



Sun River Watershed Group

2018 Year-end Newsletter

INTRODUCING THE NEW SUN RIVER WATERSHED COORDINATOR



Thanks so much for taking the time to read the Sun River Watershed Group Newsletter. In our subsequent quarterly newsletters this section will be a letter from one of the SRWG Directors, but this time I would like to introduce myself for those of you I haven't met. I came to the Sun River Watershed Group in October from a position with another grass-roots watershed organization in Colorado. I lived in Montana in the past and have family here, so I was excited personally to move to Great Falls. Professionally, I feel fortunate to have this opportunity to be a part of an organization with such a reputation for success and collaboration.

To share a little about me: I grew up in Ellensburg, Washington. I spent 17 years working in Seattle as an administrative professional, but missed small-town life and wanted to change careers to something I could really connect to, where I could really make a difference. So nearly 20 years after high school, I finally decided to go to college. After getting my feet wet at Spokane Community College, I transferred to the University of Montana where I received Bachelors and Masters degrees in Resource Conservation. My coursework included range, river, and restoration ecology as well as

conflict resolution and nonprofit administration. Next, I spent a year working on the Popo Agie and East Fork of the Wind rivers as an Aquatic Habitat Biologist for the State, out of Lander, Wyoming. When my contract was up I moved to Colorado and worked as the Project Manager for the Big Thompson Watershed Group.

With family throughout the state, including here in Great Falls, Montana is the right place for me and I'm very happy to be here. I plan to build on the great work the Sun River Watershed Group has done over the past 25 years. Thanks so much to those of you who have invited me into your homes, offices, and meetings over the past two months. I am enjoying getting to know you all and look forward to becoming part of the Sun River community.

Happy holidays, and here's to the next 25 years of SRWG success!

Tracy Wendt

Coordinator, Sun River Watershed Group

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SUN RIVER WATERSHED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE

At the December 17, 2018 Board Meeting, the Sun River Watershed Group elected the following people to our Board of Directors:

Erling Juel, Chairperson
Greenfields Irrigation District

John Chase, Vice-Chair
Cascade Conservation District Representative

Dean Pearson
Teton Conservation District Representative

Skip Neuman
Muddy Creek Landowner

Laura Ziemer
Trout Unlimited Western Water Project

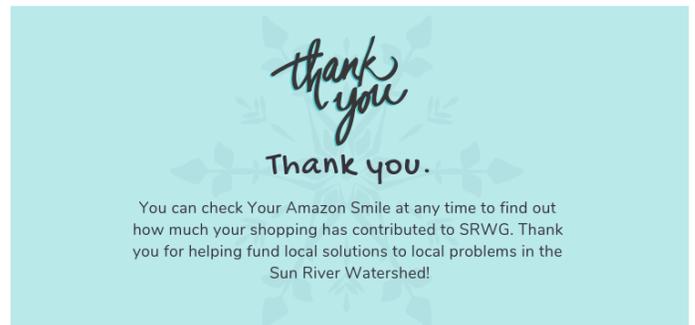
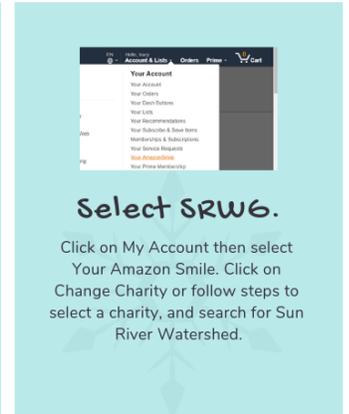
Perk Perkins
Conservation Community

Paul Roos
Conservation Community

There are still open board positions and an open position for Secretary-Treasurer. If you are interested in joining the Board of Directors for the Sun River Watershed Group, please contact a Board Member or Tracy (sunriverwatershed@gmail.com).

The Board of Directors meets quarterly and these meetings are open to the public. The next meeting will be February 20th at noon at the Greenfields Irrigation District in Fairfield.

[Follow us on Facebook for events and updates!](#)



SUN RIVER WATERSHED GROUP

Local solutions for local problems

www.sunriverwatershed.org
sunriverwatershed@gmail.com

SUN RIVER WATERSHED WORKING GROUP UPDATES

WATER MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP

The Water Management Work Group continues to be the most active SRWG committee, continuing to meet at a minimum in the spring and fall. Improving communication on water sharing during irrigation season is a very important task addressed by the group. This is accomplished by evaluating snowpack conditions and runoff predictions in the spring. Then in the fall, the group evaluates what worked and what needs to be improved on. At each meeting, the group also discusses status of water management projects, funding future projects, and the status of flow gages. The results of this work group are netting big benefits for all water users in the Sun River watershed. Now, let's see if they can learn to MAKE water...

Notes from the group's Fall 2018 meeting can be accessed on the SRWG website: www.sunriverwatershed.org. The work group will be meeting in Spring 2019, though a date and time have not yet been set.

WATER QUALITY WORK GROUP

The Water Quality work group did not have their regular fall meeting but plan on meeting this spring to kick planning and proposed projects into gear. Past water quality projects to-date have resulted in great successes improving the health of the Sun River and tributaries. There is still a lot more to do, so we look forward to hearing from and supporting the work group in 2019.

WEED CONTROL WORKING GROUP

In the past, SRWG has had a working group focused on controlling weeds in the watershed. A few folks have expressed an interest in seeing this group get going again. With or without an official working group, SRWG will still host an annual weed-pull event in 2019. We are still working with partners to finalize the date, but hope to hold it on July 13, 2019.

For more information about any working group, contact Tracy at sunriverwatershed@gmail.com.



APRIL 29th, 2019
RAISE A PINT!

SUDS
FOR THE
SUN

an event benefiting the
Sun River Watershed Group



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!

Like this newsletter? Want to
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www.sunriverwatershed.org

SUN RIVER
WATERSHED
GROUP
ANNUAL
WEED-PULL



**SUN RIVER
WATERSHED GROUP**
Local solutions & local problems

pencil it in!

July 13

(tentatively)

WATERSHED PARTNERS UPDATES

GREENFIELDS IRRIGATION DISTRICT

Greenfields Irrigation District (GID) has two seasons: the water season and the getting-ready-for-the-water-season season. During the latter, GID's crews spend their time performing necessary repairs to our 100-year-old infrastructure and making much-needed strategic improvements. The off-season means we will be doing earthwork and pouring concrete in freezing conditions. This winter is no different. Here is a short list of some of the projects we are working on or will complete before spring:

Johnson Drop

The concrete chute which failed in June of 2017 is being replaced with a "hydropower ready/hydropower friendly" pipe drop. The pipe is 79 inches O.D., 800 feet long and will have capacity of 350 cfs.

Beaver Creek Bridge

This bridge is a GID maintenance and access bridge to Gibson Dam which was detrimentally impacted during the June 2018 flood event. The current bridge is narrow and has limited load capacity. It will be replaced with dual, 10-ft diameter culverts which will have been sized for future construction loads associated with eventual construction of the Gibson Hydroelectric project.

Pishkun Reservoir Trash Rack

The previous fish screen on the outlet structure failed in 2017 after 80 years of service and a new trash rack was recently fabricated and installed to protect the operation of the 3 reservoir outlet gates.



Top photo:
Johnson
Drop
project
Middle:
Beaver
Creek
project
at right:
Pishkun
project

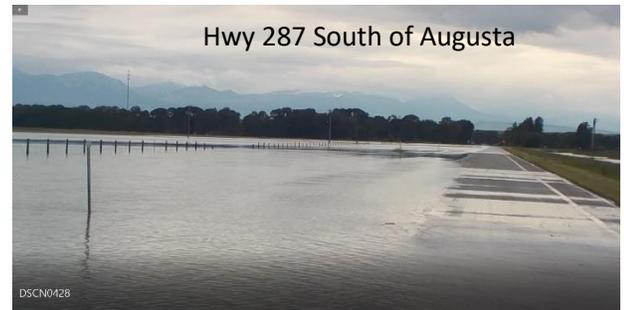
CASCADE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

It has been an exciting year for the Cascade Conservation District (CCD)! The River Campaign 2018 was a tremendous success. CCD hosted three events aimed at increasing public awareness regarding aquatic invasive species and permitting regulations, in addition to forming partnerships with businesses and landowners to practice river stewardship. Other highlights from 2018 include hosting an irrigator workshop, CCD's inclusion on the Early Detection and Rapid Response Plan for the State of Montana, and a contributing member of the Economic Impact Study of Potential Dreissenid Mussel infestation in Montana. Lastly, forty-five 310 permits were processed in 2018 with several emergency project notifications due to high water and flooding. Please contact the Cascade Conservation District via phone at (406) 770-4332 or by visiting our website www.cascadecd.com or Facebook page: search Cascade Conservation District. We wish you a happy and prosperous 2019!



**Cascade
Conservation
District**
www.cascadecd.com

LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT



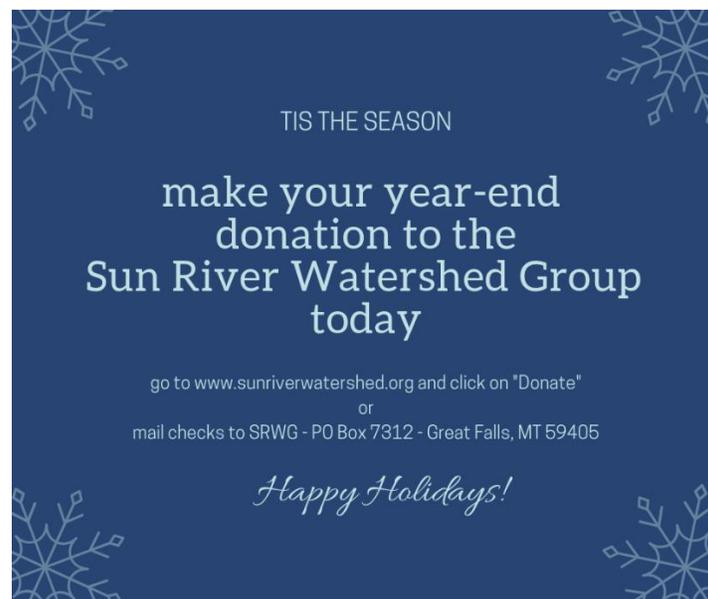
The winter of 2017-18 had everyone in the water world on pins and needles. Snowpack in the Sun/Teton/Marias basin was exceedingly high and we all knew that was going to make for an interesting spring runoff event. Around the 1st of June, we thought we had gotten through the worst of things. Mountain snowpack was "behaving itself" and coming off relatively slowly. Then around the middle of June, it started to rain. And WOW, did it rain! Local reports of 8-13" of rain from June 15-19th were common. By Tuesday, June 19th, streams and rivers in north Lewis & Clark County were out of their banks. The Dearborn River system had record flow where it dumps into the Missouri River. Elk Creek was spread out around and through Augusta. The "gold standard" reference for flood years in that area is the 1964 flood. USGS did some measurements on the Elk Creek system and their best guess was that the amount of water was similar to the flood event of 1975. The Conservation District does stream permitting for the county landowners. This was a record year for us. We are up to 46 stream emergency notices, the bulk of those in the Dearborn River System (the South, Middle and North forks, JOslin Creek, Green Creek, etc.) and the Elk Creek system (Smith, Ford, Elk Creeks among others). We have done 57 full 310 permits, many related to emergencies or other needed work. It's been a wild year and we've appreciated the patience of county landowners. We're very sorry that we haven't been able to access emergency/disaster funding yet, but I promise that we are still looking!

Chris Evans, District Administrator, Lewis & Clark Conservation District.

OTHER WATERSHED NEWS

FWP NEWS RELEASE – REGION 4

A public information meeting on the conservation and management of mountain lion populations in Montana is scheduled for Jan. 2 at 7 pm at Fish, Wildlife & Parks Region 4, 4600 Giant Springs Road. FWP Biologist Jay Kolbe will present information from the new draft Montana Mountain Lion Monitoring and Management Strategy, which is open for public comment until Jan. 11. Read the draft strategy or submit comments online: <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2018/mtnLionMgmtStrategy.html>. Comments can also be mailed to Wildlife Division, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701, or by emailing fwpwld@mt.gov.



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