

# Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



BILLINGS – BOZEMAN – GREAT FALLS –  
LEWISTOWN

September 2015

## Support to Tribes

During September, Andrew Gilham, and Josh Melton assisted the Blackfeet Environmental Office with stream surveys in the Cut Bank Creek Watershed. The Montana FWCO has been assisting the Blackfeet Environmental Office with annual stream surveys since 1998.

These surveys follow the rapid bio-assessment protocol established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to characterize diversity of fish and aquatic macroinvertebrates, as well as, riparian health. Each year a different watershed is chosen for surveys.

Following these surveys, Andrew utilized existing survey data to map detections of Northern Redbelly Dace (*Chrosomus eos*) and Pearl Dace (*Margariscus margarita*) throughout Reservation waters.

While both are recognized as species of special concern in Montana, it appears that these species, particularly Pearl Dace, are more widely distributed on the Reservation than previously thought (Figure 1).

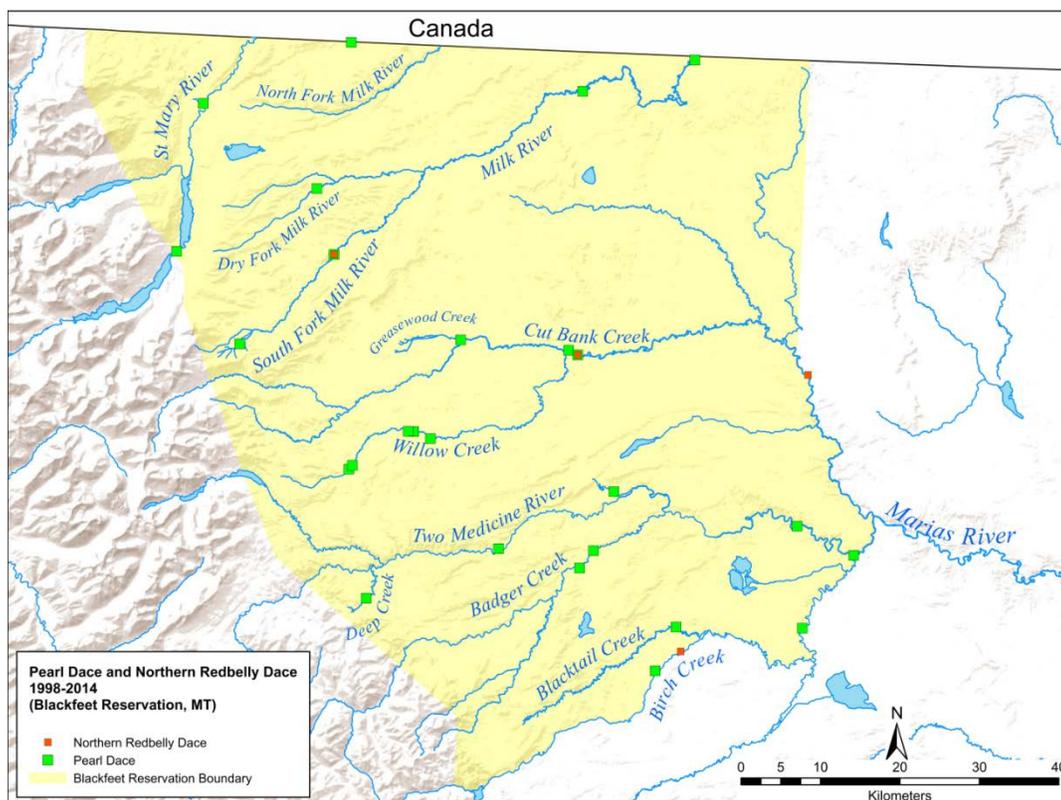


Figure 1 Pearl Dace and Northern Redbelly Dace detections in waters of the Blackfeet Reservation, Montana.

### Support to Tribes cont.

Additionally, three unidentified minnows were collected in Willow Creek, a small spring creek tributary to Cut Bank Creek. They were preserved in ethanol and brought back to Bozeman for positive identification. Dr. Bob Bramblett, Montana State University, confirmed that they were from the genus *Chrosomus* and suggested they are most likely Northern Redbelly Dace, Finescale Dace (*Chrosomus neogaeus*), or Northern Redbelly X Finescale Dace hybrids. Northern Redbelly Dace and hybrids are a Montana species of special concern, and to date no one has ever collected a Finescale Dace in Montana. Final identification to species is pending.



Andrew Gilham (left) and Barry Adams, Blackfeet Environmental Office Water Quality Program Manager (right), collecting samples as part of the rapid bio-assessment protocols.

Photo: Blackfeet Environmental Office



Figure 2 *Chrosomus* collected in Willow Creek, Blackfeet Reservation.

Photo: USFWS/Andrew Gilham

## Support to Tribes cont.

As part of our long-term stream monitoring efforts on the Crow Reservation, Robbin Wagner, Mat Erickson, and Josh returned to Windy Point in the Bighorns Mountains to download stream temperature and discharge data and to collect thermograph data near the town of Pryor

In addition to collecting stream monitoring data, they also shocked Big Bull Elk Creek and found numerous Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout that were planted in the creek over the last few years. Attempts to collect fin clips from Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout in Hay Creek were unsuccessful.

Finally, they assisted Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks biologist, Mike Ruggles, with collecting several Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) eDNA samples in Sage Creek and some of its tributaries, as well as, samples from Elk Creek and the North Fork of Sage Creek on the Crow Reservation.



Mat Erickson collecting discharge data on the Crow Reservation as part of our long-term stream monitoring efforts.

Photo: USFWS/George Jordan

## ***Air Force and USFWS collaborate on Natural Resource Management under the Sikes Act:***

The 22<sup>nd</sup> National Public Lands Day (NPLD) was celebrated in September. Across the nation, various events were held to celebrate in various ways including; trail maintenance parties, campouts, free entrance days to parks, shoreline cleanups and other outdoor activities. According to some reports, approximately 200,000 volunteers and park visitors engaged in NPLD events in all 50 states.

National Public Lands Day events at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana consisted of a two-part class called “Proper Tree-pruning Techniques” followed by a hands-on practical session at the base community center. Training and instruction were provided by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation forester and licensed arborist, Josh Stoychoff. From these events, a base tree-pruning task force germinated. Currently, this task force is led by Amn. Arthur Reynolds (MOS/MXOPE), with planned pruning to occur annually in the fall.

Additional Malmstrom Air Force Base National Public Lands Day information can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/Malmstrom-AFB-2015-National-Public-Lands-Day-Event-689910631057832/timeline/>

**Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation forester, Josh Stoychoff (foreground) instructs volunteers about the art of proper tree care.**

**Photo: USFWS/Elin Pierce**



**Air Force and USFWS collaborate on Natural Resource Management cont.**

September proved another busy month controlling noxious weeds on undeveloped portions of Malmstrom Air Force Base. Approximately 134 gallons of Tordon solution and 20 gallons of Telar solution were applied to control Spotted Knapweed and Dalmatian Toadflax, respectively.

**Other notable natural resource taskers:**

- A supplemental electrical aeration system was purchased for Powwow Pond. Installation date to be arranged.
- Continued noxious weed control coordination among Environment Flight, Contracting, CE Operations, Grounds Maintenance, Pest Shop, Housing Office, Fire Dept., USFWS, Balfour Beatty, and 40<sup>th</sup> Helicopter Squadron Safety Officer.

- A coordination meeting with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Malmstrom personnel was held to further progress towards completing the revision to the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan.
- Provided review and comment on designs for five construction and/or repair projects as well as, three environmental baseline surveys associated with the Missile Deactivation program.
- Completed Environmental Impact Assessments/Reviews on several projects including the Draft Operational Range Assessment Phase I Qualitative Assessment Update for Malmstrom Air Force Base, FINAL Project Definition Report FY16 Tactical Response Force Alert Facility, type B 100% MAF Garage Floor Drains, Malmstrom AFB Draft EBS - LF Papa 1 dismantlement, and Type A Report Repair Water Tanks Bldg 1511 & 1512.



Robbin Wagner applying herbicide to noxious weeds on Malmstrom Air Force Base.

Photo: USFWS/Josh Melton.

## ***Other happenings:***

Jim Mogen, Andrew, and Jason Marsh all attended the 2015 Fish Screening and Passage Workshop in central Idaho which included presentations, classroom discussions, a tour of the Salmon River Screen Shop and site visits to numerous salmonid screening and passage facilities along the upper Salmon River and its tributaries.

George Jordan co-authored and published [\*Age estimations of wild pallid sturgeon \(Scaphirhynchus albus, Forbes & Richardson 1905\) based on pectoral fin spines, otoliths and bomb radiocarbon: inferences on recruitment in the dam-fragmented Missouri River\*](#)



**Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) with spawning colors Photo: USFWS/Jim Mogen**

*For more information, click on the following logos  
Or feel free to contact any of the Montana FWCO  
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