

MRR Newsletter

Madison River Ranch Association

Spring, 2015



From the President....John Clark

Spring came to the Madison Valley a month early this year after a mild winter. I was fortunate to spend the last week of March on the Ranch and the county road was open and most of the snow was completely gone with temperatures in the 60s a few of the days. The Montana snowpack was around 100% for most of the mountain ranges except the Madison drainage that averaged about 75% for most of the winter and spring. We can only hope for a wet spring and summer or expect a higher than normal fire danger this summer.

The annual meeting is as always the last Saturday in June, which falls on the 27th this year. The Board has decided to change the schedule of the meeting day to try and make it more convenient for the Association. Three Dollar Ranch has been generous enough to offer us the use of the restored schoolhouse in the ghost town for our meeting. If you haven't seen what they have done with the restoration you will be surprised with how beautiful and functional the building is. We will be starting the meeting at 10am and plan on finishing by 1pm. This will allow those who want to attend the meeting to still have the rest of afternoon to enjoy. After the meeting there will be a luncheon with the Association providing sandwiches and drinks, if members would like to bring a side dish or dessert they are encouraged to do so. The luncheon will replace the pot luck dinner that we have previously held on the Friday night before

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We hope to see
YOU
at the MRR Association
Annual Meeting
June 27th
10:00 a.m.

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Hope you enjoy this issue...

From the President, continued from page 1

the meeting. The dinner took quite a bit of logistics to plan and organize as well as money to pay for the tent and tables and last year it was rained out. We can have the luncheon inside the schoolhouse if needed. If we have any energy left after the luncheon, those who are interested will be heading over to the common area with our weed eaters to clean it up for the summer. I know time is precious when you are on the Ranch so the idea is to complete all the Association business on one day instead of spreading it out over three.

We are planning to have restoration of the common area homestead house complete prior to the annual meeting. This will be the last project of the capital improvement plan until we have to replace the main gate log entry. The restoration will make the house safe and functional and continue to be a part of the history of the Ranch for years to come. The three-year capital improvement assessment has proven to be very successful as the Ranch's infrastructure is now in great shape. The Board will continue to work with the Association allocating the operating budget to maintain and increase the Ranch's value. As always, the Board is open to comments and suggestions. Please contact any of us anytime at the Ranch's web site: www.madisonriverranch.org under "contact us". Have a great summer and hope to see you on the Ranch.

Fifty-two bighorn sheep relocated to the Wolf Creek drainage in the Madison Mountain Range

The Madisonian, Ennis, MT

Posted on January 14, 2015 by Abigail Dennis

The morning of January 6, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks crews and multiple volunteers gathered near Raynold's Pass in the south Madison Valley to capture bighorn sheep from a herd that lives in the Quake Lake area and relocated them approximately 15 miles north to the Wolf Creek drainage.

"(The relocation) could not have been better," said volunteer Kathy Coontz. "We had no issues and it went like it was scripted."

According to a press release from the FWP, a large drop-net was used to confine the animals. Then teams of two and three worked to capture and test individual bighorns before they were prepared for transport.

"Ten of the bighorns were fitted with radio collars to enable biologists to monitor herd movement," the release stated. "A mix of rams, ewes and lambs were brought by a trailer... to the Wolf Creek area, once a winter home to a native population of bighorns."

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Stream Access, by John Clark

Trespassing in the common area continues to be a problem, especially in the parking area. Owners are reminded, as per the covenants, that they should not give out the gate code or allow friends and guests to use the common area unless the owners are present on the Ranch. All owners and guests should display their Madison River Ranch parking tags from their rear view mirror when parked in the common area. If you have lost your tag or if it needs replacing please contact John Clark or Pat Toalson for new ones. If you find vehicles in the common area without the hangtag displayed there are warning notices and a notebook in the mailbox located in the parking area by the gate. Please place the warning notice on the vehicle and write down the license number in the notebook. If we find vehicles that are continually trespassing we will contact the county sheriff about the trespassing violation.

We also still have instances where anglers are not honoring the high water mark and trespassing along the river in the common area. The common area is clearly posted so anglers know when they are on private property. We don't expect our owners to be law enforcement officers but sometimes a gentle reminder that the anglers should be below the high water mark when on private property is all it takes. If at any time there is a confrontation please don't let it escalate, the phone number to the county sheriff and game warden are in the notebook in the common area parking lot mailbox.

Our goal is to give all owners the privacy and experience they expect and paid for when buying property on the Madison River Ranch. Please do your part to make the experience pleasant for all owners.

Tight lines and good fishing.

**Mark Your Calendar!**

Saturday, June 27, 2015

10:00 a.m. MRR Association
Annual Meeting, Cliff Lake Schoolhouse

1:00 MRR Luncheon-
bring a side dish or dessert to share

Bring your weed eaters to help with the weeds in the common area following the luncheon.

Introducing... Dave and Martha Crawley

Many of you have known us since we've been at the ranch since 1994. That summer we visited friends in Sundance Bench, our first time in the gorgeous Madison Valley. It was love at first sight! We bought our lot at Madison River Ranch that very same visit.

We trailer-camped on our property summers until we built our house, adding improvements as we could. One year we built a little cabin in the woods which was supposed to be storage shed, but escalated into a "sleeping cabin," complete with bunk beds Dave made from aspen in our forest (he's a very handy guy). We still needed a storage shed, so that was added another year, then electricity and a well.

Dave retired as a captain from Alaska Airlines in 2005, and we built our cabin that summer. Dave worked with the contractors every day, putting on his tool belt and getting busy. I told him they charge more when you "help," but that fell on deaf ears.

Five years ago we sold our house near Seattle, and now spend 6 months of the year, May through October, at our cabin. The rest of the year we live in furnished vacation rentals, which we find online at sites like VRBO. Our schedule this year was a month near Seattle (Bainbridge Island), 4 months in Coronado, CA, and a month in Santa Fe. We are enjoying our gypsy life!

We have two daughters, one on each coast. Our older daughter is an attorney in North Carolina. She is married with two children, Will and Emily, ages 12 and 10. Our younger daughter is a writer, among other things. Also married, she and her husband run an organic farm on Bainbridge Island near Seattle. They have two children, Rowan and Beatrice (Bea), ages 10 and 7.

Last summer we got a puppy (we plead temporary insanity). Our last dog died over two years ago. We missed her, but were enjoying our fancy-free "dogless" life. Still, getting a puppy seemed like a good idea at the time. Annie is a great little dog, though, and she's keeping us on our toes.

We both enjoy our community at Madison River Ranch, and always look forward to getting back and seeing our friends there. If you are around this summer, stop by and see us.



Blizzard Camping

By Martha Crawley

We bought our lot the summer of 1994. That fall, we decided to rent a trailer and trailer-camp on our property in early October (imagine scary music).

On Oct. 1, we arrived at the Madison River Ranch gate after dark, towing the rented trailer. A gale was blowing; it was snowing sideways, and bitterly cold. The days of pushing a button and the gate magically opening were in the future. This gate was a ranch gate over a cattle guard, closed with a chain and combination padlock. While I tried to make my frozen fingers put in the combination while keeping my balance on the cattle guard, Dave tried to shine the truck lights on the lock. Finally, success.

We had been to our property a couple of times that summer, so we could drive right to it - we thought. Besides no magically opening gates, there were no street signs. We only missed one turn, though, and had to turn the trailer around at a corner without falling in the ditch and with me out in the blizzard directing. That was good practice for the rest of the evening.

Finally, by sheer accident, we blundered on to our actual lot. Halleluiah! Wait, not halleluiah. There was a ditch we had forgotten about between the road and the lot. It was too deep for the trailer. So, on to Plan B.

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Bighorn Sheep continued

Wolf Creek was prioritized as a good spot for the relocation because it was historically bighorn sheep range, Julie Cunningham, FWP region three biologist, explained.

When the sheep were released, they did exactly what Coontz and everyone hoped they would do. "They started up the hill and stopped to munch," she said. They were just browsing their way up the hill. They've gone exactly where we wanted them to go."

According to the FWP, Cunningham said, "future transplants may be necessary to augment the population."

The entire article may be found on The Madisonian website.



Hebgen Dam Project slated for completion in 2015

Posted: Friday, March 20, 2015 6:00 am
By MIKE MOORE West Yellowstone News

For more than six years, Hebgen Dam has been releasing water off the top of Hebgen Lake while the 101-year-old dam undergoes repairs from a 2008 malfunction. During that time, work has also been done to bring the dam up to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission standards for earthquakes.

An issue with the dam's stop logs back in August of 2008 caused water to be released from the dam uncontrollably for around three weeks. Water levels during this time leveled off at 3,300 cubic feet per second below the dam.

Repairs to the dam's stop logs were immediately addressed, beginning a multiple-year project to get the dam back in proper working order. Even if the dam hadn't failed, new FERC standards would have caused a hefty update to the dam, which would have begun in 2009 regardless.

The repairs have forced dam operation to release water off the top of Hebgen Lake, rather than the middle section of the reservoir as it had in the past. This has caused water approximately ten degrees warmer than normal to supply the blue ribbon trout fishery of the Madison River for considerable time.

One major obstacle for the repair of the dam was that Hebgen Dam was never supposed to be worked on while Hebgen Lake was full of water. Since draining Hebgen Lake wasn't an option for the repairs, the task of bringing the dam up to new mandates has been a long a tedious task.

"Maybe by mid-August if everything goes good we'll be releasing water out of the dam again," Brent Mabbot (a spokesperson for Northwestern Energy) said.

The water will be a mix from both the top and middle of the lake during the four to five days to allow trout to adjust to the new water temperatures. Once water is solely taken from the middle of the lake like it should, water temperatures will likely drop around 10 degrees cooler than during the past six years.

He says they will release water at the same depth as Hebgen Dam did before the malfunction, a depth of around 30 feet.

A significant drop in water temperatures will have an impact on the stream's aquatic life, as bug populations will likely switch back to cold water populations. Mabbott says the switch in bug populations might take up to 18 months.

According to Mabbott, the 2011 population of fish that still live in the Madison River is a good population. Many fish have thrived on more diversified feeding, making the current population of trout some of the largest recorded, he said.

"There is a great population of fish out there," he said. "Fish sampling had some interesting finds in size of fish in the system. We're in good shape there." The following 18 months after the dam returns to normal operation could be interesting to witness, he said.

"It will be an interesting year-and-a-half, not only for recovery but to see if (the river) goes back to like it was before the dam broke, or almost what it was before it broke," Mabbott said.

In terms of water capacity, Hebgen Lake is looking good at the moment, despite a significant snowpack in the area. He says they've learned

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Blizzard Camping, continued from page 3

Okay, there was no Plan B, but we made one up real fast. We had heard about the Cliff Lake Resort, which had RV spots. Perfect! We knew where Cliff Lake was so, after another harrowing turn-around, off we went.

We arrived at Cliff Lake in total darkness. Odd that there were no lights or signs or anything. We followed the road until it petered out into forest, then it was turn-around time again. Whose idea was this?? Plan C...

There was one more option of a road to take that turned from the Forest Service road. It led us off into the inky blackness on a "ranch road" (I later found out it was the Horn Creek road) that was only slightly better than taking off through the sagebrush.

We bounced along, squinting through the snow and trying to stay on the road, such as it was. Eventually, from way up on a hill, we saw a light far below. Could this be the fabled Cliff Lake Resort? It was something anyway, and we went for it, semi-careening down switchbacks. Peering through the darkness and blowing snow we saw a sign at the entrance that read "Cliff Lake Resort" (now Wilderness Edge).

Dave staggered up to the porch of the lighted, welcoming house. We were directed to an RV space by the resort's bemused owner who wondered who these lunatics were. I don't think her mama raised any dumb kids because she did not leave her cozy fireside. We found the spot and maneuvered into it. Dave hooked up the water for the trailer and then joined me inside. By the time he got in, the water in the hose had frozen solid. This was going to be fun.

It snowed 10 inches and we were snowed in for three days. We read, played Scrabble, and watched the snow come down through the tiny frozen windows. Sherry, the resort owner, bundled up every day and walked over to make sure we were still alive.

As often happens that time of year, on the third day the snow stopped, the temperature rose and the snow started melting. We were back in business! We still had the ditch problem, but called Dan Stroud who took pity on us and put in a culvert.

Older but wiser, we then spent a delightful few Indian Summer days camped in a clearing in our woods, falling in love all over again with the Madison Valley and our beautiful property there.

Cooking with Martha

My recipe contribution this time is an old family favorite. It's easy to have the ingredients on hand, and you can make it all ahead and assemble it right before dinner. It makes a good luncheon dish too. If you don't live in a part of the country where they know what Holland Rusks are (the only place I know is my home town, Kansas City), it's simple to make your own. Try this recipe. I know you'll love it!

Crab Toasties

8 Holland Rusks
 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
 1 T. minced chives
 1 t. lemon juice
 ½ t. salt
 1 can* crabmeat, drained
 ½ cup mayonnaise
 ½ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
 8 tomato slices

Holland Rusks:

Use any good sliced white bread, thick-sliced is preferable. Remove crusts, brush both sides with ½ stick of melted butter (4 Tablespoons) and bake at 325 for about 20-30 minutes until crisp through. Cool completely on rack and hold at room temperature.

Cream the softened cream cheese with Worcestershire, chives, lemon juice and salt until fluffy. Add crab.

Stir together mayonnaise and cheese. I'm picky about mayonnaise – I only use Best Foods or Hellman's (it's the same but different names depending on your part of the country).

Spread the crab mixture evenly on the rusks and place on cookie sheet. Top each with a slice of tomato and a dollop of the cheese-mayonnaise mixture. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes or more. They should be golden brown on top and bubbly. You can run them under the broiler if you want, but watch closely as they can burn in a hurry. Broiler isn't really necessary if you're patient! Let set for at least 5 minutes before serving, otherwise you'll burn the roof of your mouth.

Note: The rusks, crab mixture and cheese-mayo mixture can all be done ahead, then the toasties are just assembled right before you bake them.

**Canned crab is really the best for this recipe. Trust me!*

The Sense of Catch and Release

Gene Welch

My bet is that one time or another you were asked, as I have been, "you spent



all that time and expense and you didn't keep the fish to eat"? One could answer that a trout is too beautiful to catch only once. Or you could point out that fishing pressure is high and if everyone kept 2, 3 or 5 fish per day, times the number of fisherpersons, the population of good-size trout would soon decline. Moreover, the average size of individual fish would probably decline because several years may be needed to produce a good-size trout; three years for a 14-inch trout in the Madison.

The upper Madison could probably not sustain the kind of fishing that we enjoy with catch and keep at 2, 3 or 5 fish removed per day per fisherperson, given the constant pressure it receives. However, the Madison is very productive, and with less pressure, good fishing could probably be sustained with some harvest, which would simply replace natural mortality; think ospreys (photo), otters, mergansers, etc., and outmigration, which combined amount to about 30%. Trout such as cutthroat can reach good size in some low-productivity streams, however, because they live longer. At the same time, they are more vulnerable to fishing harvest because growth is too slow to keep pace with harvest. Population size and structure would not be so adversely affected by fishing pressure in productive streams.

To manage stream trout fishing more intensively, stricter regulations were imposed on many trout streams in the US during the 1970s and 1980s as fishing pressure increased. The purpose of catch/release (C/R) and slot limits (SL) is to increase the abundance of larger size trout. The angler must either release fish of all sizes, C/R, or take only those in an intermediate size range, say 10-13 inches, and release those larger and smaller. The old regulation which allowed taking fish larger than a minimum size, say 12 inches, may tend to result in populations of smaller average size - the bigger ones which take several years of growth to reach a large size,

get cropped off first. That decreases the chance to catch a big one, which is the goal of most sport fisherpersons. Releasing nice-size trout is often difficult to explain to those who believe the purpose of fishing is to eat your catch.

Up until 1978, the limit in the upper Madison was 10 lbs. and one fish, or 10 fish and no size limit. Since then it has been catch and release from Quake to McAtee Bridge, extending to Varney Bridge in 1988. How well have these "release the big ones" regulations worked? Although data are unavailable before C/R was instituted on the upper Madison, the regulation has apparently worked well. My opinion is that fishing would be much less rewarding if every fisherperson were allowed to take 5 trout per day (the current limit between McAtee and Ennis) given the intense pressure on the upper river. Annual population estimates by MTFW&P in a three-mile stretch upstream from Lyon's Bridge over the past 15 years (after recovery from whirling disease), show that the abundance of rainbows 14 inches and larger and browns 15 inches and larger has averaged 400 and 550 per mile of stream length. Those size groups represented 14 and 25%, respectively, of the total populations. That is really not a lot of good-size trout, considering the fishing pressure, so some individuals are probably caught at least twice.

To illustrate the effect of C/R, a theoretical example from the magazine *Fly Fisherman* used an abundance of 1,000 catchable trout per stream mile, which is about the abundance of 14 inchers and over in the upper Madison. Given an average catch success rate of 0.35 fish/hour, natural mortality of 50%, the abundance of catchables would not decline with about 5 hours of fishing pressure per day removing about two catchables per mile. At that rate for all year (270 days), fishing mortality was assumed to simply replace natural mortality. However, given the same abundance, success and natural mortality, 200 hours of fishing pressure per day would be possible with C/R and barbless hooks without lowering catchable abundance.

Occasionally one catches a trout in the Madison that has apparently been mishandled in hook removal. However, release mortality in studies elsewhere was usually rather low, less than 10 percent, if caught on flies. That beats 100 percent if the trout were kept. Mortality can be over 30 percent if caught with bait. Barbed hooks cause slightly higher mortality than barbless.

Sources: Mike Vaughn, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP); Downing, P. B. 2003. The logic of limits. *Stream Watch*, Fly Fisherman; McMurray, J. 2010. The truth about "catch and release" mortality. *Flyfishing in Saltwaters.*; Jason Seale, Oregon Fisheries & Wildlife

We need your help!

Writers are needed for the newsletter...about your area of interest ...fish, birds, the MRR area, ecology - whatever you are willing to share.

We also need volunteers for "Introducing..." to write about your family and how you became a property owner at the MRR.

Please contact Ann Costello, newsletter editor if you are willing to contribute, noniann@gmail.com

Hebgen Dam, continued from page 4

to manage the water much better in recent years. This makes for more consistent flows out of the dam and plenty of water for spawning trout in smaller side channels.

"Hebgen is a little more than a foot higher than it has been in a lot of years," Mabbott said. "The management of the lake is to conserve water. We're trying to protect flows and hold the lake. So in the spring, even though we have low snow, we're in a good situation because we held water."

"We have a strong ethic to keep the system in good shape and improve it," Mabbott said. "We're being proactive in making things better."

Read entire article on West Yellowstone News website.

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Newsletter Editor, Ann Costello
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**Don't forget to VOTE for your
representatives on the MRR Association
Board of Directors!!**



Links

<http://www.madisonriverranch.org>

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