



# Marias River Watershed

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Quarterly Newsletter  
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## NEWSLETTER

Website: [www.mariasriver.com](http://www.mariasriver.com)

Protecting and Improving The Land and Resources

### MARIAS RIVER WATERSHED ANNUAL MEETING

*By Marlene Moon, MRW Coordinator*

Paul Kronebusch, Chairman of the Marias River Watershed, welcomed attendees to the Annual Meeting that was held in Chester on Feb. 17, 2011.

Mary Heller, General Manager of the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority (aka Rocky Boy/North Central water project) was the featured speaker. She provided a background of the project, noting the organization was federally authorized in 2002. The project covers 6.8 million acres and includes 22 participating entities and the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation. Heller outlined the funding for the project, emphasizing that 80% comes from federal funds and the remaining 20% is split equally between the state and the community receiving the service. Although having a regional system makes it easier for smaller communities to address regulations for clean drinking water, the burden of coming up with 10% funding makes it difficult for these rural entities to participate. Additional information on this project can be found at the website [www.rockyboynorthcentral.com](http://www.rockyboynorthcentral.com).

"We were fortunate to have Ms. Heller speak to our group and the topic of clean, affordable water is important to every resident within the Marias River basin and the state," said Kronebusch. "Ms. Heller was very complimentary to all the landowners and the Rocky Boy Reservation for their participation in this project and the quality of work being done."

Chad Krause, Lewistown Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reported on cottonwood re-generation, noting the need for moist, bare sites for recruitment. He also touched on the subject of Russian olive control, acknowledging the species as a food source for wildlife, but also acknowledging the detriment to having the species in riparian areas. He spoke of

the eradication project on Council Island in the Missouri River Breaks and the effort needed to cut about 4500 trees that were so thick it was impossible to walk through the area.

The Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program was outlined by Diane Boyd, Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) biologist in Conrad. Boyd stressed that the program is funded by bird licenses, not tax dollars, as she spoke of the benefits received by landowners, hunters and definitely birds and habitat for participation in the program.

Gary Olson, Conrad FWP, gave a short update on weed control activities at the Marias State Park and Wildlife Management Area (formerly the Charlie Lincoln Ranch). Four hundred acres have been aerial sprayed for knapweed and an insect control program has also been initiated, along with the installation of 6.5 miles of fencing. There is an increase in bear activity in the area, and Olson asked that all sightings be reported. Aggressive behavior or property damage will be handled by animal control, but FWP is trying to keep records on the migration of the animals, so public assistance is requested.

An overview of the watershed projects was given by Warren Kellogg, watershed specialist. The watershed continues with Russian olive removal along the main stem and an inventory has revealed several infestations along Pondera Coulee. Landowners have been in contact with MRW to participate in the removal project. The bank stabilization project at the Pugsley Bridge will begin in early spring. An engineer has been hired to design and oversee the installation the project. Funding for the project was obtained through a DNRC Renewable Resource Grant.

#### 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 Tuesday April 5 at 1:00pm, Marias River Electric, Shelby**

#### Conservation District Contacts:

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

## EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL – GET TO KNOW IT...COME TO FEAR IT

*By Jim Ghekier, Liberty County Weed Coordinator*

Anglers, boaters, and anyone dependent upon Montana’s waters for their livelihood and recreation be aware! The dreaded invasive plant, Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) is no longer a stranger to our state. An aggressive aquatic plant, EWM has infested the waters of Washington and Idaho for many years. It was declared a noxious weed by the state of Montana in 2003, and was first found in the Cabinet Gorge and Noxon Reservoir waters of western Montana in 2007. Late in the summer of 2010, it was found in six more sites in our state, including the Missouri River drainage and Fort Peck Reservoir.

The threat this plant poses to our aquatic and riparian environments is very real. It is paramount that we educate anglers, boaters, and all recreationists to identify this plant, and to train them on preventing the spread of EWM to other bodies of water. Training must include an understanding of the plant’s spread, and everyday prevention practices, such as boat inspection, washing, and sanitation of equipment and gear.



The Marias River Basin Weed Control Association is planning a public informational meeting for anglers and recreationists to be held this spring in Shelby. The date has not been confirmed as of this printing. The primary focus of this meeting is to enlist the help of local sportsmen to keep the Marias Watershed and Lake Elwell free of EWM. More information will be distributed through our local Conservation District, MSU Extension, and Weed District offices as the plans are finalized.

### **What is Eurasian Watermilfoil?**

It is an extremely aggressive non-native water weed.

Eurasian watermilfoil crowds out native plants and forms thick, floating mats on the surface of the water that make boating, fishing and swimming almost impossible.



### **What does it look like?**

It's a submersed, rooted perennial plant with smooth stems that branch near the water surface. This branching can form large, floating mats of vegetation on the surface of lakes, rivers and other water bodies, preventing light from reaching native aquatic plants.

The leaves of Eurasian watermilfoil are feathery and occur around the stem. Each leaf is 1/2 to 2 inches long, with 12 to 21 pairs of fine, thin leaflets. The leaves rarely extend above the water surface and will collapse around the stem when removed from the water. The upper portion of the plant often develops a reddish color.

The flower is a spike which is often pink or red. It is held above the water during flowering from June to September.

### **Why is it a Problem?**

Once introduced into a river or lake, milfoil rapidly forms thick mats that make swimming, boating and fishing difficult.

Eurasian watermilfoil can cause drowning by tangling swimmers in the thick beds.

Eurasian watermilfoil alters rivers and lakes by choking out native plants, thus harming fish and wildlife habitat.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

*--Margaret Mead*