



currents



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As another fishing season arrives, I find myself daydreaming of blankets of midges skittering across the water and blue wing olive wings sticking up off the surface with that slow nose sipping the unlucky ones off the top. The spring always brings the hope of another great fishing season.

We would like to thank all of our contributors and members who have supported us. Our membership grew three fold last year. With our growing numbers our voice is becoming stronger. We have an ambitious year planned for 2010 and appreciate your continued support.

Our Youth Adventure Week is planned for June 24-27 this year. This event was very popular last year and gave 12 teenage fishermen a great experience. We hope this year is even better. We would like to thank in advance all those who have donated their services and money to this program.

For those of you familiar with the Big Lips Tournament you know that catching carp with a fly rod is a wonderful diversion and challenge. This year, the Alliance will be hosting the carp tournament on July 7 on the reservoir. We challenge anyone who thinks this is beneath them to catch a carp on a fly, to give it a try and find they are worthy opponents. Great food and entertainment are planned for the evening.

I would like to thank all of our board members for their hard work in the past year. Our board members and advisors have been invaluable to us. Frank Johnson has worked tirelessly in bringing the Youth Adventure Week to the Bighorn. Doug Haacke is perhaps the most knowledgeable person on our

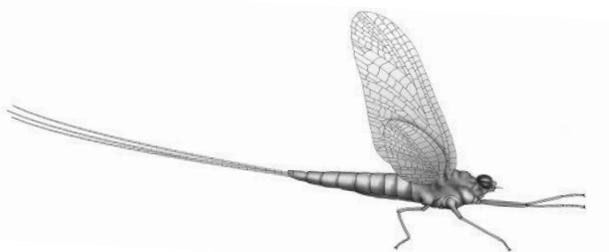
Board. Dennis Fischer has kept his nose to the grindstone in working towards the eradication of invasive plant species on the Bighorn. He has completed a lot of paperwork and legwork to allow us to begin cutting and spraying the tamarisk and Russian olive along the river. Dennis has built a great website for us, BighornRiverAlliance.com, check it out.

Again, thank you for your support. Without your membership and donations we wouldn't be able to fight for the preservation of this wonderful fishery and provide outreach programs to encourage more to enjoy this beautiful river.

Clint Krumm, President
Big Horn River Alliance

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| To be scheduled | River Clean up day |
| May 18 ---- | Annual meeting and election
See Article |
| June 13 ---- | Fun run at the Dam Benefit
For Youth Adventure |
| June 24 thru 28 ---- | Big Horn River Youth Adventure
See Article |
| July 7 ---- | "King of the Carp" Tournament
Or, as we like to call it," the John
Sindland cuddle with the carp day" |



PAYMENT OF DUES OR DONATIONS.....

In early 2009 the Board of Directors voted to have our dues all become due on May First each year. By doing this we can make our announcement regarding dues and donations only once each year and not have to send reminders every month to a small part of the membership.

Therefore we will be asking that those of you who have not paid dues since August 1, 2009 to pay at this time (May 2010) Enclosed is a reminder and a return envelope for those members whose dues are now due. Those of you who have paid since August 1, 2009 will not be billed until May 2011. (Unless, of course, you would like to send us a donation which is always appreciated.)

There are a number of members who haven't paid dues or made donations for several years. Those members will be dropped from our membership rolls unless there is a response to this mailing.

If there is any problem regarding the status of your membership please just send us some more money and the problem will be solved and we will all be happy. Or contact us and we will solve the problem.

In addition to the regular dues we always accept donations to directly benefit the Big Horn River Youth Adventure (see web site www.bighornriveralliance.org.) None of our regular dues income is used for that activity. All of the expenses for the Youth Adventure come from the nearly \$ 17,000.00 worth of goods and services donated by the Fort Smith angling community and from donations from members and friends directly earmarked 'Youth Adventure'.

The Big Horn River Alliance is making a difference in the continued well being of the river. We thank you all so very much for your continued support.

Thank you from the entire Board of Directors and the angling community of the Big Horn River valley.

ANNUAL MEETING OF ALLIANCE

This is to announce the annual meeting of the Big Horn River Alliance. The meeting date is Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at the Big Horn Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Montana. At that time we will elect Directors and Officers. All members are encouraged to attend.

BIG HORN RIVER ALLIANCE TO SPONSOR CARP TOURNAMENT

Alliance Board member John Sindland and member Mark Gervase have volunteered to be the organizing committee for this year's carping extravaganza.

The date for the tournament will be July 7th, 2010. Overall winners (most carp) will be presented a prizes and adulation. Other prizes will be given in several categories: Largest Carp, Best Lips, Best dressed anglers and others. All participants will be given a collector's edition tee shirt. A complete set of rules for the event is being prepared.

The tournament will be followed by a BBQ picnic. John has promised us top quality live music, casting games and other activities at the picnic.

The entry fee per team is \$40.00. Each angler will receive a Carp Tournament Tee shirt and ticket to the BBQ.

We welcome and encourage anglers from "out of town" to participate. We are looking for "KING OF THE CARP". A special challenge goes out to the Magic City Fly Fishers of Billings. We don't think there is a single "real" carp angler in the bunch.

More details will be available as the exciting day approaches.



Preserving, Protecting, Enhancing

Visit the Alliance Web Site

Dennis Fischer has produced a very fine and extensive web site for the Big Horn River Alliance. If you visit and read our web site you don't need this newsletter.

www.bighornriveralliance.org



PRESENTATION FROM BIOLOGISTS

Ken Frazer, Regional Fisheries Manager and Mike Ruggles, Fisheries Biologist for the Bighorn River made a presentation to the Alliance March 16, 2010. The meeting was open to the public and attended by a good number of Fort Smith residents as well as visiting anglers.

If we have water (more on that later) we have "lots of good potential for larger fish this year". The fish census taken during the early summer of 2009 was difficult as the water flow changed dramatically between the initial shocking efforts and the recapture effort. At flows of 12,000 cfs it is difficult to capture enough fish to determine accurate populations, as the fish move so much and water depths increase protecting the fish. Also, it was nearly six weeks between shocking runs and recapture was further complicated because fins clipped to denote capture grew back by the time recapture occurred.

However, Mike and Ken feel that this year will be a good one for the anglers. Preliminary and incomplete estimates of 2,000 Brown Trout and 3,000 Rainbow Trout per mile in the 13"-14" and larger range bodes well for anglers.

A good deal of the discussion was centered on river flows. As you know, we experienced low flows below 2,000 cfs and high flows approaching 13,000 cfs during 2009. You might say it was a roller coaster year if you will pardon the pun. The result is that at low flows the fishery suffers and at reasonably high flows the fishery thrives. Extreme high water flows as we experienced during June 2009 caused a good amount of stream bank erosion, flooding and damage to some property along the river.

2010 will be an interesting year to say the least. Snow Pack in the drainage is very low (64% of average March 17th) and is predicted to perhaps be the lowest snow pack in history. If there is an up-side it's the fact that Bighorn Lake is full to near capacity and a positive factor only if you believe the low runoff projections. If we get major weather events over the next three months we may again face high river releases.

At this time the Bureau of Reclamation projects flows of 2,000 cfs for the remainder of the year. We will work hard to see that flows are not reduced to the point of jeopardizing a single trout.

The Board of Directors of the Alliance very much appreciated having Ken and Mike make their presentation as did the other attendees. Their presence is always educational and interesting. The Bighorn River is fortunate to have these guys who truly care about the well being of the trout and care about the river. They, like the Alliance, Friends of Bighorn River and

the Magic City Fly Fishers of Billings are making and impact on the management of the flows and therefore impacting the quality our angling experience.

THE BIG HORN RIVER ALLIANCE WILL BE SPONSORING AND PRODUCING BIG HORN YOUTH ADVENTURE 2010

The dates for 2010 will be June 24 through 27 with a travel day before and after. This Adventure will include four days of guided fishing with experienced, professional Big Horn River guides and four two-hour sessions at the tying vise being taught by professional fly tiers. We are expanding the program to include more evening activities such as 'You-row-it Carp Tourney', Casting Games, Fly Tying Games and other activities.

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS: Any youth, male or female, ages 14 thru 18. All applicants must: 'KIND OF' know how to fly fish and 'KIND OF' know how to tie flies. We are seeking youngsters who want to experience the joy of a 'big time' fly fishing adventure and are willing to return home to mentor other young people and encourage others to take part in the great activity of fly fishing. All meals, lodging, airport shuttles and guides will be provided free of charge. Air transportation to Billings or transportation directly to Fort Smith must be secured by the participant's parents, guardian or fly fishing club.

Of course, the Alliance would welcome any donations specifically earmarked for the Youth Adventure. We do have a small amount of expense involved in this project.

For more information and applications please contact:

Frank Johnson,

Email: bghrnhkl@wavecom.net

For more information visit the Big Horn River Alliance web site at:

www.bighornriveralliance.org

There is a complete report on the 2009 Adventure as well as many pictures, and comments from the kids and their parents. Thanks for your interest.



Preserving, Protecting, Enhancing

BIG HORN RIVER RELEASES UPDATE

The inflow forecast continues to deteriorate for not only the Bighorn Basin, but the entire state of Montana and most of the region. At the time of this writing, inflow forecast are 65% of average, and snowpack right around 66%. This year is shaping up to have the worst snow packs ever, and is currently the fifth worst on record. The little bit of good news is that Bighorn Lake is only about 10 feet from being full, so we're entering this drought period with good lake storage

At the end of February, I met with biologists from FWP several times to discuss what options might be best for the fishery. It was decided that with the overly conservative management style so typical of (Montana Area Office of Reclamation) Dan Jewell's management of the reservoir, it would be wise to reduce flows now and preempt Dan from dropping flows below 2,000cfs as he has done in the past. Ken Frazer, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Region 5 Fisheries Manager said, "To me it is more important to ensure that river flows remain at or above this flow level [2,000cfs] through the spring and summer rather than dictate exactly when reductions should be made. Potential impacts to the fishery and food production on the river will be essentially the same if flows are reduced to their lowest level tomorrow or in 3 weeks so it is more important to plan for long term flows rather than look at short term gains." Engineers at Reclamation seems fairly confident should the forecast come to fruition (which it rarely does), they have good chance of maintaining 2,000cfs throughout the spring, summer and early fall. Most importantly, for the first time since the battle for river releases began four years ago, Reclamation has proposed an operating plan that does not require the lake to fill. While this seems like a small concession, it is something of a small victory for river advocates, who have seen river releases drop to bare minimum levels for no other conceivable purpose than to fill the reservoir, when a lake elevation several feet lower would have met all stakeholder requirements.

It is still early in the year, and heavy snows and rains could still be on their way. Any additional snowpack and/or precipitation that might occur will be a blessing and a bounty rolled up together. The last several years has seen good precipitation coming late in the spring, and in more than one instance, late enough to cause Dan Jewell to make drastic cuts to river releases .

River advocates realize the outlook for inflows this year is bleak, and accept flow reductions at this time. However, further cuts below 2,000cfs will be met with nothing short of outrage without a significant degradation in AND a significant reduction in lake storage.

By Doug Haacke, March 9, 2010

Russian-Olive and Salt Cedar or Tamarisk want to stop you from walking the riverbanks and is stealing thousands of acre feet of the river's flow every season without permission! We are losing our fishing access and huge amounts of river water to these invasive plant species!

Russian-Olive can interfere with natural plant succession, nutrient cycling, and tax water reserves. Although Russian-Olive provides a plentiful source of edible fruits for birds, ecologists have found that bird species richness is actually higher in riparian areas dominated by native vegetation. Russian-Olive has become so thick along the river that side channels are choked off and banks have become thorny barriers. Salt Cedar out-competes desirable vegetation and the accumulation of its leaf litter increases the salinity of the surface soils which stops the growth of native plants and provides low wildlife habitat value. Salt Cedar grows in dense stands that widen flood plains and increases sediment deposition by clogging stream channels. Most importantly, Salt Cedar steals water by transpiring it at the rate of 200-300 gallons a day for a mature plant. The Bighorn River flow has been reduced dramatically by this invader.

The Bighorn River Alliance has organized an "invasive species" eradication program and is working with Federal, State, County and Tribal officials to address the issue. Last fall, an inventory of the invaders was made from the Afterbay to the Three Mile Access. A map and an estimate of the number of acres affected were produced and the Alliance plans to begin removal projects this spring. The Alliance has secured a pesticide spraying license with a right of way endorsement to be sure that all safety and legal requirements are followed. Another project in the planning stage is to eradicate these species on the Big Horn River Access property. With the cooperation of the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks the Alliance will provide manpower and will provide the funding for rental equipment. Also, The Yellowstone River Conservation District Council is proposing to work with the Alliance to complete an invasive species eradication demonstration project on the Bighorn River.

Removing Russian-Olive and Salt Cedar will be a fight that will last years before success can be claimed but a fight that we cannot walk away from. All persons that enjoy the river have a personal stake in its success and should feel empowered to make a difference! Contact the Alliance to learn what you might do to help and make a donation to the cause!

Dennis Fischer