

Marias River Watershed



NEWSLETTER

Website: www.mariasriver.com

Picture by Roger Zentis

Protecting and Improving The Land and Resources

FLOAT TRIP ENJOYED BY ALL



On June 18 137 people showed up for the Marias River Basin Weed Control Association (MRBWCA)/Marias River Watershed Group (MRW) Float Trip & Weed Tour. Before the float began Dan Picard (Pondera Co. Extension Agent) and Steve Becker (Pondera Co. Weed Supervisor) gave a weed ID program. An overview of the Lincoln Ranch was also given by

Gary Olson (MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks).

A stop was made along the way for Stan Huhtala (Bureau of Reclamation) and Kenny Keever (Bureau of Land Management) to discuss biological weed control methods along the Marias River. Lee Ohlinger (DowAgroSciences) followed up with weed management options using herbicides.

At the conclusion of the float NRCS staff showed the group a streambank stabilization project taking place at Marias River Farms. Jeannie Olmstead (Toole Co. Extension Agent) taught record keeping for pesticide applicators and Dave Burch (MT. Dept. of Agriculture) gave an update on the department's Noxious Weed Grant program.



To end the day a everyone competed in a weed ID contest followed by the distribution of several door prizes and a barbeque catered by TLC Catering.

Sponsors for the event were the MRBWCA and MRW. Contributing sponsors included CPS Distributing, DowAgroSciences, Montana State University, and MRW.

The Board & Regional Chairs:

- Paul Kronebusch-Chairman
- Barb Cole-CoChairman
- Lawrence Bold
- Roy Doore
- Coo Coo Boggs
- Ramsey Offerdal
- John Rappold

The next regular MRW Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for October 2009. Contact your local CD for information on the date and time.

Conservation District Contacts:

- Pondera 406-278-7611 ext. 101
- Glacier 406-873-5752 ext. 101
- Liberty 406-759-5778 ext. 102
- Toole 406-434-5234 ext. 113
- Big Sandy 406-378-2298
- Hill 406-265-6792 ext. 101
- Chouteau 406-622-5627 ext. 101

This newsletter was compiled and edited by Kody Farkell, PCCD Administrator

MARIAS RIVER WATERSHED UPDATE

By Marlene Moon, MRW Coordinator

Phase II of the Russian olive removal project has received funding and will entail additional follow-up with chemical application in the demonstration area across from Sanford Park. Several Russian olive in the Sanford Park area are also slated for removal. BOR staff planted some new trees in the area to help provide replacement vegetation. Additionally, some Russian olive infestations downstream will be assessed and removal is planned to begin yet this fall.

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MARIAS RIVER WATERSHED UPDATE CON'T...

The Pugsley Bridge project will be delayed until spring of 2010. Watershed members met with staff from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT). DOT engineers plan to reinforce the north abutment of the bridge at that time. MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks also have a fishery project that will be implemented in the same area, so working closely with these agencies will ensure that one project does not negatively impact the others.

A long-term monitoring program has been initiated by the Marias River Watershed group. Water samples are periodically collected at 10 to 12 sites along the Marias River and major tributaries during various flows throughout the year. There have also been photo points and riparian vegetation transects established as part of the overall monitoring program.

Several proposed projects/events have been suggested to the watershed for future consideration. Among these have been other cleanup projects at sites on the reservoir as well as along the river; a festival/educational program on river history and the river influence with the Native American population; and signs for recreationists using the river outlining time/distance to next stopping point. If anyone has a suggestion for a potential project on the Marias River, please contact Marlene Moon at 759-5778, ext. 102 or by email at marlene.moon@mt.nacdnet.net. The next scheduled quarterly meeting is being planned for October, but the time and place has not been determined. Marlene Moon or your local Conservation District can be contacted for updated information.

FARMING IN THE REGION

By Dan Picard, Pondera Co. Extension Agent

We are approaching harvest time in the area and many expect it to be at least two weeks later than normal. The small grain crops look good in some spots and poor in others. The combination of cold weather, lack of timely rainfall, bugs, late spring frost, late seeding, and now hail have taken a toll on potential yields.

Disease pressure in small grain was lower than normal because of low rainfall and temperatures not favorable for disease development. Most of the producers I talked to said they have seen little or no leaf disease pressure this year. We have had very few Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus (MSMV) fields identified this year. Most of the WSMV is caused by volunteer plants that have the virus and mites transmit the virus to the new crop.

Farmers will have an extended harvest this year because much of the spring crop was seeded later than normal. I expect the next challenge for producers may be how to harvest spring grains and still get their winter wheat seeded in a timely manner.

Mother Nature finally treated the irrigated producers with enough runoff to nearly fill Lake Francis. Those that can irrigate have been able to produce at least average to above average hay yields. Dryland producers are relying on the late snow storm and the occasional showers that come through to help boost their yields. In some of the northern portions of the region dryland hay yields are reported to be well below average.

This year has been a good year for weeds, especially Salsify or Goats beard and Showy milkweed. Weather may have played a part in reducing the effectiveness of herbicides. Salsify has really showed up this year in a few CRP fields. Management of weeds is tough this time of year so producers are encouraged to scout fields in the spring and treat the weeds while they are still small. We are seeing the usual noxious weeds, but White-top continues to be toward the top of the list. Area producers may want to visit with their local weed supervisor on management of weeds. Small grain producers also have had a challenging year controlling weeds like Kochia in their crop.

Wireworms and cutworms have caused isolated problems for producers again this year. One of the biggest pest problems continues to be gophers or ground squirrels. There have been reports of individual losses of 20 and upwards to 80 acres to gophers this year. This pest requires a huge investment in time and money to manage. Management of gophers relies on timely treatment in the spring and favorable weather so the bait is not ruined.