



Marias River Watershed

NEWSLETTER

Website: www.mariasriver.com

Picture by Roger Zenitz

Protecting and Improving The Land and Resources

Warning: Weeds Spread At Astronomical Rate

Damon Bunting, Glacier Co. Extension Agent

Do you feel like the weeds in your fields and gardens just keep growing and growing, no matter how many you pull, hoe, or spray? Well, it's true, they do; and they will continue to do so. Understanding the how and whys of the situation can help in weed management.

One reason weeds are so persistent is because of the soil seedbank, or the collection of weed seeds that have been produced in the past. Most soils contain millions of weed seeds. Researchers in England once dug up and sifted through the top few inches of soil on a plot of land. In one acre, which is 208 feet on a side, they counted more than ½ million seeds of prostrate knotweed, 700,000 shepherds purse seeds, 1.33 million chickweed seeds, and 6.75 million annual bluegrass seeds; and this is only a partial list. Numbers of seeds in the soil are similar in the United States. This is not surprising when you consider the numbers of seeds that one plant can produce in a season. A single lambsquarter plant can produce 39,000 seeds in one season. Redroot pigweed can produce 120,000 seeds in a summer, plantain 36,000 seeds, crabgrass 8,000 seeds, and mullein 220,000 seeds.



Field bindweed
ontariowildflower.com

This answers the question of why there are so many weeds in your fields. Why then, do they continue sprouting? The answer lies in the weed's survival strategy of seed dormancy. Not all of a weed's seeds will germinate at the same time. This means if environmental conditions suddenly become unfavorable, such as a drought or frost, the weed has not used up all its chances to reproduce; it is holding other seeds in reserve. The length of time they can be held in reserve is amazing for some species. Seeds can still be viable and able to germinate after several years. It is no wonder that we are still pulling lambsquarter after controlling the weeds for 15 years- their seeds can still germinate after 40 years. Foxtail are viable for 20 years, redroot pigweed for 3 years, quackgrass up to 6 years, field bindweed to 40 years, & Canada thistle for 21 years.

Luckily, weeds seeds also die in the seedbank. Once seeds have been incorporated into the seedbank, they can die due to natural causes or the action of microbes and pathogens. Invertebrates such as ants, beetles, & crickets can consume a large number of seeds. In a laboratory condition, a single female field cricket consumed more than 250 pigweed seeds per day!

Understanding these factors can help plan the most effective weed management strategy. The importance of preventing weeds from going to seed becomes clear...and so does the virtue of patience. There are many sources of good information on weed management. For more information or help to develop a comprehensive weed control strategy contact an local MSU Extension Agent or County Weed Board.



Canada thistle
oregonstate.edu

The Board & Regional Chairs:

Paul Kronebusch-Chairman
Barb Cole-CoChairman
Lawrence Bold
Joe Weatherwax
Ken Augare
Ramsey Offerdal
John Rappold
Gary Arnst

The next regular MRW Meetings will be held Tuesday October 7 at the Marias River Electric Hospitality Room in Shelby at 1:00pm.

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

What makes a river so restful to people is that it doesn't have any doubt - it is sure to get where it is going, and it doesn't want to go anywhere else.

Hal Boyle

Historical Area To Be Saved

By Marlene Moon, LCCD

Glacier County Conservation District recently signed a grant contract with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation for a Renewable Resource Grant (RRG) to address bank erosion projects on the Marias River. One of the projects involves an erosion site near the Pugsley Bridge in Liberty County. This bridge is historically significant as one of the few remaining steel cable suspension bridges in the United States and is an important link for landowner and recreational access to that area of the Marias River.

An alternative analysis was completed by Great Western Engineering of Helena and several alternative solutions were offered. The Marias River Watershed (MRW) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), with

members from several agencies and interest groups, made a selection from these alternatives, based on the location of the project, the cost of the proposed work, impacts to habitat, and water quality as well as other factors. The grant will provide funding to plan, design, and eventually install in-stream structures to alleviate erosion of the streambank near the bridge and access road while maintaining or enhancing environmental and fish habitat conditions. These structures are often used to mitigate erosion by manipulating the channel, geometry and flow.

A Working Agreement between Glacier County CD and the Liberty County CD will provide administrative services during the project.

North Central Montana RC&D Update

By Dennis DeVries, NC RC&D

North Central Montana Rural Conservation & Development (RC&D) has had a busy 2008 summer. A couple of things that might interest the Marias River Watershed producers.

Funding for Salt cedar and Russian olive control is available to producers on the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, & Fort Peck reservations & in Wheatland, Stillwater, Carbon, Big Horn, Yellowstone, Musselshell, Golden Valley, Powder River, Treasure, Rosebud, Custer, Prairie, Roosevelt, & Valley counties.

Remember, the deadline for submitting Carbon Sequestration Credit was Aug. 15; however, projects are being accepted anytime before and after then. National Carbon Offset

Coalition (NCOC) will place the carbon for 2008 on the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX) sometime this Fall. For help signing up for carbon credits call Dennis DeVries at the RC&D @ 434-9161x112 or Jane Holzer at Montana Salinity Control Assoc. @ 278-3071. A couple of updated reminders are listed below:

- 1.Grassland acres in compliance with the existing CCX rules for eligibility of carbon sequestration from grasslands may receive emission offsets retroactively back to 2003.
- 2.Grassland acres (CRP) converted to conservation tillage acres without significant soil disturbance may still be eligible for CCX soil carbon sequestration offsets from provided all

CCX eligibility rules are met. Acres where levels of soil disturbance exceed the allowed levels of eligible disturbance under CCX rules are not eligible.

3. NCOC has been informed by the CCX that contracts must reach forward 5 years in order to register on the Exchange.

It is exciting to see a Wind Farm come out of the ground, especially in our Marias River Watershed area. RC&D is planning a tour after the Board meeting on Sept 17th. The Meeting will start at 10:00am at the Marias River Electric community room and the Tour is scheduled for 1:00pm. Everyone is invited to attend.

Interim Coordinator Appointed

By Sara Shepard, TCCD Administrator



The MRW board members have appointed Marlene Moon, Liberty County Conservation District Administrator, as interim coordinator. Marlene has spent countless hours attending meetings and trainings for MRW in addition to her many hours writing and administering an array of grants for projects that the MRW is involved in.

The MRW will continue to advertise for a part-time coordinator position, but in the meantime you can contact Marlene at 759-5778 ext. 102 or your local Conservation District.