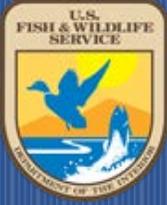


# Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



BILLINGS – BOZEMAN – GREAT FALLS –  
LEWISTOWN

Nov-Dec 2015

## *Wrapping up annual stream monitoring efforts on the Crow Reservation.*

It seems a perpetual race this time of year to get loose ends tied up prior to ice up. The final effort for 2015 was to install a thermograph and collect fall discharge measurements in Porcupine Creek.



Collecting discharge measurements on Porcupine Creek, Crow Reservation, Montana. Photo: USFWS/Josh Melton

Montana FWCO staff also met with the Crow Tribe's Natural Resource Cabinet director Thomas Ten Bear to discuss future Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout conservation. As a result, a draft MOU was developed and submitted to Director Ten Bears for review and comment.

Finally, we met with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to initiate a pilot effort to scan and convert our Crow fisheries data into a

digital format. The goal is to develop a GIS-based tool that can be used by the tribe and BIA to incorporate existing fisheries data into decision making process, identify data gaps, and help influence management actions for aquatic conservation. If successful, we will work with BIA to expand this effort for other Montana reservations for which we have data.

The remainder of the winter will be spent getting genetic

analysis completed on Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout tissue samples, and entering/interpreting shocking, stream temperature, and discharge data collected this year.

## Recognition by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

In early December, the Montana FWCO, along with Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and The Nature Conservancy, were recognized by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks-Fisheries Division as an “outstanding Partner” for collaborating on Arctic Grayling conservation efforts. As a result of this partnership with the State of Montana, Arctic Grayling abundance in Red Rock Creek has reached the highest reported level in the past 50 years.

We, at the Montana FWCO, are honored and grateful to be able to participate with such a great group of professionals. We also recognize that much of our current work was initiated by retired Montana FWCO biologist, Glenn Boltz. Without his steadfast commitment to grayling conservation we would not be where we are today.



Partners being recognized for outstanding contribution by MFWP Fisheries Division. Left to right: Bruce Rich, MFWP Fisheries Division Chief; Jim Berkey, TNC; Bill West, Refuge manager, Red Rock Lakes NWR; Yvonne Martinell, Centennial Valley Association and TNC board of directors; Nathan Korb, TNC; Jason Marsh, Montana FWCO seasonal biotech; Andrew Gilham, Montana FWCO Pathways Intern; Jim Mogen, Montana FWCO biologist; George Jordan, Montana FWCO project leader. Photo: MFWP

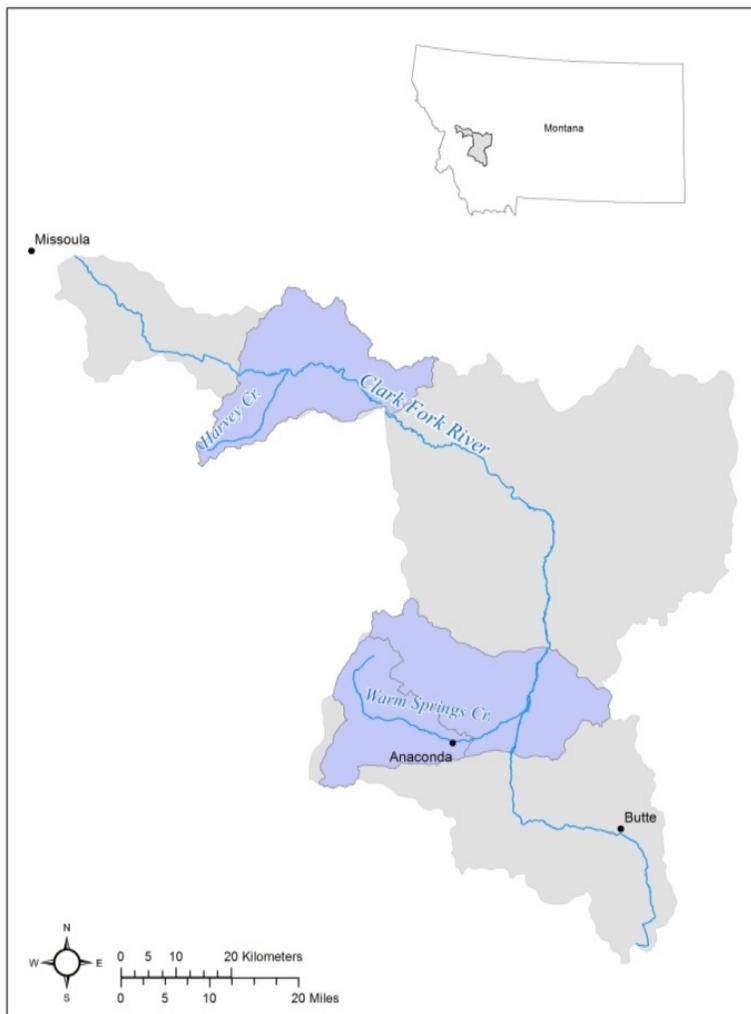


## **Bull Trout Recovery:**

St. Mary-related work continues to include working with the Bureau of Reclamation on various project items, ongoing correspondence with members of the Biological Review Team and USFWS Ecological Services personnel regarding the development of the proposed structures at the St. Mary diversion, and working closely with Justin Kucera (USBR Natural Resource Specialist) and the USBR contractor on analysis and interpretation of our cumulative 1997-2014 St. Mary Bull Trout data set.

Additionally, Montana FWCO worked collaboratively with Trout Unlimited (TU) to develop and submit a National Aquatic Connectivity Initiative proposal for a pilot fish passage focal effort in the Upper Clark Fork River to help recover Bull Trout.

This proposal, if funded, will focus efforts on two key historically important tributaries to the Clark Fork River—Warm Springs and Harvey creeks. Specifically, this strategic effort will work with partners such as TU, Forest Service, and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to leverage National Fish



**Harvey and Warm Springs creeks sub-basins in context within the Upper Clark Fork River watershed, Montana.**

Passage Program funding to systematically address all of the fish passage impacts in these two Bull Trout stronghold watersheds by rebuilding and consolidating irrigation diversions to remove

fish passage barriers, improving irrigation delivery and use efficiencies, negotiating flow agreements that leave water instream, and replacing barrier culverts with structures that provide fish passage.

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

Dr. Elin Pierce developed a plan to set game cameras at strategic locations around Malmstrom Air Force Base to provide a cost-effective means to monitor large game animals, as well as to engage airmen with outdoor/wildlife activities.

Two training classes were held, each lasting about 1.5 hours, followed by 1 hour of hands-on practice both inside and out.

Following these instructional efforts, the cameras were deployed at pre-selected locations around the installation.

In addition to other day-to-day duties, Dr. Pierce found time to coordinate a webinar for the Weed Management Team and other CES personnel. The webinar, hosted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in



**One of two volunteer deployment teams preparing to mount game cameras at strategic locations on Malmstrom Air Force Base. Left to Right: SSgt William Cole, SSgt Owen Wijaya, A1C Connor Shelby, 2d Lt Lauren Ohlgren, Dr. Elin Pierce.**

partnership with The Xerces Society, was intended for all personnel working with construction projects (re-seeding and re-sodding) and with prairie restoration.

Webinar content focused on ecotypes, how seed choices can either improve or harm plantings, and ecological restoration planning tools for greater long term conservation vegetative planting success.

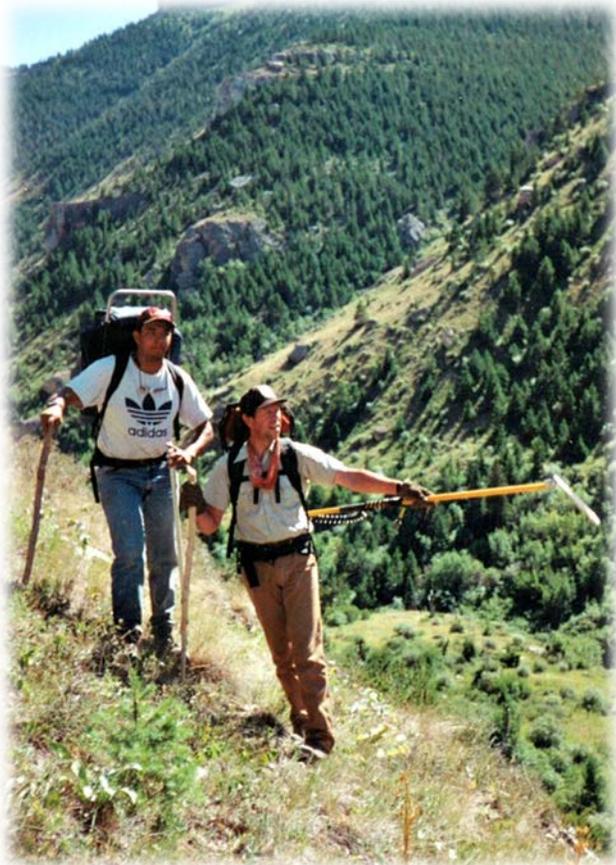
### ***Other happenings:***

The Montana FWCO bid farewell to senior biologist, Robbin Wagner. After 30 years with the USFWS, most of which was with this office, Robbin decided to move onto other challenges and adventures.

During his career, Robbin dedicated his time to conserving fish and wildlife resources on tribal lands in Montana.



**Robbin Wagner after a day setting and pulling nets on Four Horns Lake, Blackfeet Reservation, Montana. (USFWS photo)**



**Robbin Wagner (right) and Jarvis Gust, Montana FWCO student intern, backpacking electrofishing equipment into Big Bull Elk Creek on the Crow Reservation. (USFWS photo.)**



**Montana FWCO staff did not want their long-time comrade to winter-kill so they sent him into retirement with appropriate provisions.**

*(Photo: George Jordan)*

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



George Jordan  
Project Leader  
2900 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. North, Room 301  
Billings, MT 59101  
Phone: 406-247-7365  
Email: [george\\_jordan@fws.gov](mailto:george_jordan@fws.gov)

Andrew Gilham  
Pathway's Intern  
4052 Bridger Canyon Road  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
Phone: 406-585-9010  
Email: [andrew\\_gilham@fws.gov](mailto:andrew_gilham@fws.gov)

Michael (Josh) Melton  
Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
335 Airport Road 61  
Lewistown, MT 59715  
Phone: 406-535-2800 ext 22  
Email: [michael\\_melton@fws.gov](mailto:michael_melton@fws.gov)

Jim Mogen  
Fisheries Biologist  
4052 Bridger Canyon Road  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
Phone: 406-585-9010  
Email: [jim\\_mogen@fws.gov](mailto:jim_mogen@fws.gov)

Jason Marsh  
Seasonal Biotech  
4052 Bridger Canyon Road  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
Phone: 406-585-9010  
Email: [jason\\_marsh@fws.gov](mailto:jason_marsh@fws.gov)

Elin Pierce, PhD.  
Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
Malmstrom Air Force Base  
Great Falls, MT 59715  
Email: [elin\\_pierce@fws.gov](mailto:elin_pierce@fws.gov)

Judy Kobus-Fisk  
Administrative Support Officer  
4052 Bridger Canyon Road  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
Phone: 406-585-9010  
Email: [judy\\_kobus-fisk@fws.gov](mailto:judy_kobus-fisk@fws.gov)

Mat Erickson  
Seasonal Biotech  
4052 Bridger Canyon Road  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
Phone: 406-585-9010  
Email: [mathew\\_erickson@fws.gov](mailto:mathew_erickson@fws.gov)