

September, 2006

Edited by Martha Crawley

From the President's Corner

by Jeanne Loughrey

BALLOT NOTICE!

I regret to report that we did not receive enough CC&R Changes ballots to classify the vote as legitimate. Therefore, the ballot is null and void on the CC&R Changes.

I want to remind everyone that there is a one year moratorium regarding wind turbines(generators) as stated in the minutes of the annual meeting dated June 24, 2006. The motion read "To declare a moratorium on wind power generation until the next annual meeting". It was seconded and passed.

Memo from Martha:

Dave and I have spent a wonderful summer in our new cabin on the ranch. We've had a good balance of time with and without guests. On the wildlife front, we got to watch a Mule Deer doe with her twins all summer. They seemed to be hanging out in our woods. The little guys are still pretty little now in September, but they have lost their spots. We also saw elk, antelope, foxes, coyotes, owls, hawks, Sandhill Cranes, you know, the usual! Besides sitting around watching wildlife, Dave built lots of beautiful log furniture for our new house, he went on a guided river trip with our son-in-law and caught lots of fish, I spent as much time swimming in Cliff Lake as possible, and we went to Yellowstone many times. We don't know if we'll always spend as much time here as we did this summer (our house in North Bend, WA is also at its best in the summer), but it sure has been fun! Especially fun have been the times getting to know, and know better, our neighbors here. It's a great community.

I was thinking this summer how much Jeanne Loughrey does for all of us at the Ranch, and with very little appreciation. Well, maybe we appreciate her, but don't show it enough. So I was glad to see her featured in Mike Wells' fishing article. Way to go, Jeanne!

I realize it's been ages since I've sent you a newsletter. It's a volunteer position, so you can't fire me, but I will try to do better in future!

Thought for the day:

"I don't care what is written about me so long as it isn't true."

Dorothy Parker

Ranch Recipes

This recipe is from Linda Strickland, one of the best cooks I know!

Western Corn Casserole

2 cans of cream corn
2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1 can (4 oz.) chopped green chilies
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1 cup milk
2 large eggs, slightly beaten
1 package of Jiffy corn bread mix
1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder or garlic salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Mix ingredients together and pour in to greased 11x7 inch baking dish.

Bake 45 minutes or until nicely browned on top.

For more kick add Jalapeño peppers -- about a tablespoon should do it.

Fishing With Mike Wells

Rekindling Fires (A Reciprocation Proclamation)

Rumbling down to the bottom of Flatiron Trail the plume of dust from the back of the truck was damning evidence of my tardiness for the one appointment I'd had for the last two weeks. Lost in my Montana mental mode & trying to incorporate the visual effects of all the new homes into my consciousness, I eventually became aware that I was blowing the road into the sagebrush. Braking to reduce the damage to the road & get a better perspective of Dave Eldridge's recently started log home project, I chastised myself for keeping the President waiting.

Pulling into Jeanne's yard I saw her sitting on the porch all geared up & ready to go. I hoped she hadn't been out there long in those old neoprene waders. It was still fairly warm in the evenings & unless she was on some kind of innovative weight loss program I wasn't aware of, those waders would probably get really uncomfortable while waiting for some bonehead to take you fishing. We loaded the gear she wasn't wearing into the truck & I bit my tongue to avoid making silly, chauvinistic comments about her respectably well worn, faded yet still visibly hot pink fishing vest & hat. Obvious remnants of the first misguided forays of the fly-fishing gear designers/manufacturers to entice women to the sport. Seeing Jeanne's utilitarian waders, rod, reel & fully stocked boxes of her own hand tied flies I knew this was a woman who bought or was given some of this stuff a while ago when choices were limited & she would use it up, pink or not. Who could think that any woman would want style over substance?

On the road again I reflected on how we had arrived at this point & began seriously hoping that the adventure would work out. After the annual Ranch meeting this year Jeanne had commented that she had not fished at all in three years due to a bum knee for the first two & a subsequent knee replacement last fall. I was shocked! Of course I have a hard time imagining anyone spending one minute in this area & not being or becoming a fishing fanatic like me. I know there is other stuff to do, but seriously, can't you do that other stuff just about anywhere? She had fished & hunted a lot with her husband until he passed away quite some time ago. Since then her fishing had been limited by lack of partners, lack of mobility & an increasingly desperate notion that the sport was passing her by. I noted that apparently she didn't think that the countless hours she dedicates to Ranch business contributed in any way. So I gallantly offered my services & told her I would take her to the river & could show her how to fish with the "new-fangled" two fly rig she was so apprehensive about before the memories of last year's fishing debacle with my Dad could cloud my judgment.

We pulled onto Madison Trail just in time to see a nice pronghorn buck & his harem. Jeanne let out a squeal of excitement that nearly stopped my heart. I thought "Geez, this lady needs to get out more." But I envied her enthusiasm. Bounding across the road & over the fence the antelope stopped, appearing to want a stare down. We obliged for a few seconds before heading on, Jeanne exclaiming repeatedly how "cool" that had been, I nodded in agreement

At the river she was ready in seconds & we were off. She took the lead & I labored a bit to keep up. Wow, this was way different than fishing with my Dad! This woman (who is a couple years older than my Dad) with a new knee was setting the pace & last year's huffing & whining from my old man about how far the river was from the parking lot blew right out of my head. Arriving at my favorite run (which I rarely reveal or share) we rigged up. I became determined to show Jeanne a good time & hoped that the fishing gods would smile on us. The evening mayfly hatch

& spinner fall had been petering out over the past few days but all I wanted was one good fish for the President. Instructing her to cast the two fly rig just a bit slower than she would a single fly, she stepped alongside the run & proceeded to lay out line like she had fished daily for the last three years instead of not at all. Within minutes Jeanne was tight to a good rainbow, grinning from ear to ear & motioning me over to net it. She played it well & had it right at the bank, the long, deep-sided fish was a gorgeous specimen..... Jeanne was beaming.....I stepped in & with one quick motion stuck my net on the tippet & broke it off! Whoa, smooth move Mike! Now she couldn't even hold & release her first fish in three years! The President was diplomatic as usual, soothing my inner klutz. We proceeded to catch more fish & she was equally thrilled by each fish & its individual beauty, no matter who caught it or its size.

Walking out near dark Jeanne expressed her appreciation for my help in reintroducing her to a sport she had not been able to enjoy for awhile. It was obvious that a fire had been rekindled. For my part in it I felt great that I could reciprocate & show a little gratitude to a person who has directly & indirectly affected my Montana paradise. To the best of my recollection, since I bought my lot fourteen years ago Jeanne Loughrey has been on the Board of Directors of the Ranch. She has been treasurer, secretary, vice-president & president. Many years she took two of those positions in order to maintain continuity & help transition other Board Members into the system. Having been on the Board for awhile I am constantly amazed by the time & effort this woman has put in on our behalf! Thank you Jeanne, being your fishing buddy is a quite a privilege!

Mike Wells

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Hoolan's Report

Hope everyone had a great summer -- those of us lucky enough to be on the ranch experienced a spectacular season. The summer is quickly fading, we have already seen ice on the ground around the sprinklers in the mornings. The days are sunny and beautiful, most still in the mid 70's, the aspens have started turning gold. It seems a lot of owners have left for the season, kind of sad.

This will be our 6th winter on the ranch, gets kind of quiet after everyone leaves. The animals don't seem to mind. When things quiet down, they get bolder and more out in the open. The deer get almost tame, most of the does had twins last spring, we guess about 30 live on the ranch. We see them in small groups, crossing our property, on the way down to the river every evening for a drink and of course taking a bite out of whatever we have planted around the house. Sandra calls it deer dessert, our lawn stays green till mid November, that really draws them. The antelope are starting to migrate through the ranch, headed to Idaho for the winter. According to the state game people, about 1000 antelope live in our valley in the summer. I see about 20 or so on the ranch now, but of course, the really big show starts in December, elk everywhere. Last winter, the Madison Valley was home to about 10,000 elk. You'll remember the Feds had to kill our valley's 10 wolves because of their attacks on the cattle, well it didn't take long, about 6 months, for a wandering alpha male and female to take up shop, especially with all these wintering elk. In no time, we have 15 plus wolves, I am told our new wolf pack caught 50 elk last winter.

The ranch is growing up, over 50 houses now, with 3 or 4 new this summer, it's fun to see people build their dreams. For those of you who haven't heard, the price of land in the valley has gone through the roof. Remember when we could buy lots for \$30,000? Now 20 acres on the ranch are being offer for \$159,999 - \$279,000. It is said, the most paid last summer was \$225,000. Water wells are being drilled almost full time lately, Red Tiger seems to be the best company. As far as the depth goes, as a rule of thumb, one has to drill down to approximately to the 6000 foot elevation or river level, that's about 700 plus feet on top of the ranch, 350 at mid level, down to only 25 feet at the river level.

A new automatic gate was voted for at the annual meeting for the entrance at the back of the ranch near the access to Cliff and Wade lakes. We poured the footings yesterday and will install the gate in mid October.

A lot of you have noticed that many of the trees up the valley are starting to turn red. This is from a small bug the forest people call the bud weevil. It is working it's way up the valley, I first noticed what this thing can do to a whole forest west of Pony, MT., about 50 miles south, 5 years ago. Once this moth lays her eggs on a tree trunk in summer, the next spring, it's like an explosion. Every single new bud growth on the conifer is attacked, the needles on the tree start turning red and falling off, According to the forest service, the tree will try and grow new buds the next year, if its not stopped by a severely cold winter, after about 5 years the tree dies. If you want to see this thing in action, drive up Johnny Ridge road, next to the Talc mine and you'll see a red dying forest for miles. Last week I saw some of the trees at West Fork starting to turn red, next summer could

be our turn. We can save the small trees around our properties fairly easy with each of us spraying, but the big trees may be in for it. If we ranch owners chose to be more proactive there may be a way to spray on a much larger scale. Let's all put our heads together, perhaps we can come up with something because whether we are ready or not, the Huns are at the gates.

On a more upbeat note, Martha Crawley and I have both seen the burrowing owls on the ranch this summer, so exciting !! These guys actually make their nest and live underground. They were here when we first arriving in 1989 but seemed to disappear, who knows why, but now they are back, what a warm feeling. Their burrows are somewhere around Mike Carpenters place, look for them around the big corner on Flatiron trail in the evening. They are about 1/3 of the size of the great horned owls that live here full time.

An exciting thing is happening with the ranches bordering MRR, about 30,000 acres are in the process of utilizing conservation easements. The benefit for all of us is that it will never be developed, thus our views will be the same 100 years from now. Wow, that is really saying something the way these valleys, all over the Rocky Mountains, are filling up. We are lucky to have such neighbors.

Best Regards,

Bill Hoolan

Homeowner Contributions:

Gene Welch sent the following article in Dec. of last year (and there hasn't been a newsletter since – Yikes!) I have separated it into two parts, the first covering Wild Trout Management, and the second on Whirling Disease. The second part will come out next time.

Wild Trout Management and Whirling Disease

As an old-timer ('59-'62) employee, I was invited to attend the annual meeting of the Fisheries Division, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, in Billings, December 6-8. That was a fun experience and my overall impression is that a bunch of obviously serious, devoted professionals are working hard to protect and enhance the fisheries of the State. But what was most interesting to me was the review of some selected past (hence the invite to past employees) accomplishments, such as, developing the solid data to protect stream habitat, provide stable flows (e.g., below Hebgen), protect the free-flowing Yellowstone and end the damaging practice of planting catchable trout in favor of wild trout management, which started on the Madison in 1974. The 30th anniversary of the birth of wild trout management in the US was reviewed in Montana Outdoors, May/June, 2004, p. 34-35.

Before 1970, thousands of catchable size (9-10 inches) hatchery rainbow trout were planted in

the Madison and most other rivers of the State. Fishery biologists were convinced by the early 1960s that catchable (9-10 inches) trout planting was uneconomical – 95% died within a few months, so only a small percent reached fishermen creels and, therefore were very expensive (about \$2.50 each; \$14 in today's dollars). However, fishery biologists also believed that, 1) catchable trout planting was politically difficult to stop, 2) there was no adverse effect of adding hatchery fish on top of the better-adapted wild populations, and 3) maintaining good habitat was far more important. So biologists worked on the latter. The classification system we are familiar with (blue, red, etc., ribbon streams) was developed by a few forward-thinking biologists in the 1950s to prioritize where to resist habitat change (dams, roads, etc.) and was followed by in-depth research showing that total pounds and size of trout were directly related to habitat (i.e., water depth, flow, brush, substrata, etc.). Unique legislation to protect habitat was enacted in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of that sound research. Biologists were worried about stream dewatering from irrigation, stream straightening with highway construction, etc. Results of the legislation can be seen around the State, e.g., the many bridges crossing the Missouri between Wolf Creek and Great Falls instead of straightened stream channels, no loss of stream length of the Clark Fork along I-90 and a free-flowing Yellowstone. However, the fishing nonetheless had been deteriorating in the Madison and other productive rivers.

So along came Dick Vincent, a young fisheries biologist, who had developed an improved electro fishing tool to sample fish populations in large rivers (e.g., Madison) – there-to-fore virtually impossible. The first task for Vincent and his crew was to census the Madison downstream from Ennis Lake near Norris and upstream near Varney Bridge to study the effect of river flow (habitat again). Those results prompted Montana Power to stop filling Hebgen during winter low flow in favor of spring high flow. To Vincent's surprise, increased flows during 1968-1969, due to higher flows from Hebgen, helped in the Norris area with more and larger fish, but there was no change in the populations at the Varney stretch. So why was that? The big difference Vincent noticed was no trout planting at Norris, but 10,000-15,000 catchable hatchery trout per year were going into the Varney stretch. And, all the good rivers were averaging 2,000 catchable trout per mile.

So Vincent designed an experiment to investigate the effect of hatchery trout planting on wild trout populations. In order to proceed, cessation of planting in a ten-mile stretch above Ennis was necessary. The citizens vehemently opposed that action; they were afraid no planting would ruin the economy of Ennis. The politics were intense. To gain approval by the Fish and Game Commission (FGC - an independent board) to begin the experiment, the Chief of Fisheries had to literally put his job on the line. There was also a ten-mile section farther upstream that was to continue to receive plants. For that there was, of course, no opposition. Also, there was no opposition to plant hatchery fish into the wild population of Odell Creek, the previously unplanted control stream. So against much opposition, but with FGC approval, Vincent's famous experiment was off and running in 1970!

Improvement in the wild population in the Varney stretch happened quickly and by 1974, the numbers of fish over 10 inches had more than tripled, numbers and size of fish in O'Dell dropped substantially after two years, with no change at Norris. So there was, in fact, a huge adverse effect of hatchery fish on wild fish, which there-to-fore had been considered nil. An explanation of that effect is behavioral; stress results from increased population density and hatchery fish surprisingly tend to be more aggressive.

But even after Vincent's results, there was still opposition to cessation of planting in other rivers, but with strong leadership backing the biologists with their data, planting was ceased in other major rivers in 1974. Now there would be strong opposition to reinstating a program of planting catchable rainbows in the Madison, or any other major stream in Montana. Wild trout management may have afforded an unforeseen added benefit in the face of whirling disease, which was to occur 20 years later.

Real Estate:

I was going to contact a realtor this summer and see if I could line up some real estate info for the newsletter on a regular basis, but never got to it. Who knows? Maybe by next time I'll have my act together (well, miracles happen!).

Classified:

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Thanks to Bill Hoolan and Mike Wells for their excellent contributions, and to Linda for her great recipe. And a big thanks to Gene Welch for the interesting and informative article. We will look forward to the next installment. As always, please send or email me comments, or anything you think would be of interest to your neighbors, whether it's family news, recipes, reports from the ranch, stuff for sale, letters to the editor, etc. I really enjoy hearing from you.

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