

River 2 Lake News

Photo by Karen Nichols

Welcome to the River to Lake monthly newsletter.

Issue 3 | September 2009

In this issue:

- Foys Bend Flathead River Fisheries Conservation Area Celebration & Management Plan draft
- Flathead River Conservation Easements Update
- North Shore Projects Update: Bigfork Fisheries Conservation Area Project
- Restoration Projects Update
- Bonneville Power Administration Funding Update
- Sign-up for the NRCS Conservation Reserve Program for Farmable Wetlands Began
- Reminder: Sign-Up Period for the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program Ends September 30
- Outreach to Realtors - Wetland & Riparian buffers
- Meeting September 24th - NRCS Farm Bill Funding Opportunities
- River to Lake Partners Meeting - October 7th

Land and Water Conservation

Foys Bend Project Celebration!

The Conservation Fund and Fish, Wildlife & Parks are holding a party and press conference to celebrate the completion of the Foys Bend Fisheries Conservation Area project in early October. For more information contact Gates Watson at (406) 239-6469.

Foys Bend River Fisheries Conservation Area Management Plan

Fish, Wildlife & Parks will release a draft management plan and environmental assessment for the Foys Bend Fisheries Conservation Area for public comment by the end of September. The Foys Bend Fisheries Conservation Area is a 243-acre property along two miles of the Flathead River. Fish, Wildlife & Parks purchased it in February for fisheries conservation using Bonneville Power Administration funds. The draft management plan and environmental assessment will include recommendations for public access, habitat enhancement, weed management, agricultural land uses, education, and other activities. For more information contact John Wachsmuth at (406) 751-4554 or jwachsmuth@mt.gov.

North Shore Projects Update: Bigfork Fisheries Conservation Area Project

Fish, Wildlife & Parks anticipates closing on the 70-acre Bigfork Fisheries Conservation Area on the north shore of Flathead Lake by end of the September. Bonneville Power Administration mitigation funds are being used to acquire the property for the purpose of fish and wildlife habitat conservation and to help mitigate for impacts caused to resident fish by construction and subsequent habitat loss associated with Hungry Horse Dam. The Decision Notice for the Hay Creek Management Plan can be found fwp.mt.gov/content/getItem.aspx?id=39300. For more information contact Kris Tempel at (406) 751-4573 or ktempel@mt.gov.

Restoration Projects Update

In August, project partners toured six river and wetland restoration projects along the Flathead River to assess their condition and plan for additional maintenance needs. Partners followed up with landowners to discuss weed management and the completion of an off-stream livestock watering facility. Two new restoration projects are planned for next year.

Funding and Programs

Bonneville Power Administration Funding Update

The joint Confederated, Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) 2007-2009 Hungry Horse fisheries mitigation program resulted in significant conservation of fish habitat in the Flathead Watershed. Projects funded by BPA include the purchase of conservation easements along the Flathead River (the Siderius family properties) and at Weaver and McWenneger Sloughs along the Flathead River, and the acquisition of property at Foys Bend (Ingham's property) and on the North Shore (Miller's property) by FWP. Two additional projects are being completed on the North Shore (Mattson's property) and along the Flathead River (three Loudon family farms)

Negotiations with the North Shore Ranch did not come to fruition so far and the BPA funding partners hoped to apply to this project will not be applied to the River to Lake Initiative, as the current agreement with BPA ends September 30th. For the next three years, BPA will fund fisheries mitigation projects in the Swan Valley. For more information contact Joel Tohtz at 751-4570 or jtohtz@mt.gov.

NRCS Conservation Reserve Program for Farmable Wetlands Accepting Applications

The Farmable Wetlands Program is a voluntary program administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency to restore wetlands and associated buffers impacted by farming activities. Landowners receive an upfront payment or rental payments for a 10 to 15 year period based on the weighted average dryland cash rent, as well as a portion of the costs of implementing a conservation practice. Landowners can apply at any time. Applications are evaluated immediately and, if application is approved, funding is immediate. More information about the program is available on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/2008fbcprsummary.pdf.

Reminder: Sign-Up Period for the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program ends September 30. For additional information, contact the NRCS field office at 406-752-4242 Ext. 104 or go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/new_csp.

River to Lake Outreach

Outreach to Realtors - Wetlands & Riparian Buffers

Following the Realtors Workshop held in January, the Flathead Lakers and Montana Watercourse developed and distributed a follow-up survey to participants. At the workshop, 85 percent of workshop participants responded that they would be willing to share information with their clients. In the follow-up survey, 100 percent of respondents (19.5% of participants) said that they had done so. The survey results indicate that the realtors are sharing materials with their clients. For more information about the workshop or the follow-up survey contact Constanza von der Pahlen at 883-1341 or criticallands@flatheadlakers.org.

Meetings

NRCS Farm Bill funding opportunities meeting - Thursday, September 24th

River to Lake partners are holding a meeting with Randall Gray, the Intermountain West Joint Venture's Farm Bill Coordinator on Thursday, September 24 at Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 10:00 am to learn about new programs and opportunities in the Farm Bill. Please contact Constanza at criticallands@flatheadlakers.org if you plan to attend and haven't already confirmed.

River to Lake meeting - Wednesday, October 7th

River to Lake partners will meet on Wednesday, October 7 from 9 am to noon at the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks conference room. An agenda will be sent out before the meeting. For more information contact Constanza at criticallands@flatheadlakers.org.

To check a project location you can find the *River to Lake Map* at www.flatheadlandtrust.org/pdf/R2LMap.pdf

Please send news and information that you would like to share via the River to Lake E-News the first week of each month. If your information or request is time sensitive, you can request that we send an "Action Alert" e-mail.