

# BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE



## A N N U A L R E P O R T

**2002**

*Photo by Teri Garrison*

### ***Darrell Sall Memorial Award***

*In October 2002, we conducted a Tour for the Board and the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, ending with a dinner awards ceremony at the H2O Ranch where Hank Goetz received the "Darrell Sall Memorial Award" in recognition his outstanding contribution to the Blackfoot Challenge and its mission to protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Blackfoot River Valley.*



*Land Lindbergh with his best buddy Hank Goetz*

*The Blackfoot Challenge is a private nonprofit organization whose mission since 1993 is to protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Blackfoot River Valley.*

#### Officers & Board

**Jim Stone**, Chairman  
PO Box 148  
Ovando, MT  
793-5830  
rsranch@blackfoot.net

**Greg Neudecker**, V. Chair  
USFWS

**Nancy Anderson**, Secretary  
BLM

**Dave Cochran**, Treasurer  
Landowner

**Land Lindbergh**, Officer  
Landowner

**Daina Bambe**, USFS

**Andy Erickson**, Landowner

**Racene Friede**, Blackfoot  
Telephone

**Denny Iverson**, Landowner

**Tony Liane**, DNRC

**Mack Long**, FWP

**Jeff McNally**, Rocky Mt. Elk  
Foundation

**Denny Sigars**, Plum Creek  
Timber

**Dave Streufert**, Powell  
County Extension

#### Staff

Tina Bernd-Cohen  
Executive Director  
PO Box 563  
Helena, MT 59624  
(ph)442-4002 (fax)442-4114  
blkfootchallenge@aol.com

#### Web Sites

HomePage: [www.r6.fws.gov/pfw/montana/mt6.htm](http://www.r6.fws.gov/pfw/montana/mt6.htm)

Adopt-A-Trout:  
<http://fwp.state.mt.us/adoptat trout/>

## BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE ANNUAL REPORT 2002

### *From the Chairman, Jim Stone*

For those of you still counting the years (let's hope that is most of you) we are celebrating a ten-year milestone with the Blackfoot Challenge. That is an amazing statistic for me, but as you read this annual report you will begin to comprehend how productive this past year has been, and how far we have come in that short amount of time.

As I am reminded of the conflicts that we see in this world everyday, I am humbled by the fact that we have chosen a direction that is notably more productive and holds true to a vision; people are the difference. This is a world of special interest, political wrestling, and unprincipled compromise affecting how we will leave this land for future generations. We could become complacent and let over-bearing technocrats dictate to this watershed what their visions and aspirations would be. I think we have spoken to that, and we have embarked on a much healthier road. This will never be an issue that can be solved, but we can shape it within the framework of this watershed to accomplish our goals for the next ten, twenty years. As landowners and managers we have to show by example. This is our legacy. We should be proud of where we have been; and more importantly where we choose to go.

These next ten years will be very important for all of us to become involved, join a community organization, be pro-active in representation of our business and communities, and commit to our effort of watershed planning. The Challenge speaks from the landowners in this valley. If we do not speak-up and be heard, then someone else will speak for us.

The Blackfoot Challenge is very appreciative of all the support we have had and we look forward to having more of you become involved. My door is always open. Please don't hesitate to call on issues that you feel are important. Remember: "better communities are built through communication."



### Board and Committees

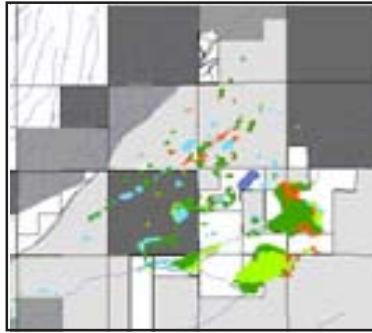
The Blackfoot Challenge Board of Directors met monthly to foster communication, coordinate activities and help resolve issues and conflicts. Priority topics this year included conservation strategies, headwaters water quality/TMDLs for metals and sediments, weed management, water conservation, and education.

Active Committees of the Blackfoot Challenge in 2002 include:

- Executive, Finance & Planning
- Conservation Strategies
- Drought & Water Conservation
- Education
- Habitat, Water Quality & Restoration
- Lewis & Clark
- Recreation
- Teacher Steering
- Weed Steering
- Wildlife

### Conservation Strategies, Greg Neudecker, Chair

The Blackfoot Conservation Strategies Committee provides a quarterly forum for information exchanges on conservation work in the Blackfoot. In 2002 we took a giant step forward with some major joint venture projects. The Blackfoot Challenge received a \$1 million wetlands conservation grant.



foot Watershed.

*Middle Blackfoot Wetlands Map*

We made great progress towards a community-based “disposition and management strategy” for the buy-out of almost a third of the Plum Creek Timber Company lands in the Blackfoot, hosting community meetings attended by over 130 citizens to identify community values of these lands for access, recreation, grazing, timber, other natural resource values. We have expanded community involvement on the Committee and continue work on a Blackfoot Conservation Plan.

With help from USFWS, the National Wetlands Inventory mapping project is progressing. We developed a watershed-wide bird list. At present the partnership has easements conservation activities on over 85,000 acres of private lands in the Blackfoot. Our common goal is to maintain intact large landscapes to protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Black-

foot Watershed. We will continue to seek funding opportunities to better coordinate stewardship activities and partner on conservation strategies. And, we have a very full plate as we move into 2003.

### **Education Committee, Racene Friede, Chair**

2002 offered many exciting opportunities for Blackfoot teachers through the Blackfoot Challenge. The Teacher Summit on February 25 allowed teachers from all over the watershed to share watershed education projects they have led at their own schools, and to learn about new opportunities for natural resource education. A series of 3 GIS/GPS workshops provided through the EOS Center at UM were well attended by watershed teachers. Many teachers participated in the Adopt-A-Trout program this year, with a teacher workshop, field trips, and web-based monitoring of fish movements.

Check Website: <http://fwp.state.mt.us/adoptatrout/>.



*WET Teachers examine wetlands restoration site with Greg Neudecker of USFWS*

Youth Field Day 2002 unfortunately was cancelled due to a late season snowstorm. But the weather was plenty warm for the Project WET Tour in June and July, when participating teachers learned about place-based education, wetland functions and values, plant identification, and wetland birds and bird research at Seeley Lake, enjoying a canoe trip down the Clearwater Canoe Trail and Seeley Lake.



*Lincoln teacher releases songbird at WET Tour*

The valuable Teacher Steering Committee met throughout the year to advise the Challenge on issues important to schools. Many thanks to those teachers who have participated in this committee and to all of you hardworking teachers who do so much for students in the Blackfoot Watershed.

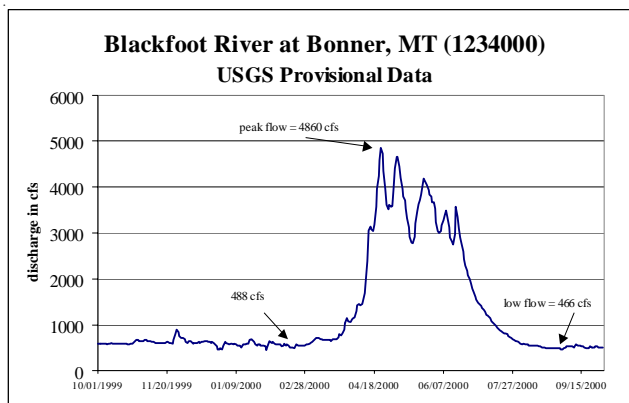
With funding from Mary Bradshaw, we developed an outdoor learning program for the H2O ranch, property in Helmsville that was donated to USFWS in 2000 as a Waterfowl Production Area.

We hosted over 10 tours in the Blackfoot. We reached about 400 adults through meetings, workshops, tours, training and other education outreach efforts in 2002. We presented our power point slide show at meetings, workshops and conferences, distributed our brochure and made presentations to agency and non-profit organizations throughout Montana.

Elaine Caton joined the Blackfoot Challenge as our Education Coordinator to help us implement our year-round Blackfoot Watershed Education Program. Thanks to funding support from the Chutney Foundation, USFWS, FWP, DNRC, EPA and private donations, as well as volunteer services provided by our Board members and partners, education will remain a priority activity.

**Drought and Water Conservation Committee,**  
*Mike McLane, Field Staff to Committee*

In 2002 the Drought Committee met, tracked snowpack and flow forecasts, and evaluated whether to call for emergency drought response. Luckily stream flows did not fall below 700 cfs at the Bonner USGS stream gage until late August. Though emergency drought plans for individual water right holders and recreationists were not requested, we provided outreach and education through posters at local post offices and businesses showing low flow forecasts, newspaper articles and press releases, as well as 100 flyers and three separate mailings to 73 drought plan participants. It is evident that ten-years of stream restoration work in the Blackfoot has reduced our vulnerability in low flow periods.



*NCAT Soil Moisture Probe Installed in Blackfoot*  
Conservation Strategy to benefit irrigators, other water users as well as fisheries in the Blackfoot. Strategies include ditch lining projects, habitat improvements, and instream flow leases to guide our efforts in non-drought years.

The Drought Committee sponsored year-two of a soil moisture probe pilot project involving twelve large irrigators in the Blackfoot and the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) to study irrigation usage and assess over-watering and possible efficiencies based on crop, rotation, and soil. Vicki Lynn from NCAT provided technical support. In 2002, 12 ranches (including the Bandy Research Ranch), one golf course, 14 fields, and about 1500 acres were part of the project. Irrigation system types included 13 pivot systems, 1 wheel line and the underground sprinkler system at the golf course. Cooperators grew alfalfa hay, grass hay, pasture, and turf.

Thanks to a Watershed Assistance Grant from DNRC, we made progress in developing a Long-Term Water

**Habitat, Water Quality and Restoration Committee,**  
*Tina Bernd-Cohen, Ex. Director & Project Coordinator*

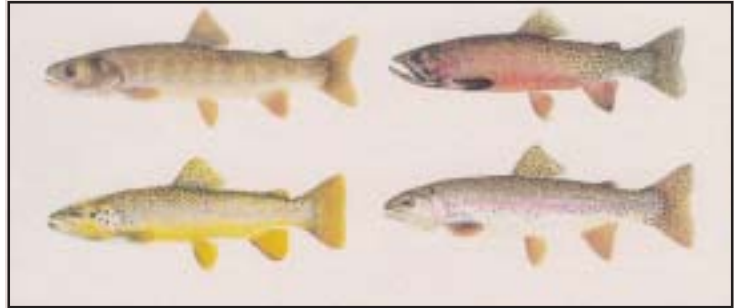
The Blackfoot Challenge, thanks to its Habitat and Water Quality Restoration Committee, spent countless hours working with its scientific team, consultant, and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to develop metals and sediment water quality restoration plans in the Blackfoot Headwaters. This is part of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Planning required in Montana under a federal court order to clean up degraded streams. The Challenge agreed to lead the restoration planning process in cooperation with its partners, conservation districts, the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Plum Creek Timber, US Forest Service, DEQ, FWP, and others. The metals TMDL went to public comment and is available at the DEQ Website: <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/ppa/mdm/tmdl/tmdlPublicComments.asp> The sediment *Phase 1 Assessment Report* can be viewed on the NRIS website: <http://nris.state.mt.us/specialproj/blackfootwatershed/upper%20blackfoot%20report%20final.pdf>



*Blackfoot physical assessment survey work*

A Monitoring Work Group was formed to address data needs for the TMDL, as well as track the long-term health of the watershed, and document how Blackfoot restoration projects achieve water quality and habitat health objectives. Fish, Wildlife and Parks continued its monitoring of fisheries health in the Blackfoot, as a

cornerstone activity and barometer of the health of the watershed. FWP also produced stream prioritization report that will guide future restoration work on 83 impaired tributaries of the Blackfoot. The Blackfoot Challenge has continued its partnership activities with the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited in 2002, by securing and passing-through funds for stream restoration projects in the Blackfoot. We are looking forward to sustaining this excellent partnership.



**Lewis and Clark Committee, David Cochran, Chair**

The Committee continued its efforts to prepare for anticipated tourists wanting to travel along the Lewis & Clark Trail during the Bicentennial years. In the Blackfoot, this “River by the road to the Buffalo” runs along



the well-worn Native American trail up the Blackfoot River and across the Continental divide to the Missouri River. The Committee serves as the grass-roots organization serving as a clearinghouse and partnership on L&C opportunities. We are working on 3 gateway kiosks and a driving map through the Blackfoot. On October we celebrated the dedication of the first Lewis & Clark Gateway Kiosk at Bonner.

*Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Gateway Interpretive Kiosk at Bonner, Montana*

**Recreational Steering Committee, Land Lindbergh, Member**

Members of the Challenge sit on the Blackfoot River Recreational Steering Committee that advises Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks on river recreation management and ways to protect the natural resources and quality of the recreational experience on the river. In 2002, controversy over a traditional public access site at Scotty Brown Bridge was successfully resolved with the help of key local landowners. A recreational use survey was conducted in the summer of 2002 to quantify increased recreational river use. The group participated in two Weed Pulls to raise public awareness about the need for river stewardship and river etiquette.

The Committee has been waiting for the Statewide River Recreation Management Committee to complete its policy recommendations to the F&W Commission. The Commission’s response to those efforts will be all-determining as to where things go from here. ... and will certainly be a very critical junction for this on-going process of managing recreational river uses on the Blackfoot. While waiting on the Statewide Management Committee for policy direction, the local group has concentrated on local access point improvement where necessary to protect the resource and provide a better recreation experience for the public.



*Summer fun on the Blackfoot River*

**Weed Steering Committee- Jim Stone, Chair**

In 2002, the Blackfoot Challenge continued its leadership role in education and management of noxious weeds in the Blackfoot Valley. The Weed Steering Committee guides this effort and includes landowners, county, state and federal agencies, and university researchers. About 80 people attended the annual weed meeting in February including Weed Management Area leaders, Powell, Missoula, and Lewis & Clark County weed coordinators and extension agents, federal agency staff (BLM, USFS), state agency staff (FWP, SNRC), Plum Creek Timber, MSU staff and the Blackfoot Challenge members. This meeting re-capped 2001 accomplishments and set the 2002 work plan.



*Blackfoot Challenge Weed Tour to MSU 2002*

The Blackfoot Challenge and its weed partners conducted their annual education efforts including training and workshops on *dirty dozen*, *new invaders*, *weeds and wildfires*, *leave no weeds*, and *monitoring biocontrol agents*. We sponsored weed education activities including two Weeds Pulls/River Cleanup Days at Russell Gates and a Weed Tour to MSU to learn about the latest techniques in the war against weeds.

During the summer, chemical weed control was undertaken in the nine WMAs: Middle Blackfoot, North Fork, Greenough, Douglas Creek, Nevada Creek, River Junction, Woodworth, Potomac, and Double Arrow on private, state and federally managed lands. Over 100 individual landowners implemented weed management on their lands. Annual cost-share funding came from the MT Noxious Weed Trust Fund. The Challenge, with foundation funds and grants, sponsored several projects in 2002. For a second year, though the Blackfoot River Leafy Spurge Cooperative Project, sites along 40 miles of the Blackfoot were sprayed from the water's edge to the high water mark to eliminate seed production on infested sites.



*Nevada Creek 4-H Club Weed Pull*

We completed our successful Pulling Together grant. 4-H Clubs and schools in the town centers of Greenough, Seeley Lake, Ovando, Helmville, Elliston, and Deer Lodge used GIS/GIS mapping technology to encourage urban landowners to begin noxious weed control in town, some for the first time. In addition to hand pulling, biocontrol was implemented at these town centers.

Weed management area signs were installed throughout the Blackfoot letting folks know about our weed management work. The Helmville School GIS/GPS weed mapping/monitoring demonstration project got a second year under its belt, serving as a model for applied GIS/GPS technology. The Mannix Bros. completed their third and final year of goat grazing trials for containment of spotted knapweed using 600 'herded' goats over the summer. The Blackfoot Challenge sponsored a Montana State University biological weed control project for yellow toadflax and dalmatian toadflax. The War on Weeds continues.

Weed management area signs were installed throughout the Blackfoot letting folks know about our weed management work. The Helmville School GIS/GPS weed mapping/monitoring demonstration

**Wildlife Committee, Greg Neudecker, Chair**

The Wildlife Committee was created in 2002 to exchange information and coordinate efforts related to management of wildlife and human interactions in the Blackfoot. A landowner advisory group of seven local landowners or land managers throughout the valley advise on major issues and guide us on solving conflicts. We started a preventative management program of fencing calving and lambing yards with high tensile electric fences to keep predators like Grizzly bears and wolves out of these areas. We also began a GIS mapping program on livestock operator lands with known Grizzly bear locations to identify bear and human conflict areas and devise solutions. To inform and involve landowners, we hosted a meeting & tour with about 40 ranches concerned about Grizzly activity on their lands.



*Joe Broesder presenting Grizzly Management at the Bandy Ranch*

**Blackfoot Challenge**  
**PO Box 563**  
**Helena, MT 59624**

**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

The Blackfoot Challenge is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2003. We need your support more than ever to continue our efforts to protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Blackfoot River Valley. With a donation of \$25 or more we will send you a genuine "Blackfoot Challenge Hat." With a donation of \$10,000 or more, we will place 10% of the donation in the Blackfoot Challenge Endowment Fund to sustain this important work in the years ahead. We will host a Blackfoot Challenge Tour on Saturday June 14, 2003 and you are invited!

**I WANT TO SUPPORT THE BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE:**

**Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**and payable to:**

**The Blackfoot Challenge**

**PO Box 563**

**Helena, MT 59624**

**OPTIONAL---I would like my donation directed to support:**

£ The Blackfoot Challenge and its Program

£ The work of the following Committee/Activity: (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

£ The Blackfoot Watershed Endowment

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Email:**

**I want to learn more about the June 14, 2003 Tour: \_\_\_\_\_**