



# Marias River Watershed

Volume 4, Issue 4

Quarterly Newsletter  
Summer 2011

## NEWSLETTER

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

Protecting and Improving The Land and Resources

### MARIAS RIVER MONITORING IN ITS THIRD YEAR

Since 2009, the Marias River Watershed had been working closely with the Pondera County Conservation District to complete field monitoring on the Marias River and major tributaries. This stream monitoring includes water quality sampling, macroinvertebrate (aquatic bugs) collections, photo points, and riparian vegetation transects. Several landowners throughout the watershed have been involved with the monitoring effort by sharing their knowledge and experience.

Overall, the water quality monitoring is showing that the Marias River mainstem is in very good shape. Being mostly an agriculture-based watershed, the water quality in the river is excellent. There are some major sources of silt that enter the river, but much of this comes from natural bank erosion and sloughing where the river butts up against the valley walls. There are also human-based sources of silt coming from upland crop-



Schultz Coulee upstream from the Bullhead

land during rain and snow melt run-off events that eventually reaches the Marias River via coulees and tributaries.

Other preliminary findings are showing that some coulees and drainages carrying irrigation waste water, located primarily in the upper watershed, have moderate concentrations of salt and high levels of nutrients. Some concentrations are as much as 5 to 6 times greater than the Marias River and other drainages that don't convey irrigation waste water. Many of these drainages were sampled for the first time in 2010 so additional water sampling and analysis is needed this year to see if these high levels are sustained.

The three year monitoring report is due out by the end of 2011. Results will be presented to the Pondera County Conservation District, the Marias River Watershed, and any other interested group this winter.

#### 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 July 5 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

### KNOW YOUR FARMER, KNOW YOUR FOOD

Larry Cooper, NRCS

It is a biological fact that we all need food. Let's apply this fact to our Montana State Legislature. They need a lot of food. There are 150 members of the Montana Legislature. If each member followed the recommended diet outlined in the new USDA Food Pyramid, over the 90 days of the legislative session, they would collectively consume:

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

## MRBWCA Float Trip July 26

Registration forms are now available to sign up for a float trip on the Marias River to learn more about noxious weed management and watershed conservation problems. The Marias River Basin Weed Control Association and Marias River Watershed Group are hosting the trip on Tuesday, July 26. This year's float will take us from Sanford Park below Tiber Dam, downstream past the historic Pugsley Bridge. Participants will meet at Sanford Park, below Tiber Dam at 9:30am.

Pre-registration is required and forms can be picked up at the MSU Extension Offices in Toole, Glacier, Liberty, Hill, Chouteau, and Pondera counties or on at [www.mariasriver.com](http://www.mariasriver.com). There is a \$20 registration fee, which includes rafts, life jackets, a barbeque supper, educational materials and bus transportation back to Sanford Park at the end of the float. The registration deadline is July 5<sup>th</sup> and space is limited, so



register early!

There will be several educational speakers covering biological, mechanical and chemical weed control options as well as bank stabilization and maintaining healthy river systems. The lower Marias Russian Olive removal project will be shown, and a weed seedling ID contest will test the knowledge of partici-

pants, with some wonderful awards for the winners. The day will wrap up with a barbeque dinner and door prizes when we return to Sanford Park.

Be sure to bring a sack lunch, sunscreen, bug spray and water friendly clothing. We will float rain or shine, so be prepared for whatever Mother Nature has in mind. Private and commercial pesticide applicator credits will be available. If you have questions contact your local Extension office. Space is limited, so sign up soon for an adventure on the Hi-line!

## KNOW YOUR FARMER CON'T

94,500 ounces of grain (about half of that should be whole grain) ; 54,000 cups of vegetables; 27,000 cups of fruit; 81,000 ounces (that's 5,062 pounds) of beef and beans; 81,000 teaspoons of oil.

On any given day when the Montana Legislature is in session, there are as many as a thousand people in the State Capitol building. The amount of food provided in the Mountain Moose Deli, located in the basement of the Capitol building and a snack bar on the third floor, needs to be enough to feed as many as 600 of those folks on any given day. That doesn't take into consideration the amount of food consumed in Helena away from the Capitol building by Legislators, workers, visitors, and others.

Food is essential. The United States Department of Agriculture is leading an effort to develop a national conversation about food and agriculture and the importance of local and regional food systems. By developing our local and regional food systems, we can spur job growth in our communities and ultimately strengthen American agriculture.

Know your farmer, know your food. A healthy farm is a part of a healthy community. The Natural Resource Partnership of Montana encourages sustainable agricultural practices and systems so that Montana's natural resources - our soil, water, and air - will be available for generations to come. The Partnership works daily to help today's producers conserve and protect those resources. It is interrelated: support local farmers, strengthen our communities, promote healthy eating, and protect our natural resources.

The next time you take a bite out of that burger think for a moment about the ranchers who provided the meat; the farmers who provided the wheat for the bun; the tomato for the ketchup; the vegetable grower providing the pickles; and - above all - the natural resources we need to conserve to keep.