2006 Conference: Much to Hear and See

Polson is the place for the 2006 Montana Section AWRA conference. Join us on October 12th & 13th at the beautiful KwaTaqNuk Resort on Flathead Lake—the perfect location for our plenary session focus on “Montana’s Lakes and Wetlands: Improving Integrated Water Management.”

New this year will be a pre-conference workshop on wetlands identification, sponsored and organized by the Montana DEQ. This one-day workshop will be held at the KwaTaqNuk Resort on Wednesday, October 11. Free of charge, it will include classroom and field sessions (see separate article for details). Conference room rates will be available for Tuesday night if you want to arrive early. Pete Husby, State Wildlife Biologist for the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Greg Kudray, PhD Senior Ecologist for the Montana Natural Heritage Program, will lead the workshop. Plan on attending!

The meeting officially begins early Thursday with a field trip to the Ninepipes National Wildlife Refuge and other nearby locations. Seating will be limited, so register early.

The plenary session begins at 1:00 PM. We are pleased to welcome Dr. Richard Hauer, Professor of Limnology at the Flathead Lake Biological Station, as our keynote speaker. Dr. Hauer will address current challenges and key issues related to protecting Montana’s lakes and wetlands.

Mike Supplee, Water Quality Specialist, and Lynda Saul, Wetland Program Manager, both with the Montana DEQ, will follow with presentations on the status of Montana’s lakes and wetlands. We will conclude the plenary session with a panel of scientists, planners, and local experts discussing and answering questions on the challenges of working to preserve and protect Flathead Lake and surrounding waters.

The poster session happy hour takes off on Thursday evening. Once again we will provide complimentary beverages (beer, wine, soft drinks) and hors d’oeuvres. The banquet will follow, featuring the traditional pig roast, vegetarian entrees, and other delicious side dishes. We welcome banquet speaker Dr. Daniel Fagre, Ecologist/Global Climate Change Research Coordinator for the USGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center. He will discuss how current and past climatic patterns are affecting glaciers in Glacier National Park. We’ll finish up with the slide show featuring the exceptional photographs submitted for the photo contest.

Friday’s concurrent sessions will feature talks by students and professionals on surface and groundwater studies, wetlands, mining, water quality, and channel/floodplain processes. This is your opportunity to learn about the most current water research ongoing right now in Montana. We’ll wrap up the meeting with presentation of student awards.

This year’s conference is a joint effort of the Montana Water Center, the Montana DEQ, and Montana AWRA. It has been pleasure working with all these folks to bring this conference together. I’d especially like to thank Sue Higgins, May Mace, and Sue Faber. Their experience, guidance, and hard-work are key to the continued success of this conference. I look forward to seeing everyone in Polson!

Katie McDonald, Montana Section AWRA President

The Field Trip: Geology and Wetlands of the Mission Valley

The Mission Valley provides a beautiful setting for this year’s field trip. The area lies within the boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), includes several U.S. Fish Wildlife Service waterfowl production areas and national wildlife refuges, supports large tracts of agricultural land, and is a magnet for population growth. Hydrogeologist John LaFave and geologist Larry Smith from the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, hydrologist Seth Makepeace from the CSKT, and CSKT Wetlands Conservation Program Manager Sue Ball will provide field trips with a geologic history of the Mission Valley from atop the Polson moraine, then proceed to visit a few of the many prairie pothole wetlands in the valley including a stop at Duck Creek Fen. Plan to join John, Larry, Seth and Sue as they lead a discussion on conservation strategies and the regulatory management of these valuable resources in a valley with many competing and changing land uses. If interested, please sign up on the registration form. Space is limited.

About Polson

Polson is located on the south shore of Flathead Lake, one of the 300 largest freshwater lakes in the world and the largest freshwater lake in the western United States. Polson is a resort community with numerous city parks, golf courses, and museums. The area is a photographer’s paradise with superb fishing, swimming, and boating on Flathead Lake and nearby rivers. The Mission Mountains provide excellent hiking and camping opportunities. Polson is a trading center for local agriculture and is a well-known cherry growing region. The downtown is within walking distance of the KwaTaqNuk Resort and is filled with interesting restaurants, gift shops and art galleries.

There is plenty to see and do around the area. Polson is located within the 1.37 million acre Flathead Reservation which is home to the Bitterroot Salish, the Pend d’Oreille, and Kootenai tribes. To learn more about the traditional lifestyles and histories of the Salish, Kootenai and Pend d’Oreille people, visit the museum at The People’s Center in Pablo (7 miles south of Polson). Other nearby attractions include Kerr Dam, the National Bison Range at Moiese, Pablo and Ninepipes National Wildlife Refuges, and Wildhorse Island.

Katie McDonald, President

Mike Roberts, Treasurer
New this Year! Free Day-Long Workshop on Wetlands Identification on October 11

Pete Husby, State Wildlife Biologist, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Greg Kudray, Ph.D Senior Ecologist, MT Natural Heritage Program will lead a workshop the day before the AWRA conference about wetland plants, soils, identification, National Wetland Inventory maps, the new statewide aerial photography, and other wetland information resources.

The morning session will be in the classroom with an afternoon hands-on session out in the wetlands. Go to the meeting web site at http://awra.org/state/montana/events/conference.htm to register. Space for this free-of-charge workshop is limited, so we ask you to notify us in advance if you will need to cancel.

Lynda Saul, DEQ 2006 Poster Session Engaging for All

Make sure to attend the poster session and social hour beginning at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday evening. This is a great opportunity to engage in stimulating conversation with the poster presenters and mingle with friends and colleagues. Free refreshments (beer, wine, soft drinks) and snacks will be provided along with a no-host bar. No entertainment this year, just us talking together (that’s entertaining enough!).

Tammy Crane, Vice-President

2005 Conference a Winner

The 22nd annual Montana Section AWRA conference, “Surface Water/Ground Water: One Resource” was held in Bozeman. Alan English (GLWQD) and Dr. Steve Custer (MSU) guided a large group of pre-conference field trip participants to various locations around the Gallatin Valley to gain an understanding of ground-water/surface-water interaction issues. Trip highlights included site visits to Utility Solutions, Inc. public water supply facility at Four Corners and wastewater treatment plant at Elk Grove to discuss issues associated with well permitting, ground-water augmentation, and the Upper Missouri River Basin closure statute.

The plenary session featured two distinguished keynote speakers: Dr. Robert Glennon, Morris K. Udall Professor of Law and Public Policy at the University of Arizona, gave an interesting and thought-provoking presentation highlighting case studies from across the country on ground-water/surface water interaction issues. Dr. William “Bill” Woessner, Director of the University of Montana’s Center for Riverine Science and Stream Re-naturalization, examined the exchange of groundwater with the stream/floodplain system and the physical, thermal and geochemical approaches to stream re-naturalization. A panel discussion on “Conjunctive Surface Water/Ground Water Management in Montana” rounded out the afternoon session. Panelists included: Dr. Robert Glennon, Dr. Eloise Kendy, Gerald Mueller (Upper Clark Fork River Basin Task Force), Scott Compton (DNRC) and John Wilson (MT Trout Unlimited).

Conference participants had the opportunity to attend a diverse mix of oral (27) and poster (23) presentations with topics ranging from water quality, coalbed methane, ground water and surface water interaction, channel and floodplain processes, ponds, sediment, and dam removal. Banquet participants were once again treated to a pig roast. Dr. Jack Ward Thomas, former U.S. Forest Service Chief, was the featured banquet speaker and gave a fascinating perspective on his 50 years of experience working on a diversity of controversial natural resource issues. AWRA President Chuck Dalby recognized Chuck Parrett as the 2005 Montana Water Legend and presented him with an award. Always entertaining, the annual photo contest featured fantastic photos submitted by the membership.

Student presentations were abundant at the conference (7 talks, 10 posters) and their excellent content made judging a difficult task! Congratulations to these students for their outstanding work:

- First prize paper: Tracy Grant, Montana Tech
- Second prize paper: Dale Engstrom, University of Montana
- Third prize paper: Tim Covino, Montana State University
- First prize poster: Dan Hoffman, University of Montana
- Second prize poster: Steve Cook, Montana State University
- Third prize poster: Vince Pacific, Montana State University

Tammy Crane, Vice-President 2006 Photo Contest Needs YOU!

If you have yet to experience your “15 minutes of fame”... well, it's more like 15 seconds of fame... then here's your chance! Sort through your digital photo files and select your favorite watery theme photo (serious and silly) to enter into the 2006 Photo Contest. Digital entries will be projected at the banquet, maybe even with a musical accompaniment! If you would like to enter a photo(s), please email them to Tammy Crone at tammy.crone@gallatin.mt.gov, or call her at 406-582-3145 for more details. To ensure a quality viewing experience for all banquet attendees, please submit your photo(s) by October 4th.

Tammy Crane, Vice-President Banquet

Following the poster session and social hour, the fun continues at the pig roast banquet which will include vegetarian options and of course, dessert. The buffet-style dinner will be served at 7 p.m. followed by this year’s distinguished banquet speaker Dr. Daniel Fagre, the Global Change Research Coordinator for the USGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center stationed in Glacier National Park. Dr. Fagre will share insights into some of his research, which includes glacial as well as wetland/stream ecosystem response to climate change in Glacier National Park. Please join us for a great meal and this timely and interesting presentation. As per usual, the banquet festivities will close with the popular photo contest.

Mike Roberts, Treasurer