

Big Hole Watershed Committee

FALL 2019 NEWSLETTER

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



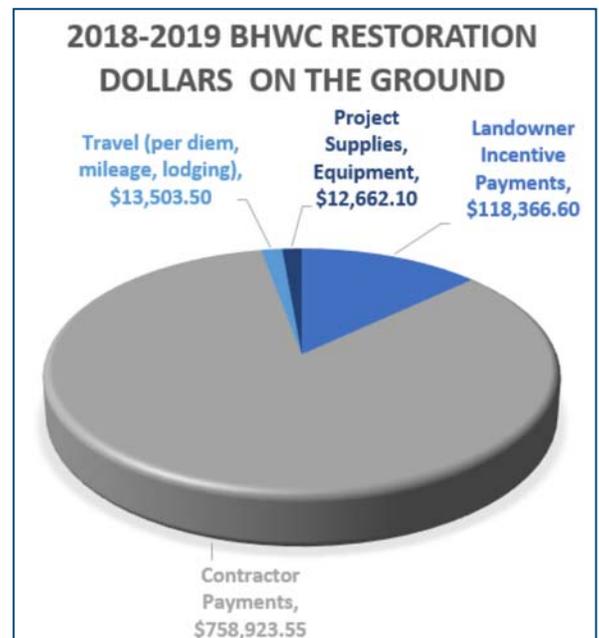
P.O. Box 21
Divide, Montana 59727
406-960-4855
bhwc.org

As the snow starts to blanket the Big Hole and long days become long nights, I'm taking stock of what we've done, and I'm also taking stock of what we do. We accomplished a great deal of work on the ground this year. Our natural water storage projects added a dozen acres of wetlands to the landscape, we composted livestock carcasses, introduced native fish to fishless tributaries, engaged irrigators and anglers through our drought management plan, rode the rangelands of the upper river to reduce predator conflict, restored super-degraded landscapes under Superfund, and naturalized streambanks on private lands. I'm proud of all this work and of our dedicated and talented staff who get it done with poise and integrity! And I'm inspired by the partnerships and collaboration we are able to catalyze!

In ecology, we try to understand the niches that each organism or group fills in the larger system. In that light, we all have a role in the vast ecosystem of people working the land and the river in the Big Hole. Ranchers steward our river bottoms and uplands, keeping grasses down and adding disturbance to the landscape that supports nutrient cycling and soil creation- like the bison used to do in days long gone. Flood irrigators are "soaking the sponge" to keep our groundwater tables up late in the season, much like beaver do. Like the leaves of the trees, guides and outfitters capture out-of-state dollars that fuel our small town businesses and like hawks and eagles, they keep an eye on the fishery. And our state and federal resource managers are out there tracking and improving our public lands on limited budgets.

*It's hard enough for folks to get to everything that needs to be done in a day. So take on a larger restoration project? Work with the Army Corps to get a project permitted? Sit in on meetings to find out where agencies see priorities and funding opportunities? Who's got time for that? **We do.***

By filling those gaps and being at the table, we've been able to multiply opportunities into great projects on the ground. But these projects don't just improve ecological conditions, they provide good work for contractors and income for local businesses. The \$1.3 million we've secured in the past two years alone has gone primarily to local contractors! Turns out, we're like the Big Hole's underground fungal network- channeling the resources that fuel the projects that enhance the entire system. The latest data from the Montana Nonprofit Association shows that Montana's charitable nonprofit organizations employ 11.2% of Montana's workforce and 27% of all wages paid by NGOs are paid in places like the Big Hole, outside the 6 largest cities in the State. These organizations are fueled by people like you who support our work. In this spirit, we are thankful for our supporters and project sponsors, and ask that you keep us fueled up by donating today!



—Pedro Marques, BHWC Executive Director

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Our Governing Board:

Randy Smith
Chairman, Rancher

Jim Hagenbarth
Vice Chairman, Rancher

Steve Luebeck
Treasurer, Sportsman

Roy Morris
Secretary, George Grant Trout Unlimited

Cindy Ashcraft
Rancher, Business Owner

Jim Berkey
The Nature Conservancy

Peter Frick
Rancher

Jim Dennehy
BSB Cty. Water Utility

Hans Humbert
Rancher

Liz Jones
Rancher

Mark Kambich
Rancher

Erik Kalsta
Rancher

Dean Peterson
Rancher

Phil Ralston
Rancher

John Reinhardt
Rancher

Ray Weaver
Rancher

Bill Kempf
Guiding/Outfitting

John Jackson
BVHD Cty. Commission

Andy Suenram
Resident

Eric Thorson
Guiding/Outfitting

Paul Cleary
Resident

Mark Raffety
Rancher

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

Member Spotlight: Sierra Harris, TNC

The Nature Conservancy Staff Make Valuable Partners

Our "Member Spotlight" highlights key board members, partners, and supporters of the BHWC to give them a chance to explain their commitment to our organization and watershed. We are fortunate to work with two representatives of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Jim Berkey (board member) and Sierra Harris (engaged participant and member of our Big Hole River Drought Subcommittee). This edition of our Member Spotlight features Sierra Harris.

1. *How long have you been a member of/participating with the BHWC? "I have been attending BHWC meetings for about 5 years."*
2. *How did you become involved with the BHWC? "I became involved with the BHWC prior to my work with TNC through the Missouri Headwaters Partnership. At that time, I was the coordinator for the Greater Gallatin Watershed Council. Once I began working in the Upper Missouri Headwaters with TNC, I really enjoyed learning about the great work going on in the Big Hole watershed and have been interested and involved ever since."*
3. *What work of the BHWC do you find the most important/of greatest interest to you? "I was initially fascinated by the shared resource/shared sacrifice idea that the BHWC elevated in the watershed. The BHWC has always been an innovator in terms of getting ahead of problems and getting the right people involved to get the work done."*
4. *What do you like the most about the Big Hole watershed? "Well it is a tie between the people and the landscape ... definitely one of my favorite places in Montana!"*
5. *What is your current occupation? "Freshwater Conservation Project Manager for The Nature Conservancy."*
6. *What do you love most about conservation? "I love working through the process of conservation ... working with stakeholders, exploring the landscape, identifying the priorities, and of course the outcome of the project. Finally ... I love being outside and reaping the benefits of all of our hard work."*
7. *How do you define success? "Success is when I know that I have tried as hard I as can at something ... regardless of the outcome."*
8. *Who inspires you? "I recently had the opportunity to hear Sally Jewell (former Secretary of the Interior, currently interim CEO of TNC) speak and was blown away by her candor, sense of humor, and her ability to help move conservation forward regardless of the many obstacles we all face."*
9. *What's one thing - either conservation-related or not - that you learned recently? "That Southwest Montana just experienced one of the coldest October's on record. Not surprising ... it was 13 below when I visited the French Creek project site on October 30th!"*
10. *What's something about you (a fun fact) that not many people know? "I LOVE bats and had the opportunity to study them in Australia, Mexico, and Washington throughout my career."*



The Nature Conservancy 

10 Ways to Support Conservation in the Big Hole Watershed

Get Involved

1. **Donate** to the BHWC & other conservation organizations.
2. **Participate** in public meetings.
3. **Volunteer** to improve your community.
4. **Attend** community events.
5. **Communicate** with your friends, neighbors, and colleagues about local conservation issues.
6. **Collaborate** by working together.
7. **Learn** about conservation issues.
8. **Listen** to & consider other viewpoints.
9. **Conserve** water.
10. **Support** conservation-related legislation.

We're on [YouTube!](#)



Subscribe to our page to see more of our work and our watershed.

Partnering for Success

More than the Sum of Our Parts

We strive to use local contractors and vendors whenever possible, because we believe contributing to local businesses sows goodwill and keeps our community strong. This year alone, BHWC has partnered and contracted with the following entities:

Agencies

MT FWP
MT DNRC
MT DEQ
NRDP
USFS
MDT

NGOs

The Nature Conservancy
Montana Watershed Coord. Council
Wildlife Conservation Society
Cinnabar Foundation

Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Montana Conservation Corps.
High Divide Collaborative
People and Carnivores
Blackfoot Challenge
Montana Trout Unlimited
George Grant TU

Centennial Valley Association

Contractors & Vendors

Heli-works Flight Services
R.E. Miller and Sons
Water & Envir. Technologies

Circle S Seeds
Rowe Excavation
Basic Biological Services
Big Hole River Retreat
Branding Iron BBQ
Greenfield Printers
FilmWest, High Alpine Hydro.
Watershed Consulting
Morrison-Maierle
Pioneer Technical Services
AFC West Inc. Geosynthetics
GCM Services

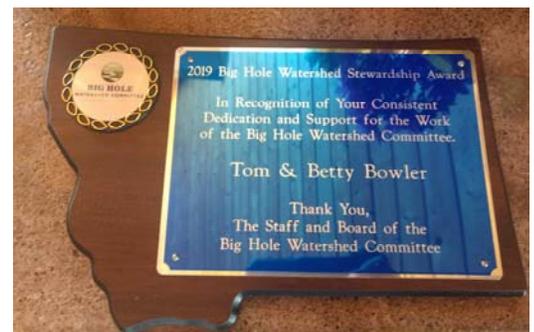


And the Prize Goes to ...

The BHWC Honors Supporters with Stewardship Award

At the BHWC's October monthly meeting, we presented the first ever Big Hole Watershed Stewardship Award to two of our most committed supporters, Tom and Betty Bowler. Tom and Betty make time to attend nearly every monthly meeting and special event we host, as well as reading our meeting minutes and providing valuable feedback. We are continually inspired by their commitment to conservation and community collaboration.

Nonprofits are built and thrive around their supporters, whether board members, interested parties, partners, or donors—we need all of you to keep doing what we do.



"I continue to be impressed by the work people are doing with the life forms around us along with the environment they live in ... Thank you for the work you and other conservation organizations do and the privilege of learning that provides." - Betty Bowler

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Activities & Events

BHWC Monthly Meetings

Our monthly meetings are held every 3rd Wednesday (except January, July and December) at the Divide Grange. Our meetings are always open to the public—please join us for committee updates, community discussions, and presentations on topics relevant to the Big Hole River and its watershed.

Recent

- ◆ August: Conifer Encroachment
- ◆ September: Sage Grouse
- ◆ October: Western Pearlshell Mussels & Aquatic Macroinvertebrates
- ◆ November: CCAA Update
- ◆ December: No meeting

Upcoming

- ◆ January 15—11am @ Fairmont Hot Springs
Business Meeting for Board Members only.
- ◆ February 19—6pm @ Location TBA
- ◆ March 18—7pm @ Location TBA
- ◆ April 15—7pm @ Location TBA
- ◆ May 20—7pm @ Location TBA

Visit our website, bhwc.org/about/monthly-meetings, for detailed notes from all of our meetings.

Otters Make a Splash in the Big Hole

UM Prof. Shares Knowledge at Wildlife Event

On Tuesday, August 6th, Kerry Foresman from the University of Montana taught Big Hole watershed community members all about otters. The event was part of the Wildlife Conservation Society's annual Wildlife Speaker Series, for which the BHWC hosts a potluck and presentation each summer. Forty-seven people attended the event, and lamb & beef burgers were donated and cooked by BHWC board member and Wise River Rancher, Liz Jones. Liz was helped by her grandson, Nate.

About the Wildlife Speaker Series: The Wildlife Speaker Series was started in 2013 to increase awareness and refocus the conversation about local wildlife. Events throughout Southwest Montana share stories of conservation initiatives and interesting wildlife facts at historical working lands and conservation-oriented venues each summer. BHWC events have featured songbirds, pelicans, reptiles & amphibians, bats, Western Pearlshell mussels, wolverines, and otters.

Thank you Kerry, Liz, and Nate for a wonderful presentation & meal!



Conservation through Collaboration Starts with You

Join Us as We Protect the Big Hole's Landscape & Heritage

Join us at our meetings and work with us to manage, protect, and enhance our beautiful Big Hole River and watershed. We pride ourselves on being an organization that gets things done. In 2019 alone, we completed several stream and riparian restoration projects, we raised \$41,000 for the Burma Road project near Glen, we hosted 10 monthly meetings and one wildlife event, and we worked hard to identify and solve conservation issues that matter to local residents and businesses. ***But ultimately, we are here to serve you and your support is what carries us.*** Please join us at our meetings and help us figure out the best ways to manage, protect, and enhance our beautiful Big Hole River and watershed.



We want to hear from you. Collaboration is key to our success and the success of the river. Please join us— all are welcome.

The BHWC is trusted to help our community work together to take care of the river, the watershed, its wildlife, and its people. We need your participation and we need your donations to cover important things that grants don't fund, such as: ***stream gages, project development & support, outreach, staff development, and more.***

Your contributions are tax deductible and can be targeted to any of our work areas.

Have You Heard About Our Livestock Donation Program?

A Gift of Livestock Could be a Win-Win for You and the BHWC

Your gift of livestock will help the BHWC enhance the ecologic and economic sustainability of the watershed for the people who live, work, and play here.



You now have the ability to make a substantial gift to the BHWC and *reduce your taxes.*

Here's how it works:

1. You donate one or more of your animals to the BHWC before they are sold.
2. You deliver the animal(s) to auction or private treaty and fill out BHWC Bill of Sale.
3. The auction house sends the donation & Bill of Sale to the BHWC.
4. BHWC supplies you with tax forms & thanks you for your donation.

For more information, visit <http://bhwc.org/giving/>

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Building Drought Resilience in the Big Hole Watershed

Fall/Winter 2019 Snowpack & Climate Forecast

— *Matt Norberg, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Hydrologist*

“September and October storms provided some early fall precipitation across the Big Hole and below-average temperatures. These storms provided a good start to the snowpack as we transition into winter. However, the winter forecast is currently calling for above-average temperatures, and South-west MT has equal chances of below, normal, or above-average precipitation to above-average precipitation. As we transition into spring, the warmer temperatures and equal chances of below, normal, or above-average precipitation continue.”

“While the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) climate pattern often influences the winter, neutral conditions are in place this year and expected to persist into the spring. In the absence of El Nino or La Nina, long-term trends become a key predictor for the outlook, while other climate patterns, such as the Madden-Julian Oscillation and Arctic Oscillation (AO), will likely play a larger role in determining winter weather.” (NOAA)



A Relatively Easy Water Year for the Big Hole River

2019 Drought Restrictions

We were fortunate this year! Ample rain and cool summer temperatures resulted in minimal drought restrictions. Big Hole River Sections II-IV experienced zero restrictions. This is the kind of year that makes drought planning & response easy—but it won't always be this way. Join us in celebrating this year and help us prepare for worse years by participating, communicating, and donating. You can do it all at our website, here: <http://bhwc.org>.

Summary—2019 Big Hole River Drought Restrictions

Section	Flow based Fishing Restrictions	Temperature Based Fishing Restrictions
Section I: Headwaters to North Fork Big Hole River	Closed 8/31 to 9/25 (25 Days)	
Section II: North Fork Big Hole River to Dickie Bridge		
Section III: Dickie Bridge to Maiden Rock FAS		
Section IV: Maiden Rock FAS to Notch Bottom FAS		
Section V: Notch Bottom FAS to Mouth		Hoot Owl Restriction: 8/8 to 9/12 (35 days)

Building Drought Resilience in the Big Hole Watershed And That's a Wrap

Big Hole River Incentive Program Pilot Finishing Up

A total of 8 projects were executed through the Big Hole River Incentive Program to improve private properties along the lower Big Hole River. Our river corridor is predominantly private land, so incentivizing landowners to do these types of projects has direct conservation outcomes. The Big Hole is the first watershed in Montana to pursue this incentives payment concept. Main projects have included: repairing, maintaining, and installing fencing around riparian areas; reducing conifer encroachment in riparian areas; bank stabilization projects to reduce sedimentation; and riparian plantings to promote vegetation establishment.

This pilot program demonstrated that landowners will engage in conservation when a trusted local partner supports them through the design and permitting. We were also able to make an important value statement by reimbursing landowners who fenced their streamside areas years ago, because we all benefit from those un-developed lush cottonwood galleries.

Thank you to the DNRC and all landowner participants for contributing to health of the Big Hole River and watershed!

Timber!

BHWC Developing Forestry Stewardship Cooperative

The BHWC is in the process of developing a Big Hole Forestry Cooperative. The cooperative will be designed and managed in a similar fashion to the Big Hole River Incentive Program but will focus on restoring forest and rangeland health by reducing conifer encroachment into grasslands, restoring aspen stands, and thinning on the private/public interface. The cooperative will begin its work in the hardest-hit areas of the Eastern Pioneers, the Western Highlands, and the McCartney Mountain region.

Over the past 150 years, conifers (juniper, pine, Douglas fir, etc.) have expanded into ecosystems that historically supported other habitat types such as grasslands, sage steppe, meadows and riparian areas. At first glance, the forests look natural, but the problem is that as they expand their range and become more dominant, they use more water and out-compete important understory vegetation and forage. This can lead to less infiltration of rain and snowmelt, increased erosion and run-off, and habitat reduction for species like sage grouse, deer, elk, moose, and songbirds.



Fire exclusion as well as insect & disease outbreaks have created stands with hazardously excessive fuel loads. Forest thinning will reduce the risk of big wildfires, improve water quality and watershed function, and improve important forest ecosystems such as aspen stands. Cutting down trees may seem like an odd approach to restoration, but it's the best way to tackle this huge problem and maintain the vital and diverse habitats of the Big Hole watershed.

For more information about how you can enroll your private lands in the Big Hole Forest Cooperative, contact Ben LaPorte, BHWC Program Manager, at (303) 808-5611.

Big Hole Watershed Committee

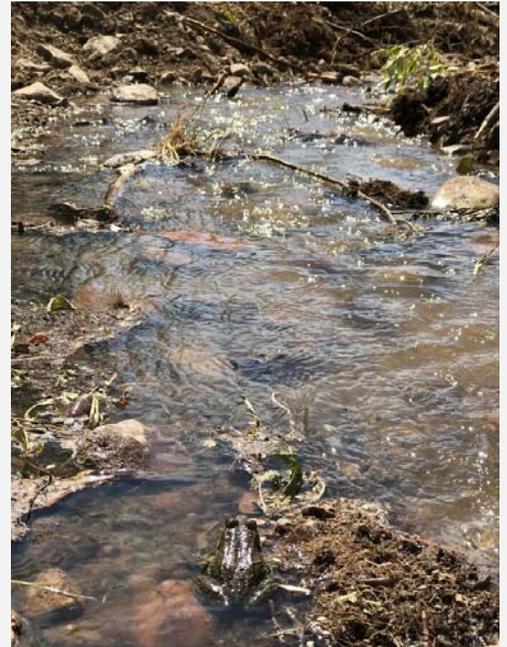
Fish & Water

BHWC Builds 1,400' of Stream Channel, 4 Acres of Floodplain

Oregon Creek Restoration Complete

Our Oregon Creek restoration project was completed September 6th, on-time and under-budget. The lower reach of Oregon Creek was impacted by historic gold and silver mining in the late 1800's, leaving it pinned against large placer piles (river cobbles and sediment dug out from the channel bed and stacked next to the stream). These piles of rock confined the channel to a straight, incised, and fast-moving stream. The stream was unable to overtop its banks and spread out onto its adjacent floodplain during the spring runoff or high flow events. Due to the disconnection between the stream and its floodplain, the ability for the stream to store clean, cold water was lost. The mining impacts also left impaired fish and wildlife habitat. This project fixed all of Oregon Creek's alignments in the lower reach, allowing the stream to access its floodplain and naturally store water for the first time in over 150 years!

Approximately 1,400 linear feet of new stream channel and 4 acres of new floodplain were constructed in addition to the installation of 8 machine-made, off-stream beaver dams. These manmade beaver dams, or "detention ridges", span the floodplains length, functioning to catch sediment, and slow and store water. They will also enhance the habitat for amphibians, insects, song birds, and more. A slew of other treatments were built into the project to enhance the stream's function and habitat such as dug-out pools, bank stabilizing structures, riffle crests, and willow trenches.



More Work to Be Done on French Creek

Lower French Creek Restoration Underway

Construction on Lower French Creek started this fall. Like Oregon Creek, this project addressed mining-related impacts, which left the old channel pinned against a high, eroding bank by a man-made dike feature. These human-caused alterations have caused 800+ tons of sediment per year to break away from the bank and fall into the stream, affecting downstream fish and mussel habitat. To fix the problem, we are constructing approximately 4,000 lineal feet of new stream channel east of the current channel through an area of healthy riparian vegetation.



This is a much larger project, both in volume and length, than our previous stream restoration projects. Each meander, pool, riffle, bank, and floodplain are highly engineered to ensure a structurally stable stream, while also enhancing wildlife habitat. The project incorporated other water storage techniques as well, including depositional wetlands and floodplain micro-topography.

Fish & Water

Modeling the “Watershed Approach” to Conservation

MWCC’s Missouri Headwaters Tour Features BHWC Projects

The Montana Watershed Coordination Council and the Missouri Headwaters Partnership hosted a watershed tour September 11th through 13th, highlighting the watershed approach to natural resource management. BHWC is an active member of both organizations. The goals of the tour were to:

- View successful projects that have improved watershed health;
- Learn about community driven natural resource plan and priorities;
- Observe initiatives that build landscape resiliency;
- Hear from the local watershed champions that are pushing for sustainable communities; and
- Discuss the statewide implications of local challenges and opportunities for water management.



The tour started in Butte with an introduction and a panel discussion of drought experts before visiting two of BHWC’s restoration sites on the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area, French Gulch and Oregon Creek. BHWC staff and board members were joined in explaining the projects by Morrison-Maierle, Inc. Engineer, Matt Barnes, who has been instrumental in the design and oversight of these projects. The tour was attended by interested community members, water policy decision makers, statewide and local natural resource professionals, and supporters of community-based conservation.

After visiting the BHWC’s sites on Mount Haggin, the tour visited watershed restoration sites in the Beaverhead, Jefferson, Madison, Ruby, and Gallatin watersheds. Centennial Valley projects were discussed during dinner in Bannack on September 11th.



So what is the watershed approach to natural resource management? It’s the idea that ecological health is best maintained at the watershed scale through community collaboration and local solutions, an idea that the BHWC has championed since its inception in 1995. By continuously maintaining, enhancing, and restoring our landscape, project-by-project, we are protecting our beloved Big Hole River and watershed.

Join us. Sign up for our newsletter, read about our projects, make a donation at our website, bhwc.org. We need you.

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Wildlife & Uplands

Learning to Live Together

BHWC Helps Residents & Ranchers Live with Wolves & Bears

Wolves and bears are here to stay and are a part of what makes the Big Hole watershed a truly wild place. But living with them is not always easy. Bears dig through trash cans, raid campsites, and can be dangerous if encountered unexpectedly. Wolves often prey on livestock, causing ranchers both dollars and heartache. That's why the BHWC has programs in place to deter depredation and educate both residents and visitors about important wildlife issues, like bear safety. And we are always looking for additional ways to help.

Helping ranchers maintain their way of life is important to us because the sprawling ranches in the Big Hole watershed are a large part of what makes it a special place. They provide food and habitat for wildlife as well as migration corridors between key habitats. And ranchers are invested in maintaining and enhancing the health of their land and water—more than many other users might be—because their futures depend on it. By providing non-lethal predator management tools to producers, we are helping both ranchers and wildlife to survive and thrive in the Big Hole watershed.

With a Little Help from our Friends

People and Carnivores Offers Tools & Expertise to Combat Livestock Depredation

People and Carnivores (P&C), a nonprofit conservation group dedicated to helping carnivores and people—especially ranchers—share the landscape, has been a dedicated partner to the BHWC for over a decade. They have helped us develop and expand our wildlife conflict reduction programs and are interested in working with local residents, landowners, and livestock producers in the Big Hole Valley to reduce risk of conflicts with large carnivores. P&C will help you find solutions to keep your family & property safe and large carnivores, like bears, wolves, and mountain lions, wild.

Kim Johnston is P&C's Field Project Manager and is based out of Dillon. Using a variety of tools and methods for conflict reduction, Kim can assist with finding a customized solution for you and your situation. Kim can help with implementing tools such as:

- ◆ **Garbage Management:** bear resistant garbage canisters or similar solutions
- ◆ **Fladry:** electrified flagging to temporarily deter wolf conflicts around livestock
- ◆ **Electric fencing:** permanent and/or temporary electric fencing to exclude large carnivores from areas or attractants
- ◆ **Scare Devices:** various devices available to temporarily deter large carnivore activity
- ◆ **Livestock Guard Dogs:** technical advice on incorporating livestock guard dogs, assistance finding reliable breeders
- ◆ **Livestock Management Techniques:** technical advice on management practices to reduce risk of depredation
- ◆ **Property Consultations:** assistance with identifying and securing potential attractants on property
- ◆ **Ranch Risk Assessments:** identification of large carnivores risks & solutions customized for individual ranch needs
- ◆ **Bear Safety Training and Outreach:** assistance with bear safety training



For more information, reach out to Kim at (406) 599-9424 or kjohnston@peopleandcarnivores.org.

Wildlife & Uplands

On the Range Again

BHWC Range Rider Completes 9th Season

The Upper Big Hole Range Rider program's 9th season wrapped up September 30th. Range Rider Chet Robertson patrols 6 USFS allotments for 7 livestock producers during the summer months when cattle are in the forest grazing. He looks for livestock condition & behavior as well as predator (mainly wolf) sign. Chet also maintains 6 game cameras set in strategic locations around the forest to get a better idea of what the wolves are doing.

Maintaining a human presence on the range keeps wolves moving, helps ranchers find injured livestock, aids in the confirmation of livestock loss to predators (so ranchers can seek reimbursement), and lets landowners know where wolves have been sighted or tracked so they can provide additional monitoring in those areas.



Keeping Carnivores “Honest” Benefits Ranchers and Wildlife

The BHWC Offers Free Livestock Carcass Removal to Ranchers

Wisdom locals and other passersby may have noticed what looks like fenced-in piles of dirt next to the Montana Department of Transportation's maintenance shop outside of Wisdom. It may look like nothing more than piles of debris, but it's actually the BHWC's livestock carcass compost facility.



Each spring, John Costa, BHWC Wildlife Program Technician and Wisdom resident, removes carcasses from local ranches free-of-charge with a dump truck loaned to us by the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. John then transports the carcasses to the compost facility, where they are broken down into compost to prevent them from attracting and providing an extra food source for local predators. In 2019, John picked up 123 carcasses from 9 livestock producers.

So why do we do it? It's important to get these “free meals” off the landscape so wolves and bears don't overpopulate and develop bad habits like feeding on livestock, resulting in livestock loss and lethal predator management. Composting also removes a food source for birds of prey, like hawks and ravens, which can overpopulate, decimate sage grouse populations, and even harass and kill livestock. Carcass removal and composting are two cost-effective, low-maintenance methods of livestock carcass disposal that benefit both ranchers and wildlife.

The BHWC will offer free carcass removal again March through May, 2020. To make arrangements to have carcasses picked up, call John Costa at (209) 628-2225.

Big Hole Watershed Committee
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**Big Hole Watershed
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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.

You can donate online.
Visit bhwc.org and click on
our “Donate Here” button.

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.*