

## 2017

### A Year of Challenges for the Clearwater Valley

#### Invasive Mussels

##### PROTECTING OUR WATERS

The good news is that our Clearwater Chain of Lakes is still free of invasive mussels – and CRC is working hard to keep it that way. Since 2012, CRC's aquatic invasive species (AIS) program has been very proactive, monitoring the six major lakes that support trailered motor boats. This past summer, we extended the monitoring period to May through late October, increasing the number of sampling rounds from four to six. Not only did we increase the frequency of sampling, but we exported our AIS monitoring program to lakes in the Swan Valley and middle Blackfoot Valley where the Blackfoot Challenge and Swan Valley Connections launched AIS monitoring programs of their own. CRC provided the protocols and training to help get these programs off the ground. The State of Montana recognized our proactive approach and has highlighted our program as a model for the state. The DNRC awarded CRC two grants in 2017 to both develop an 'inspect before launch' strategy for the area and create a statewide media awareness campaign to prevent the spread of invasive mussels. Still, we cannot relax. In 2018, monitoring, outreach and prevention efforts will be as robust as funding allows.

#### Get ready for 2018 Fire Season

CRC is the go-to organization in the Seeley Lake area to help landowners assess their property for fire danger and fuel mitigation. The CRC fuel mitigation program has channeled over four million dollars of federal, county and private landowner funding



CREDIT JEFF HARRITS

Former District Ranger Tim Love recalls events of the 2007 Jocko Lakes Fire at CRC's June 25 Event.

to employ local contractors to work with private landowners to encourage ecosystem restoration to help protect residents from wildfire on over 3,000 acres. We are eager to spread the word to many more residents about these opportunities to evaluate and develop a plan to mitigate fire danger on area home sites. Contact CRC's forester on-line for a free landowner assessment at [signe@crcmt.org](mailto:signe@crcmt.org).

#### Adopt-A-Lake

2017 marked the 10th season of our Adopt-A-Lake program where volunteers measure water clarity and temperature twice a month from May through September. We plan another full season again in 2018 – hopefully with no interference from fires. This program is establishing a long-term data set that provides a general evaluation of the health of the lakes. Seeley Lake, Salmon Lake, and Placid Lake all

have periodic blue-green algae blooms that are concerning.

#### Adopt-A-Stream

The Adopt-A-Stream program depends on citizen-science volunteers to collect weekly water chemistry samples and record flow measures on 20+ streams throughout the Clearwater watershed for 15 weeks throughout runoff. Many sites require cross-country skiing or snowshoeing for miles before the snow melts. Thank you to our volunteers! The data generated by CRC are used as part of a larger program that is looking at sedimentation of creeks by USFS roads. This program is also being implemented by the Blackfoot Challenge on streams in their region. Some of these streams have been affected by the Rice Ridge Fire and will offer valuable before and after information on the fire's effects.

## Students In Action

Local Junior and Senior High School students are in the middle of their 8th year working with CRC's Citizens in Action Adopt-a-Stream programs engaging them in "real world" science with sophisticated scientific equipment to enhance their understanding of the natural world around them. More importantly, CRC has helped develop educational curricula for local and regional schools, bringing students into the streams for hands on experience.

## Seeley Lake Trails Project

CRC pioneered the Seeley Lake Trails Project, engaging with local residents, businesses, agencies, local and regional non-profit organizations to plan a multi-use trails system. This program has as

its purpose: 1) improvements and maintenance for existing trails, 2) some development of new trails, and 3) marketing to promote outdoor recreation and tourism. This spring, we will complete this 3-year planning process with a condensed, multi-use trails plan for user groups to pursue and complete in the future. Thanks to all the trail user groups, land managers and individuals who have been part of this process.

## Clearwater Lakes Alliance

Wildfire, invasive mussels - the many challenges facing our Chain of Lakes have led us to realize that we need to work actively with lake landowners, agencies and other NGOs to develop a strategy to protect our pristine waters. We call this 'all hands on deck' initiative Clearwater Lakes Alliance. CRC seeks to bring all interested people to the table to identify lake-use and water quality concerns on a lake by lake basis, develop active volunteers and donors to ensure the future stability of the water quality programs and motivate active engagement by the community. You will be hearing more about this initiative in 2018.

## Pure Montana Tales & Clearwater Partners Workshops

CRC offers numerous Clearwater Partner educational workshops and Pure Montana Tales events to bring skills and information on the natural world to the community. Our tentative schedule for FY 2018 is:

- **Discover the Art of Wildlife Tracking:**, Saturday, Feb. 17, 10-3 pm, co-sponsored by Swan Valley Connections
- **Rice Ridge & Liberty Fire Recap:** (co-sponsored with USFS) February 28, 6:30 pm, Seeley Lake Elementary School
- **Rice Ridge Afterlife:** Impact of the fire on fish, streams, forests and wildlife: May date TBD
- **Gardening Tips with Molly Hasket, Master Gardener:** Saturday, April 7, 1 pm, Seeley Lake Community Hall
- **Don't Move a Mussel Crawfish Boil:** Early June, Date & Location TBD
- **Celebrate the Clearwater Picnic,** featuring Kate Davis, Raptors of the Rockies - mid-summer

CRC is extremely fortunate to have a wonderful team of volunteers who return year after year. We're sure many would appreciate sharing the fun with others. If you would like to participate in any of these programs, please contact Joann Wallenburn, joann@crcmt.org, (406) 201-8453 or Jenny



Animal Track & Sign Clinic

Discover the art of wildlife tracking!

**SAT., FEB. 17th**  
10am - 3pm

At Condon Work Center, 6887 MT Hwy 83

\$25 per person :: Space is limited :: Registration is required

  **SWAN VALLEY CONNECTIONS**

For details and to register visit  
**SwanValleyConnections.org**  
or call 754-3137