

MADISON RIVER currents

WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Angler Attitudes: AWARENESS OR APATHY?

BY RICHARD LESSNER, PH.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

An interesting study crossed my desk recently, an article from the journal *Fisheries Management and Ecology*. The study, "Angler awareness of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) and potential transport mechanisms," focused on the role of anglers in transporting aquatic nuisance species -- nasty critters like rock snot (*Didymo*) and whirling disease -- from one watershed to another. The study was conducted in southwest Montana on several rivers including the Madison.

The results showed that anglers are generally aware of the dangers posed by ANS and most have heard about the worst of the alien invaders. Fewer anglers take precautions to inspect, clean and dry their gear -- especially boats and felt-soled wading boots -- when they travel from one river system to another, potentially moving the nasty beasts from infested to uninfested waters. Fifty-one percent of resident anglers and 49 percent of non-resident anglers rarely or never clean their equipment between watersheds. Because anglers come from all over the U.S. to southwest Montana to fish our famous streams, often moving daily among river systems and then traveling great distances back to their homes, we fishermen unwittingly provide convenient transport for aquatic hitchhikers.

But the finding that most anglers only rarely if ever clean their waders and boots was not the most surprising statistic in the study. Instead, this factoid jumped right off the page: Of 487 anglers surveyed, only 39 percent were active members of any conservation organization.

Fewer than four in 10 of the anglers surveyed were active members of Trout Unlimited, the Federation of Fly Fishers, or the Madison River Foundation. I found this remarkable. I've been a member of TU for 30 years, ever since I first took up the fly fishing addiction. I always figured that all fly fishers understood that the pursuit of our obsession required the conservation of our cold water fisheries; that without clean, cold rivers and streams we wouldn't have any fish and, hence, no fishing, and that we need organizations devoted to protecting and preserving these precious resources.

It's probably fair to assume that the anglers surveyed here on the Madison and other rivers of southwest Montana are among the most dedicated, the most fanatical. And yet only four in 10 of these die-hards support organizations working to conserve the very resource upon which their fishing adventures depend. Astonishing . . . and disheartening.

A lot more anglers need to get involved in conservation efforts, if for no other reason than their own self-interest in preserving the waters that provide their pastime. The Madison River Foundation is not an angling organization. We have many members who do not fish at all, but who understand the need for an organization working to safeguard the Madison ecosystem. But anglers are an important core constituency. More of them should become involved in such conservation organizations as TU and the Foundation.



This beautiful photo of the West Fork of the Madison was taken by Foundation member John White of McAllister, MT. You also may have enjoyed John's photo study of the Ennis in the Madison Fly Fishing Festival we featured in the Fall 2009 edition of *Madison River Currents*.

*short casts***MADISON WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED**

The Foundation has teamed up with the Madison Conservation District and the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group to create the Madison Watershed Partnership. Former MRF director and board member Sunni Heikes-Knapton has been hired as the first Madison Watershed Coordinator.



Heikes-Knapton and her daughter, Maida, on the banks of the Madison River

The basic objective of the Partnership is to coordinate the activities of the various government and non-governmental agencies and organizations that focus on the Madison watershed, create strategic partnerships, avoid duplication, and multiply our mutual strengths to protect and preserve our natural resources. The Partnership is up and running, meeting regularly, and already planning some exciting conservation projects for the coming year.

QUAKE LAKE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT GRANTED PRELIMINARY PERMIT

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has issued a preliminary permit to Hydrodynamics Inc. of Bozeman to pursue a license to construct a hydroelectric generating facility on the Madison River below Quake Lake. The permit only allows the applicant to preserve the right of first priority in applying for a license for the project being proposed. It allows the applicant to study the feasibility of the project and investigate the technical aspects and environmental impacts of the proposal. Hydrodynamics originally applied for a permit in April 2009.

The Foundation filed a motion in August 2009 to intervene in the project and along with other organizations questioned the geological stability of the project area at the landslide that dammed the Madison and created Quake Lake, as well as impacts on the trout fishery, recreation on the river, cultural features, and the area's abundant wildlife. In granting the preliminary permit FERC said the concerns raised by the Foundation are premature. These issues, FERC says, will be addressed during the licensing process. The preliminary permit is valid for 36 months.

The proposed project would entail construction of a concrete intake structure on top of the landslide at Quake Lake, a 3,200-foot-long penstock, a powerhouse and other buildings on the Madison, and a new 4-mile-long high-power transmission line along U.S. Highway 287. The Foundation will continue to monitor this proposed project and will file comments expressing our concerns at the appropriate time and place in the licensing process. The concerns detailed in our Motion to Intervene, we believe, are valid and raise serious questions about the feasibility of the project at this location on the Madison River.

MADISON RIVER WEED MAPPING

The Foundation has partnered with the Center for Aquatic Nuisance Species in Livingston, MT, Madison-Gallatin Trout Unlimited, the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group, and the Madison Conservation District to undertake a project to map noxious weeds along the Madison River. The mapping is scheduled for July 27th. Volunteers in boats will use GPS units to map noxious weeds along the river from Hebgen Lake to Three Forks. Watch for details as the season progresses. If you own a drift boat and would be willing to help, we'll be conducting a training session prior to the actual day of mapping. Noxious weeds are not just a problem for farmers and ranchers. Invasive species can have a negative impact on fisheries as well, crowding out native plants, damaging riparian vegetation, and harming water quality.

FOUNDATION ENDORSES TESTER'S FOREST JOBS & RECREATION ACT

The Foundation has endorsed S. 1470, the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act, sponsored by Montana's Sen. Jon Tester. A letter of support to Sen. Tester cited the legislation's addition of new wilderness areas on the Madison River watershed and the financial resources the act would make available from timber sales for conservation projects.

The Foundation's Board of Directors made the decision to support Sen. Tester's bill after long and careful consideration. The bill enjoys support from a wide range of conservation and sporting groups, including Trout Unlimited, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and the Montana Wilderness Association. The Madison River Foundation is pleased to lend its voice to this coalition in support of this important legislation.

The bill would directly benefit the Madison watershed. Adding 18,950 acres of wilderness designation to the Lee Metcalf Wilderness will help protect headwater tributaries of the Madison, some of which contain remnant populations of native westslope cutthroat trout. The stewardship contracts under which limited timber sales would be allowed would benefit the forest by removing insect-killed trees, thereby reducing fire hazards, while making money available for such projects as replacing culverts that block fish passage, removing old roads that adversely impact streams, and improving trails and campgrounds.

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Imported aquatic nuisance species (ANS) can have a disastrous impact on a trout fishery. This spring the Foundation will be distributing educational flyers on how to stop the spread of ANS in fly shops, lodges, hotels, and other locations from West Yellowstone to Ennis. This is a project of the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee's Task force on Aquatic Nuisance Species. The Foundation is a member of the task force that includes local, state and federal agencies and non-profit groups from the three-state Greater Yellowstone area. Such ANS invaders as whirling disease, New Zealand mud snails, Didymo (rock snot) algae, and others can devastate native fish habitats. Anglers and boaters are primary agents in moving ANS among watersheds. The task force also is producing a handy guidebook to ANS that should be available this spring to help in the identification of these unwanted pests. The Foundation and the task force partners are working hard to stop aquatic hitchhikers! For more information call 1-800-StopANS.

FOUNDATION BECOMES MAJOR SPONSOR OF INTERNATIONAL WILD TROUT SYMPOSIUM

The Tenth International Wild Trout Symposium will be held September 27-30 in West Yellowstone, MT. The event brings together biologists, fisheries managers, scholars and researchers from all over the world. The Foundation Board of Directors has voted to award a \$3,000 grant to the symposium to support scientific research into the global effort to protect, preserve and enhance the world's wild trout populations. The symposium offers scientists working in the field of trout conservation the opportunity to share their research with their peers from all over the world. Whether it's combating invasive species such as whirling disease that threatens trout populations or genetic studies to preserve native species, the symposium represents the basic scientific research required for such endeavors. The Foundation is proud to be associated with this prestigious gathering as a major sponsor.

Storrs Bishop
President
Madison River Foundation

Dear Storrs,

Annie and I would like to thank you and the Madison River Foundation for honoring us with your 2009 Friend of the Madison Award. We would very much like to have been at the gala to receive the award in person, but as you know we had a previous commitment in England that prevented us from being there. We are greatly honored by the award and we love the trout! We will certainly display him proudly in our home.

I think it is very easy for anyone who has ever seen the Madison Valley to be a "Friend of the Madison." We are still relative newcomers to the Valley and know many families have called the Valley their home for generations. It is gratifying that so many newcomers and long-time residents alike have recognized the importance of preserving the Valley's unique beauty and character and have joined in the preservation efforts. While we are pleased to have been able to help in the preservation effort, we know that it is only through organizations like the Madison River Foundation that so much has been accomplished.

It was only fitting that Marina [Smith] accepted your award on our behalf. Since we bought our ranch she has been our guide and inspiration in our conservation efforts. There is no one who cares for the Madison Valley more than she does.

Thank you again for honoring us with your award. We very much appreciate the work the Madison River Foundation does and look forward to attending [this year's] gala.

Sincerely,
Bob Graham
Cameron, MT & Houston, TX

MORTALITY PLAY

How you play and land a fish is a matter of life and death.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife has developed a program to help anglers better understand the causes of mortality in fish that have been caught and released. The variables that the DOW considered include water temperature, the length of fight, and the amount of time the fish was kept out of the water. (The control fish was an 18-inch trout.) There was no distinction made between lures and flies, and the chart below applies only for "superficially hooked" fish. If the hook is swallowed or buried in the gills, the chances that the fish will die certainly increase, and statistics for fish caught with bait showed significantly higher mortality.

What's clear from the numbers below is that the faster you land a fish, the better. And leaving the fish in the water while you unhook it can double its chances of survival. These rules become increasingly important as water temperature rises.

Water Temp (in degrees)	Playing Time (in minutes)	Time out of Water (in minutes)	Probability of Death
60	4	1½	10%
70	4	1½	17%
60	2	1	5%
70	2	1	8%
60	2	0	3%
70	2	0	5%
60	4	0	5%

Reprinted from American Angler with permission.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & DONATION FORM

YES, I want to invest in the future of the Madison River.

preserve • protect • enhance



PO Box 1527
Ennis, MT 59729
mrfinfo@3rivers.net

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- Lifetime \$1000
- Royal Wulff \$100
- Stonefly \$50
- Caddis \$25

TOTAL \$ _____

MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

FULL NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP CODE

PHONE NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

CHECK ENCLOSED (payable to MRF)

CHARGE MY: AM EX VISA MC DISCOVER

ACCT # _____ / _____
EXP DATE

SIGNATURE

join by phone 406.682.3148
apply online www.madisonriverfoundation.org



PO Box 1527
Ennis, MT 59729

OFFICE
222 Main Street, Suite 1H
Ennis, MT
406-682-3148
mrinfo@3rivers.net
www.madisonriverfoundation.org

OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Storrs Bishop, President
David Bricker, Secretary
Dennis Aigner, Treasurer

Joe Dilschneider, Director
Nancy DiMeola, Director
Mike Lum, Director
Jeff Montag, Director
Sherri Shows, Director

STAFF

Executive Director
Richard Lessner, Ph.D.

Assistant Treasurer
Diane Bricker

CREDITS

Front Cover Photo - Ken Hall, Bearfeather Studio, Ennis, MT
Design - Abby Thomas, Random Acts of Creativity, Virginia City, MT

2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 29TH-31ST

Great Rockies Sports Show, Bozeman

FEBRUARY 15TH

Board of Directors Meeting

MAY 17TH

Board of Directors Meeting

JUNE 25TH

Annual Membership Meeting

JUNE 25TH

"Guardians of the River" Gala Banquet

JULY 27TH

Madison River Noxious Weed Mapping

SEPTEMBER 3RD-4TH

Ennis on the Madison Fly Fishing Festival

SEPTEMBER 27TH-30TH

10th International Wild Trout Symposium,
West Yellowstone

DECEMBER 13TH

Board of Directors Meeting

MADISON RIVER
-FOUNDATION-

PO BOX 1527
ENNIS, MT 59729

PRSR STD
US Postage
PAID
Ennis, MT
Permit #291