

Clearwater PARTNERS

Events

CRC Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 1, 1 pm,

Seeley Lake

Community Hall

Clearwater Partners

Workshop: The ABC's of Seed Saving with Good

Seed Co's Robin Kelson.

Gardening Tips, seed

sharing. Co-sponsored

by the Blackfoot Valley

Gardeners and the Seeley

Swan Gardening Group.

Sunday, April 25, 3pm,

Seeley Lake

Community Hall

Era of Megafires

Presentation 6 pm -

Info booths and free BBQ

provided by Seeley Lake

Fired Department

7 pm - Showing of Era

of Megafires multi-media

presentation with Dr. Paul

Hessberg.

Saturday, June 25, 3 pm,

Seeley Lake

Community Hall

Celebrate the Clearwater presents: Jocko Lakes Fire 10-Year Anniversary

Presentation by former

Seeley Lake District

Ranger & more. Free BBQ

& Silent Auction

THE MUSSEL INVASION

Last October, Montana lost its standing as one of the few western states that were still free of invasive mussels. Dreissenid mussels, commonly known as zebra mussels and quagga mussels arrived in North America in the late 1980's in the Great Lakes. They were stowaways on an ocean-going vessel from the Black Sea. Without any natural controls they flourished and spread down every connected waterway, all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. In 2007, they were found in Lake Mead. There are no connecting waterways. They hitch-hiked overland. And we, mankind, helped them.

So, what's so bad about these mussels? They are very proliferative. A single female can produce a million eggs a year, and she lives for 4-5 years. Fortunately ONLY 20,000 offspring per year reach sexual maturity. At this rate, over her lifetime, she will have a hundred billion billion offspring. When they die, their razor-sharp shells wash up on shore, making the shoreline unfit for bare feet - human and canine. And they stink!



Lake residents discuss options to prevent invasive mussels during a public meeting held in Seeley Lake.

Unlike native mussels, when invasive mussels mature they put down roots called byssal threads and anchor themselves to something hard and solid. Because they can't move, they filter their food out of the water. A full-grown mussel, all of a ½ inch long, can filter a quart of water per day. They deplete all of the small food like algae and zooplankton from the water that juvenile fish need. Fisheries collapse. Like all creatures, they excrete waste. All of the nutrients normally spread throughout the water column are

now concentrated on the bottom. As the excrement decomposes, massive toxic blue-green algae blooms can occur; toxic enough to kill waterfowl that land in the water. Did I mention, they stink! The health of our lakes and the health of our local economy are threatened by this potential invasion.

Where are the mussels? So far, the mussels have only been found east of the divide. Tiber Reservoir is positive, without a doubt. Canyon Ferry is suspicious but is being treated as positive. Fortunately, Mother Nature put a lid on these lakes that stopped the possible spread of the mussels - for the winter. Unfortunately, ice arrived before divers could thoroughly assess the situation. We'll know more in a few months.

What's the state doing? Several new rules have been established. Boats leaving Tiber or Canyon Ferry must be inspected and decontaminated. The number of watercraft inspection stations has been doubled, with a firewall of stations located along the continental divide. All boats entering the state or traveling across the divide from east to west must be inspected before launching. The total AIS budget for the next biennium is around \$12,000,000.

CRC began monitoring for these mussels in our largest lakes in 2009 and has one of the most comprehensive monitoring programs in the state. Many, many thanks to our volunteers who do most of the actual work. We can't do what we do without you! This year, the program is being beefed up - and our volunteers are willing to take on the extra load. We can always use more volunteers. Also working in our favor, Swan Valley Connections and Blackfoot Challenge are implementing monitoring programs on the lakes in their areas. If our neighbors' lakes remain mussel-free, we have a better chance of remaining mussel-free.

In January, CRC hosted a community meeting to share information and get a feel for the level of protection we think is needed. Based on the input at that meeting, CRC is creating a local work group to develop an Inspect Before Launch program that takes the state's rules, and expands them for our lakes. The first organizational meeting was March 29th. If you are interested in helping in any way with efforts to prevent this mussel invasion, please let us know. Contact Joann: (406) 210-8453 or joann@crcmt.org

Don't Forget to Complete the Trails Survey!

On February 25, over 75 people turned out at the Seeley Lake Community Hall to share and learn about the progress of the Seeley Lake Trails Project and get introduced to our Trails Survey. Through this survey, we want to learn what you like about recreational trails in the Clearwater Valley and your suggestions for improvements. You can take the survey on-line (which has advantages – see below) or pick up a hard copy at these locations in Seeley Lake: Double Arrow Lodge, Grizzly Claw Trading Company, Kurt's Polaris, Optimal Fitness, Roveros Ace Hardware, Seeley Lake Elementary or Seeley Swan High School. Surveys are due by July 17.

The purpose of the Trails Project is to develop a comprehensive trails plan across ownerships for the Clearwater Valley that will benefit all user groups and include:

- 1) improvements and maintenance for existing trail infrastructure,
- 2) some development of new trails and
- 3) marketing to promote outdoor recreation and tourism.

All suggestions for trail improvements and new infrastructure will be evaluated using this criteria: Quality, Feasibility, Liability, Partnerships, Sustainability, Economic Impact, Environmental Issues, Education and Tribal and Cultural Issues. Once all suggestions are evaluated, the public will have an opportunity to weigh in on what to include in the final plan. In all cases, proposed improvements and new projects will have to go through a detailed planning and permitting process specific to each land manager. New trail projects will only be possible with land owner approval, funding for construction, and a long-term maintenance plan, including funding and partnerships to do the maintenance.

You can complete the Trails Survey on-line at www.surveymonkey.com/r/seeleylaketrails.

If you follow the on-line link to crcmt.org/trail-maps, the website gives you access to fascinating on-line winter and summer maps. Within those on-line interactive maps, you can make comments on trails ideas, loops, usages directly at that point on the map. This

will give us much more detailed information to evaluate your suggestions. We appreciate and value your input! Thanks to our funders who have generously supported our trails efforts: — *Headwaters Economics, Seeley Lake Community Foundation and USDA Rural Development.*

Clear Vision

The mission of the Clearwater Resource Council is to engage the community and facilitate efforts that will enhance, conserve, sustain, and protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Clearwater Watershed for present and future generations.

To receive this quarterly newsletter, email info@crcmt.org or call 406-677-0069.



Era of Megafires is a 70-minute presentation featuring Dr. Paul Hessberg, with nearly 30 years of experience in fire and landscape ecology. The multi-media event merges short talks with compelling videos and photos, describing why forest conditions throughout the West are now conducive to megafires, what's at stake, and how we can tackle the problem. Join us for a free public event and community conversation.

Thursday, April 27th, 6pm
Seeley Community Hall
Info Booths & Free BBQ hosted
by Seeley Lake Fire Department

Showing of
"Era of Megafires" 7PM
followed by Q&A with Hessberg
& local experts.

For Info: <http://bit.ly/2n3wZqp>
or Jenny @ 754-0034
Cory @ 244-2384