

Big Hole Watershed Committee

FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

Collaborative conservation
for the Big Hole River watershed
since 1995.



P.O. Box 21
Divide, Montana 59727
406-960-4855
bhwc.org

The X-Factor: Why We're Here and How We Multiply

At the end of October, I found myself representing BHWC to two wildly different audiences. At the National Adaptation Forum on the Baltimore harbor I spoke to scientists, agency personnel and NGO leaders about our local approach to water management. Three days later, I was at the fairgrounds in Laramie, Wyoming speaking to the Albany County Stock-growers about on-farm techniques to hold back snowpack and getting conservation funding on the ground. Both audiences invited me to speak about our work in headwaters conservation and riparian restoration. At both events, I listened and connected with people, keying in on the opportunities and constraints they each face in conserving water resources.

Back here in the Big Hole I heard irrigators call us apologists for fishermen. And I heard fishing guides call us apologists for ranchers. That means we are doing something right! And it means we have more work to do to explain what we are about, even to local people.

And now, litigation on the grayling again looms on the horizon. While the threat of litigation helped catalyze the formation of BHWC years ago, we now have a strong culture of collaborative conservation, and there are better ways to save the grayling than protracted lawsuits.

As you read on about all the work we accomplished this year, know that the big project grants we secure come on the backs of small donations from individuals and family foundations. Since 2016, every private dollar donated to BHWC has generated \$5 in project grants! That is our X-factor, and why I say with confidence your support of our work adds value to our river.

2022 X-Factor (through Nov. 15)

Private Contributions: \$56,000

Grants and Contracts: \$470,000

Payments to Contractors: \$313,000

2022 X-Factor: 8.4



Thank you,

Pedro Marques
Executive Director, Big Hole Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Our Governing Board:

Randy Smith
Chairman, Rancher
Jim Hagenbarth
Vice Chair, Rancher
Steve Luebeck
Treasurer, Sportsman
Roy Morris
Secretary, George Grant
Trout Unlimited

Dave Ashcraft
Rancher, Business Owner
Sean Claffey
The Nature Conservancy
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Rancher
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Rancher
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Rancher
Erik Kalsta
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Rancher
Phil Ralston
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John Reinhardt
Rancher
Bill Kempf
Guiding/Outfitting
John Jackson
BVHD Cty. Commission
Andy Suenram
Resident
Eric Thorson
Guiding/Outfitting
Paul Cleary
Resident
Mark Raffety
Rancher
Brian Wheeler
Big Hole River Foundation
Diane Hutton
Resident

Our Staff:

Pedro Marques
Executive Director
Tana Nulph
Associate Director
Ben LaPorte
Program Manager
Chet Robertson
UBH Range Rider
Johnathan Costa
Wildlife Program Tech.

Our Focus Areas:

- Fish & Water
- Wildlife & Uplands
- People

We're Here to Help!

Ways BHWC Can Serve You and Your Operation

At BHWC, we pride ourselves on being the organization that connects our community and strives to improve the ecological and economic health of our watershed. There are many services that BHWC offers that you may not have heard about. They include:

- **Streambank restoration:** Having issues with streambanks on your land? We are happy to take a look, provide recommendations, and help find funding to fix them.
- **Conifer removal:** Or maybe you have too many conifers on your land, limiting production and requiring large amounts of water. Let us know—we can help!
- **Irrigation infrastructure upgrades:** Leaky, worn-out headgates and other irrigation devices make things tough on irrigators and the river. We can help find solutions and funding for improvements.
- **Carcass removal:** From March-May, BHWC provides FREE carcass removal to Big Hole Valley ranchers from Wisdom to Glen. Carcasses are hauled to our compost site near Wisdom. Call or text John Costa at 209-628-2225 to make arrangements.
- **Beaver conflict resolution:** Having trouble with nature's engineers? We recognize that they can cause major problems for landowners. We will install beaver culvert fencing at your request to alleviate these issues.
- **Livestock loss reduction/bear safety toolkits and trash cans:** We have supplies and books you can borrow free-of-charge, including fox lights, Critter Gitters, bear-resistant backpacking containers, bear spray, and inert, practice bear spray. We will also set you up with bear-resistant trash cans as supplies last.
- **Land transfer facilitation:** Plans and circumstances change. We understand that and can help you figure out your next steps in a way that honors your land and legacy.
- **Policy issues:** For issues that affect the Big Hole River and its inhabitants, we will send letters, outreach to legislatures, and testify in-person.
- **Local news and connections:** Join us the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Divide Grange Hall to hear about local issues and get to know your neighbors.
- **Project tours:** Want to learn more about our work? We'll take you, your colleagues, and/or your students to our sites and explain how and why we do what we do.
- **Opportunities for students/professors:** We're happy to speak to your class and have them volunteer on our projects or join our monthly meetings to learn more about how conservation works in the real world.
- **Other resources:** Looking for something else? If it's related to the environment, conservation, or the Big Hole, we'll do our best to help you find what you need.

Getting Our Name out There

2022 Speaking & Tabling

1. Medicine Bow CD
annual meeting
Saratoga, WY—February 2022
2. Montana Watershed
Coordination Council
annual meeting
Virtual—February 2022
3. Patagonia Earth Day event
Dillon, MT—April 2022
4. Montana Storm Water
conference
Missoula, MT—May 2022
5. Montana Farm Bureau
Federation conference
Fairmont, MT—July 2022
6. American Fisheries Society
annual meeting
Spokane, WA—August 2022
7. Western Collaborative
Conservation Network
“Confluence” conference
Paradise Valley, MT—Sept. 2022
8. American Water Resources
Association workshop
Missoula, MT—October 2022
9. National Adaptation Forum
conference
Baltimore, MD—October 2022
10. Albany County Stock Growers
Association annual meeting
Laramie, WY—November 2022

Activities & Events

Join Us in Divide or on Zoom

Monthly Public Meetings at the Divide Grange

Our public meetings are the 3rd Wednesday of the month and include committee reports, project updates, time for discussion, refreshments, and special topic presentations. Please join us at the Divide Grange or on Zoom! More info here: bhwc.org/monthly-meetings.

BHWC does not meet in December. Happy Holidays!

January 17, 2023 — 11:00 am

BHWC Annual Business Meeting (Board & Staff only)

February 15, 2023 — 6:00 pm

Water Storage Opportunities in the Big Hole

March 15, 2023 — 7:00 pm

Public Land Water Access Association

Coffee for our meetings is donated by Black Coffee Roasting Company in Missoula. WiFi is donated by Southern Montana Telephone Company in Wisdom.

Get to Know Your Watershed

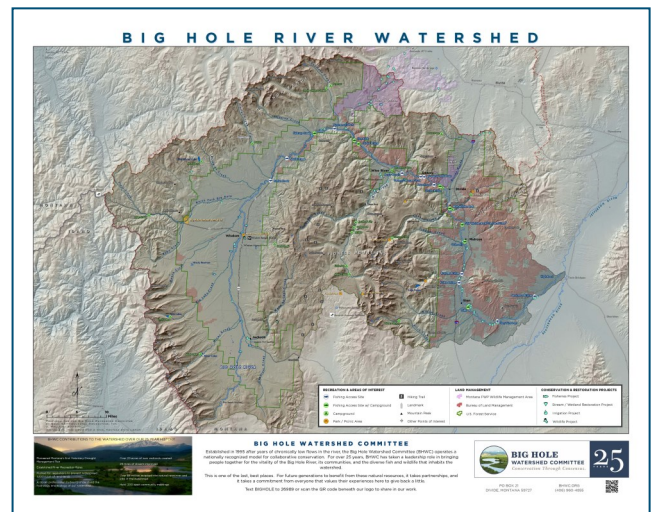
It's About More than Just the River

BHWC printed 50 of these gorgeous, detailed Big Hole Watershed maps this summer and offered them to our friends, stakeholders, and supporters for a minimum donation of \$30.

Designed by Geum Environmental Consulting, the maps show Big Hole communities, fishing access sites, tributary streams, project locations, land ownerships,

and more. In 2022, they raised over \$2,500 for the Big Hole Conservation Fund. Contributions will directly support on-the-ground, river-front projects.

Be on the lookout in 2023 for another round of prints for a chance to get yours! Also available at our monthly meetings for \$25 while supplies last.



Big Hole Watershed Committee

River Givers Make All the Difference

Big Hole Conservation Fund Pays Back to the River

Everyone who lives, works, or recreates in the Big Hole benefits from having clean water that is abundant and cold, healthy wildlife, and thriving communities. Ideally, everyone who benefits from our river would contribute to its conservation.

That's why we created the Big Hole Conservation Fund through which we raise contributions that will be matched 1:1 and used for on-the-ground projects along the Big Hole River. Individuals can donate directly to the project of their choice by visiting bhwc.org/conservation-fund. Partner businesses add a percentage to their regular fees, which gets donated as tax-deductible contributions to the Fund.

Now Enrolling 2023 Partner Businesses: We'll be signing up business interested in becoming partners in conservation until April 2023. Local Valley Lumber became our first Partner Business in July. Owner Tyler Powers sells blue stain pine boards and slabs and does custom work and finishing, like these picture frames he made for our maps! He can be reached at rockhound1984@hotmail.com.

This year, the Fund received \$53,500 in contributions from individual donors and George Grant Trout Unlimited. In 2022, the Fund invested nearly \$35,000 in streambank restoration projects in Wisdom and Glen.



Help Save the Divide Grange

Community Building Facing Closure

Have we ever told you about our meeting place? For 28 years, BHWC has been meeting in the Divide Grange Hall, a small-town building with a long and rich history. Since 1957, the Grange Hall has provided the community a venue for public meetings, weddings, retirement parties, pinochle and bingo nights, fall festivals, school plays, and more. The group of dedicated citizens who make up the membership of the Divide Grange also complete community service projects in the area.

But now, this small community is faced with the possibility of losing the Grange Hall due to lack of funding to support utilities and other basic needs for the building, including insulation upgrades.

BHWC has offered to help the Grange secure grants to improve the building's energy efficiency and decrease maintenance costs and will be looking for grants for basic capacity needs. If you would like to help:



Become a member: Reach out to Shirley Johnson: sjohnson@atoms4peace.org or any current member for an application. Membership dues: \$30/year.

Donate to the Divide Grange: Send checks to: Divide Grange #142, PO Box 112, Divide, MT 59727.

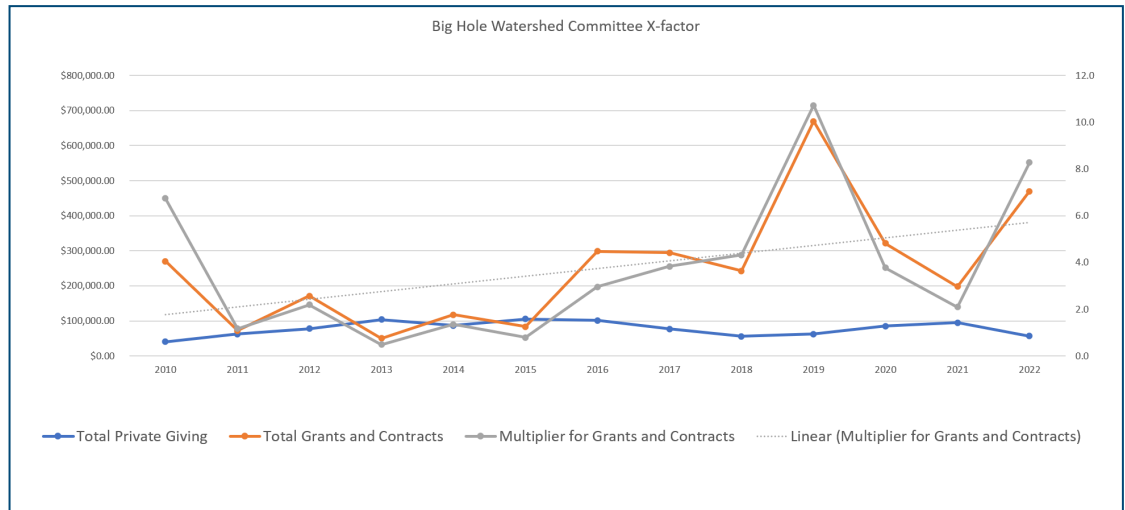
Rent the Hall (\$150/day or \$75/half-day) **or learn more:** Contact Leanne Jensen: jdvd3389lj@gmail.com.

The X-Factor

Multiplying the Impact of your Contributions

When you donate to BHWC, your contribution counts. In fact, it is matched and multiplied to make it count even more. Over the last 12 years, every private dollar invested in BHWC has generated an average of 3.7 dollars. In some years, that number has seen a high of 10x and more recently is closer to 5x.

Local watershed groups like ours are the ones getting the on-the-ground work done. We are tied to the landowner base and local resource managers, and over the last 28 years, have gained the trust of our stakeholders, members, and partners. BHWC has a proven track record of providing effective collaboration, suc-



cessful restoration projects, and leadership on natural resource issues. We also glue together private partnerships, and have regular, face-face interactions to learn from local resource managers. We based our decisions on science and consensus. And leverage funding to achieve multiple resource benefits.

Join us today. There are many ways to get involved. Come to our monthly meetings, sign up for our e-news, and follow us on social media (handles on pg. 12). And of course, donate whatever amount is meaningful to you.

There are many challenges facing conservation efforts in today's world, but a donation to BHWC is a step in the right direction. You can be sure that we will stretch your money and use it for the good of the river, the watershed, and our communities. After all, that's why we're here.

Invest in the Big Hole

How to Contribute

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

Donate by Text: Text "BigHole" to 26989 to donate from your phone.

Donate by Mail: Send checks to BHWC at P.O. Box 21, Divide, MT 59727.

Donate at our Meetings: The 3rd Wednesday of each month except July and December at the Divide Grange Hall.

Donate Livestock: Click for more information: bhwc.org/giving/livestock.

Donate items for auction or raffle: Contact us to make arrangements: info@bhwc.org or 406-960-4855

BHWC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible.



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Building Drought Resilience in the Big Hole

Fall 2022 Streamflow, Snowpack & Climate Forecast

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

Streamflow: Streamflows in the Big Hole River watershed are still below to well below average for this time of year. Lack of precipitation and warmer than average air temperatures this fall have not replenished water availability throughout the watershed. Hopefully, the winter storms and cooler temperatures will start to elevate streamflows in the Big Hole.

Precipitation: October 1st started the new Water Year (2023). Precipitation in the Big Hole is 51% of the median and Snowpack is 21% of median values (as of October 19, 2022). The only SnoTel sites reporting measurable snow are the Mule Creek and Saddle Mtn sites.

Drought Status: Drought conditions in the Big Hole remain in the D1 to D2 category. Hot and dry weather from the summer months continued through October.

Forecast (from NOAA):

Seasonal Outlook: The three-month outlook is more favorable than previous months. Equal chances of normal temperatures and equal to slightly above normal chances for average precipitation.

ENSO Alert System Status: La Niña Advisory

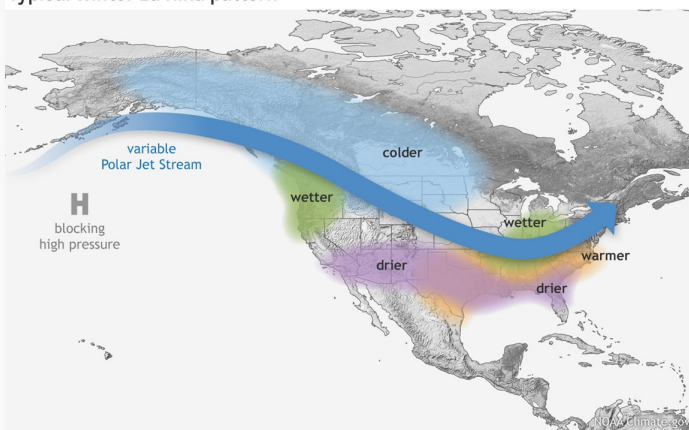
Synopsis: There is a 75% chance of La Niña during the Northern Hemisphere winter (December-February) 2022-23, with a 54% chance for ENSO-neutral in February-April 2023.

La Niña three-peat?

La Niña conditions are expected to persist through early winter and potentially through February and gradually transition to neutral conditions. This is only the second time a three-peat La Niña has occurred in the period of record (73 years).

What does this mean for the Big Hole? The answer is...we don't know! La Niña conditions in Montana typically mean colder and wetter winters, but the past two years have not played out like that. Does this mean that the La Niña trend is changing for MT? Possibly, but until more data is available, we won't really know, it's still early to be making solid predictions for our upcoming snowpack. The general climatic trend is showing warmer and drier conditions in general with shorter more intense storms. SW Montana has been in shortage the last couple of years especially in late summer. Current long-term predictions do not show this trend changing.

Typical winter La Niña pattern



Helpful Resources

- BHC River Conditions webpage: bhwc.org/river-conditions
- DNRC Stream and Gage Explorer (StAGE): gis.dnrc.mt.gov/apps/StAGE/
- MFWP Current Water Body Restrictions: fwp.mt.gov/news/current-closures-restrictions/waterbody-closures
- US Drought Monitor — Montana: droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?MT

Building Drought Resilience in the Big Hole

Legislation and Litigation

Conservation Policy Updates in the Big Hole

- In October, the Water Policy Interim Committee requested \$1 million for stream gage funding in the 2023 Governor's budget. BHCW took up this issue in 2017, exposed the funding deficiencies in the system and worked to pass a bill creating a stream gage working group, whose report recommended funding.
- The Arctic grayling litigants are back. The Center for Biological Diversity, Western Watersheds, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Pat Munday announced in late October their intent to sue the USFWS to reconsider the fish for listing under the Endangered Species Act. BHCW believes the money spent on litigation would be better spent on conservation actions and resource management activities that yield more late-season water.



Another Tough Water Year

2022 Fishing Restrictions & Closures

Starting in late July, four out of five of the Big Hole's river sections were either under hoot owl restrictions (no fishing after 2:00 pm—the hottest part of the day) or closed entirely to fishing due to high water temperatures and low flows. This lasted into the fall months.

Despite the near record-breaking spring precipitation, it came on top of a very dry winter and soils that were parched from the year before. Ecologically, drought dramatically reduces the soil's ability to "sponge" excess water. July and August rain events that rejuvenated flows used to happen more frequently. And of course, there's irrigation.

Ranchers had a really good hay crop in early summer, and many in the lower part of the river got a second cutting of hay in, drawing directly from the river. While those water withdrawals are legal and have been consistent throughout the years, they are now occurring in a climate change scenario with the changing precipitation patterns described here. This is why we're honing in on long-term water storage solutions for the Big Hole to avert the summer shut downs.

Prior to the 2022 water year, BHCW updated the [Big Hole River Drought Management Plan](#), making it more concise and clarifying our outreach and communications commitments. You can view the plan and check out current river conditions (during the water year) by visiting bhwc.org/river-conditions. The Drought Subcommittee will meet this winter to review the 2022 season, update the DMP as needed, and plan for 2023.

2022 Fishing Restrictions

Section	Flow-based Fishing Restrictions	Temp-based Fishing Restrictions
Section I: Saginaw Bridge on Skinner Meadows Road to North Fork Big Hole River confluence	Full fishing closure (8/11 to 10/28) 78 days	Hoot owl restriction (7/29 to 8/11 when moved to closure)
Section II: North Fork Big Hole River confluence to Dickie Bridge	Full fishing closure (9/3 to 10/27) 54 days	Hoot owl restriction (7/29 to 9/3 when moved to closure)
Section III: Dickie Bridge to MFWP Maidenrock FAS		
Section IV: MFWP Maidenrock FAS to Tony Schoonen FAS	Full fishing closure (8/23 to 9/28) 36 days	Hoot owl restriction (7/29 to 8/23 when moved to closure)
Section V: Tony Schoonen FAS to confluence with Jefferson River	Full fishing closure (8/17 to 10/27) 71 days	Hoot owl restriction (7/27 to 8/17 when moved to closure)

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Fish & Water

Stopping the Flow (of Sediment)

Restoration Near Completion on Oregon Creek

It was a productive field season on Upper Oregon Creek, where historic mining and smelter emissions from Anaconda created eroding hillsides and degraded streams. Major 2022 project accomplishments included:

- 99 beaver dam analogs/post-assisted log structures installed to capture sediment in the channel/floodplain;
- 74 gully check dams and 18 gully slash filters installed to capture eroding upland sediment;
- 600 feet of straightened and incised channel filled to reconnect 11 acres of floodplain;
- 25 bare and eroding acres revegetated and fertilized;
- Failed culvert removed, reconnecting 0.5 miles of Oregon Creek headwaters;
- 30 acres of aspen enhancement; and
- 8,300 linear feet of gullies filled with slash and wood.

Oregon Creek is a headwater tributary to the Big Hole River within the state-owned Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area. Our Upper Oregon Creek project addressed both upland sediment sources and enhancement of riparian areas impacted by sediment plumes and erosion to improve water quality. You can learn more about the project here: bhwc.org/project/upper-oregon-creek.



Thank you to our project partners: Trout and Salmon Foundation, MFWP, DEQ, NRDP, MCC, and Watershed Consulting.

More Stream Miles for Native Fish

French Gulch Fish Passage Project Complete

From July to October, BHWC and partners built 29 step pools to replace the existing steep cascade and perched culvert in Upper French Gulch, restoring connectivity to 1.7 miles of stream. Historic placer mining had effectively cut off the upper portion of the stream, preventing fish from accessing cooler upstream reaches and spawning habitat. Long, deep resting pools will now give fish a break and a better chance of success as they move upstream. We also employed low-tech restoration and erosion control techniques to revegetate and spot-treat a nearby, severely eroding bank that was contributing excess sediment into French Gulch.

This project coincides perfectly with MFWP's restoration of native fish in French Creek, which will create one of the largest interconnected populations of Westslope Cutthroat trout in the upper Missouri River drainage and the only population of fluvial Arctic grayling in the absence of non-native species. Building on our earlier work on French Gulch and Creek, this addition of 1.7 miles of French Gulch will bring the total mileage of occupied stream to nearly 42 miles. You can learn more about the project here: bhwc.org/project/french-gulch-fish-passage.



Thank you to our project partners: MFWP, DLVCD, DNRC, Watershed Consulting, GGTU, and a generous private donor.

Fish & Water

And in Other News ...

Important Updates for Conservation in the Big Hole

Amy Corps of Engineers (ACE) considering common sense regulatory language for beaver mimicry projects

Informed over the last 3 years by BHWC's work, a legal team has proposed language changes to ACE's Nationwide 27 permit, which would ease the burden on doing simple, beneficial projects on tributary streams. The proposed language change would make it easier for ACE to accept plans from other Federal agencies, decreasing the cost and regulatory burden of restoration.

BHWC staff trained in wetland delineation to reduce project startup costs for BHWC

Restoration Program Manager Ben LaPorte was trained by Geum Environmental Consulting in September 2022.

BHWC secures long-term BLM Agreement to continue riparian and mesic restoration in the Eastern Pioneers

The 5-year agreement sets up another partnership for BHWC to streamline the delivery of conservation projects. Projects will include conifer encroachment and riparian/wetland restoration. Read more about this work below!

Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) agrees to complete multimillion-dollar cleanup of Anaconda Smelter Superfund site

ARCO is heading up the Mill Creek corridor to reclaim bare steep slopes denuded from years of smelter emissions and logging. We're proud that our work across the highway in the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management area has become the playbook ARCO is following for steep slope remedy.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks restocking native fish in the French Creek drainage

The habitat in most of the 42 miles of stream in the drainage is prime for native fish, including Arctic grayling and Westslope cutthroat trout. BHWC and partners have done extensive restoration work in this drainage since 2016.

Working in the Eastern Pioneers? YEP!

Restoring Floodplains and Removing Conifers

In September, we launched our Eastern Pioneers Wetland Restoration and Conifer Reduction project with the Dillon Youth Employment Program (YEP). This project consists of building low-tech in-stream structures in four intermittent stream reaches along with riparian conifer encroachment treatments in the Eastern Pioneer foothills. This work aims to maintain and restore stream function, water quality, and both aquatic and riparian habitat by kickstarting recovery trends.

This summer, we built 60 structures in two tributaries of Brown's Gulch and Trapper Creek. Next summer, we plan to install another 60 structures in two other mainstem reaches and implement 5 acres of riparian conifer encroachment.

This type of project couldn't be completed without the cooperation of downstream irrigators and local landowners, and this project is no exception. We are working with downstream irrigators to ensure that this work will have no negative impacts to their operations during the irrigation season. You can learn more about the project here: bhwc.org/project/eastern-pioneers.



Thank you to our project partners: BLM, UMW, YEP-Dillon, and TNC-Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership.

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Fish & Water

All Eyes on Elkhorn

Quantifying Contamination and Testing New Treatment Methods at Historic Mine

Since 2020, BHWC and partners have been working together to first understand the source and extent of contamination and then design a remedy for the historic Elkhorn Mine and Mill, including Elkhorn Creek. Mining for gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc occurred in this area from 1872-1965, leaving behind a legacy of contaminated soils and water. While some reclamation took place in the early 2000s, Elkhorn Creek still exceeds heavy metals standards for aquatic life.



In 2022, BHWC contracted Pioneer Technical Services to complete a soils characterization that found a volume of 110,000 cubic yards of heavy-metal laden mine wastes impacting Elkhorn Creek.

BHWC also partnered with Montana BioAgriculture on a pilot study to clean acid mine drainage using mycelia, which are root-like networks of fungal threads. Running 500 gallons through the filter showed dramatic decreases in zinc, copper and other metals using fungal biomass as an ion exchange filter.

Next step: We're seeking funding to develop a 30% remedy co-designed by the mycologists (MBAI) and the engineers (Pioneer Technical). You can learn more about the project here: bhwc.org/project/elkhorn-mine/.

Thank you to our 2022 partners: USFS-BDNF, Pioneer Technical Services, Montana BioAgriculture, and Beaverhead CD.

Getting a Baseline on our Biggest Tributary

BHWC & Partners Monitor Flow & Temperature in the Wise River

BHWC and partners are working to understand the water budget and hydrology of the Wise River. This summer and fall, BHWC measured stream flow and temperatures throughout the drainage. The goal of the data collection is to develop enhancement projects to improve late-season, cold-water availability and connectivity for fish species while also enhancing working ranchlands.

Tributary streams are vitally important to both rivers and fish. Tributaries provide places to hide and cool off in the summer heat. Fed by snow-melt, they can be several degrees cooler than mainstem rivers. The cold-water input that the Wise River contributes to the mainstem Big Hole River can be felt downstream for miles. Improvements in the Wise River's ability to deliver cold, abundant water will benefit all water users on the Wise River and downstream. You can learn more about the project here: bhwc.org/current-projects/wise-river-water-budget.



Thank you to our project partners: USFWS, DNRC, MFWP, NRCS, and private landowners.

Wildlife & Uplands

Lions, Wolves, and ... Grizzlies?!

A Busy Season for BHWC's Range Rider

BHWC wrapped up the 12th season of our Upper Big Hole Range Rider program on September 30th. Each summer, Range Rider Chet Robertson monitors 6 USFS grazing allotments for 7 livestock producers with the goals of deterring conflicts between livestock and large carnivores like wolves and bears and helping producers find carcasses quickly so they can get reimbursed by the state for their losses. Chet is a seasonal employee of BHWC.

The major development this year was the number of grizzly bear sightings across the watershed! Chet tracked and photographed (with a game camera) at least two distinct grizzlies and received reports and photos of grizzlies from local ranchers, hunters, and campers. While there were no confirmed depredations on our Range Rider-enrolled allotments during the summer 2022 season, there was one grizzly depredation in the Pioneer Mountains near Jackson in early September, outside of the program's boundaries.



Chet found six dead cattle, in separate incidences, over the summer: one died after getting stuck in a fence, one was investigated but the cause of death could not be determined, and the rest were already so far gone to scavengers that not enough remained to be investigated by Wildlife Services. He also noticed one injured calf and notified the livestock producer. There were at least five depredations, that we heard about, on neighboring ranches: three unconfirmed and two confirmed as wolf depredations.

In addition to the grizzlies, Chet tracked and photographed several black bears and wolves as well as one mountain lion. The wolves were active and, from Chet's observations, seemed to be moving around more than usual. Game cameras showed at least four wolves, including three gray and one black.

Chet also warned hunters and campers of grizzly bear presence, offering bear spray and advice on food storage and safety in bear country.

In the Big Hole, we have gotten used to not having to worry about grizzlies, but that is changing – and changing FAST. Please remember to carry bear spray and secure your bear attractants like garbage and livestock feed. Reach out to our partners, People and Carnivores in Dillon, who will visit your ranch and help you make it more bear-resistant. Join BHWC at our monthly meeting – the 3rd Wednesday of each month except December and July – at the Divide Grange. You can learn more about the project there: bhwc.org/project/upper-big-hole-range-rider.



Thank you to our 2022 project partners: USFS-BDNF, Montana Livestock Loss Board, WLA, HoTR, NRCS, Wildlife Services, and our range rider enrollees.

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

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FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER



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

Phone: 406-960-4855

E-mail: info@bhwc.org



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[/bigholewatershedcommittee](https://www.youtube.com/bigholewatershedcommittee)

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.