

Big Hole Watershed Committee

FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

Seeking Understanding & Consensus
Creating Long-term Solutions
for the Big Hole River Watershed
Since 1995



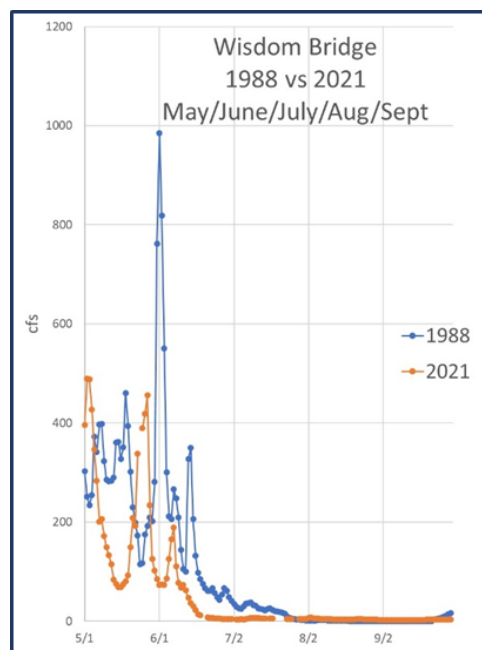
P.O. Box 21
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406-960-4855
bhwc.org

Conservation is the Baseline

There was lively debate about water use during this summer's historic drought and wildfires. I can only imagine how heated the same conversations were 30 years ago after a similar drought. BHWC was in the thick of many of these conversations, and I suspect many more took place during dinners and at seats at bars and on boats. So what'd we learn?

We know that nearly 4% of the entire BV-DL National Forest burned. We know over 60% of Butte's water this summer came from the Big Hole (up 12% from 2020). We know we had less water than in 1988, yet the river did not go dry at Wisdom or downstream. I hope one of the lessons of 2021 is that, at the end of the day, there's nobody to blame. Mother nature is in charge. There's just no getting around how little water there was this year. But everyone adapted and struggled through it. It'll happen again, so what can we do in the meantime?

A recent article I read about a successful community-led conservation initiative with the Masaai of Kenya helped me put the plight of the Big Hole in perspective.



"Conservation should not be seen as something new and scientific but seen as what communities have always done ... it is not something easy, and success takes a long time. It is a complex and dynamic space to work in and you need to be flexible in your thinking and willing to adjust constantly to changing situations." — [John Kamanga \(Tusk Award for Conservation in Africa\)](#)

Though not everybody participated in using less of the water resources we all share, during a time of stress, we know that the culture of conservation in our basin prevented worse outcomes. There is room for improvement, so we're redoubling our efforts around drought management, engaging more water users to find solutions to water management issues, and giving the public more ways to invest in the future health of the river through our [Conservation Fund](#).

Our focus is on the resource and our work firmly grounded in partnerships. We'll begin 2022 with signed agreements with six federal and state agencies for projects creating wetlands and natural water storage, treating conifer encroachment, designing a remedy for acid mine drainage, and restoring fish passage from placer mining. We're ready to support irrigation improvements, from funding to permitting and oversight, on behalf of willing landowners who reach out. Please join us in this effort!

Pedro Marques
Executive Director
Big Hole Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Our Governing Board:

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Jim Hagenbarth
Vice Chair, Rancher
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Treasurer, Sportsman
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BVHD Cty. Commission
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Resident
Eric Thorson
Guiding/Outfitting
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Resident
Mark Raffety
Rancher
Brian Wheeler
Big Hole River Foundation

Our Staff:

Pedro Marques
Executive Director
Tana Nulph
Associate Director
Ben LaPorte
Program Manager
Chet Robertson
UBH Range Rider
Johnathan Costa
Wildlife Program Tech.
Max Hanson
Watershed Health Intern
(volunteer)

Our Focus Areas:

- Fish & Water
- Wildlife & Uplands
- People

Member Spotlight: Jim Dennehy, Butte-Silver Bow Water Utility Department

Getting to Know our Members

Our "Member Spotlight" features key board members, partners, and supporters of the BHWC and highlights their commitment to conservation and the Big Hole watershed. This edition features Jim Dennehy, BHWC Board Member and Superintendent of Treatment for Butte-Silver Bow County's Water Utility Division.

1. How long have you been a member of, or participating with, the Big Hole Watershed Committee? *"About seven years. That's when I started coming out to these meetings after Doug Finnicum retired."*

2. Why did you join BHWC and what is your role with the committee? *"First of all, I want to see Butte-Silver Bow represented because we're a major stakeholder in the river. Also to work with other stakeholders, including irrigators, sportsmen, conservation groups, and outfitters to do what is best for the river and for all water users."*



— I want them to experience the same things that I have. I grew up in Butte. I spent a LIFETIME on the Big Hole River. As a little kid, my brother and my uncle and I used to go down every weekend to Glen to go fishing. I spent my whole life on the Big Hole and it means a lot to me."

On behalf of BHWC, thank you Jim, for your passion and dedication to keeping clean, cold water in the Big Hole River!



3. What work of BHWC do you find the most important and/or of greatest interest to you? *"The greatest interest to me is keeping more water in the river and keeping cold water in the river. That drives it for everybody."*

4. What do you like most about the Big Hole watershed? *"I personally like interacting with all parties that are involved. Like I said, from ranchers to outfitters to utilities to people who run the show. It's fascinating, and I think that everyone is doing a really good job to make sure that the Big Hole River stays the way it is."*

5. Where do you live? *"Butte ... Butte, America!"*

6. What do you love most about conservation? *"Conservation is dear to my heart because my kids, future generations*



Activities & Events

Getting Noticed

BHWC Outreach

BHWC has taken the lead on several events, presentations, letters of support, and more in the last few months:

- Event Leader: High Divide Collaborative Aspen Workshop
- Event Leader: Mesic Restoration Volunteer Day
- Guest Lecture: Montana State University: Conservation Policy
- Presentation: Riverscape Restoration Cons: Stream Permitting
- Presentation: MWCC Capacity Workshop
- Presentation: Beaver Work Group: Low-tech, Process-Based Rest.
- 4 Letters of Support for conservation initiatives
- 2 testimonies submitted to MT Legislature (SB 39, HB 6)
- 1 letter requesting federal support for stream gaging
- [Guest view: A culture of collaborative conservation](#) — MT Std.
- Montana Public Radio 'Shared State' podcast (coming soon!)
- Stories for Action film (coming soon!)

Upcoming Meetings

Our meetings are always open to the public and include committee updates, time for discussion, coffee & snacks, and special topic presentations. Please join us!

November 17, 2021 — 6:00 pm
at the Divide Grange + Zoom
Topic: Big Hole River Foundation
Water Quality Monitoring Program

BHWC does not meet in December

January 19, 2022 — 11:00 am
at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort
Topic: Annual Business Meeting
For BHWC Board & Staff only

February 16, 2022 — 6:00 pm
at the Divide Grange + Zoom
Topic: USFS Pintler Face Project

What We Learned in 2021

2021 Monthly Meeting Highlights

1. Floodplain mapping: Beaverhead County maps adopted, very few structures impacted by changes.
2. A new product on the market, Nutrafix, is a micro-nutrient cocktail that makes cheatgrass grow itself to death, allowing natives to re-establish.
3. Grizzly bears are moving in & through the Big Hole at increasing rates.
4. Big Hole Brown trout are at historically low numbers, grayling are improving, and conservation efforts are improving recruitment in the lower river.
5. **1 month!** That's how long aquatic hitchhikers like clams and mussels can survive out-of-water. [Clean-Drain-Dry](#)
6. Every 10 acres of forest (mid-sized trees 0.5-1.5 m height), uses approximately **1 cfs of groundwater per day!**
We all love trees, but they're taking over areas that used to be sagebrush steppe or riparian zones and they use A LOT of water!
7. FWP & partners replaced **17 miles** of fencing in the Big Hole with wildlife friendly alternatives!
8. From June-September, the Big Hole River supplied **61.6%** of Butte's water!



Big Hole Watershed Committee

1% for the River: Big Hole Conservation Fund

Have You Heard?

New Ways to Support BHWC

In 2021, BHWC launched the Big Hole River Conservation Fund. The fund provides a way for individuals, local businesses, and their clients to get involved in conservation and the long-term health of the river. Enrolled partner businesses add 1% to the cost of their clients' bill, which is donated to BHWC through the conservation fund. BHWC matches donations 1:1 and puts dollars to work in important conservation and restoration projects in our watershed.

Curious about Enrolling Your Business?

Contact Pedro Marques, BHWC Executive Director, at 406-552-2369 or pmarques@bhwc.org for more information.



We've already funded one project through the fund.

This summer, 12 individuals and businesses donated \$1,600 to offset BHWC's investment into Phase I restoration at Pennington Bridge! This was the first fundraising goal met through the new Conservation Fund. You can learn more about the project at Pennington Bridge here: <https://bhwc.org/project/pennington-bridge>.

This project (and historically low flows) provided temporary relief to streambanks and bridge infrastructure. We are working with Madison County, Great West Engineering, Applied Geomorphology and landowners to design a more permanent, and ecologically beneficial solution.

Want to Get Involved? There are So Many Ways!

Donate Online: Point your phone's camera at this QR code or visit bhwc.org.

Donate by Mail: Use the envelope provided.

Donate Livestock: More information: <https://bhwc.org/giving/livestock>

Text: "BigHole" to 26989 to connect with BHWC via text or donate with your phone.

Donate Items for Auction or Raffle: Like this stunning guitar made of reclaimed Brazilian hardwoods donated by a supporter of native fisheries and conservation (right).

Join Us at our [monthly meetings](#), the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Divide Grange + Zoom.

Sign Up for our [e-news](#).

Follow "bigholewatershed" on social media and check out our projects on [YouTube](#).



We Go Further Together

Join Us

If there's one thing this summer taught us, it's that there is still a great need for conservation in our watershed. Conservation of land, of water, and of habitats. Also a need for collaboration, because we can get much further when we work together.

It's tough to see the light at the end of the tunnel when you're in the middle of a bad drought year like the one we just had, but if we can find one silver lining, it's that BHWC is tackling known problems with renewed vigor and increased capacity.

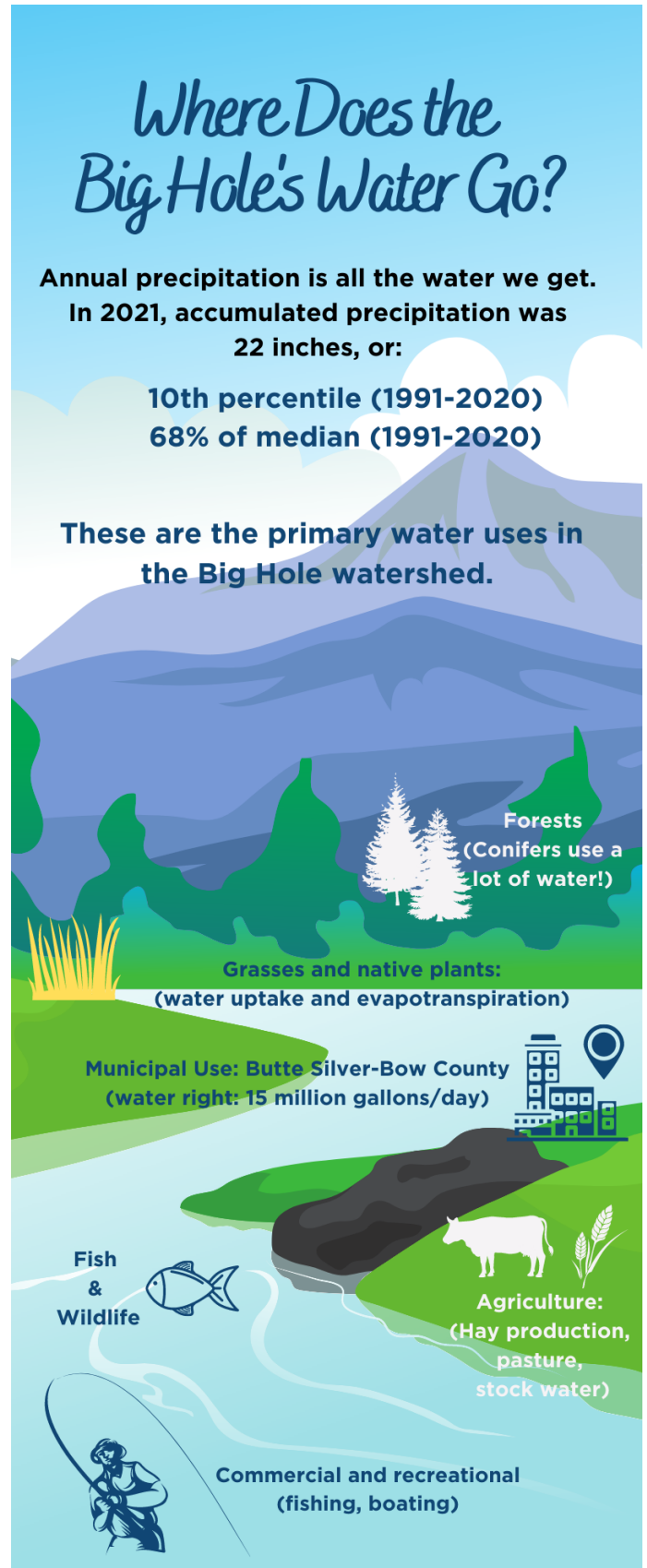
In addition to drought response and ecological restoration, we're also setting a proactive path to make our watershed and its people more resilient to the next drought year. And there WILL be a next drought year.

We are priming the funding and partnership pumps to address conifer management for watershed yield, cloud seeding, and working with Butte residents to conserve water during times of drought. We're investing in projects that improve natural water storage capacity. We are doubling down on our efforts around communications, particularly where it concerns drought. We are working with stakeholders throughout the watershed to improve irrigation infrastructure, identify and prioritize project opportunities, and increase participation in the BHWC and the Big Hole River Drought Management Plan.

But all of this costs money, and we can't do it alone. That's where you come in. We need your help to keep improving our watershed one drop of water, one streambank, one project at a time.

Please [donate today](#).

We will put your contribution to work on important conservation and restoration projects in our watershed.



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Building Drought Resilience in the Big Hole

Summary: 2021 Water Year

-Matt Norberg, Hydrologist, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation

Water Year 2021 proved to be challenging to say the least. It started off on the right track with mid-late October storms bringing above average precipitation to the watershed. The remaining part of fall was dry and total precipitation and Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) began to flatline compared to the normal. As the calendar year ended a small round of storms again, provided much needed precipitation/snow. At the beginning of the New Year, total precipitation was approximately 98% of normal and SWE was slightly below average at approximately 94% of normal. La Nina finally showed her face at the beginning of February and continued through March, bolstering snowpack and precipitation to above average levels. However, this was the last of our good fortune for the year except for a late May storm system. Big Hole snowpack peaked on April 1, 2021 at approximately 98% of normal, which is two weeks earlier than the median peak. Snowpack started melting off at a faster rate than normal and on May 1, 2021, the snowpack had been reduced to 68% of normal. A late May storm provided cooler temperatures and gave the Big Hole a much-needed boost in precipitation and SWE, but at this point, we were already well below normal in terms of total precipitation.

As you may know, **precipitation** during the late spring and summer months is critical to maintaining stream flows after the snowmelt has passed. **June, July, August, and September were dry, dry, dry!** Precipitation percentages dipped into the 10th percentile and remained there for the remainder of WY2021. Comparable years in total precipitation are 1987 (lowest), 1988, and 1994. The National Weather Service reported that June to July was the driest on record, with a -2.91" departure from normal for Beaverhead County.

Air temperatures were also a major contributing factor to lack of water availability for WY2021. Beaverhead County had the warmest average temperature on record during June-July, with a +7.0 °F departure from normal. Below normal **snowpack**, earlier than normal runoff conditions, well below normal precipitation, and above average temperatures all contributed to reduced water availability in the Big Hole this past year.

The Big Hole River at Wisdom (USGS stream gage 06024450) experienced record low conditions since the gage was installed in 1988. Volumetrically, the total amount of water that flowed past the Wisdom gage in 2021 (16,632 AF-provisional data) was about 52% of the total volume that flowed past the gage in 1988 (31,837 AF) and approximately 19% of the period of record average (1988-2021=86,112 AF) for the May 1 to September 30 timeframe. **Conversely, even though WY2021 had the lowest volume on record, the river at the Wisdom Bridge did not completely dry up as it did in 1988 (24 days of 0.00 flow).**

The Big Hole River near Melrose (USGS gage 06025500) fared slightly better in comparison to 1988 than the Wisdom gage. Total volume past the Melrose gage from May 1 to September 30 was 257,205 acre-feet (AF) compared to 1988 which was 243,970 AF. However, the volume of water that flowed past the Melrose gage this year was approximately 52% of the 1988 to 2021 average (488,252 AF).

WY2021 was hard on everyone in the Big Hole. This past year resulted in a significant drought and it could take multiple seasons to recover. The Big Hole River experienced historic low river levels, near record low precipitation, and record high temperatures during the summer months.

The potential good news is that we have transitioned into a back-to-back La Nina event (Double-dip La Nina), which historically lends to strong winters in Montana and above average precipitation.

Montana: June-July 2021		
Average Temperature warmest on record		
Avg Temp	20 th Century Average	Departure
69°F	62°F	7.0°F
Precipitation ranked driest on record		
Precip	20 th Century Average	Departure
1.54"	4.45"	-2.91"



Building Drought Resilience in the Big Hole

A Year for the Record Books

2021 Drought Season Recap

Big Hole River (BHR) Section I was closed to fishing due to low flow in late June and stayed closed throughout the water year. Hoot Owl Restrictions were implemented in Section V in late June; the section was moved to full closure three weeks later. Sections II and IV were under Hoot Owl Restrictions from early July to mid-August, when both sections were closed to fishing due to low flows. Section III remained open throughout the summer but reached voluntary drought plan triggers for the first time in the DMP's history.

View current river conditions or access the [BHR Drought Management Plan](#) by visiting [bhwc.org](#). The BHR Drought Subcommittee will meet this fall to review the 2021 season, update the DMP as needed, and plan for 2022.

2021 Fishing Restrictions

Section	Flow-based Fishing Restrictions	Temp-based Fishing Restrictions
Section I: Saginaw Bridge on Skinner Meadows Rd. to North Fork BHR confluence	Full fishing closure (6/28 to 10/31)	
Section II: North Fork Big Hole River confluence to Dickie Bridge	Full fishing closure (8/17 to 10/20)	Hoot Owl Restriction (7/1 to 8/17 when moved to closure)
Section III: Dickie Bridge to MFWP Maiden Rock FAS		
Section IV: MFWP Maiden Rock FAS to Tony Schoonen FAS	Full fishing closure (8/17 to 10/18)	Hoot Owl Restriction (7/1 to 8/17 when moved to closure)
Section V: Tony Schoonen FAS to confluence with Jefferson River	Full Fishing Closure (7/21 to 10/21)	Hoot Owl Restriction (6/28 to 7/21 when moved to closure)

Low-tech, High Impact

Restoring a Dry Meadow for Wildlife, Water

On August 13th, BHWC co-hosted a volunteer restoration event with MFWP on the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area. Twenty-two people helped repair a degraded wetland meadow in the French Creek drainage. Together we built 37 low-tech, rock "Zeedyk" structures to slow and store spring runoff. It was a "rocking" success! Next year, the area will hold more water on the landscape and will provide invaluable wildlife habitat.

The value of mesic areas: Mesic areas (i.e. wet meadows and riparian areas) provide critically important habitat for many species. Functioning mesic areas capture and store water in the soil, slowly releasing it after runoff events and ensuring continued base flows throughout the growing season. Holding water in the soil later into the summer results in plant communities that are more productive, providing essential food and cover for insects, wildlife, and livestock.

Unfortunately, many of these precious mesic areas are degraded and in desperate need of repair in the Big Hole watershed and throughout Southwest Montana. But thanks to BHWC, MFWP, TNC/Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership, MCC, DNRC, NRCS, Intermountain West Joint Venture, the Audubon Society, Skyline Sportsmen's Association, Anaconda Sportsman's Club, local landowners, this wetland meadow is now on the road to recovery! We were also joined by a cute toddler and several dogs, and everyone enjoyed the day.

This event was part of our initiative to restore the French Creek watershed, funded by the Bureau of Reclamation. To learn more about the restoration of French Creek, click here: <https://bhwc.org/project/lower-french-creek>.

A deep, heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who helped with this important project.



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Fish & Water

It All Starts Here

Gathering Local Input on the Lower River

This last season was a prime example of how truly important every drop of water is in our watershed, which is why we have recently focused our attention to irrigation infrastructure improvement and efficiency projects. We are actively working with landowners in Wise River and Melrose to identify and prioritize projects.

Temperature, snowpack and precipitation may increasingly look like 2021. Are there changes in irrigation management and infrastructure you see that could lead to measurable results for water conservation? If you have a project, we'll get the money to get it done. Every drop counts!



Impaired No More

Assessing Tribs for Possible De-Listing

This summer, BHWC engaged the DEQ to begin the State's first effort at de-listing a large basin for sediment, in this case, the French Creek watershed. These streams were historically impacted by placer mining, logging, livestock grazing, aerial deposition of heavy metals from smelting in nearby Anaconda, and the loss of beaver. As a result, the French Creek drainage and many of its tributaries were placed on Montana DEQ's 303(d) list of impaired waters and BHWC prioritized this drainage for action in our Watershed Restoration Plan of 2012.

BHWC, MFWP, and a slew of great partners have invested heavily in projects to restore streams, uplands and fish habitat in this drainage over many years and have removed thousands of tons of sediment from the system.

With the help of our Watershed Health intern, Max Hanson, and DEQ personnel, we spent summer 2021 documenting habitat, sediment, and sediment-related conditions on these streams. As part of his graduate work, he'll be setting us up with a roadmap to de-list the basin. This is a major undertaking and has the potential to be the first largescale delisting of streams in the state of Montana! We are grateful to have forged such a strong partnership with Montana DEQ over the years and to now have the opportunity to work through this process together.



Fish & Water

Let 'em Spawn

New Brown Trout Fishing Regulations

From MFWP: New fishing regulations for the Big Hole River are now in effect after they were passed by the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission in August. These include:

- Catch and release only for brown trout from the mouth of the river upstream to Dickie Bridge.
- A seasonal fishing closure between the Bureau of Land Management's Maiden Rock site and Brownes Bridge Fishing Access Site from November 1 until the third Saturday in May.
- Artificial lures and single-pointed hooks only from the mouth of the river upstream to Dickie Bridge. No treble or double hooks are allowed. Anglers may remove treble or double hooks.



For more information about fishing regulations or waterbody restrictions and closures, visit fwp.mt.gov/fish.

What's Up Next?

Upper Oregon Creek

We are proud to introduce the Upper Oregon Creek Restoration Project!

This project is just upstream of our 2019 Oregon Creek restoration and will address the last known upland sediment source created by aerial emissions from smelting activities in Anaconda. Our 2019 Oregon Creek project created a sediment capture reach out of a placer mined area at its mouth but did not address the continual upland sediment source coming from directly upstream.

This new project will employ proven techniques to capture sediment and establish vegetation on bare slopes. Work will begin early next spring. Project partners include: MT DEQ, MFWP, NRDP, and the Trout and Salmon Foundation.

Of Mushrooms and Mines

Our Innovative Pilot Study at Elkhorn

It was a busy summer season at the Elkhorn Mine and Mill! We completed another series of water quality sampling for DEQ, partnered with Montana Tech and the Montana Bureau of Mines on drone mapping studies, and finalized our Soils Characterization Sampling and Analysis Plan. Unfortunately, implementation of the soils characterization will have to wait until next year when funding becomes available.

In more exciting news, BHCW has secured a grant through the DNRC to design and install a pilot bio-absorbent filtration system to treat the acid mine drainage coming out of the 1000' adit (mine shaft). What is a bio-absorbent filtration system, you may ask? We will be piloting the use of mycelium (aka mushrooms) for heavy metal absorption.

Partnering with local experts Montana BioAgriculture Inc., (who make fish protein from spent barley using fungus in Melrose), we will develop and deploy a mycelial screen through which we run acid mine drainage from the Elkhorn adit. Many lab studies have shown that the different ionic charge between the metals and mycelial mass can bind metals to the substrate and remove it from water. Our project will consist of a lab demonstration study first, then the installation of an on-site filtration system. Project Partners include DNRC, BoR, Beaverhead CD, MBMG, MFWP, MDEQ, MTech, USFS, and WindenWater LLC.

To see the video from the first drone flight into the historic Elkhorn Mine adit, visit our [YouTube channel](#) (click the link or search Big Hole Watershed Committee in YouTube).



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Wildlife & Uplands

Wolves, Fires, and Grizzlies — Oh My!

Another Wild Season for Range Rider Chet Robertson

September 30th marked the end of another Upper Big Hole Range Rider season – Chet Robertson’s 11th to be exact. Chet monitors six USFS allotments for seven livestock producers each summer with the goal of deterring conflict between livestock and large carnivores like wolves and bears. Another main goal of the program is to help producers find carcasses quickly so they can get reimbursed by the state for their losses. Chet is an employee of BHWC.

This year was a unique one for Chet. From putting out literal fires to warning campers and hunters about the grizzly bear roaming the forest, Chet took on several responsibilities that are not usually parts of his day-to-day workload.



In July, he stumbled across a fresh lightening-strike fire and quickly jumped into action. Chet used the chainsaw he carries and some common sense to prevent the fire from spreading while he called the USFS and local ranchers for help. This fire was small, but it could have grown much larger if not for Chet! (And we had more than enough fires in the Big Hole this summer.)

Chet saw plenty of the forest’s usual inhabitants this year, like elk and grouse. He also tracked wolves and photographed a few of them with the program’s game cameras. Though wolves were active in the forest this year, there were no confirmed depredations by wolves on allotments enrolled in the rider program.

The real excitement of the season came in late August, when Chet found tracks that he was almost certain were made by a grizzly bear. MFWP and our game cameras later confirmed it to be a young, male grizzly bear, and Chet spent a good deal of the rest of the summer following its tracks. He nicknamed the bear, “Caleb”.

We’ve known for years that grizzlies were coming through and potentially moving into the Big Hole, but with this year’s photos (and multiple other grizzly bear sightings reported throughout the watershed), it’s a good time for a reminder to be bear aware. Whether you’re working or playing, please stay safe in the Big Hole watershed!



Wildlife & Uplands

Gearing up for Grizzlies and Warding off Wolves

Ways to Be Bear Aware

A few recommendations to help you stay safe while working or recreating in bear country:

- Carry bear spray
- Travel in groups when possible
- Make noise
- Reach out to People and Carnivores in Dillon for recommendations and resources to make your operation more bear-resistant.



Services BHWC Offers to Help You Prevent Wildlife Conflict

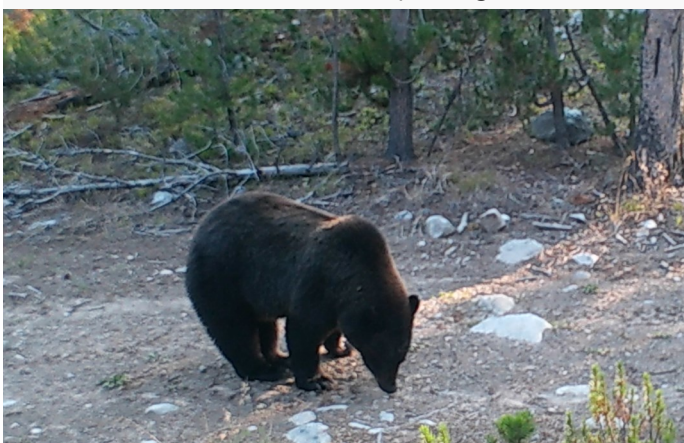
BHWC offers a variety of services and supplies to help combat wildlife depredation:

- Upper Big Hole Range Rider Program
- Livestock Carcass Removal/Composting
 - ⇒ Text CARCASS To 26989 for more info
- Free bear-resistant garbage cans to Big Hole watershed residents, while supplies last
- Bear safety trainings and info offered periodically

Supplies You Can Borrow

Below is a list of items BHWC has to borrow or test: Contact Tana Nulph, BHWC Associate Director, at: 406-267-3421 or email tnulph@bhwc.org.

- Books about wolves, bears, and conflict avoidance
- Scare devices
- Temporary e-fencing
- Bear spray (inert & real)
- Bear-resistant backpacking canisters



Gathering Grizzly Bear Hair

Preliminary Results of USFWS Study

The USFWS shared the preliminary results of their 2021 Southwest Montana grizzly bear study at a meeting in Wisdom on October 14th. Six crews with USFWS, Defenders of Wildlife, and Lolo National Forest set up hair snare corrals at 140 sites on USFS land to gather samples for DNA analysis. Samples were gathered over 3-4 weeks with a total of 3,446 corral nights.

Results may help to determine whether grizzlies are coming into the Big Hole from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, or both.

Preliminary Results:

- 2 grizzly bears detected by camera at only 1 site (in the Bitterroot)
- 805 hair samples collected
- 181 hair samples sent to lab for DNA analysis
- **DNA results will be available spring 2022. BHWC will share them when they are published.**

Big Hole Watershed Committee
P.O. Box 21
Divide, MT 59727

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FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER



**BIG HOLE
WATERSHED COMMITTEE**
Conservation Through Consensus.

**Big Hole Watershed
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/bigholewc



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Conservation Through Consensus Since 1995

Mission: To seek understanding and agreement among individuals and groups with diverse viewpoints on water use and management in the Big Hole River watershed of Southwest Montana.

Established in 1995, the Big Hole Watershed Committee (BHWC) is a collaborative organization representing diverse regional interests, including ranchers, sportsmen, conservationists, tourists, and community members. For two decades, BHWC has taken a leadership role in enhancing the vitality of the Big Hole River, the surrounding watershed and communities, and the diverse and rare wildlife that inhabits the Big Hole Valley. The Big Hole River is the lifeblood for the surrounding area's natural and agricultural legacies, and the foundation for the region's economy. By proactively working to conserve this precious resource, BHWC is enriching one of Montana's last, best places for local residents and visitors from around the world.

BHWC is a consensus-driven, multi-stakeholder entity that works closely with other conservation organizations as well as local, State, and Federal agencies on watershed restoration and management plans.

The Big Hole Watershed Committee is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax deductible as allowable by law. *Our tax identification number is 11-3737644.*

Donate online!
Visit bhwc.org and click
the “Donate” button.