



Contact Us at 406-677-0069

MARCH 2020

# Clearwater

# NEWS

## It's never too early to think about fire season!



### Updates from our Fuels Management Program

With snow still blanketing the valley, fire season may seem far away. However, it is never too early to start preparing. CRC is dedicated to protecting the Seeley Lake community from wildfire by enacting fuels management efforts throughout the valley. One of the most effective ways to reduce wildfire risk is to limit the amount of flammable materials around a property through diligent vegetation maintenance.

The Seeley Lake Fuels Mitigation Task Force is a cooperative group including representatives from CRC, the Seeley Lake Rural Fire Department, US Forest Service, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Swan Ecosystem Center, and Bitterroot Resource Conservation and Development.

The Task Force began receiving fuels mitigation grants in 2003, and has received a \$270,000 grant in order to continue the implementation of the Seeley-Swan Fire Plan (SSFP) from 2019 to 2021.

Written in 2003 and updated in 2019, the SSFP identified approximately 12,000 acres of high and moderate priority fuel mitigation needs on lands within the Clearwater Valley. We are happy to report that from 2017 through 2019 the Task Force completed fuel mitigation on 338 acres of private property within the project area. Within these years the Task Force received 76 applications for treating approximately 500 acres of private land. The large number of applications is indicative of a broad awareness of the issue

and an increasing desire to reduce the risks. This is thanks in part to the various outreach projects which were vital to the success of the SSFP, including a targeted mail campaign and various presentations by local fire experts.

Our Task Force offers “one stop shopping” for private land owners who want free assistance with thinning projects. There are many benefits associated with thinning your property, including:

- Reducing fire risk;
- Improving the health of the forest;
- Enhancing the value of your property; and
- Protecting yourself and your neighbors from wildfire.

CRC is seeking new applications for the 2020 field season.

**To read more about our fuels mitigation program or to download an application, go to [crcmt.org/fuels](http://crcmt.org/fuels), and for further information, contact CRC's Jon Haufler at [jon@crcmt.org](mailto:jon@crcmt.org) or by phone: (406) 499-0264.**

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### Updates from our aquatics programs!

The summer of 2020 will be the 12th full season of data collection for the Adopt a Lake (AAL) program. In 2019, 18 volunteers sampled throughout the Clearwater watershed at eight separate lakes for water clarity and temperature. In 2019, all of the lakes showed



increased transparencies (less turbid) as compared to data from 2018. CRC will continue this sampling regimen in 2020, and is looking to build on this program with the addition of dissolved oxygen and nutrient monitoring as well as macroinvertebrate sampling.

2019 was a huge success for the Adopt a Stream (AAS) program, thanks to our dedicated volunteers who helped to monitor 27 streams throughout the valley, measuring a variety of parameters from turbidity to nitrogen content, to help us gather important information on the condition of our streams and their responses to watershed management.

In 2020, CRC will continue the Aquatic Invasive Species

monitoring program, which, like the AAL and AAS programs, involves the help of trained “citizen-scientist” volunteers to monitor lakes for invasive mussels and plants. We are happy to report another mussel-free season for the Clearwater Valley!

**CRC is extremely fortunate to have a wonderful team of volunteers who return year after year. If you would like to join the fun, please contact us at**

**(406) 677-0069 or  
info@crcmt.org**

### Upcoming spring gardening workshop

Saturday, April 4 from 1-3 pm at the Seeley Lake Community Foundation, gardening author and newspaper columnist Molly Hackett will return to share her tips on organic gardening and planting bee gardens. Be sure to bring all your gardening questions for Molly to answer!

The event is free, and snacks will be provided. Follow our social media pages for more event updates!

### New program on the horizon: summer youth education program

CRC is excited to announce a four-day Summer Youth Education Program that will take place July 20-23 here in the Clearwater Valley! Open to middle school students, this program will serve the Seeley Lake Community by educating students, laying the foundation for stewardship, and expanding career possibilities for local youth. We hope to also build an awareness of careers in the science and natural resource fields. Students will have the opportunity to learn from trained educators about a variety of local conservation related topics, including:

- Water quality monitoring;
- Stream ecology and macroinvertebrates;
- Aquatic invasive species; and
- The intersection between arts, culture, and conservation.

Stay tuned for program registration, which will be available soon!



### CRC welcomes new Big Sky Watershed Corps member

In January, CRC welcomed a new Big Sky Watershed Corps Member, Emily McGuirt, who will be serving with the organization through November of 2020. Emily comes to Montana from North Carolina, where she recently graduated with a B.S. in Environmental Science and a minor in Marine Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Emily spent much of her undergraduate time conducting research and taking classes at various field sites, including the NC State Center for Marine Sciences and Technology and the UNC Chapel Hill Institute of Marine Sciences. She recently completed her honors thesis in collaboration with the geospatial team at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in coastal North Carolina. Emily was also able to spend some time at the Flathead Lake Biological Station in Polson, MT during the summer of 2017, which inspired her to return to beautiful Western Montana to continue working in the conservation field with CRC.

#### Follow us on social media!

Facebook: Clearwater Resource Council  
Instagram: @clearwaterresourcecouncil



We are always looking for fun photos of the Seeley-Swan valley, Potomac to Ovando areas, and Clearwater and Blackfoot corridors. If you have any photographs you would like to submit for consideration for posting on our social media or website pages, please do so here:

[crcmt.org/photo-submissions](http://crcmt.org/photo-submissions)