka spotted knapweed, is a native of eastern Europe. Cm covers over 8 million acres nationwide, with 5 million acres in Montana. The species spread across western states at an average rate of increase of 27% per year since the 1920's. Cm is allelopathic, and exudes an acidifying compound that is toxic to most range vegetation. It can overwhelm and displace native vegetation in 10 to 40 years. CM is not palatable for most herbivorous fauna in North America. Cm has a deep and narrow tap-root, and is most competitive for soil water during periods of severe drought. Most bunchgrasses are rhizomatous or sod forming, and are effective at binding soil. Cm displacement of native bunchgrass increased surface water runoff by 56%, and sediment yield by 192%.
- Houndstounge (*Cynoglossum officinale*) could be Beaverhead County's fastest growing problem.
  - Toxic to many ungulates
  - Dominates riparian areas
  - Destroys wool, infects fur-bearers
  - Displaces native species
- Biological Controls:
  - Seed head, leaf and root moths
  - Flea beetles (Leafy Spurge)
  - Stem, seed head, root boring, and flower weevils (Knapweeds)
  - Stem and seed head flies
  - Limitations and costs: severely cold and dry climates, slow to establish, partial control and \$0.10 to \$1.00 each.
- Cheatgrass Bio-Control: *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain aka D-7. Not offered in Montana. Could be a good option but may not see results that have a large enough impact
- To summarize, lets keep all of our options open to contain these weeds.
- *Discussion*
  - *Amber Burch can put people in touch with bio-controls. Contact me so I can get people bugs*
  - *A combination of spraying and bio-controls can work well*

### **Dave Green- FWP**

- We are spread very thin. 2 WMA's, Fleecer and Mt Haggin. Me and one other guy are responsible for 150,000 acres.

- FWP decided to spend money through contracting.
- His priorities are based on Vanna's direction- Big Hole side of Haggin will be a focus.
- Fleecer feel behind. Aerial worked well and they'll try to do it again
- Areas to hit include Duheim around German Gulch, fence repairs on McGinnis and some road work.
- FWP land acquisition is problematic b/c of staffing

#### Upcoming Meetings and Events

- May 15, 2019, 7pm @ the Divide Grange – Divide, Montana. BHWC Monthly Meeting. Topic: Big Hole River Fishery Update by Jim Olsen, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.
- June 19, 2019, 7pm @ the Divide Grange – Divide, Montana. BHWC Monthly Meeting. Topic: Big Hole Watershed Wildlife Update from Vanna Boccadori and Craig Fager, both with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

#### Adjourn