



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

April 20th, 2022 – 7:00 pm at the Divide Grange
Zoom option also provided

In Attendance

In-person: Pedro Marques, BHWC; Tana Nulph, BHWC; Ben LaPorte, BHWC; Tom Bowler, Resident; Betty Bowler, Resident; Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher/BHWC; Paul Cleary, Resident/BHWC; Randy Smith, Rancher/BHWC; Pete Kamperschroer, Resident; Erik Kalsta, Rancher/BHWC; Jim Dennehy, BSB Water/BHWC; Diane Hutton, Resident; John Reinhardt, Rancher/BHWC; John Moodry, BSB Weeds; Jarrett Payne, MFWP; Mark Raffety, Rancher/BHWC; Peter Frick, Rancher/BHWC; Mark Kambich, Rancher/BHWC; Hans Humbert, Rancher/BHWC; Amber Burch, Beaverhead County Weeds; Craig Fellin, Big Hole Lodge; Michael Mooney, BLM-Dillon; and Craig Christopherson.

Zoom: Allegra Sundstrom; Jan Bowey, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest; Andy Suenram, resident/BHWC; and Sierra Harris, TNC/BHWC.

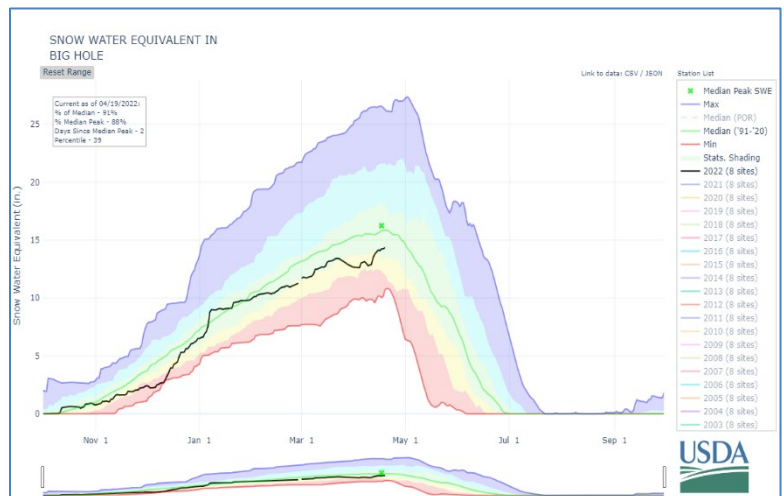
Meeting Minutes

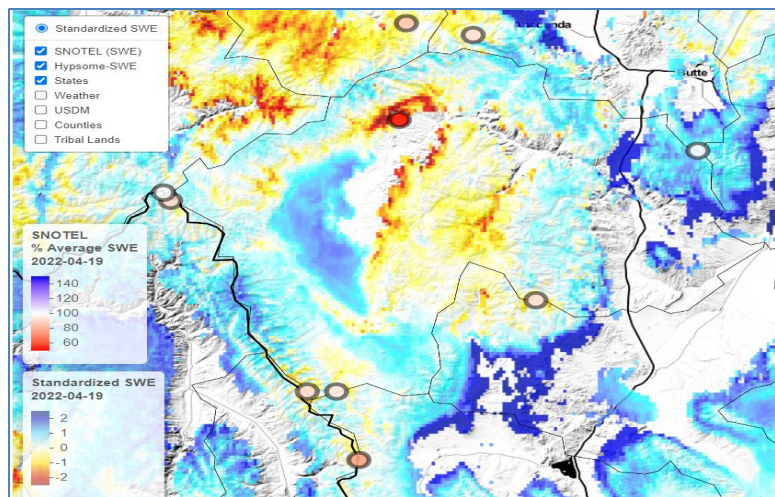
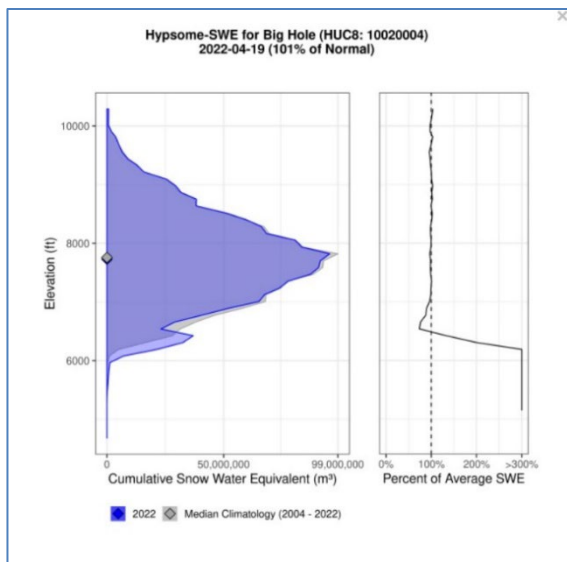
BHWC monthly meetings are now held at the Divide Grange with a virtual (Zoom) option provided thanks to Southern Montana Telephone Company, who donated the internet service. Meeting minutes and recordings are available at <https://bhwc.org/monthly-meetings/> (scroll down for meeting minutes archive). Printed copies are available during in-person meetings. Contact Tana Nulph, BHWC Associate Director, at tnulph@bhwc.org or (406) 267-3421 to suggest additions or corrections.

Reports

Streamflow/Snowpack Report as of April 19, 2022 – Matt Norberg, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

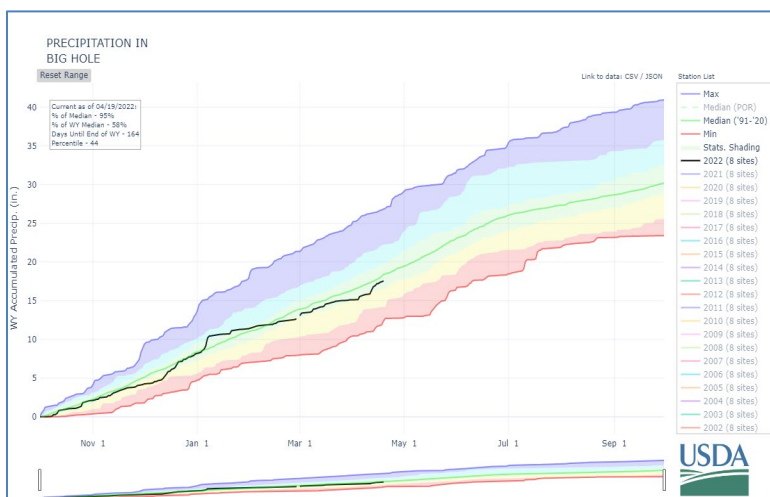
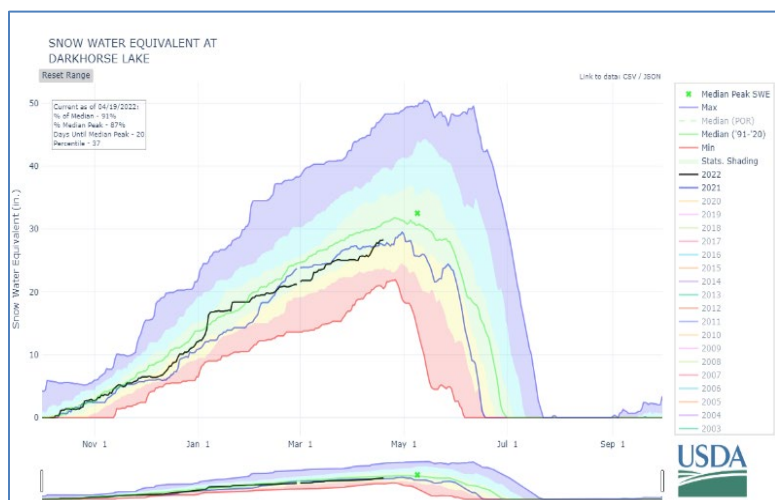
- **Streamflows:** Stream gages along the Big Hole are online and reporting data. Wisdom Bridge and Dickie Bridge gages are ice affected due to the recent and hopefully extended cold air temperatures. The remainder of the stream gages are well below the long-term median flows. Again, this is due to cold temperatures which is keeping valley/mid elevation snowmelt at bay for the meantime.





- **Precipitation/Snowpack:** The NRCS is reporting that precipitation for the Big Hole basin is currently 95% of median conditions. The median peak snowpack date for the Big Hole River basin was April 17th, and the Big Hole peaked at 88%, but hopefully we are not done yet building snowpack! Snow Water

Equivalent is currently 91% of 1991-2020 median conditions. We are above where we were last year in terms of snowpack and total precipitation. The recent storm systems Montana and the Big Hole have encountered have definitely helped bring up SWE and the cooler temperatures have subsided runoff. Satellite imagery/hypsometry is showing a better snowpack picture with 101% of normal conditions from 2004-current. Darkhorse SNOTEL is currently reporting 28.3 inches SWE and is 91% of median conditions. Calvert Creek SNOTEL (6430 ft) is currently reporting 2% of median conditions and is basically melted out which is approximately a 1.5 weeks earlier than last year. The remaining representative Big Hole SNOTEL sites range from 91-102%.

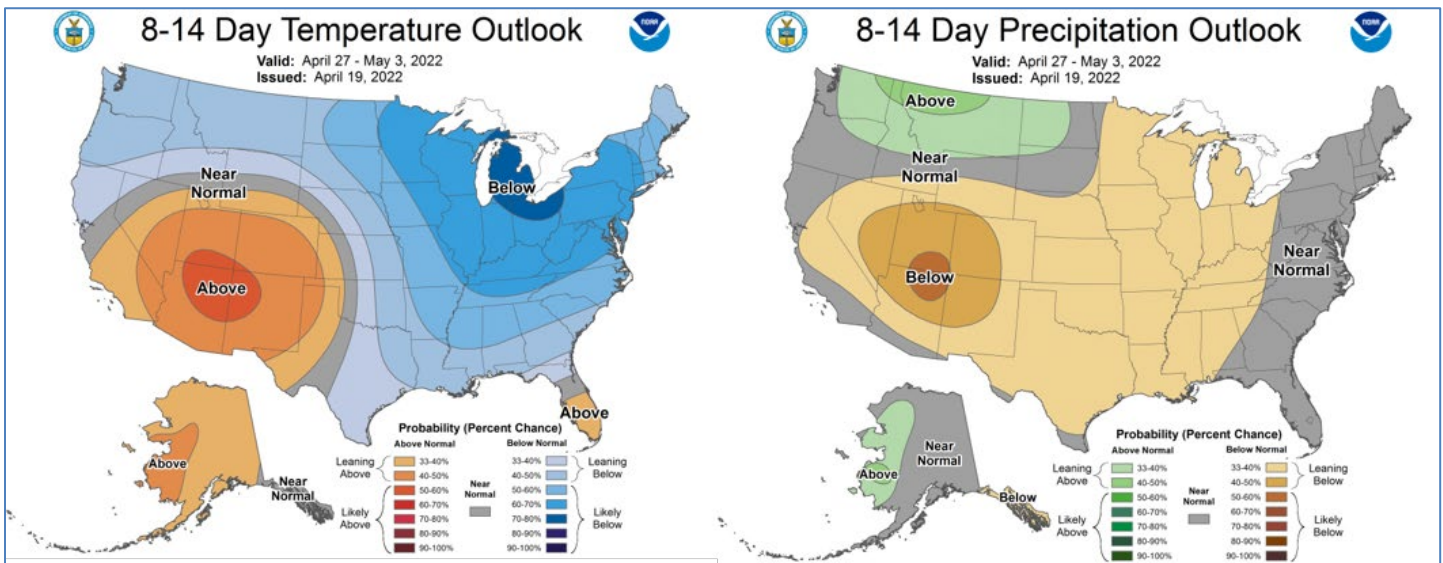
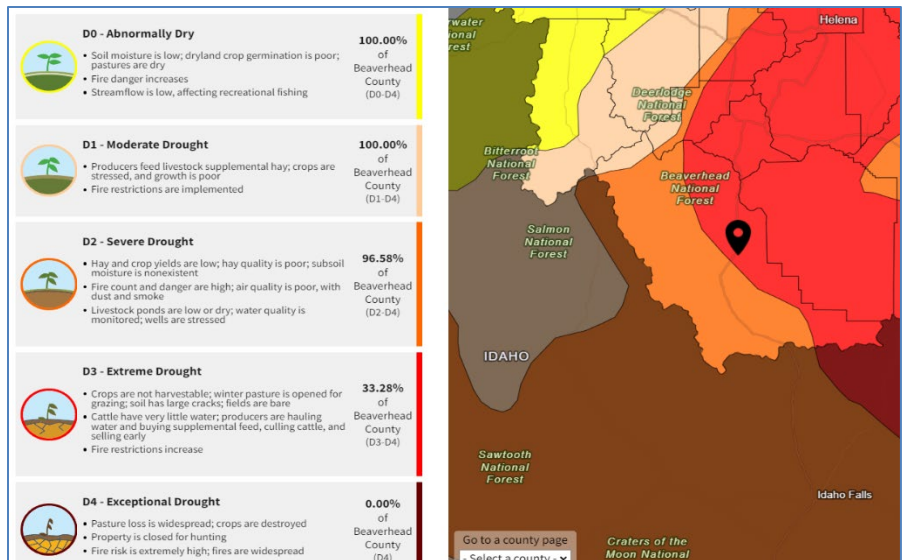


- **Drought Status:** Parts of Beaverhead and Deer Lodge counties have been upgraded to D2, while Silver Bow County remains in D3 status:
- **8-14-day Outlook:** The 8-14-day outlook predicts below average temperatures and near normal to slightly above precipitation.
- **Seasonal Outlook:** The May, June, July outlook predicts a transition to equal to slightly above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. The remaining summer months

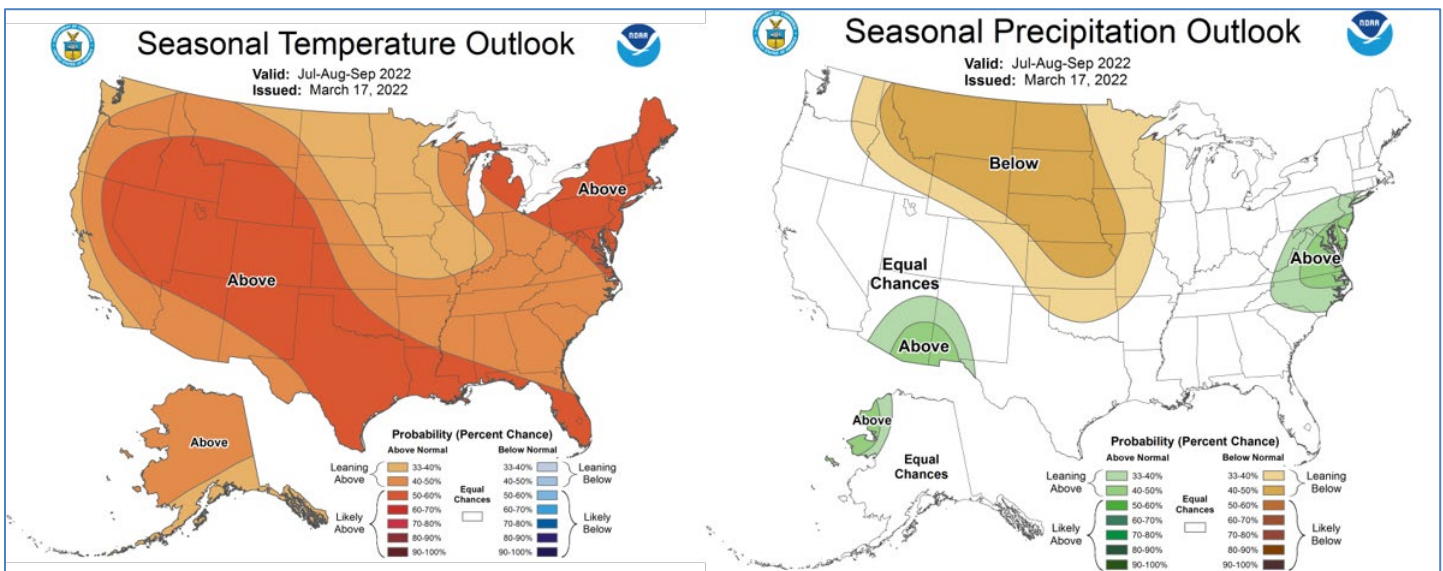
are predicted to become increasingly warmer and drier. Water users should expect shortages during the late spring/summer months which is all dependent upon air temperatures and precipitation. While current conditions are trending in the right direction the prolonged forecast could mimic last year's hot/dry conditions.

- (From NOAA): ENSO Alert System Status: La Niña Advisory

- Synopsis: La Niña is favored to continue through the Northern Hemisphere summer (59% chance during June-



August 2022), with a 50-55% chance through the fall.



Drought Management Plan – Pedro Marques, Executive Director

- Vote to adopt updated 2022 Drought Management Plan – ***all in favor, motion passed***
 - No updates to river sections, triggers, or measurement locations
 - Voluntary conservation actions added for anglers
 - Plan made more concise
 - Communication goals added/clarified
- Secured DNRC Watershed Management Grant (\$25,300) to improve communications around drought, to include but not limited to:
 - Weekly river condition reports during summer via email/text (contact us to get on the list)

Director's Report – Pedro Marques, Executive Director

- FAS infographic/signage: Infographic designed with funding from Beaverhead County United Way – will be put up at FAS across the Big Hole – general message: the Big Hole is a shared resource. We all benefit when conditions are good and we all suffer when conditions are bad. Ways to give back to the river include the DMP, participation with BHWC, and our conservation fund. Will include a QR code to access more information/donation page. Refining language.
- Watershed map: designed in partnership with Geum Environmental. Represents the whole watershed – isn't specific to fishing or any other recreational use. Includes BHWC projects and studies. To summarize/memorialize the 25 years of BHWC so far.
- Irrigation funding/ARPA: requested \$500,000 but only secured \$50,000 because ARPA wanted to see engineered designs on headgates. The good thing is, we've lined up these projects and scoped them out, so we'll use this money to continue development of these projects and will look for other pots of funding.
 - There is still room for more project proposals. Please reach out to Pedro if you have any ideas.
- BLM Agreement
- Water storage – renewed emphasis
 - Pedro is reviewing past studies and reports to reassess and summarize potential for water storage (i.e., reservoirs) in the Big Hole.
 - Message is – when these reports were completed, we accepted “No” too quickly. We need to revisit the issue of reservoir storage for the long-term sustainability of our resource.
 - May be a mosaic of several smaller reservoirs rather than one huge one.
- Nationwide permit review Army Corps
- Watershed Restoration Plan update underway
- Communications:
 - Montana Standard [River in Peril](#) article series
 - Life in the Land: Big Hole film festival
 - First full showing: June 1st, p.m. – Depot Theatre, Dillon
 - BHWC will have a table, Q&A session with some of the people represented in the film.
 - Hope to see as many of you as possible there.
 - 15-minute version of full film shown as part of International Wildlife Film Festival in Missoula on Monday, April 25th.

Steering Committee Report – Randy Smith, Chair and Jim Hagenbarth, Vice-Chair

- Everything is going well. Pedro and the crew are doing a great job.

- Working to communicate (with granting agencies) the need to increase billing rates on grants based on inflation.

Wildlife Report – Tana Nulph, Associate Director

- Carcass Removal – Spring 2022: BHWC will offer carcass removal March-May, 2022. For more information, text “carcass” to 26989, [click here](#), or call John Costa, Wildlife Program Technician at 209-628-2225.
- Wildlife Connectivity/Collisions:
 - BHWC met with MDT, Yellowstone Safe Passages, Center for Large Landscape Conservation
 - Assessing issues with wildlife collisions in the Big Hole:
 - Is there a problem?
 - Where are the problem areas?
 - What can residents do if they are experiencing a lot of wildlife collisions or carcasses from collisions in their area?
 - What is the process for individuals to report wildlife collisions?
 - MDT is creating an interactive map tool to look up collision information based on location, species, date, etc. (hoping to have them present on this tool at a later BHWC meeting, possibly this fall).
 - Yellowstone Safe Passages is working to reduce collisions along Highway 89 (from Livingston to Gardiner) using a variety of tools, but mainly through listening and building partnerships
 - There is a lot to think about when considering wildlife crossings – it’s not as simple as just building a fence, because you might just push the wildlife into a worse situation or create problems for your neighbor.
 - Potential: If there is need in the Big Hole, and available funding, BHWC could work with local MDT and use the new map tool to prioritize areas where wildlife collisions are occurring and develop solutions (e.g., education, signage, structures, dialog, etc.).

Livestock Carcass Removal & Composting

PICK-UP: 209-628-2225 INFO: 406-267-3421




REDUCE PREDATOR CONFLICT

COMPOST YOUR CARCASSES

Service free to Big Hole Valley Ranchers March-May; donations accepted.

More info: bhwc.org or text 'carcass' to 26989

Partners & Funders: Livestock Loss Board, MDT, NFWF, NRCS, WLA, People and Carnivores, USFWS, HoTR, MDEQ, Vital Ground Foundation, and local ranchers.

Restoration Report – Ben LaPorte, Program Manager

- BLM Participating Agreement – submitted
 - East Pioneers and Rochester Creek Sub-watersheds
 - Provide capacity support for planning, coordination, logistics, and implementation of restoration projects:
 - LTPBR Stream enhancement/restoration
 - Wetland/mesic enhancement/restoration
 - Conifer encroachment
 - Elkhorn Mine and Mill
 - Soils Characterization planning
 - Lab visit to Montana BioAgriculture
 - Anaconda Uplands
 - NRDP, EPA, DEQ, MFWP meetings

New Business

- Cloud seeding – Jim Hagenbarth
 - Cloud seeding is an important potential solution to water availability issues, but we must manage watershed yield too. If there are too many conifers, they will take up a lot of the extra snow/water you may produce by cloud seeding.
 - A lot of novel ideas out there and it's important that we look at them.
 - BHWC will support Jim in his push for cloud seeding, assuming everyone agrees.
 - Board election – candidate Diane Hutton
 - ***All in favor, motion passed – Diane joined BHWC governing board***
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Meeting Topic: Invasive Weeds in the Big Hole Watershed

Presented by: Amber Burch, Beaverhead County; John Moodry, Butte-Silver Bow County; Mike Mooney, Bureau of Land Management – Dillon; and Jan Bowey, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

John Moodry – Butte-Silver Bow County

- It's nice to be back after COVID-19 kept BSB-weeds from attending many in-person meetings and events over the past two years.
- Drought conditions over the last two years have extended the spray season and as a result, BSB-weeds has altered their approach to weed spraying:
 - More fall applications than they've ever done in the past because they have the window of opportunity.
 - This spring:
 - Butte-Silver Bow properties in the Big Hole: any county owned properties or roads, water lines going out to Fleecer (Big Hole Pump Station)
 - Won't start doing highway work until July 1 due to budgetary reasons
- 2-planned spray days with USFS/MFWP – volunteers welcome:
 - Fleecer – June 29th (meet at South entrance to game range in Divide)
 - High Rye area/Anaconda uplands – June 30th
 - BSB-weeds provides herbicide to landowners, hoping for a lot of participation this year.
- Union Pacific Railroad – sent survey to anyone in BSB county who is adjacent to the railroad, working to get them in compliance. Need support of adjoining landowners/comments.
 - To submit comments, get in touch with John Moodry or Mark Kambich (or reach out to BHWC and we can connect you with one of them).
 - Comment from BHWC would be helpful as well.
 - For 5 years, BSB has been fighting with the railroad, because they won't allow BSB's weed-spraying contractor to address weeds on their property.
 - How far do they own on either side of the tracks?
 - Varies, but about 70-120 feet total width.
- *Discussion:*
 - *What does it mean that the railroad is not in compliance? Are they spreading weeds with their trains?*
 - *Trains are a great vector to transport weeds, but the reason they're not in compliance is that they're not treating the weeds on their properties.*
 - *Are there any other particular species outside the Union Pacific that we should be aware of? Like Ventenata?*

- *We have not identified any Ventenata. Dyer's Woad identified a few years ago but controlled. Looking at Hound's tongue, Spotted Knapweed, Hoary Alyssum,*
- Drought affects weeds the same way it affects your grasses. In a bad drought, grass isn't growing much, but neither are weeds. But if we get a burst of moisture, the weeds will propagate just as fast as the grasses do. The only good thing about drought is that it eventually ends!
- Note: Mile High CD is in support of water storage projects in the Big Hole watershed.

Mike Mooney – Bureau of Land Management, Dillon Field Office

- Have a few projects planned this year:
 - Dalmatian toadflax found up Soap Gulch, infestation growing substantially – will try to keep this contained.
 - East Pioneers – in a few years, prescribed fire to help control conifer encroachment. Afterward, BLM will follow up with cheatgrass treatments.
 - Wisdom – assessment on all BLM ground in the Big Hole Valley including weeds, riparian conditions, etc.
 - BLM will give out free herbicide to anyone willing to treat on BLM land. Just come into the office and fill out a quick form and let Mike know where you treated. The more eyes out there, the better – a crew of 6 covering almost 1 million acres, so they can use the help.
 - *Discussion:*
 - *What are you treating your cheatgrass with?*
 - *Plateau or Imazapic*

Amber Burch – Beaverhead County

- Ongoing project along the Big Hole and Wise River corridors
 - Noxious weeds trust fund – awarded \$25,000 to have a contractor working within 100-foot corridor of the river
 - For the last few years, have been focusing on Wise River section down to Silver Bridge.
 - This year, BVHD-weeds will be extending river treatments lower down the river into the Melrose/Glen area.
 - Landowners can expect contractor to reach out to secure access to river.
- Treated 275 acres along the river corridor:
 - Mainly spotted knapweed, houndstongue, hoary alyssum
 - Also, some common tansy and oxeye daisy
- Resource Advisory Council – USFS
 - Scenic Byway
 - Triangle Gulch/Quartz Hill – treated 350 acres aerially in 2020 – a very bad knapweed infestation. Last year, did ground applications in same area.
 - Knapweed
 - Yellow toadflax
 - Houndstongue
 - Wisdom (Twin Lakes Road to Mussigbrod): BVHD-weeds crews/commercial applicator treated 10 acres, will repeat this year. If you're familiar with the area and know of some problems, please let Amber know so they can get commercial applicators/crews to the right place and get those weeds treated.
 - Melrose (Trapper Creek area): same – treated in 2021, will treat again this year. Please contact Amber with any concerns.
- Weedwhacker Ball:

- Cancelled in 2021
 - Received ~\$7,500 in cash donations in lieu of ball – a lot of this will be used as match for Big Hole River corridor project (to pay commercial applicators)
- Tentatively scheduled the ball for September 17th, 2022
- Fire areas:
 - Working with USFS on Alder Creek, Trail Creek
 - Working to get money into agreement to offer contracts to treat weeds in those areas
- List of cooperative spray days – *attached*
 - Encourage folks to come out and help
 - Bring spray tank, we can fill it up for you
 - Putting together map of spray day locations
- Weeds to pay attention to – check field guide:
 - Ventenata – found some near Wisdom, along Pioneer Scenic Byway
 - Like cheatgrass, such high silica content that no domestic or wild animals will eat it
 - *Discussion:*
 - *What is the protocol if you see ventenata (call someone, yank it out)?*
 - *It would be best to contact someone in weeds, so they can positively identify it as ventenata. Take a GPS waypoint if possible.*
 - Rush skeletonweed – no leaf structure so it is difficult to kill it. Will be one of the only things that is still green in the fall. Seeds float in the wind like dandelion seeds – spreads very quickly. Has been identified in three areas in the Big Hole:
 - Mystic Lake Trailhead
 - Hamilton Ranch near Carroll Hill
 - BLM Property – Miner Lake Road
 - Blue weed – concern for folks in Wisdom area. Large population in Ravalli County.
 - Houndstongue – *Mogulones crucifer* – insect that targets Houndstongue. Has moved in and is surrounding Beaverhead County. Still listed as a “pest”, so can’t be moved or propagated. Petitioned APHIS to change its status.
 - Will be a game changer for Houndstongue management.
 - *Discussion:*
 - *Years ago, they used to have shaker cans that had Tordon in them. Is there any chance to use them again – not with Tordon – but are there any chemicals you can use that you don’t have to be certified for*
 - *Not that we know of, it’s difficult to regulate the application rate using these methods, which is why a lot of chemical companies have moved away from making those cans.*
 - *Do you have the spray days on the county webpage?*
 - *Not yet, but we will. We will post on Facebook, too.*
 - *Educational event April 26 in Lima on Weeds & Drought*
 - *Hopefully will have a training in the Wise River area this fall.*
- [EDDMapS](#) (EDDMapS West, EDDMapS Pro), iNaturalist Seek app

Jan Bowey – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

- Recently discovered some ventenata in New Mexico – looked like weird-looking cheatgrass (took it to local BLM office who confirmed it to be ventenata)
- Excited about biocontrol for houndstongue – project near Georgetown Lake was incredibly successful.
 - Were worried that the bugs would move onto native bluebell, but so far, they have not.

- Yellow toadflax & dalmatian toadflax hybridizing in Boulder area. Biocontrol agents don't touch the hybrids.
- North of the Big Hole (Boulder, Delmoe Lake area): Yellow toadflax is rapidly expanding.
- 2021:
 - Sprayed 1,400 acres on Wisdom Ranger District
 - 25% increase from previous years
 - 85% knapweed
 - Remainder oxeye daisy and houndstongue
- Have bumped a lot of our aerial spraying into October.
 - Seems to be effective (from personal observation) on knapweed using Milestone
 - Native forbs seem to be bouncing back more quickly in the summer – possibly because they're dormant when we spray in the fall.
 - Can get about 3-4 years off an aerial spray before it needs to be repeated.
 - Trying to get a contract together to treat on Fleecer in conjunction with the MFWP Game Range, which has lost some of its funding.
 - Last late-season aerial spray on Fleecer lasted about 4 years.
- Secured RAC funding, processing through Beaverhead County agreement.
 - Amber's crews/contractors will spray those areas for the USFS.
 - Due to a shift in priorities and a change in the availability of equipment and employees to cover enough areas.
 - Beneficial because Beaverhead County can get contracting done much more quickly and affordably than the Forest can.
- Burned areas – our priority this year (and for the next 4-5 years):
 - Noxious weeds love burned areas – all the excess Nitrogen from downed trees allows weeds to "take off".
 - In the past, the Forest would receive special funding to treat noxious weeds in burned areas in for one year. (Frustrating because it's not effective to treat for only one year.) This year, the Forest was able to tap into some disaster funding to treat for an additional four years for a total of five years of weed treatments post-burn.
 - Hoping to knock weeds back to the roads, where they'll be easier to handle and contain.
 - Biocontrol releases deep within the interior of burned areas that are not likely to be treated on a regular basis.
 - The tradeoff – a decrease in treatment of normal acres:
 - The season is only so long and only so many areas can be treated.
 - Some roads, campgrounds will not be treated as frequently as they normally would be, because focus is being shifted to burned areas.
- Beaverhead County helping the Forest with contracting
- Timber treatments/sales:
 - Pintler Face
 - Will treat these areas before they're harvested to knock down existing infestations.
 - Have been seen an increase in weeds in timber sale areas about a year after they start – primarily due to road disturbance from logging trucks. Treating these areas prior to sales will help get ahead of this problem.

Upcoming Meetings

- May 18, 2022: **Big Hole River Fishery Update**

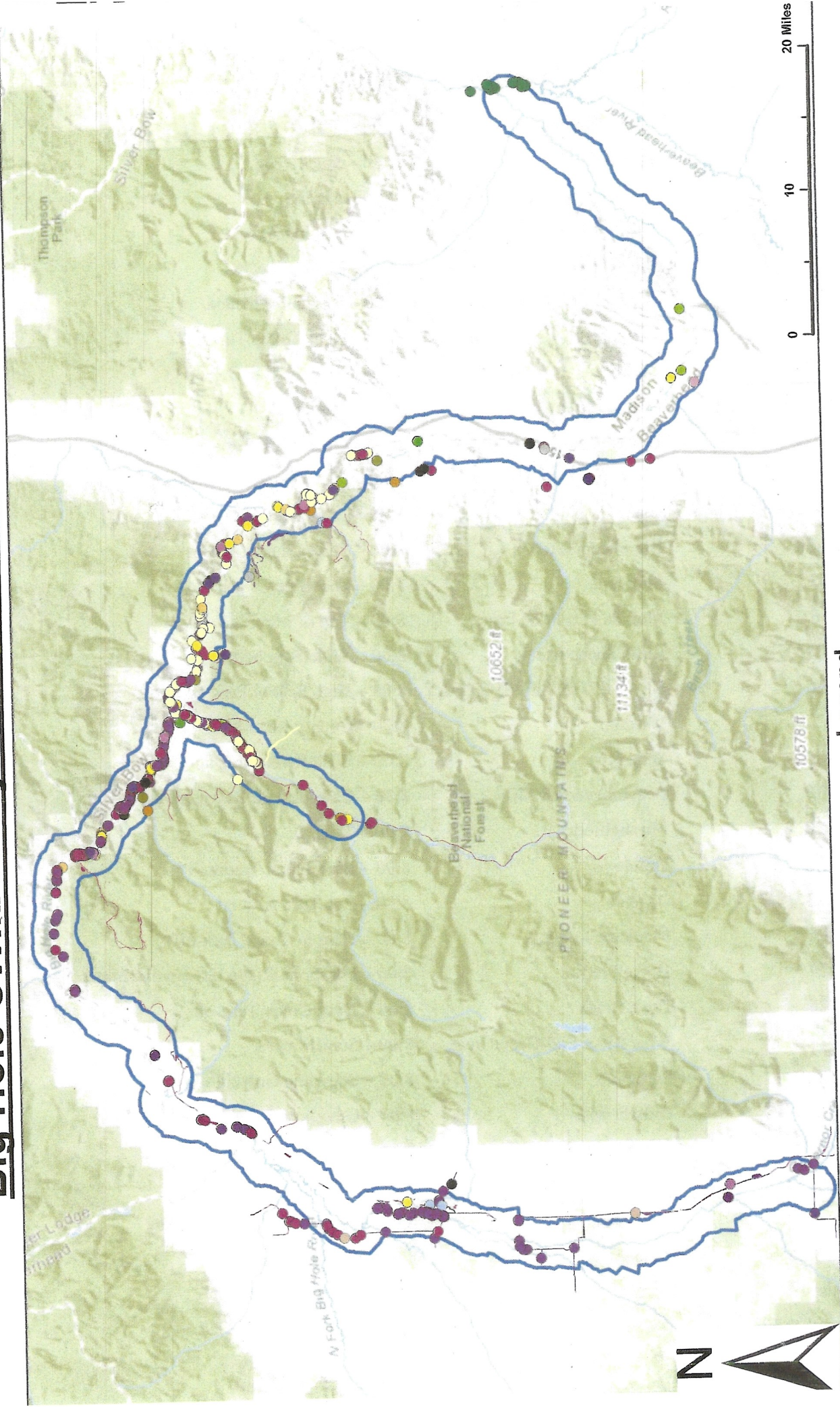
- 7:00 pm at the Divide Grange/Zoom
- June 15, 2022: **Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Communications and Direction**
 - 7:00 pm at the Divide Grange/Zoom

Adjourn

BEAVERHEAD COUNTY WEED DAYS 2022

May 31 – June 1-2	Crew Training	8:00 – TBD
June 9	Burma	7:30 – Stack Yard
June 14	Clark Canyon Dam	7:00 – Marina
June 15	Glen	7:30 – Fishing Access
June 16	Maiden Rock	7:30 – Fishing Access
June 17	Argenta	8:00 – Bus Turn Around
June 21	Blacktail	7:30 – Rock Creek Turn-off
June 22	Melrose	7:30 – Melrose Bar
June 23	Scenic Byway	8:00 – Fire Hall
June 24	Dewey Cemetery	8:00 – Quartz Hill Turn-off
June 28	Lima Dam	8:00 – BLM Access (Old Taft Property)
June 29	Lima	7:30 – Lima Rest Area
June 30	Big Sheep Creek	8:00 – Sheep Shearing Pens
July 5	Snowline	8:00 – Snowline Gravel Pit
July 6	Monida Hill/Price Peat	8:00 – Top of Monida Pass
July 7	Little Sheep Creek	8:00 – Wide Spot before Y
July 9	BEAVERHEAD WEED DAY	8:00 – High School Parking Lot
July 12	Wisdom	8:00 – County Road Shop
July 15	Wise River	8:00 – Wise River Fire Hall
July 19	Beaverhead/Ravalli	8:30 – Chief Joseph Pass Turn-off
July 20	Mussigbrod	9:00 – TBD
July 22	Divide	8:00 – Blue Moon Trading Post
July 23	Argenta	8:00 – Bus Turn Around
July 26	Medicine Lodge	8:00 – Hansen Creek Turn-off
July 27	Horse Prairie	8:00 – Shoshone Ridge Interpretive Site
July 28	Dyce Creek	8:00 – Dyce Creek Turn-off
July 29	Wise River Pull/Deep Creek	8:00 – Stanchfield's
August 2	Snowline	8:00 – Snowline Gravel Pit
August 6	Grasshopper	8:00 – Grasshopper Inn
August 9	Wolverine	9:00 – Wolverine Gate
August 10	Red Rock Pass	9:00 – Top of Pass
August 11	Lima Dam	8:00 – Below Lima Dam Spillway
August 16	Wisdom	8:00 – County Road Shop
August 19	Argenta	8:00 – Bus Turn Around
September 10	Wise River	8:00 – Wise River Fire Hall

Big Hole CWMA Project Weed Points-Fall 2021



Legend

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Canada thistle | Common tansy | Houndstongue | Black henbane | Spotted knapweed | Houndstongue | Oxeye daisy |
| Dalmatian toadflax | Curly-leaf pondweed | Leafy spurge | Common tansy | Tall buttercup | Leafy spurge | Spotted knapweed |
| Absinth wormwood | Diffuse knapweed | Musk thistle | Whitetop | Yellow toadflax | Musk thistle | Yellow toadflax |
| Black henbane | Hoary alyssum | Oxeye daisy | | | | |
- Big Hole CWMA Boundary