

MRR Newsletter

Madison River Ranch Association

Fall, 2010

Hooray for Martha!

Three Cheers for Martha! Thank you Martha for the many years that you produced the MMR Newsletter. We're glad you will continue to contribute to future issues!

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Read Martha's article and try her Quiche recipe on page 3.

Fishing Report...

By Mike Wells

Strange Brew

Wind roared down from the mountaintops, gusting over the benches and inexplicably gaining velocity threading its way through the trees. Dragging a bank of sky-high black clouds from the southwest in its slipstream it abruptly slapped me upside the head and threw my cap into the river.

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Where Has All The Money Gone?

By John Clark

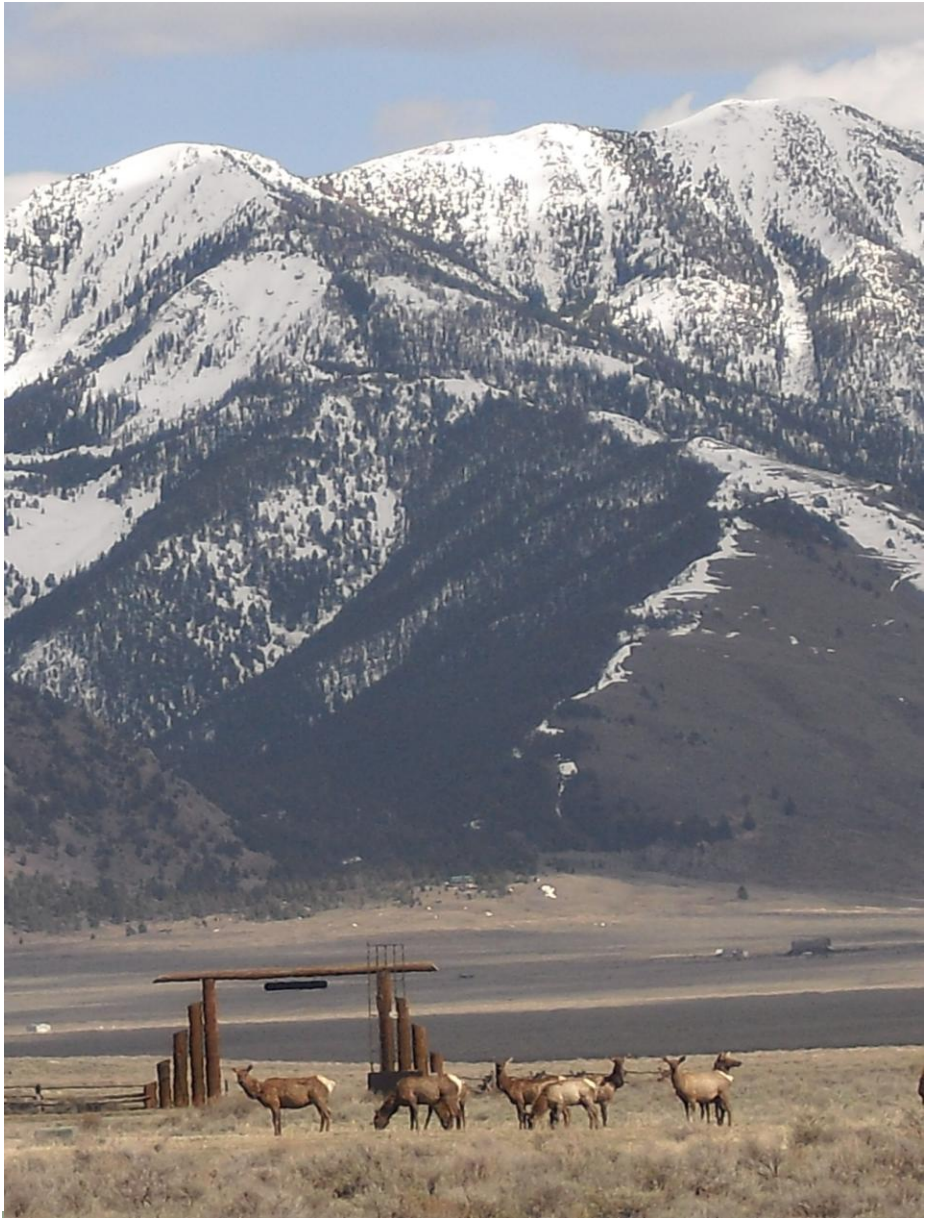
Now that I have been trained by Jeanne Loughrey and have settled in as the new treasurer for the Association, I began wondering where all of our dues money had been spent over the years. With a little help from

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Introducing...

First of new series... 3



From the President's Corner...

by Bill Hoolan

Greetings from Montana.

After many years, Martha Crawley decided to hand over the production of our ranch newsletter. I know the ranch will always be grateful to the lady, who took responsibility in our early days,

See Bill Hoolan on page 4

John Clark, continued from page 1

Jeanne and some research, I found some interesting facts.

When Jody and I purchased our lot back in 1989 we did not even pay annual dues because everything was new. By 1993 most of the lots had been sold and annual dues of \$50 were instated. All we had to worry about was basic maintenance of the roads, weed spraying, insurance and a few other miscellaneous expenses.

In 1995, the Association decided to spend funds to rehabilitate the spring creek running through the common area. Hay bales were placed along the stream banks to repair it from years of overgrazing and gravel was added to the streambed to aid the trout in spawning. The Association's cost was \$13,250 and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks added grant money of \$15,000. The habitat of the stream has improved dramatically and the number of juvenile trout making the stream their home has increased significantly.

The spring of 1996 brought a flood that washed out the roads in many areas and our budget of \$3,500 for road maintenance fell well short of the \$8,098 that it took to get the roads back in shape. This was the first time the Association was falling short on money available to keep the Ranch operating. It was decided to have a \$50 assessment to cover the cost of the roads and stream improvement. The following year the dues were permanently raised to \$100.

The Ranch continued with normal expenses for the next few years. In 2000 the Association decided it wanted to move up in the world and add an automatic electric gate to the main entrance at a cost of \$6,516. Electric gates were added to the other entrances over the next few years -\$6,757 for the lower gate and \$8,523 for the solar-powered upper gate. In 2001 the common well on lot 106 was upgraded with a new pump and fencing at a cost of \$5,550. In 2003 we had to replace the south end of the Ranch's perimeter fencing at a price of \$5,840.

The Madison River Ranch was maturing through the 2000's with people starting to build cabins and homes and the increase in traffic was

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Mike Wells, continued from page 1

I had been standing in sunlight and sweating moments before on what I eagerly anticipated was going to be the first truly summer evening of fishing this year. All the expectations of rising fish roiling and boiling in bug soup were blown out of my mind with the first thunderclaps and lightning bolts. Knowing my wife would kill me if I got struck by lightning I turned tail and hastily retreated to my truck.

The strange brew of weather that Mother Nature cooked up for us this year had a major impact on my time on the water, the flows in the river and the behavior of the bugs and the fish. It seems like I spent more time going, waiting and leaving than actually fishing. Spring lingered into late July and summer was only recognizable by an increase of a few degrees in the air temperature. Otherwise summer was the same as spring...daily storms dropping various but comparatively significant amounts of rain or hail most of which were accompanied by thunder, lightning and generally inclement conditions. There were still wildflowers blooming and green grass in late August! Now it appears that fall has moved in early and winter is

knocking on the door.

River flows were high from the start of runoff through early July when PPL started drawing them down to reasonable levels for the prime time fishing season. Because of the continuing influx of spring and summer moisture, the water level was adjusted on what seemed like almost a daily basis which, accompanied by the strange brew of weather, made the hatches inconsistent, the fish skittish and the fishing much more challenging. There was sporadic insect activity but nothing like we historically experience on this river. There were no major or consistent mayfly, caddis, salmon fly or stonefly hatches, and the

hoppers and other terrestrials have not yet appeared in numbers worth mentioning.

All of this combined to make this season quite a conundrum for most fishing folks I talked with. I fished hard and caught sufficient quantities of fish. Earlier Browns outnumbered Rainbows 3 to 1 and most were surprisingly large, 18"+. As the season progressed those

numbers were reversed with most the Rainbows being smaller, 12"-14". Several other fishermen have echoed my experience. Veterans, neophytes and professionals all had to reach deep





How did you end up at Madison River Ranch? MRR property owners are an eclectic group from all walks of life. In an attempt to get to know each other better, I would like to feature at least one property owner in every edition of the MRR Newsletter. To begin, meet our family, the Costellos, lot 43, 124 Flatiron Trail.

Fred and I are both retired, Fred from 34 years as an administrator in Student Housing and Child Care at the University of California, Davis, and I was a teacher and, later, a program manager in the K-12 public school district. We live in Davis, California, in a home that we built in 1978. We feel very fortunate that our two sons, and their families, love Montana as much as we do, and that we can spend time there together.

Anthony is an avid fly fisher, a biker, a hunter, a musician and the Vice President of Mytrus, a company that does software development and data management for clinical trials, based in San Francisco. He lives in Davis, as do his two children, Bridger (age 10) and Susannah (almost 8). He and Bridger are rabid Cal fans and attend many of the football and basketball home games. Bridger and Susannah attend a Spanish Immersion public school here in Davis. Both children learned how to fly fish this summer, and can't wait to get back there to fish, search for wildflowers, canoe, and hike.

Christopher, also an avid fly fisher, gardener, and lets-figure-out-how-to-make-it-ourselves person, lives in Goleta, home of the University of California, Santa Barbara where he is a professor of Resource Economics at the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management. He and his wife Dana have two children – Cooper (age 5) and Charlotte (almost 2). Dana, a credentialed teacher, is a very active stay-at-home mom and volunteer, Cooper just started kindergarten this fall at the local public school, and Charlotte wants to do everything herself. This summer, Cooper did a fair amount of fly-fishing, and he is definitely “hooked.”

Martha Crawley

I am bowing out of the newsletter this year and am delighted to pass the reins on to Ann. So many of you have been supportive over the years, telling me how you enjoy hearing the “Ranch News.” I know you’ll be as happy as I am that she generously offered to keep up the tradition.

Dave and I are off on a new adventure; at least it’s new for the winter. We are still here at the ranch all summer, but we have sold our winter house near Seattle and will live in furnished vacation rentals during the winter, wherever we want. We are both curious to see how we like it – we’ll keep you posted.

Busy Day Quiche

This recipe is easy and versatile. I make it with whatever cheese, meat, and vegetables I have on hand. It always turns out delicious! I often spread sliced tomatoes across the top before baking. It’s yummy! I know you’ll love it.

1 9-inch pastry pie shell, unbaked (I cheat and use Pillsbury)

2 eggs, beaten

½ C. milk

½ C. mayonnaise

1 T. cornstarch

1 ½ C grated Swiss cheese

1 ½ C cubed ham

½ C. finely chopped onion

1/3 C. sliced green or red pepper

Preheat oven to 350. Combine eggs, milk, mayonnaise and cornstarch in large mixing bowl. Mix until well blended. Stir in cheese, ham, onion and green pepper.

Bake 40 to 45 min. Allow to cool 5 minutes before cutting. Serves 6

Enjoy!

Bill Hoolan, continued from page 1

saw the value of bringing 130 landowners together, and produced the newsletter several times a year. Thank you Martha!

The ranch is in good order: Roads continue to be a main focus and, I am pleased to report, even after an entire summer of traffic they are still in good repair. We were able to spend about \$5000 less than budgeted due to the fact that we had a lot of moisture when we were grading and rolling in the spring. The fence along our north border was another focus; in many places it was nonexistent. We have known about this potential problem for many years but have always had more important issues to address. This year, the cowherd that was grazing in the national forest decided to come to our ranch on a daily basis. The fencing of the NW corner of the ranch was completed about a week ago; the owners in that area no longer have to wake up to cows living in their yards. The last mile of an old falling down fence on the west boundary remains and will be addressed in the future.

Mike Wells and his winter access committee are still trying to work out the details with the county regarding the 2 miles of county road plowing that is necessary for us to get to our main gate, allowing us to park on our own property, and being less of a burden to the landowners along the highway. The manager of \$3 Ranch has bent over backwards to try and accommodate the Madison River Ranch never ending, growing parking needs. I am looking forward to the day when MRR can handle our own parking responsibilities on our ranch. At that point, we as owners can collectively decide if, when, or how much we want our ranch roads open in the winter.

Wildlife: I hope I am not overdoing this wildlife thing, but for the 10 years that we have been able to live on the ranch full time, they have brought a ton of entertainment to us and I am trying to pass it on to you. Just about when you think you have it figured out, you will spy a jaw-dropping scene playing itself out - a mountain lion walking across your yard in broad daylight (Hoolan), one sitting in your yard (Karen Stirling -lot 99), and crossing his yard (Paul Schirmer - lot 91/92); wolves sneaking up on calf elk; bald eagle trying to catch a falcon in mid air, etc. There is not an owner that drives across the place without seeing abundant

across the place without seeing abundant wildlife.

My favorites are the elk of course (see photo on page 1). There are approximately 50 full-grown females and 22 calves living on the ranch. They cross by my place quite often going down to the river for a drink in the evening. Getting the exact number is a little difficult at times because of the thousands that will cross our ranch both going and coming to the winter elk reserve half way to Ennis. But when all this coming and going is over, there are roughly 75 MRR Reserve elk that were born here. They are not nearly as skittish as the big herd. When you see them grazing on the hillsides during a sunrise or sunset, it will give you goose bumps. Several of the owners tell me of walking out their front door to be met by the entire herd, standing in their yard. The stare down lasts only a few seconds before they panic and bolt. I for one never get tired of it. The mule and whitetail deer, coyotes, foxes, and badgers are doing fine.

The teenagers that the ranch hires have seen 6 or 7 badgers throughout the ranch. These guys eat the gophers and gophers we do have. The other day, while driving to our home down Madison Trail, Sandra and I noticed a new mound of freshly dug dirt about a foot high, practically in the road. We know this means a badger is trying to dig out a gopher. As we walked up to the pile, a badger head popped up. When he saw us, he panicked and took off running across the sage. We walked up to the hole and knelt down, marveling at how much dirt could be moved by this 10 or 15 pound creature. Just then we heard a noise behind us, looked over our shoulders, and saw the badger coming back to his hole with his mouth wide open and snarling. We both dove out of his way. He ran between us and into his hole, turned around and hissed again.

I guess when you are three or four down on the food chain as a human is in these parts; it's better to be attacked by a badger than a bear. That happened to Hans Thallmayer (lot 105) while riding his horse just outside the NW corner of the ranch this summer. He told me about it just after it happened. As I remember, he and his trusty stead were moving along the tree line. All of the sudden he and his horse both heard a noise and, when they looked back, they saw a full-grown grizzly running straight at them. As he tells it, the horse ran in 3 directions at one time and fortunately Hans was able to hang on. He says he doesn't know how long the

bear chased them because he never looked back again. Be sure to ask Hans about it when you see him.

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Bill Hoolan continued from page 4

Living on the ranch and seeing the wildlife every day never gets boring and now and then you get to witness the interaction between the creatures.

Before I go, I just have to tell you about a wolf/coyote encounter Sandra and I witnessed. There was a black wolf (about 125 pounds) walking along the hillside and, out of nowhere three coyotes attacked him. Everybody in these parts knows a wolf can kill a coyote very quickly and that is what made it so peculiar. They ran in a circle around the wolf and when his head was turned one would run in and bite him in the rump. The wolf would then chase the coyote that bit him, only to be bitten by one of the other two. This went on and on. We actually started to feel sorry for the wolf. Eventually he got smart and quit chasing the coyotes; he just sat on the ground and made the coyotes come to him. The coyotes quickly tired of the more dangerous game. The adversaries eventually trotted off in different directions. An old rancher told me what I was seeing was a female coyote teaching two of her full grown kids how you run a wolf off when he gets too close to the den in the spring when the pups are at stake.

If you are an owner that dreams about moving onto the ranch at least in the summer, I hope you will find a way to do it. Each day is different but it is never boring - rejuvenating serenity, breathtaking sunsets, a moose looking in your window... it goes on. You will always be glad you did. For you really bold ones that are thinking about spending a winter, I could write a book on how fun and exhilarating it can be.

Best regards, Bill

Links

<http://www.madisonriverranch.org>

If you haven't signed up for electronic delivery of the MRR Newsletter please go to the Madison River Ranch web site, click on the "**Contact Us**" tab and sign in.

Your email address will not be shared with anyone.

Do you have items at MRR you'd like to sell?
"For Sale" will be a feature in the next issue.

Please send your information to me at
noniann@gmail.com. Include a photo if you wish.

John Clark, continued from page 2

beginning to take its toll. The Ranch was doing its best to maintain the status quo. Mike Wells volunteered to take on the weeds and came up with a plan for the Ranch to do its own weed spraying saving us \$1,000-\$2,000 a year. Bill Hoolan was doing his best to keep the roads in shape on a shoestring budget of \$2,000-\$5,000 a year but it became evident that we needed to do more to keep the Ranch from falling into disrepair. The Association voted in 2008 to raise the dues to \$200 and it couldn't have come at better time. Jeanne had done a great job to keep the Ranch within its limited budget and we even had a surplus. With the increase in dues that were not anticipated we started the 2008-2009 fiscal year with \$14,000 dollars more than planned. Fortunately for me that was the year I took over as Treasurer!

Over the last couple of years it was decided to concentrate on bringing the roads back into shape. It cost \$22,280 last summer and \$16,500 this year. We got our money's worth; those of you who have been on the Ranch the last couple of summers have noticed a drastic improvement. Now that the roads are back in good condition we should not have to spend quite as much to keep them there.

The last few years have seen an increase in general Ranch maintenance such as keeping the gates operating and the fences in good repair. Bill has been telling me for years that the fence on the north part of the Ranch was failing or nonexistent. Some work was done on it earlier this year but by late this summer, we had cows back on the Ranch and they were not paying grazing fees! The bottom line is it cost us \$12,832 to repair the fences this year and we had only budgeted \$2,000. It has been nice to take over as Treasurer with a surplus because we just used a big chunk of it. Even though we have spent some of our surplus over the last couple of years we will still start next year with almost a year's worth of dues in the bank and ready to keep the Ranch running through the next surprise.

I would like to thank Jeanne for all her help in transitioning to Treasurer. She and Bill Hoolan aided in the historical data of this article.

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Just a reminder...

MRR Association Dues - due September 30!

Costellos... continued from page 3

After spending the first four years of my life in Montana, it was not so strange to be watching our son Christopher walk the periphery of lot 43 with the real estate agent on that cold, rainy day during the summer of 1992. After all, we had roots in Montana – my maternal grandparents hailed from Billings, and my paternal grandparents owned a cattle ranch in Nye near the Stillwater River. As a family, we had visited Montana, and both boys had learned to fly fish there. However, Fred and I never in a million years dreamed that, as a family, we would build a log cabin and spend many glorious days with our children and grandchildren there, but let me start from the beginning...

During the summer of 1992, Christopher, Anthony and their friend Maeci purchased lot 43 on the Madison River Ranch. They had all wanted to own Montana land for years, and here was the golden opportunity. Anthony had graduated from UC Berkeley) and Christopher was a student there at that time. That fall, Christopher and Maeci returned to the property and planted tiny trees, close to Flatiron Trail.

The next summer, the original cabin was

constructed, under Christopher's watchful eye, according to plans drawn on a piece of plywood. It all started with 60 unpeeled, 40-foot logs, a chain saw and a generator. Many of you witnessed the rest of the story. Anthony and Maeci were there to help much of the time. Fred and I spent as much of the summer there as our jobs would allow. Many of the boy's friends showed up and spent days there camping out and learning about cabin construction. By the end of the summer, the roof was on and the doors/windows boarded up. Each summer, as time permitted, we completed other parts of that cabin – added a deck, installed solar, built a beautiful outhouse, and planted more trees. When Maeci got married and moved out of state, Fred and I bought her share of the property.

The original cabin has been used and enjoyed each summer, and has had several winter visits as well. But as the family has grown, we have needed more than a 15x18 foot cabin to house us all. In September 2009, the second cabin was completed. Those original trees planted by the road have now grown tall enough for the raptors to use them as perches.

We hope you will stop by 124 Flatiron Trail when we are there and say hello. We are looking forward to getting to know more about you and how you ended up owning property at MRR.

**MRR Association Work Day**

We had 25 landowners volunteer on a beautiful Sunday afternoon to make the Ranch a better place.

Thanks to all!

MRR Association**Board of Directors:**

Bill Hoolan, President

Mike Wells, Vice President

Frank Davis, Secretary

Gene Welch, Outgoing Secretary

John Clark, Treasurer

Paul Schirmer

Webmaster

Marv Gibbs

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