

MONTANA STATE OF THE WATERSHEDS CONTENTS WATERSHED MAP **IMPROVING WATER QUALITY** SUSTAINING WATER SUPPLY PROTECTING WATERSHEDS FROM INVASIVE SPECIES **CONVENING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS** WATERSHED ACTIVITIES **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES BIG SKY WATERSHED CORPS** WATERSHED ORGANIZATION 10 DIRECTORY

ABOUT MONTANA'S

WATERSHED ORGANIZATIONS

MWCC 2018 ANNUAL REPORT 12

THE WATERSHED APPROACH

The Watershed Approach to conservation is a distinct strategy – one rooted in the unique values of Montana's individual watershed communities, as well as efforts to work collaboratively among diverse stakeholders within those communities. The watershed organizations MWCC supports encompass a wide range of goals and organizational structures. Yet each:

- Is tied to a distinct land area or hydrologic boundary
- Ensures broad stakeholder involvement and inclusivity
- Is community-based and community-driven
- Relies on local leadership
- Encourages collaboration with partners in the watershed
- Strives for consensus, and avoids litigation as a conservation strategy

These shared principles of the Watershed Approach provide a framework under which these organizations may successfully define and pursue the conservation goals that best serve their geographic communities.

In 2018, Montana's watershed organizations accomplished the following:

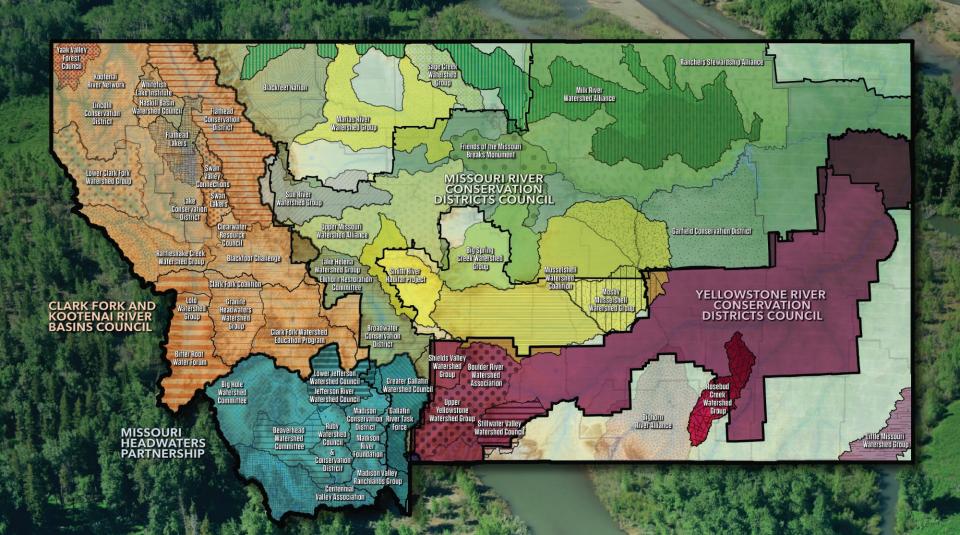








MONTANA'S WATERSHED ORGANIZATIONS





SUSTAINING WATER SUPPLY

atershed organizations work directly with land managers to track, plan for, and improve water supply challenges in their communities. Together, they support more effective drought response, more efficient water use, and innovative water storage solutions in the face of a changing climate. Watershed organizations educate community members about the need for maintaining stream flow for a broad range of uses. They also coordinate and provide financial support for stream gages and water monitoring stations. Water supply projects implemented by watershed organizations include:

- Communicating current water flows and drought potential to local stakeholders
- Creating drought response plans
- Improving irrigation efficiency and irrigation water management
- Monitoring water quantity by engaging local volunteers

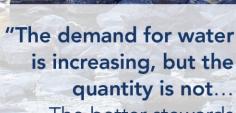




Soils scientist Barry Dutton checks a rain gauge and soil moisture to evaluate irrigation efficiency.



Big Sky Watershed Corps member Joe Zimbric measures Nevada Creek stream flows with Helmville students.



The better stewards we are, the more effective we can be to sustain our man-made water rights."

-David Mannix, Helmville Rancher



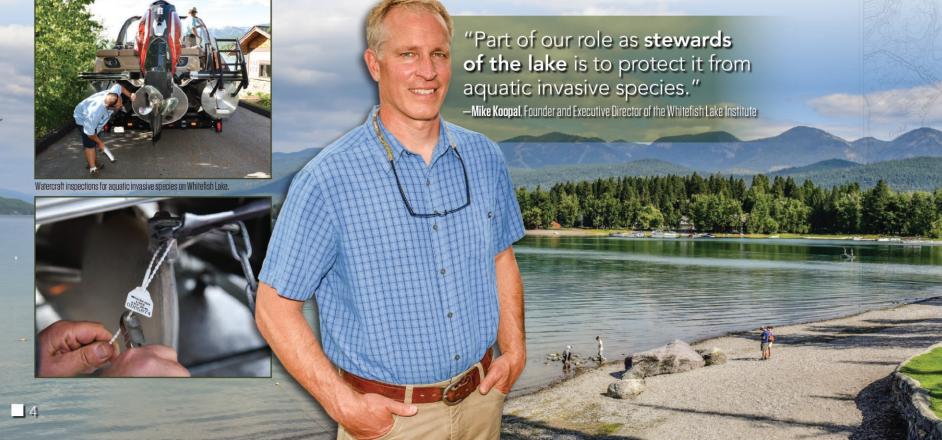
12

PROTECTING WATERSHEDS FROM AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

atershed organizations are a front-line defense against the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS), including zebra and quagga mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, and New Zealand mud snails. They are the eyes on the ground for checking boats, irrigation equipment, and other potential sources of AIS contamination. They also work to raise community awareness of the potential harm of AIS introduction. Watershed organizations often collaborate with broader state efforts to prevent AIS, through:

- Setting up and staffing watercraft inspection and decontamination stations
- Raising community awareness by educating students, recreational water users, irrigators, and the general public
- Establishing local and regional AIS prevention and management plans
 Whitefish Lake Institute also led the virtual eradication of an early infestation of Eurasian watermilfoil through aggressive rapid response actions.





CONVENING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Lower Musselshell Conservation

chats with Austin Shero and Justin Meissner, both with the NRCS

District Supervisor Steve Tyrell

o matter the issue, Montana's watershed organizations know what it takes to effect positive change: locally-driven community conversations that emphasize shared values and priorities. These community conversations drive and define the Watershed Approach to natural resource management.

Working within the Watershed Approach requires extensive time spent engaging community members. As a result, watershed organizations take on projects that are less directly related to water resources yet are significant to the community as a whole. Examples include reducing predator conflict, land use planning, and sustainable economic innovations. These projects build and sustain community trust, maintaining the foundation for collaboration that is essential for natural resource management.

Water Manager Lynn Rettig discusses the connections between water management and the community in the historic Musselshell School.







artners

Conservation districts, water user associations, landowners, cities, counties, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service

Major Funding Sources

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

"People are the heart of the work that we do. Bringing folks together is what community conversations are all about."

-Laura Nowlin. Watershed Coordinator, Musselshell Water Coalition

WATERSHED **ACTIVITIES**

Montana's watershed organizations engage in a broad array of efforts to improve the health of both communities and the natural resources they rely on.



Cynthia Ingelfinger of the Whitefish Lake Institute teaches students about insects that live in local streams.

Restoration work underway on private lands along Mud Creek,

a tributary of Therriault Creek in Lincoln County.



Watershed stewards read an information kiosk created by the Lincoln Conservation District to illustrate restoration of the Tobacco River Basin.



Students learn how to measure stream flow as part of an educational program created by the Bitter Root Water Forum.



93% 42 ORGANIZATIONS

58% 26 ORGANIZATIONS

48% 22 ORGANIZATIONS

87% 39 ORGANIZATIONS

62% 28 ORGANIZATIONS

49% 22 ORGANIZATIONS

78% 35 ORGANIZATIONS

42% 19 ORGANIZATIONS

49% 22 ORGANIZATIONS

27% 12 ORGANIZATIONS

60% 27 ORGANIZATIONS

51% 23 ORGANIZATIONS

Drought and Landscape Resiliency



Education and Community Outreach



Fisheries



Land Use



Water Quality





Water Quantity



Wildlife Habitat or Wildlife Management



Invasive Species





Forest or Uplands



Range Health and Ranching Economy



Economic and Community Development



Agriculture or Irrigation



Community Quality of Life







Individual Watershed Activities





WATERSHED **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

Watershed organizations rely on a wide range of state and federal grants to do their work. They leverage these funding sources with dollars from private foundations, local governments, businesses, and individuals, as well as in-kind donations. In our 2018 State of the Watersheds Survey, organizations reported accessing the following resources in the last 5 years.

HIGH-USE GRANTS*

DNRC Watershed Management Grant

DEQ 319 Program Grant

SWCDM Mini-Grant Program

Cinnabar Foundation Grant

DNRC "HB223" Grant

FWP Future Fisheries Grant

NFWF Grants (various)

DNRC Conservation District
Administrative Grant

DNRC Conservation Education Mini-Grant Program

DNRC Renewable Resource Planning Grant

MEDIUM-USE GRANTS**

DNRC Renewable Resource Grant

DNRC Reclamation and Development Grants

DNRC Aquatic Invasive Species Grant

USDA, NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

DEQ Volunteer Monitoring Laboratory Analysis Assistance

USDA, NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

DNRC Irrigation Development Grant

DNRC Conservation District
Development Grant

AGR Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant

LOWER-USE GRANTS***

DNRC Western States Wildland Urban Interface Grant

> DNRC Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Grant

USDA, NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

USDA, NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant

DNRC Hazardous Fuel Reduction Grant

DNRC Renewable Resource Grants to Private Entities

DNRC Renewable Resource Emergency Grant

DNRC Forestry Program Development Grant

*HIGH-USE grants are those that 12 or more watershed organizations have applied to in the past five years, from among the 45 who answered this question in our State of the Watersheds Survey.

**MEDIUM-USE grants are those that between 4 and 10 watershed organizations applied to in the past five years.

***LOWER-USE grants are those that between 1 and 3 watershed organizations applied to in the past five years.

GROWING THE CONSERVATION FIELD BIG SKY WATERSHED CORPS

Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) is an AmeriCorps program that places young professionals in Montana's watershed communities to make a measurable difference in local conservation initiatives. Since its inception in 2011, BSWC has become a statewide success, with members making strides in watershed research, project planning and implementation, education and outreach, and community engagement.

MWCC partners with the Montana Conservation Corps and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana to ensure the success of the BSWC program. Our role in this partnership includes providing host site support, coordination, and access to funding for BSWC members and host sites.

Since 2011, BSWC has engaged 160 members who contributed 226,100 hours of conservation service. Dozens of members have gone on to work for local watershed organizations, as well as state and federal agencies working on water issues in Montana. In 2018, 27 BSWC members served 25 conservation organizations statewide, putting in 45,900 hours of conservation service.





Tools for Living. Experience for Life.





BSWC member Casey Gallagher teaches a young community member about aquatic invasive species at the Fort Peck Governors Cup Winter Carnival.



BSWC member Aissa Wise leads a classroom presentation for the Bitter Root Water Forum's Farth Stewardship Program.





MONTANA WATERSHED ORGANIZATION DIRECTORY

BEAVERHEAD WATERSHED COMMITTEE

Jamie Cottom beaverheadwatershed@gmail.com 406-683-3802

BIG HOLE WATERSHED COMMITTEE

Tana Nulph info@bhwc.org • 406-960-4855

BIG SPRING CREEK WATERSHED COUNCIL

Clay Dunlap dunlap@midrivers.com • 406-366-6887

BIGHORN RIVER ALLIANCE

Anne Marie Emery info@bighornriveralliance.org 208-520-6290

BITTER ROOT WATER FORUM

Heather Barber heather@brwaterforum.org 406-375-2272

BLACKFEET NATION AGRICULTURE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Loren BirdRattler Ibirdrattler@blackfeetnation.com 406-338-7521 ext. 2370

BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE

Jennifer Schoonen jennifer@blackfootchallenge.org 406-793-3900

BOULDER RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

Dan Rostad dan.rostad@mt.nacdnet.net 406-932-5160 ext. 106

BROADWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Josie Reynolds josie.reynolds@mt.nacdnet.net 406-266-3146 ext. 104

CENTENNIAL VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Kara Maplethorpe communityorg@ centennialvalleyassociation.org 715-681-0795

CLARK FORK & KOOTENAI RIVER BASINS COUNCIL

Dave Shively david.shively@umontana.edu 406-546-3250

CLARK FORK COALITION

Holly Biehl holly@clarkfork.org 406-542-0539, ext. 206

CLARK FORK WATERSHED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Rayelynn Brandl rbrandl@mtech.edu • 406-496-4790

CLEARWATER RESOURCE COUNCIL

David Batchelder dave@crcmt.org • 406-210-0183

ELKHORN RESTORATION COMMITTEE

Al Christophersen
Buglingelke@gmail.com • 406-439-0197

FLATHEAD BASIN COMMISSION

Rich Janssen rich@cskt.org 406-675-2700 ext. 7260

FLATHEAD CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Valerie Kurth vkurth@flatheadcd.org • 406-752-4220

FLATHEAD LAKERS

Robin Steinkraus lakers@flatheadlakers.org 406-883-1346

FRIENDS OF THE MISSOURI BREAKS MONUMENT

Tim Dwyer tim@missouribreaks.org • 406-502-1334

GALLATIN RIVER TASK FORCE

Kristin Gardner kristin@gallatinrivertaskforce.org 406-993-2519

GARFIELD COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Dusty Olson garfieldcd@macdnet.org 406-557-2740 ext. 100

GRANITE HEADWATERS WATERSHED GROUP

Karen Petersen karen.petersen@mt.nacdnet.net 406-859-3291 ext. 101

GREATER GALLATIN WATERSHED COUNCIL

Holly Hill greatergallatininfo@gmail.com 406-560-4425

JEFFERSON RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Evan Norman jeffersonriverwc@gmail.com

KOOTENAI RIVER NETWORK

Brian Sugden kootenairivernetwork@gmail.com 406-751-2413

LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Heidi Fleury lakecountycd@ronan.net 406-217-6959

LAKE HELENA WATERSHED GROUP

Jennifer McBroom jmcbroom@lccountymt.gov 406-457-8584

LIBERTY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT/SAGE CREEK WATERSHED GROUP

Gail Cicon gail.cicon@mt.nacdnet.net 406-759-5128 ext. 102

LINCOLN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Becky Lihme lincolncd@interbel.net ◆ 406-297-2233

LOLO WATERSHED GROUP

Kascie Herron kascie@lolowatershed.org 406-546-2316

LOWER CLARK FORK WATERSHED GROUP

Brita Olson brita@lowerclarkforkwatershedgroup.org 208-304-3852

LOWER JEFFERSON RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Bob Sims sims@ixi.net • 406-287-5117

MADISON CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Ethan Kunard ethan@madisoncd.org • 406-682-7289

MADISON RIVER FOUNDATION

Lauren Wittorp lauren@madisonriverfoundation.org 406-624-9782

MILK RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Deborah Clayton milkriverwatershedalliance@gmail.com 406-654-1334 ext. 101

MISSOURI RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS COUNCIL

Rachel Frost mrcdc@macdnet.org • 406-454-0056

MOSBY MUSSELSHELL WATERSHED GROUP

Diane Ahlgren skipndiane@midrivers.com 406-429-6851

MUSSELSHELL WATERSHED COALITION

Laura Nowlin musselshellwc@gmail.com 406-429-4832

RANCHERS STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

Paula Enkerud info@ranchstewards.org 406-658-2516

RATTLESNAKE CREEK WATERSHED GROUP

Eric Edlund rattlesnakecreek.watershedgroup@gmail com 406-240-1986

RUBY VALLEY WATERSHED COUNCIL AND CONSERVATION DISTRICT.

David Stout david@rvcd.org 406-842-5741 ext. 105

SHIELDS VALLEY WATERSHED GROUP

Ashley Lowrey ashley.lowrey@mt.nacdnet.net 406-222-2899 ext 114

SMITH RIVER HABITAT PROJECT

Sherry Meador info@smithriverhabitatproject.org 406-431-7638

STILLWATER VALLEY WATERSHED COUNCIL

Lindsey Clark svwc2010@hotmail.com 406-780-1249

SUN RIVER WATERSHED GROUP

Tracy Wendt sunriverwatershed@gmail.com 406-214-2868

SWAN LAKERS

Jeff Kemp info@SwanLakers.org • 406-420-2010

SWAN VALLEY CONNECTIONS

Rebecca Ramsey rebecca@svconnections.org 406-754-3137

UPPER MISSOURI WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Alan Shaw contactumowa@gmail.com 406-995-2792

UPPER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED GROUP

Ashley Lowrey ashley.lowrey@mt.nacdnet.net 406-222-2899 ext. 114

WATERSHED RESTORATION COALITION

Ted Dodge ted.dodge516@gmail.com 406-579-3762

WHITEFISH LAKE INSTITUTE

Mike Koopal mike@whitefishlake.org • 406-862-4327

OTHER KNOWN WATERSHED ORGANIZATIONS

BIG HOLE RIVER FOUNDATION FLATHEAD RIVER COMMISSION

HASKILL BASIN WATERSHED COUNCIL

LITTLE MISSOURI WATERSHED GROUP
LOWER MISSOURI COORDINATED

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
MADISON VALLEY RANCHLANDS

MARIAS RIVER WATERSHED GROUP

ROSEBUD CREEK WATERSHED GROUP

TEN MILE/SOUTH HELENA COLLABORATIVE

YAAK VALLEY FOREST COUNCIL

ABOUT MONTANA'S WATERSHED ORGANIZATIONS

Montana's local watershed organizations creatively leverage scarce resources to accomplish a lot in their communities. Many have small budgets and few or no paid staff. In fact, 47% are working with less than one full-time staff person, and many rely partly or exclusively on volunteers. These groups know how to stretch their funding - and how to make the most out of state and federal dollars by combining them with local and private donations.

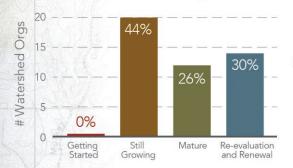
▼ 2018 General Operating Budgets



2018 General Operating Budget Funding Sources



▼ Life Stages of Montana's Watershed Organizations



Other sources of funding used by some watershed organizations 310 stream permitting programs and fees County mill levies

County mill levies Municipal funding Note: Due to rounding, numbers don't add up to 100%

> Conservation is critical business for the Kelley family. Leigh and Kyle Kelley are ranchers along the Blackfoot River in Greenough and leaders in protecting and sustaining water resources in their community.





MWCC OBJECTIVES & MILESTONES

SUPPORT

Provide funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building resources to local watershed organizations.

- Watershed Fund sub grants approximately \$150,000 annually and growing.
- Big Sky Watershed Corps Program provides 27 service members to Montana watershed organizations - amounting to nearly 46,000 hours of conservation service annually.
- Up-to-date online watershed coordinator resources.

CONNECT

Provide opportunities for the water community to learn from one another.

- Watershed Newsletter keeps over 1.800 network members informed and connected to technical, financial, and human resources.
- MWCC Annual Meeting attendance has grown to over 100 attendees annually.
- Biennial Watershed Symposia bring together over 150 professionals statewide.
- Annual watershed tours highlight community-based conservation successes.
- Watershed Day at the State Capitol connects watershed organizations and state decision makers.

INSPIRE

Share watershed successes, while promoting the Watershed Approach to conservation.

- Define shared principles of the Watershed Approach.
- Watershed Stories Campaign has increased the awareness of watershed organizations statewide and regionally
- Watershed Stewardship Awards celebrate outstanding contributions to watershed health.

REPRESENT

Collective voice for watershed organizations and relationship building with agencies, nonprofits, and other partners to support watershed organizations.

- Positive working relationships with key state and federal agencies.
- Steady increase in non profit and corporate MWCC partners.
- Successful watershed engagement on State legislative initiatives in 2018 legislative interim session.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ethan Kunard Board Chair, Ennis Michelle McGree Secretary, Helena Emily Isaacson, Treasurer, Helena Torie Haraldson Bozeman Laura Nowlin Winnett Jen Downing Missoula Adam Sigler Bozeman Eric Trum Helena Amy Seaman Helena Sierra Harris Bozeman Barbara Chilcott Helena Charles Wolf Drimal Bozeman

GOVERNMENT LIAISON

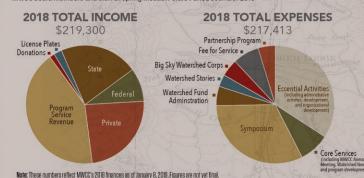
Keri Bilbo Natural Resources Conservation Service

STAFF

Erin Farris-Olsen Executive Director Terri Nichols Watershed Programs Coordinator Kierra Davis Partnership & Events Coordinator



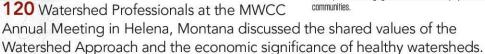
MWCC board members and staff at Spring Meadow State Park, December 2018



THIS YEAR AT MWCC...

\$100,000 Distributed in capacity, project, and professional development sub grants to watershed organizations through our Watershed Fund.

6 Watershed Stories developed to share the success of the Watershed Approach in the Blackfoot, Bitterroot, Broadwater, Madison, Musselshell, and Whitefish Lake watersheds.



200 Watershed Approach enthusiasts attended the 2018 Watershed Symposium: Advancing Conservation through Effective Communication, in Whitefish, Montana.

4 Partner Service initiatives helped build capacity and assist with strategic planning for the Upper Yellowstone Watershed Group, Clark Fork & Kootenai River Basins Council, Sun River Watershed Group, and the Upper Missouri Watershed Alliance.

24 Watershed Newsletters reached over **1,150** people, providing up-to-date information on trainings, careers, and funding opportunities for local watershed communities.

20 Watershed, **8** For Profit, and **9** Non Profit Partners invested in MWCC's strategic plan to support all watershed communities successfully advancing natural resource stewardship across Montana.

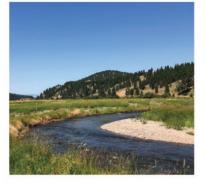
2 Enthusiastic new staff and **2** knowledgeable new board members joined the MWCC team.



Watershed Symposium participants listen to panelists discuss their experiences bringing the Watershed Stories project to their communities.



Watershed Fund money is allowing partners in the Blackfoot Watershed to continue restoration work on Nevada Creek. Shown are before (above) and after photos of an earlier phase of this project.



MONTANA STATE OF THE WATERSHEDS



The Watershed Fund

Promoting Healthy Watershed Communities Across Montana











MWCC Leverages Contributions From Partners Like You

To Directly Support Watershed Partners
-Community Driven
-Inclusive

Who Lead In Local Natural Resource Management









To Sustain Healthy & Productive Watersheds

The MWCC Watershed Fund provides direct support to local watershed organizations for on-the-ground projects, capacity-building, and professional development. Since 2015, the Fund has generated more than \$400,000 to help these groups leverage their traditional funding sources. MWCC tracks Watershed Fund success through:

- Stream miles improved
- Acres made more resilient
- Stakeholders engaged
- Conservation practices implemented

To learn more, or to join us in supporting the Watershed Approach in Montana, go to www.mtwatersheds.org.

"MWCC provides wonderful insight into the watershed world and is able to help us connect the dots when working with federal lands, private landowners, conservation districts, and more."

—**Tim Dwyer,** Executive Director, Friends of the Missouri River Breaks

