



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2018 – 7:00pm
Divide Grange – Divide, Montana

In Attendance

Tana Nulph, BHWC; Pedro Marques, BHWC; Randy Smith, BHWC/Rancher; Paul Cleary, BHWC; Jim Wierzb; Jane Wierzb; Marv Johnson; Tim Fry; Ben LaPorte, BHWC; Mike Cleary; Peter Frick, BHWC/Rancher; Jim Dennehy, BHWC/BSB Water Utility; Liz Jones, BHWC/Rancher; Sarah Smith, Rancher; Steve Luebeck, BHWC/Sportsman; Scott Reynolds; Malcolm Peterson, Rancher; Dean Peterson, BHWC/Rancher; Paulo Marques; Jarrett Payne, FWP/MSU; and Ryan Davy, USFS.

Introductions *Attendees introduced themselves.*

Meeting Minutes *September 2018 meeting minutes were reviewed, no additions or corrections.*

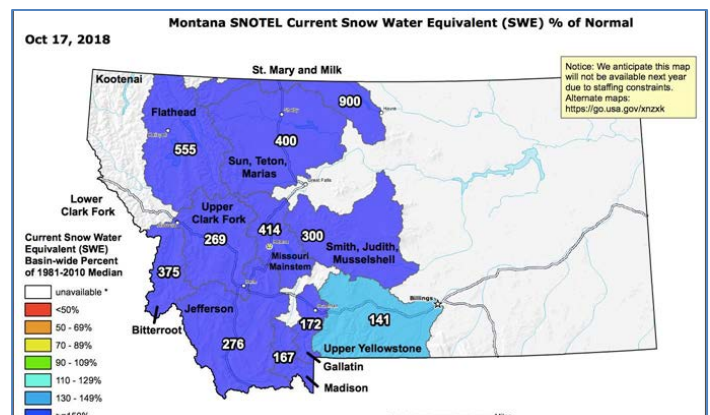
Reports

Streamflow/Snowpack Report – Jacqueline Knutson, MFWP

- **Streamflow:** Streamflows are right around average for October and seasonal stream gages will stop reporting soon. By November I should have a nice summary of our statistics for the year but I can say that we did not have to shut any river stretches down due neither to temperatures nor to low flows this season. Conservation measures were implemented by the CCAA in the upper reaches in July and August. The 2019 water year began on October 1.

06023500	Big Hole River near Jackson MT	10/17 13:15 MDT	0.99	19.1	18.0
06023800	Big Hole River ab Spring Creek nr Jackson MT	10/17 13:00 MDT	1.50	27.2	26.0
06024020	Big Hole River at Miner Creek nr Jackson MT	10/17 13:15 MDT	1.06	76.6	80.0
06024450	Big Hole River bl Big Lake Cr at Wisdom MT	10/17 12:45 MDT	2.32	108	66.0
06024540	Big Hole River bl Mudd Cr nr Wisdom MT	10/17 13:30 MDT	2.81	188	204
06024580	Big Hole River near Wise River MT	10/17 12:30 MDT	2.80	302	306
06025250	Big Hole River at Maiden Rock nr Divide MT	10/17 12:45 MDT	3.15	473	457
06025500	Big Hole River near Melrose MT	10/17 13:15 MDT	1.82	566	453
06026210	Big Hole River near Glen MT	10/17 13:30 MDT	2.67	589	539
06026420	Big Hole R bl Hamilton Ditch nr Twin Bridges, MT	10/17 12:30 MDT	1.520	422	405

- **Snowpack:** Snowpack is starting to accumulate in the upper and mid elevations although warm temperatures are preventing it from sticking around. It is promising to see early season snowpack starting to accumulate but with an El Nino looming on the horizon I think it's too early to be optimistic about the current above average snowpack.
- **Forecast:** We are still in ENSO-neutral conditions but sea surface temperatures are indicating El Nino conditions are beginning. Forecasters have maintained the El Nino Watch issued back in September and their confidence that El Nino will be here by December is up to 75%. While forecasts indicate that the El Nino forming will be weak it still means mild and dry in Montana. While we have gotten some good early season snowpack it will be important to



watch how our snowpack stacks up throughout the winter. No matter how it shakes out, though, we cannot rely on the strong snowpacks that we experienced the last two years.

- The outlook through December currently favors below average precipitation and above average temperatures.

Steering Committee – Randy Smith, Chairman; Steve Luebeck, Treasurer; and Roy Morris, Secretary

- The steering committee is happy with the progress BHWC is making.

Wildlife Report – Jim Hagenbarth, Vice-Chairman and Tana Nulph, Conservation Programs Coordinator

- New wildlife partner – Kim Johnston, People and Carnivores taking over for Steve Primm
- Bear Safety Training held today, October 18th, prior to BHWC monthly meeting. Danielle Oyler with the Southwest Montana Bear Education Working Group presented information regarding how to react in different bear encounter scenarios, best practices to avoid conflict with bears while camping/recreating, and how to tell the difference between black bears and grizzly bears. She also provided hands-on practice with inert bear spray, and BHWC gave out 3 cans of free bear spray to event attendees. For more information on how to stay safe in bear country, follow the SWMTBEWG on Facebook, visit <http://igbconline.org>, or view the attached flier.
- Range Rider program: Chet, our Range Rider, identified a carcass and called Wildlife Services, who confirmed the carcass to be a wolf predation. Wildlife Services called in wolves in that area and removed them. The program worked how it was supposed to in this case, and that rancher would not have been able to be reimbursed if Chet had not found the carcass and facilitated the confirmation of the depredation. There were no further confirmed depredations this season, so we suspect that the wolves removed were the culprits.

Restoration Report

- Pedro and Ben met with Jim Olsen and Matt Barnes at the Lower French Creek and Oregon Creek projects to discuss conceptual design based on the survey drone and wetland delineation completed by Morrison-Maierle, Inc. Both projects are in the preliminary design phase. A late-winter bid is anticipated with construction to occur in the late-summer/into the fall of 2019. Funding for both projects is almost completely secured.
- Pedro showed a video of dozer pits and gully fill on Joyner Gulch. The video can be accessed via our YouTube channel by clicking the following link: <https://youtu.be/CRquNwUOwIY>
- *Discussion:*
 - *Did you put fertilizer in there or seed?*
 - *Both, the helicopter did 5 passes of fertilizer and then we did seed mix. I'm very hopeful. It was an intensive approach, but it was a great opportunity given the skill of the operator and what we we're working with. The biggest challenge now will be weeds. If we have to hand pick weeds in each one of those gullies over the next 5 years, we'll do that.*
 - *How will this affect the water table?*
 - *We're hoping the seeps that are coming out now that have been running right on the surface will pond up, hold back sediment, and eventually overtop, trickle down, and work just like a stream does. With all the extra water, we think the aspens and willows will pop up.*
 - *So this will slow down erosion a lot?*
 - *Yes, a lot. The water that used to flow down those gullies and just pick up sediment and wash it down will be staying on the landscape. I'm hopeful, very hopeful. And Ben (LaPorte) has done a bang-up job up there, so I wanted to point that out.*
 - *How about the area (gullies) that haven't flattened out? Are you thinking about bringing the dozer in there and doing some work?*

- *Yes, we're thinking about it. I originally thought we'd have to do that work by hand, but we may bring a dozer in depending on the availability of funds and comfort level of FWP (the landowner) with the process.*
- *It will be really interesting to see the effects on the landscape in the next year or 5 years.*
 - *Yes, it's nice to go to a place and know that you can't screw it up worse than it is.*
- *Pedro did a presentation on this (at Tech?), there were several people in attendance and the students seemed really interested. Pedro did a bang-up job. I keep encouraging him to tell the story because it's a pretty important story, and the more people we can talk about it to the better.*
- *Are they still going to do the fish ladders in French Creek?*
 - *Yes, it's happening. Jim Olsen is working on that. It should go out to bid over the winter and go in next spring/summer.*

People/Land Use Planning Report

- Incentive projects: 3 projects permitted and ready to go – holding off on implementation until the spring. One project below Melrose may be able to be implemented in November.

New Business

- None.

Meeting Topic: Forestry in the Big Hole Watershed

Ryan Davy, United States Forest Service – Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest

Background: Ryan is a Silviculture Forester out of the Butte USFS office. He is here to provide us an update on USFS forestry projects, including timber harvest & planting, the 2018 fire season, and insects & disease.

Fire

- Beaver Creek Fire
 - Lightning-started fire: August 11, 2018 in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness.
 - August 15th: ~1,500 acres burned in one day
 - Total of 2,090 acres
 - High elevation, rocky scree, Whitebark pine
 - In the same general area as the Mussigbrod fire of 2000. Fire scars helped keep the Beaver Creek fire from spreading.
 - End of August/beginning of September, received first precipitation which helped put the fire out.
 - Discussion:
 - *The Mussigbrod fire started in mid-July, so it had a lot more time to spread than this fire did.*
 - *Yes, that's true, late-season starts definitely help.*
 - *How many of the Mussigbrod trees are still standing?*
 - *Not many.*

Timber Sales

- Pintler Face Project
 - ~80,000-acre project area
 - Planned activities:
 - Commercial 3,934 acres (~5%)
 - Noncommercial: 7,765 acres (~10%)
 - Should start seeing log trucks running out of there in the next 1-2 years.
 - Initially this project was planned as a largescale response to Mountain Pine Beetle. We saw about a 15-20% loss of trees there due to beetle kill. Our mindset has changed on that in the last

few years; we've gone from more of a largescale response/salvage area to more of a green tree sale. We're using more of a thoughtful process now as opposed to an emergency response.

- *Discussion:*
 - *So planning is done, now you go to public comment period?*
 - *Public comment is done, now we're working on our EA and hoping to get a signed decision in the next 3-6 months.*
 - *Are you anticipating some lawsuits?*
 - *We get a lawsuit on all of our big projects. We hope we've done a good job of anticipating some of the major concerns of our potential litigants and hopefully won't be held up for too long, but we'll see. Now we wait.*
 - *How big is the largest cut going to be?*
 - *Around 300 acres.*
 - *Do you have your maps out where your cuts are going to be yet?*
 - *Yes, they should all be available in the EA on the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest website; and if not, we can get them to you, so don't be shy about asking for them.*
 - *Does the money from this timber sale go into the general account or back into the project area?*
 - *A lot of it will go into the project area. There are aquatic restoration projects planned and burn/slash projects that will be funded through this. There is a percentage that will have to go back to Washington for overhead, we don't have a say in that, but the majority of the funding will go back to the project area.*
 - *Do you know the percentage that will go back into the project area?*
 - *No, but it will be a lot.*
 - *Can you spend all the money?*
 - *Yes – that won't be a problem; there is a lot to do up there.*
 - *Is there a shared boundary with the FWP game range and is there any integration with their management plan?*
 - *Probably not, we've talked to them about our projects that are happening, but unfortunately we work at a different timescale and that makes it hard to work across boundaries, unfortunately.*
- Selway-Saginaw Project:
 - Future timber harvest
 - Landscape resistance and resilience
 - Money back into roads and infrastructure
 - In the early stages of planning
 - *Discussion:*
 - *What's your vision there? Are you doing selective cuts or clear cuts?*
 - *Its Lodgepole, so it will be clear cuts. There's not a lot of beetle kill there, as the trees were probably all young enough to avoid the beetle kill this time. Clear cuts will help to establish diversity in the age class and composition of the trees, which will make the area more resilient.*
 - *We'll be putting out scoping in the spring, and we'll make sure to involve BHWC as this area is in your backyard and you'll be able to help make sure we're doing the right thing on the ground and for the landscape.*

Planting after Fires

- Whitebark Pine
 - Trees bred to be resistant to blister rust; hopefully their successors will carry that trait as well.
 - Mussigbrod: ~100 acres (24,500 trees)
- Douglas Fir:
 - Rat Creek: ~1,000 acres (>300,000 trees)

- Targeting areas that are at higher risk for erosion and other issues/areas that burned so extensively and so hot that very few trees remained.

Insect and Disease

- Beetle kill levels are down from past years.
- *Discussion:*
 - *What caused the downturn in the pine beetles? Was it a natural cycle?*
 - *Yes, climatic variation and food availability were the main factors. The past 2 cold winters were enough to knock the populations down, and it could be that they've already eaten the majority of their preferred trees, which are large-diameter, older trees.*
 - *When you determine that a tree has been infected, how long do you have before you can determine that there is no value left in that killed tree.*
 - *About 3-5 years after infection, there is basically no value left. Once the tree is red, it is totally dead. But with the current value of timber, loggers are taking nearly everything down to sticks on the ground. We've had to ask them to leave some for wildlife habitat.*
 - *Do you receive much road construction on your Pintler Face and Saginaw projects?*
 - *On the Pintler Face project, a lot of clerical work was done to close roads on the books that no longer exist on the ground. When you see the numbers, there are a lot of decommissioned roads, but most of those roads have not been drivable in 50 years anyway. There will be some temporary roads put in, but they will be obliterated after the project. There should be no net loss of roads. In Selway-Saginaw, there is a pretty good road system in place already.*
 - *So in Pintler Face, the roads constructed will even out the roads that are closed?*
 - *Yes, there will be a quality improvement, but no net gain in roads.*

General Forest Service Questions

- *Has anything changed coming down from Washington since 2016?*
 - *The Good Neighbor Authority has allowed us to sell timber projects to DNRC to administer when we don't have the manpower to do so. This has worked out well. The project is in the Boulder area.*

New Business

- Jim Hagenbarth went to a meeting about the CSKT Water Compact tonight in Kalispell, so hopefully he'll have some good information for us about that and how it may affect the Big Hole when he come back.

Upcoming Meetings

- November 14, 2018, 6pm @ the Divide Grange. BHWC Monthly Meeting. Topic: Big Hole Watershed Committee Restoration Projects.
 - *Note the time change from 7pm to 6pm due to daylight savings time.*
 - *The November monthly meeting has been bumped up to the 2nd Wednesday of the month (rather than the 3rd) to account for Thanksgiving.*
- BHWC does not meet in December. Happy holidays!

Adjourn



Montana Bear Encounter Information



1. Bears can be anywhere, assume their presence.
2. Both grizzly bears and black bears pose a risk. The bear's behavior should determine your response.
3. Avoiding an encounter is easier than dealing with a conflict.

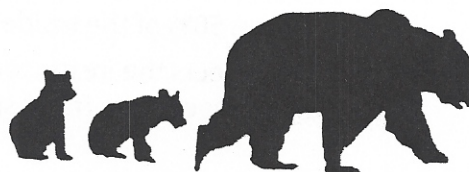
Food and Attractants

- Keep food, garbage, gear, and anything smelly, away from bears.
- Securing food and garbage means keeping it in an approved bear resistant container (locked car, bear box, bear resistant garbage can, etc.) See <http://igbconline.org/certified-products-list/> for list of approved products.
- Never feed a bear.

Bear Encounters

- Avoid encounters by...
 1. Staying alert, especially when hearing or visibility is limited.
 2. Traveling in groups and with members together.
 3. Making noise, the human voice is best.
 4. Carry bear spray in a very accessible place and know how to use it.
 5. Avoid traveling at night, dawn or dusk.
 6. Avoid carcass sites and places you see lots of scavengers, like ravens.
- **During a bear encounter never run or approach a bear. What you do next depends on the situation.**
 1. *If you see a bear that does not seem aware of you and you can move away undetected, do so quietly while the bear is not looking at you.*
 2. *If the bear sees you, stand your ground and watch its behavior.*
 3. *If the bear "disengages," then slowly move away.*
 4. *If you've surprised the bear and it is agitated, charges, or appears ready to charge...*
 - a. Stand your ground
 - i. If it charges, use your bear spray
 - i. Always fight back when being attacked by a **black bear**
 - ii. If a **grizzly bear** contacts you, go face down on the ground and cover your neck
 5. *If a bear slowly, purposefully, or methodically approaches you...*
 - a. Stand your ground and get intimidating: wave your arms and shout. Get bear spray out and ready
 - b. *If the bear charges, follows or stalks you, use your bear spray.*
 - c. *If the bear contacts you, fight back*

For more information, please visit <http://igbconline.org/>

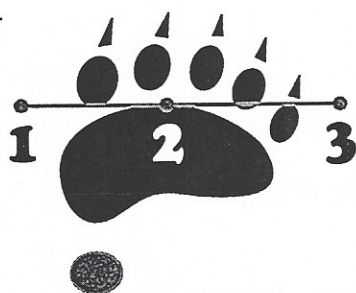


The Palmisciano Method for Differentiating Black & Grizzly Bear Tracks

Black Bear

Left Front Foot Track

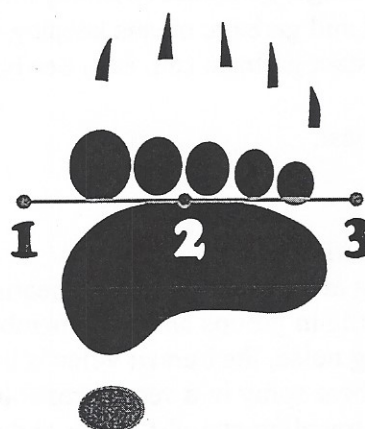
- Claws shorter
- Toes more separated and more curved



Grizzly Bear

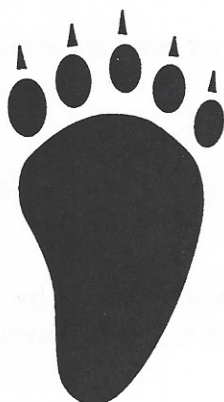
Left Front Foot Track

- Claws longer
- Toes closer together and less curved

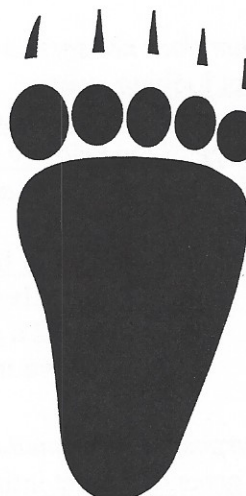


- Heel pad of front foot often does not show for either species

Left Back Foot Track



Left Back Foot Track



- Tracks of big grizzlies are larger

1 Lowest point of outside (largest) toe

2 Highest point on front edge of palm pad.

3 Connect points 1 and 2; extend this line to the inside of the track.

- If more than 50% of the inside (smallest) toe is above the line, the track is from a grizzly bear.
- If more than 50% of the inside (smallest) toe is below the line, the track is from a black bear.
- If the line bisects the inside toe, claw marks, shape of the palm pad, spacing between toes, other signs must be used in species identification.