



Picture by Roger Zentzis

Marias River Watershed

NEWSLETTER

Website: www.mariasriver.com

Protecting and Improving The Land and Resources

“CLEAN MARIAS GREEN” Clean-Up Day Planned

By Marlene Moon, MRW Coordinator

MARK APRIL 25 ON YOUR CALENDARS! This will be the day that the Marias River Watershed (MRW) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) will host a clean-up event of the Tiber Reservoir and volunteers are needed! This event is planned to coincide with Earth Day activities and promotes a vision of “protecting and improving the land, water and resources of the Marias River Watershed.”

The reservoir, also known as Lake Elwell, was formed when Tiber Dam was built on the Marias River in the early 1950s, and has been a favorite recreational site for boating, fishing and camping since that time. The MRW, formed in 2003, funded an assessment of the river and reservoir with a grant provided by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The assessment, conducted by Warren Kellogg, NRCS now retired, and Roger Zentzis (then the MRW Coordinator), was completed in 2008. This assessment highlighted the need to address the general resource condition of the reservoir, one of the largest bodies of water in the state. Tiber Reservoir is 27 miles long, boasts 180 miles of shoreline and can hold, at full flood pool, 1,515,522 acre feet of water.

“We are excited by the response we’ve received for this project” stated Paul Kronebusch, MRW Chairman. “We’ve already gotten support from Walleye Unlimited members, local 4-H and Extension and scout groups. We’ve confirmed landfills from Chester, Shelby and the North Central Montana Joint Refuse. The RC&D (North Central Resource, Conservation and Development) and Conservation Districts in Lib-

erty, Toole and Pondera counties are helping with planning details.”

The cleanup will begin at 8:30 a.m. on April 25th and continue until 3:00 p.m. Staging/collection sites will be established at the following locations: 1) the Tiber Marina will serve as the main site and will be the location of a barbeque following the cleanup; 2) the VFW Park/dike area; 3) Willow Creek campground; 4) the North Bootlegger camp site; 5) the South Bootlegger camp site and 6) the Devon picnic area. Volunteers are being asked to pre-register and come prepared for the work...wear long sleeved shirts, long pants and closed shoes (no sandals, flip-flops etc). Be sure to have jackets/hats if the weather is cool. Workers are also asked to bring their own gloves and snacks/water. At 3:00 p.m. there will be a barbeque for all at the Marina site.

To provide a good count for the barbeque and tally the groups participating, please pre-register by contacting the any of the cooperating conservation districts...Liberty CD 759-5778 x 102; Pondera CD 278-7611 x 101 or Toole CD 424-5234 x 113.

“We hope that recreationists from Havre to Cut Bank, Conrad to Great Falls and everywhere in between are willing to help with this project. This recreation site is used by people all across the state and we’re hoping all of them will join with us to clean up the reservoir before summer begins” Kronebusch said. He also noted that trucks/trailers are being solicited to help with the garbage collection, so if you have a vehicle that can be used for a few days, please call and VOLUNTEER.

MEETINGS

There will be a meeting Wednesday March 11 at 9am at Marias River Electric to continue planning of the *Clean Tiber Green* event.

The next regular quarterly meeting of the MRW is scheduled for Tuesday April 7 at 1pm at Marias River Electric.

The Board & Regional Chairs:

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

The next regular MRW Meetings will be held Tuesday April 7 at 1:00pm, Marias River Electric, Shelby

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

Noxious Weed Spraying on Lake Elwell's "Big Island"

Jim Ghekiere, Liberty Co. Weed Coordinator

Over the past several years, the Liberty County Weed District (LCWD), through a contract with Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has put considerable effort towards the control of noxious weeds on Reclamation's land surrounding Lake Elwell. One major area has been the lowlands on the east shore of the Willow Creek Arm, just off the "Millers Slough" area. This area was once completely covered with noxious weeds, including Russian knapweed, Canada thistle, musk thistle, and small patches of leafy spurge.

With the low water levels on Lake Elwell in spring 2008, LCWD was able to walk out to the lake across the exposed frozen lake bed on to assess the current weed situation. The weeds were GPS, mapped and inventoried. It was estimated that the island was 113 acres with nearly 40 acres covered with Russian knapweed and leafy spurge.

This project became a true joint effort with a meeting between LCWD and Reclamation's Tiber Field Office to discuss further options for the weed removal. One idea explored in the past was to use a flat-bottomed boat to ferry ATV's with sprayers out to remote and difficult-to-access areas on the lake. With the ATV's at the site, the



weed control efforts would be relatively quick and easy. The greatest challenge was how to get the equipment to the site. After much debate and idea-swapping, Reclamation crews decided to modify a barge they owned. They installed new decking and anchors for tying down the ATV's.

On June 25th Reclamation and LCWD crews used a work crane to lower the barge into the lake, where it was pushed up to the boat ramp for loading two ATV's. The barge was towed by a boat owned by Reclamation.

A second boat followed close behind transporting Reclamation and LCWD employees, chemicals needed for the project and a floating pump.

A total of twenty-seven acres of weeds were sprayed on the island. Another 10 acres of weeds that were exposed in March had become submerged under water and were unreachable.

This project was an excellent example of how Reclamation worked together with LCWD to address the area's noxious weed problems. The LCWD would like to thank Reclamation for their assistance and patience throughout this project.

Marias River Watershed Hosts Annual Meeting

On February 3 the Marias River Watershed hosted their annual meeting at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Shelby.

A presentation on the acquisition of the Charlie Lincoln Ranch property by the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks was given by Gary Olson, FWP Wildlife Biologist from Conrad. Olson referred to the 10,705 acre property as the newly designated Marias State Park and Wildlife Management Area.

The property has been left in a primitive state along both sides of a 14 miles stretch of the Marias River channel southwest of Shelby. The property boasts grazing and riparian areas with a variety of vegetation species, wildlife and numerous recreational opportunities. Public comments received have indicated that the area should remain in a primitive state, but there are several issues that need management plans. Weeds are a primary concern for the property itself and surrounding neighbors. Fencing and a boundary survey also present a formidable financial issue for FWP. Olson stressed that FWP always welcomes suggestions and comments and these can be sent to Olson (278-7033) or the Great Falls Regional Office (454-5840).

Other speakers for the event included Tera Ryan, MT Salinity Control Association (MSCA) of Conrad. Her presentation was an update on the P-Canal Irrigation project east of Conrad. MSCA installed 84 monitoring wells to determine the influence from the canal on salinity problems on irrigated and dry land, and MSCA continues to monitor these wells to determine the trends in groundwater levels. Ryan also spoke of the fabric liner that was installed in 2002 to address leakage in a portion of the canal. In 2005, plastic curtains were installed in trenches to two small canal segments that were leaking. Another section received an annual application of polyacrylamide (PAM) in 2006-2008. All of these methods have proven to be successful in addressing water loss and improved efficiency.

Jan Langel, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Water Resources Division in Helena, was present to provide a status report on the various bills being considered in the 2009 Legislative session that involves water and other issues of interest to CDs and watershed.

Warren Kellogg, Watershed Specialist, provided the group with a report on the various projects being carried out by the MRW. These include 1) continuation of Russian olive removal on the main stem of the Marias; 2) streambank erosion at the Pugsley Bridge site; 3) water quality monitoring and development of transects, photo plots and water sampling; 4) and the *Clean Marias Green* project being planned for April 25.