

BITTER ROOT
Water
FORUM

**Bringing the Community
together to protect,
enhance, and restore the
watershed we all rely on**

*The Bitterroot
Mountains over
the Burnt Fork*

FALL 2019



Full Speed Ahead

With nine years under my belt as Executive Director, I can honestly say I've never been more excited about where we are and where we're going. Thanks to amazing supporters like you and a new funding opportunity, we are ready to expand our conservation impact in a major way.

We have proven that a small organization can be incredibly effective at completing projects that improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Our project successes helped MT DEQ choose the Bitterroot as a pilot watershed for increased grant investment (more on that inside). We hired a Restoration Coordinator, Andrea Price, so we can take advantage of this opportunity and tackle even more restoration projects.

With Andrea on projects, Katie engaging people in our work, and our AmeriCorps Member leading youth education and volunteer programs, I will be able to spend time identifying even more ways we can bring our community together to protect, enhance and restore our watershed.

Our organization was built with community support and our impact will grow for the same reason. You make it all possible. Thank you.

Heather

Heather Barber
Executive Director



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The Bitter Root Water Forum is a community driven non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the traditions of agriculture, community and recreation by protecting, enhancing and restoring the Bitterroot Watershed through on the ground restoration projects and watershed education.

Building our Team

To increase our conservation impact, we created a new Restoration Coordinator position. Andrea Price joined the Water Forum team in late July. With a degree in environmental engineering, Andrea brings new technical skills to the organization.

With a fresh perspective and a more technical knowledge base, Andrea can help get more done for Bitterroot waters. We have achieved so much with limited staff, and now we'll be able to do even more for ranching families and streamside landowners.



Andrea learned to love rivers and lakes growing up in the Seattle area. She followed that passion in college earning her degree from Dartmouth College. After graduating, she worked overseas with NGOs in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene sector.

She's been visiting the Bitterroot since 2008, when her grandfather retired here.

As our Restoration Coordinator she will work with private landowners and agency partners to develop projects, get them on the ground, and steward them in the years to come.

Thank you for making this addition possible.



Watershed Enhancement Team

The Watershed Enhancement Team (WET) was formed in 2016 to provide necessary monitoring and maintenance for the restoration projects the Water Forum has completed over the years.

Work Accomplished in 2019:

Browse protector maintenance, weeding, plant watering, photo point monitoring, plant counts, solarization fabric removal, vole protector removal, fence maintenance, and more.

**Thank you WET Volunteers -
your efforts protect and improve projects.
*See you next year!***



Some WET members help at a project on the East Fork of the Bitterroot

Big Sky Watershed Corps



Thanks to donor support and the Bitterroot Conservation District, the Water Forum is in its eighth year of hosting a Big Sky Watershed Corps member. The Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) is an AmeriCorps service program that places young professionals across the state of Montana to make a meaningful difference in local communities and conservation efforts.

This year's BSWC member, Emilie Lahneman, coordinated the youth and adult education programs, led the Watershed Enhancement Team, organized the Clean Up All Year program, worked on Miller Creek to improve and build on the fencing there, and so much more.

We are excited to see what the future holds for Emilie, and look forward to welcoming our new BSWC member in January. Thank you to our donors for making the impactful work of Big Sky Watershed Corps members possible.

Opportunity to do More

Thanks to hard work, partnerships, and project successes, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has announced the Bitterroot as the pilot watershed for increased 319 Program funding over the next three years. The 319 program supports local issues of nonpoint source (NPS) pollution and is funded through the EPA with roughly one million dollars per year invested in Montana. The pilot watershed designation means the Bitterroot is eligible for half of all 319 program funds in 2019-2021.

In the Bitterroot the primary NPS pollution issues are temperature, sediment, and nutrients, which can cause problems for aquatic life. Warm waters can kill fish. Too much sediment can choke out aquatic insects and fish eggs. Excess nutrients can lead to overgrowth of algae or even be lethal to aquatic life.

Our restoration work is successfully combating these NPS pollution issues. A healthy plant buffer along waterways can make a huge difference for our streams. Native trees and shrubs like cottonwoods and willows provide shade, habitat, and food sources, they can reinforce eroding banks, and filter nutrients from the soil.

The 319 funding opportunity is great, however, it requires support from outside sources through matching funds of at least 40% of the project total. *That means for every \$150,000 awarded through the 319 program there needs to be an additional \$100,000 from private donors, foundations, and state funds.*

Our community has an opportunity to receive more restoration dollars than ever before, and the Water Forum is positioned to get projects on the ground.

Montana Watershed Coordination Council's Watershed Fund has started the ball rolling, and **now we need more support than ever from the community to keep that momentum going!**





Projects on

Miller Creek Fencing

Installing additional fencing at the Oxbow Cattle Company to improve streamside habitat and protect plants that will shade the stream.

Project began in 2018 with more fencing going in this fall.



Bitterroot River at Skalkaho Bend Park

Planting native trees and shrubs in the future Skalkaho Bend Park to improve habitat and reduce future erosion.

Partnering with Bitter Root Land Trust and the City of Hamilton.



Threemile Fish Passage

Improving a road in the Threemile Wildlife Management Area to reduce erosion, and building a bridge and fish steps to improve habitat and fish passage.

Partnering with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

the Horizon

Creekside Fencing on Burnt Fork Ranches

Working with private landowners to add exclosure fencing and vegetation to build habitat along the Burnt Fork.



Fishing Access Site Rehab-itat

Planting native trees and shrubs at the future Stevensville Fishing Access Site to improve habitat and eventually shade the River.

Partnering with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.



South Valley Floodplain Creation

Reducing erosion from old logging roads and creating healthy floodplains on two tributary streams, one to Rye Creek and the other to the East Fork of the Bitterroot.

Partnering with the Bitterroot National Forest.



Empowering our Community through Education



Classroom to the Field: Youth Programs

Youth education is an important piece of our education program and always will be, as we work to inspire and engage the future stewards of our water resources.

The Earth Stewardship Program provides 7th grade students in Corvallis, Lone Rock, Victor, and Darby with monthly lessons featuring local natural resource professionals. In the spring they get out of the classroom and into the water to get hands-on experience.

The Future Irrigators of the Bitterroot trip shows local FFA high school students how water travels in our valley and its complex role in irrigation.

The Everyday Water User: Adult Programs

Education is key to watershed health. This year, we offered numerous education events for local valley residents. They included:

- An educational forum, “From Fishing to Farming: How Climate is Affecting the Bitterroot” where three local professionals discussed changes they have seen in the valley
- Our Irrigation in the Bitterroot Tour, where valley residents could delve deep into the complexity and importance of irrigation in the valley from talks with local irrigators
- A continuing education course for Realtors on water rights



Inspiring Future Generations with a Gift

Our friends, the Fly Fishers of the Bitterroot, are lending more support to our youth education programs this year with funds from the **Doug Duff Memorial Fund**.

Fly Fishers of the Bitterroot (FFB) is a non-profit club dedicated to sharing a passion for fly fishing by promoting fellowship, education and stewardship of our fishing resources.

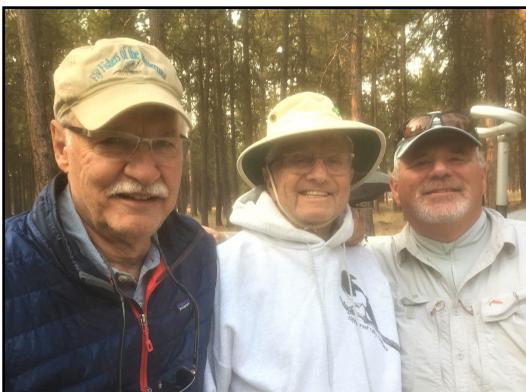
Doug Duff was a past FFB President who passed away last year after a battle with cancer. A kind soul, rarely without a smile on his face, Doug is remembered as a friend who was up for anything and always doing what he could to lend a hand.

With a background as a professor in the mid-west, after retirement Doug and his wife Susie moved to the Bitterroot in 2008 to be closer to their daughter and grandchildren.

Whether it was with his grandchildren or students in Bitterroot Trout Unlimited's Bitterroot Bugger program, Doug wanted to pass on his passion for the outdoors and fly fishing.

With that passion in mind FFB donated from his memorial fund to help support our Earth Stewardship Program and Future Irrigators of the Bitterroot trip.

Doug's legacy will get kids out of the classroom and connected to water. Thanks to FFB, and thank you to the Duffs.



*Doug pictured with FFB members,
Phil Romans (left) and Jay Melzer (right)*

“The legacy of Fly Fishing was something that helped him become who he was and you want to pass that on”

- Phil Romans said of his good friend of Doug

“He was a conservationist to the core”



Working for a Cleaner River

1,980+ pounds of trash removed from the Bitterroot River



Over 80 volunteers donated their time to this year's annual River Clean Up. Thanks to their efforts **1,980 pounds of trash** were removed from the river.

Frank Schultz and his friends took home the prize for Best Trash, pulling out a dryer door with the instructions intact inside.

Jenny West won our photo contest with this picture of her nephew, Koa.



Thank you to our 2019 sponsors



Evans Ace Hardware ♦ Geum Environmental Consulting
 TrailWest Bank ♦ Bitterroot Disposal ♦ Runner's Edge
 Higherground Brewing ♦ Clearwater Systems
 Hamilton Marketplace ♦ Iron Horse Athletic Club

Clean Up All Year

By providing reusable river clean up bags at local businesses throughout the valley, 2,215 bags went out to help folks keep a better handle their own trash and collect litter every time they were out enjoying the river.

For the first time two stands were placed at Fishing Access Sites, Hannon Memorial and Bell Crossing. This is the most effective way to get bags in the hands of folks right as they're hitting the river. We plan to expand to more Fishing Access Sites next year.



You make it all possible. Clean water, healthy lands, and quality education for youth and adults can only happen when people like you invest in our work.

TOGETHER WE MAKE THE GREATEST IMPACT

Ways to Give

GIVE A MONTHLY OR STAND ALONE GIFT and your financial support will allow our organization to thrive and leverage other private, state, and federal project funding

ONLINE	BY MAIL	IN PERSON
brwaterforum.org	Bitter Root Water Forum PO Box 1247 Hamilton, MT 59840	178 S 2nd St in Hamilton

GIVE THE GIFT OF YOUR TIME volunteering on our restoration projects, helping with events, or lending a hand in the office

BITTER ROOT WATER FORUM ACCEPTS PLANNED GIFTS

Make the greatest impact possible for cold, clean waters in your lifetime and for future generations

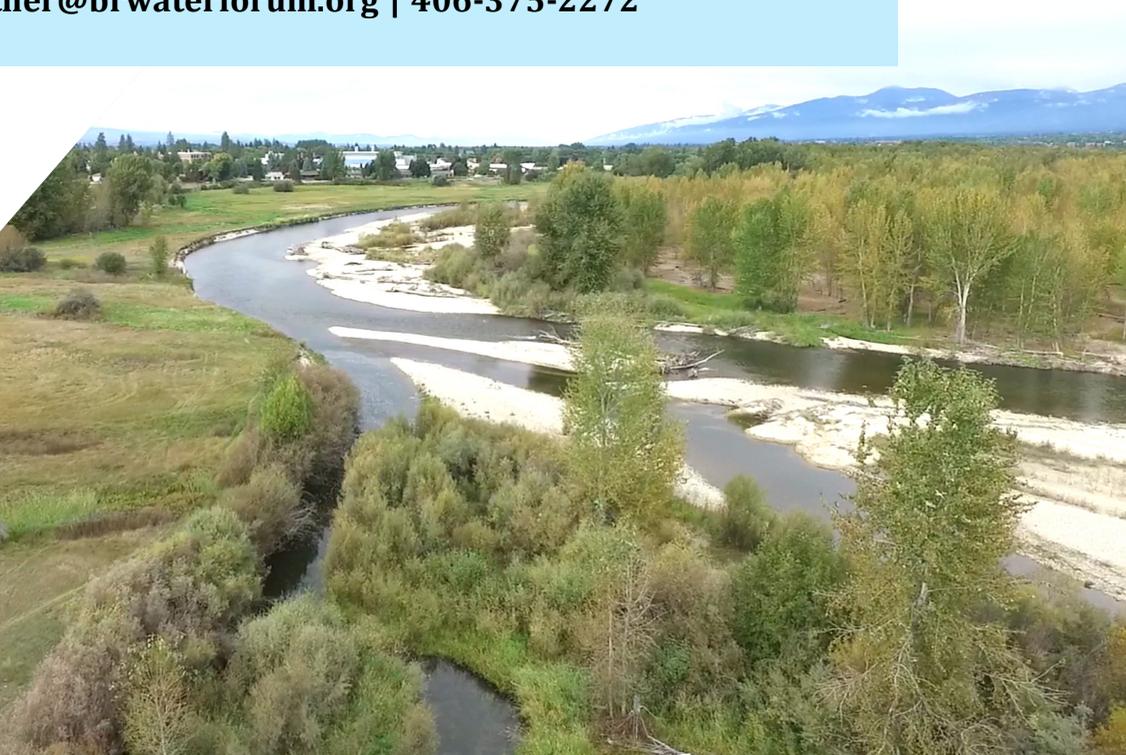
Types of planned gifts include, but are not limited to:
Stocks, bequests, and the Montana Endowment Tax Credit

Please contact Heather with questions about any of these types of gifts.

heather@brwaterforum.org | 406-375-2272

Provided for informational purposes only; not intended to be tax or legal advice.

Prior to making a planned gift to the Bitter Root Water Forum, please consult a qualified financial advisor.



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Darby 7th Graders collect
Macroinvertebrates on
Lost Horse Creek as part
of the Earth Stewardship
Program field trip