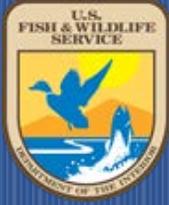


# Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



BILLINGS – BOZEMAN – GREAT FALLS –  
LEWISTOWN

June-July 2016

## *Sikes Act work, Malmstrom Air Force Base, MT.*

Summer has been busy at Malmstrom Air Force Base. As families plan vacations in an effort to eek every ounce of enjoyment from the summer months in Montana, so too have natural resource staff been planning, coordinating, and implementing projects to maximize success before the inevitable return of winter less than six months away.

While there have been a multitude of meetings and coordination efforts necessary to implement various aspects of the Malmstrom AFB Integrated Natural Resource Plan, the following are merely highlights that do little to recognize the behind-the-scenes efforts of those in CES/CEIE, RHS, USFWS-MTFWCO, AFCEC, and others, some paid, some volunteers, without whom the following projects may not have been met with as much success. To all involved: THANK YOU.

### NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL:

As part of our ongoing efforts at Malmstrom, the fight against noxious weeds continued with the addition of new biological “weapons” – goats were added to our arsenal in July.

While chemical control (herbicide application) has

been a reliable stand-by for decades, these newer and more environmentally friendly alternatives were tested for possible incorporation into an overall weed control strategy intended to reduce herbicide application through time.

Approximately 170 goats unleashed their weed-eating fury for a few days as a pilot effort.

This was followed by post grazing evaluation of weed densities within the test plot to assess efficacy.

If approval is gained, the plan is to deploy significantly more goats annually for 3 consecutive years beginning in 2017.

See also:

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/story/news/local/2016/07/14/malmstrom-air-force-base-testing-goats/87095886/>



Goats attacking weeds in a test plot on the undeveloped side of Malmstrom Air Force Base. Photo: USFWS/Dr. Elin Pierce

*Sikes Act work,  
Malmstrom Air Force  
Continued...*

**Other notable activities  
include:**

- USFWS supplied 60 fishing rod/reel combos for loan during both the June [Kids Fishing Day and Military Fishing Day at Powwow Pond](#);
- USFWS volunteer Sloane Adams conducted surveys of buildings on the industrial side of the base and mapped and recorded the location and extent of damage imposed by Northern flickers;
- Helped coordinate the [relocation of a swarm of honey bees](#) possibly saving a large group of important pollinators;
- Coordinate the purchase and release of weevils that will help control invasive weeds. Release is planned for August;
- Continue to monitor and implement the on-base big-game camera monitoring effort as well as ordering additional equipment to expand this effort into the missile field;
- Development of a volunteer program for Airmen, military dependants, and retirees who have an interest in natural resource conservation.



**The Thomas D White Award for best-in-Air Force Natural Resources Conservation: Small Installation for FY14-15 being presented by the 341st Civil Engineering Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Purcell, to Mr. Rudy Verzuh (CEI Installation Asset Mgmt and Environment flight chief; not pictured) and to Dr. Elin Pierce, USFWS-MAFB Natural Resources Mgr.**



**Volunteers at Malmstrom are making a difference in the natural resource program. Sloane Adams (military dependent, left), Christina Howell (military spouse, center) and SSgt Seth Haak, (819th RHS, right) are gaining experience in natural resource management while providing support to joint USFWS-CES/CEIE weed management efforts. Photo: USFWS/ Dr. Elin Pierce**

## Arctic Grayling efforts at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

One of our long-term efforts to facilitate Arctic Grayling restoration at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is to restore a spawning run in the Elk Springs Creek drainage – an historically important spawning tributary to Upper Red Rock Lakes.

Prior to restoring the lower end of Elk Springs Creek, Montana FWCO staff established a series of Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag arrays to detect PIT-tagged fish.

These stationary PIT tag arrays, part of a 3-year effort, will collect pre- and post-habitat restoration data that will be utilized to assess the biological response of Arctic Grayling to restoration efforts on Elk Springs Creek.

The physical habitat restoration effort, planned for

the fall of 2016, will involve re-routing Elks Springs Creek into its historical channel.



Transporting field equipment and data collection at remote PIT tag array sites, while logistically challenging, affords great views of the Centennial Mountains.

Photo: USFWS/Jason Marsh



Working in wilderness areas, as is much of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, poses many challenges – one of which is restricted use of motorized equipment. Here, a deep cycle marine battery is fitted to a back-pack frame in preparation for non-motorized transport to the PIT tag arrays.

Photo: USFWS/George Jordan

## ***Bull Trout Recovery:***

Montana FWCO staff continue to work 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.

Over the past several months, much effort has been put towards planning fall Bull Trout surveys within the Saint Mary watershed. Fall surveys were initiated in late July and will continue into early August.



**Jim Mogen, Montana FWCO biologist, with adult Bull Trout collected from the St Mary watershed in NW Montana. Photo: Sarah Muessig, USFWS volunteer**

## **Tribal Trust Responsibilities:**

As part of our tribal trust responsibilities and at the request of Dona Rutherford, Director of Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife, Montana FWCO biologists assisted the Tribe with sampling three lakes on the Blackfeet Reservation. The lakes sampled were Duck, Kipp, and Mission Lakes. The collected data will be used for stock assessments to guide future stocking rates and to make recommendations to the Tribe for possible management changes.



Montana FWCO seasonal biotechs Marlene Fisher (front) and Mat Erickson (Back) are ready to assist MTFWCO biologist Andrew Gilham (center) with gill-net surveys on Duck Lake, Blackfeet Reservation.



Looking like something from a sci-fi movie, the Burbot (*Lota lota*) is the only freshwater member of the cod family. This species is native throughout Canada, Alaska, and the northern United States including Montana. This specimen was netted from Mission Lake, Blackfeet Reservation.

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

During June, Montana FWCO staff worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement to set up an education and outreach booth at the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Watershed Festival and Kid's Fishing Day held at the Bozeman Fish Technology Center. The event was well attended by an estimated 2,000 people.



Outreach display at the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Watershed Festival and Kid's Fishing Day held at the Bozeman Fish Technology Center.

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