



The Outlet

A publication of the Montana Chapter American Fisheries Society
June 2004

President's Corner by Steve Leathe

Well, summer's finally here, or at least on the way. According to the calendar, summer begins June 21 (well, maybe..) and ends on September 22 (yeah, right!). I used to think summer more or less began around Memorial Day (wrong), then recalculated it to early June when the kids get out of school here (wrong again..). Bottom line is that it is a darned short season here in the Big Sky Country and there is so much for fish folks to do before the snow flies again. Not so long ago, I used to really look forward to summer. Now, regrettably, after about 5 years of continual drought over much of Montana I find myself almost dreading it. How unfortunate! Recent rains over much of the state have provided some short-term relief, but the situation remains critical for fluvial grayling in the upper Big Hole and for fish (and farmers & ranchers) in the Beaverhead drainage and elsewhere. We need some rain!

If you are anything like me, you probably—for the most part—forget about AFS as soon as the meeting ends. Well, let me tell you, there is much that goes on behind the scenes the rest of the year. First and foremost, there is the job of wrapping up the financial report for the annual meeting. Clint and Travis have some great news on that front (see summary below). Then there is correspondence and action on important resource issues. The Chapter has recently submitted comments on: 1) the [economic analysis for bull trout critical habitat designation](#); 2) the [Forest Roads Highways proposals for Clark Fork tributaries](#); 3) the [Corps of Engineers' Missouri River Master Control Manual](#); and 4) the [State of Montana TMDL program \(303d list review\)](#). Many Chapter members assisted in preparing these comments, including Bob Bramblett, Carol Endicott, Bruce Farling, Ladd Knotek, Ken McDonald, Clint Muhlfeld, Kate Walker, Nic Zymonas, and others. Thank you all for your good work on these issues. I believe our collective expressed professional opinions will make a difference to decision-makers.

And, of course, there is more. Though it seems so far away, we have started planning for a joint meeting with the Western Division AFS here in Montana in 2006. Pat Byorth (our wise Immediate Past President) has been busy working on the annual revision to our Chapter's Procedures Manual, a very important document that helps to smooth Chapter operations immensely. Bob Bramblett and Dale Zale recently completed an excellent status review for the [pearl dace](#). Clint Muhlfeld and Pat B

have been researching the set-up for a Wally McClure scholarship fund. The MSU student unit getting up and running. Bob Bramblett and Greg Hoffman are working with ExCom to revise our Chapter's procedures for designating fish species of special concern.

There is lots of other stuff going on, but perhaps most importantly, Clint has laid plans for the upcoming annual Summer Workshop. See his announcement below. He has a great trip lined up in some premiere areas of southern BC, including the Elk, Wigwam, and North Fork Flathead river. This will be a great trip, scheduled for end of July. I heartily recommend you attend - it will be educational, a great way to meet some new folks, and most of all....fun! Finally, have a great summer!!



Wally McClure Scholarship

Wally McClure Scholarship update: As many of you are probably aware, we recently lost an outstanding member and friend of our Chapter, Wally McClure. Wally was an incredible advocate and leader for conservation and wise management of aquatic resources in Montana. He served as a co-chair for the Species of Special Concern Committee and the Land Use Committee. In an effort to continue his legacy and promote educational opportunities for fishery students in Montana, Excom agreed to establish an annual scholarship for graduate and undergraduate fisheries students enrolled in the Montana University system. The Chapter will set aside \$10,000 for the scholarship from funds generated from the 2004 annual meeting in Whitefish. Clint and Pat are working on details of the scholarship, including selection criteria and financial arrangements. Details will be discussed at the next Excom meeting in September.

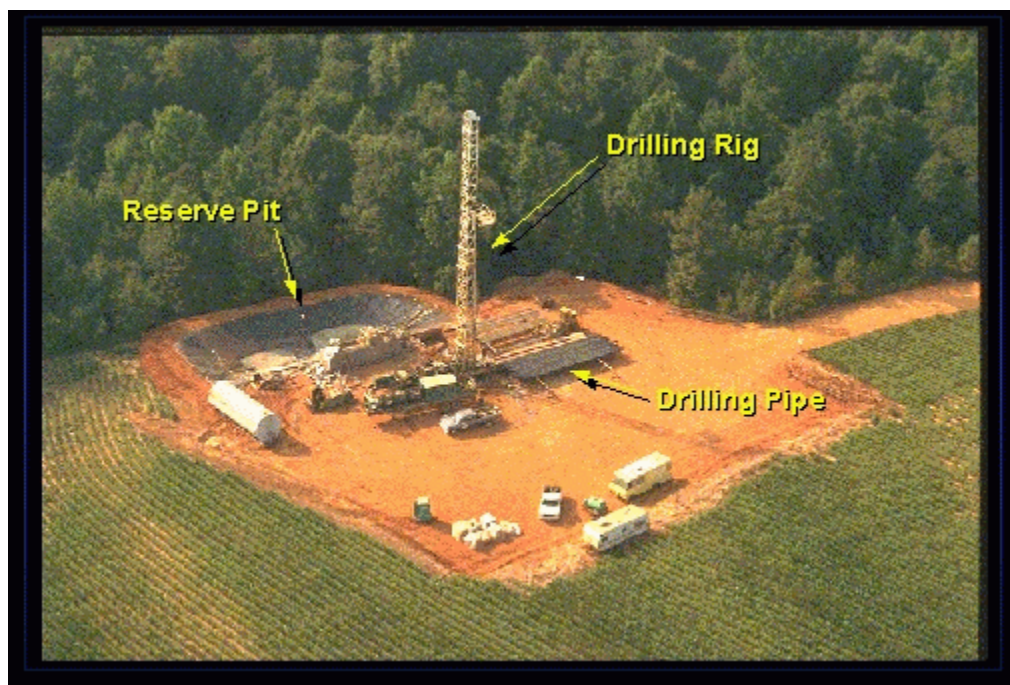
Montana Chapter AFS 2004 Summer Workshop

The MCAFS Summer Workshop on CBM development scheduled for July 27 and 28 has been canceled because of low enrollment. A small field tour may be scheduled for the fall.

We are pleased to announce that this year's Continuing Education Workshop of the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society will be held 27-28 July 2004 in the bull trout and cutthroat trout infested waters of the Kootenai and Flathead River drainages in Montana and British Columbia. Guests will enjoy a relaxing and productive (pounds of native fish!) stay in the picturesque town of Fernie, British Columbia (Canada), just a 2-hour drive from Kalispell, Montana. Lucky participants will be able to observe hundreds of spawning bull trout staging in pools of the Wigwam River, catch native westslope cutthroat trout in the Elk River (and a secret tributary that holds "fatty" cuttie) and, most importantly, continue their education by learning more about the recent proposal for coalbed methane (CBM) development close to the international border between the state of Montana and the Canadian province of British Columbia.

The CBM proposal includes plans to begin offering CBM leases, or tenures as they are known in Canada, in a potential CBM field about 18 miles north of the border. The proposed CBM lease is in headwater areas of the North Fork Flathead River, which flows from southeastern British Columbia into northern Montana, and the Wigwam and Elk Rivers, which converge and then flow into the Kootenai River and Lake Kootenai, Montana. The two major coal fields have the potential production of 7 Tcf of gas resource in place in the Elk Valley (Kootenay) and 12 Tcf in place in the Crows Nest coal field, which includes headwater areas of the North Fork Flathead River. Interestingly, there was a plan to develop a coalmine six miles north of the international border at Sage Creek, a tributary of the North Fork Flathead River, but the proposal was recently retracted.

Natural resource officials are concerned that CBM development will adversely impact water quality and transboundary fish and wildlife populations. The pristine, mountainous terrain is home to migratory bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout populations and a variety of terrestrial species including grizzly bears (that are listed as an endangered species), wolves (that are listed as an endangered species), mountain lions, wolverines, lynx, white-tailed deer, moose and elk.



The workshop format is as follows:

- Tuesday, July 27:

We will meet at FWP R1 Headquarters (490 North Meridian Road, Kalispell) at 10:00 am and then drive to Fernie, British Columbia (2 hours north). In the early afternoon, we will take a field tour to take a look at the fisheries resource and CBM issue in the Elk, Wigwam and Flathead. Speakers will include Steve Thompson (National Parks Conservation Association), Erin Sexton (CBM Researcher, University of Montana), Casey Brennan (East Kootenay Environmental Society), David Thomas (Fernie City Council) and others to be announced. Wapiti River Flyfishers will host a fishing field trip to “Fatty” Creek and Elk River in the late afternoon and evening (Canadian “alien” fishing license required). “Fatty” Creek provides exceptional highcountry angling for large cutthroat trout and it is within the coalbed methane

area. David Thomas stated, "industrialization of this landscape would be a substantial loss to angling in the Elk River system." That night we will camp at Fernie Provincial Park, so bring your sleeping bag and a tent.

- Wednesday, July 28:

Discussions on CBM will continue on Wednesday morning. We will return to Kalispell in the early afternoon, depending on people's interest in fishing the Elk River.

Our Summer Workshop will delve into the physical, biological, and political issues associated with CBM development. This is a unique opportunity to learn more about CBM development in a forested landscape that encompasses international borders and transboundary and threatened fish populations.

Total cost will be \$30 per person, which will include transportation; food (lunch and dinner on Tuesday, breakfast on Wednesday); and camping fees. Cost of the workshop does not include a one or two day fishing license fee.

To sign up or for more information about the 2004 MTAFS Summer Workshop please contact: Clint Muhlfeld, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks; cmuhlfeld@state.mt.us; (406) 751-4542 (phone).

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Chapter Notes

MCAFS 2004 Annual Meeting A Raging Success! Congratulations to Prez-Elect Clint Muhlfeld and his tremendous support crew on pulling off a record-breaking meeting at the Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish on February 3-6. The meeting featured Dave Rosgen and focused on "Theoretical and Practical Approaches for Watershed Restoration and Stream Habitat Improvement". The meeting was preceded by not one, but TWO Continuing Education sessions. The first was "Building Awareness of Our Fishery Management and Hatchery Heritage", organized by Continuing Education Committee Chair Wade Fredenberg and facilitated by representatives from the D.C. Booth National Historic Fish Hatchery. The second was "River Assessment and Stability Analysis for Enhancement and Restoration", facilitated by Dave Rosgen, Ron Pierce, and John Muhlfeld. Attendance at the latter shattered all previous records, with more than 100 registrants.

The main meeting was also a tremendous success, with more than 300 attendees (about 100 more than normal!). All sessions were very well attended and the beer was stout and plentiful. The "Outstanding Fisheries Professional" award was presented to Mike Enk, a former president of MCA. A special recognition award was presented to Bill Westover, a British Columbia fisheries biologist for his outstanding trans-boundary bull trout conservation activities. Bruce May, Brad Shepard, Weir Urie, and Steve Carson were awarded for their excellent westslope cutthroat trout range-wide assessments.

project. Wally McClure was recognized posthumously for his dedicated efforts to conserve fish resources in SW Montana. Pat and Blanche Flanagan received the landowner award for their effort to improve aquatic habitat in Grave Creek in NW Montana. Ron Haviland (Clark Fork Bass Angler Association) was honored for his efforts over 15 years to improve fisheries in his area.

The meeting was a huge financial success, due primarily to record-setting donations by sponsor record attendance at the Rosgen workshop and the general meeting. Dave Rosgen donated his time for the workshop, which was a wonderful contribution. As a result of all this, the Chapter earned about \$18,000, which will allow us to continue to fund good Resource Action Fund projects and establish a Wally McClure scholarship fund. Congratulations again to Clint and all those who helped make the Whitefish meeting a great success!

Go to the [Archive](#) for the 2004 Annual Meeting abstracts and more.

2006 Annual Meeting with Western Division. As you may recall, our Chapter volunteered to host the 2006 annual meeting with the Western Division in Montana. To begin the process, the ExCom (Pat, Steve, Clint, and Travis) traveled to Salt Lake in early March to attend the Western Division meeting, meet with the organizers, and take some notes. It was a great meeting. Leanne Raulson (Garcia and Associates – Bozeman) also attended. Leanne has volunteered to be the Arrangements Chair for the '06 meeting. A very important job, thanks Leanne! She will need lots of help!

The first order of business has been to determine time and place. The Western Division meeting is usually held concurrently with the annual meeting of the host Chapter(s). So, our annual meeting agenda will be folded into the overall meeting in '06. Leanne and Kate Walker scouted out the Universities (UM and MSU) as they are our main options for such a large meeting with many concurrent sessions. The two schools offered similar facilities and prices so it looks like we will be in Bozeman for two reasons. First, it is where Leanne lives. Second, Kate will be holding the '06 meeting next winter in the Missoula area and we didn't want to wear out our welcome there.

Next was to determine the time of the meeting. Some complications here. First, the 2005 Western Division meeting is going to be held in conjunction with the National AFS meeting in Anchorage in September (Clint has already volunteered to "oversee" that meeting...). This is about six months later than the normal early spring date. Consequently, we need to put some space between the September '05 meeting and our meeting in spring '06. Also, the Universities are pretty much unavailable until school gets out for the summer. Net result is that the meeting will be in mid-2006, about 3 months later than normal for our annual meeting. But, the weather should be nice and traveling! So get it on your calendars now, and plan on helping out! It should be a great time.

MSU Student Subunit Report. Andy Dux, President of the new MSU student subunit, recently submitted a report on their activities. The Subunit's bylaws were approved by the AFS Governing Board in March, so the formation process is complete. The subunit has 10 members and expects to increase membership next year. They have developed a logo and will begin fundraising later this year. The group has conducted trout redd counts and plan to help with lake trout netting in Yellowstone Lake this fall. The MSU subunit is well on its way now and thanked the Chapter for their financial support.

Newsletter Editor Needed!!

Despite our pleas for volunteers, nobody has stepped forward to take on the job that was vacated by Mark Kornick. This is an important job and there is great potential to spruce up our newsletter. So, if you think you would like to help out, please let us know!



Tag, You're It! If you haven't had a chance yet, check out the [latest](#) "Tag" article written by Camp (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation – Billings). It has some great reflections on Sue's colorful post and is a "must read". Thanks Sue for doing a great job! Next "Tag" will be from **Chris Guy** (M) and we can't wait to read his musings.

Species of Special Concern Committee Proposes New Ranking Procedure

In the past, ranking species of special concern has generated considerable debate at committee caucuses and MCAFS business meetings. In the past, rankings have been brought up for membership vote before many members had a chance to become familiar with the species. In order to ensure objective, scientifically based rankings for species of special concern, Bob Bramblett and Greg Hoffman, co-chairs of the Species of Special Concern Committee (SSCC) proposed a new framework for developing rankings, involving scientific expert peer review.

The proposed framework for the status expert and peer review follows:

- The SSCC co-chairs will form a voting subcommittee to consider each species
- The voting subcommittee will consist of 5 members
 - The two SSCC co-chairs
 - Two volunteer peer-reviewers with a good general knowledge of Montana fishes. Peer-reviewers may change from species to species and according to the volunteer's willingness to participate.
 - An expert in the species under consideration
- This 5 person subcommittee shall review all available data, the status paper if available and the NatureServe model. When a species review is initiated, a call for comments will be posted on the MCAFS web page.
- Based on the comments and all available sources of information, the 5 person subcommittee will make a status recommendation in the form of a written brief

summary of information or status review paper to EXCOM, who will then act on that recommendation by vote of approval. If EXCOM does not unanimously accept the recommendation of the subcommittee, then a vote by the membership should be considered. In either case, the recommendation of the SSCC and subcommittee should be posted on the MCAFS Website.

EXCOM and the co-chairs of the Species of Special Concern committee are in the process of reviewing this proposal and welcome your comments or perspectives. Call, write, or email your comment to any EXCOM or co-chair of your choice.

Latest Species of Special Concern paper: [Pearl Dace](#)

