



Conservation Districts,

Though I wish I were able to meet each of you in person, it is with great pride that I get to introduce myself as the new coordinator for MRCDC. I began working for the Council in mid-March and am based out of Sidney where I have an office space next to the Richland County Conservation District. I grew up on a registered Simmental operation and studied political science and agricultural business at Montana State University before lobbying for the Montana Farm Bureau for three years. After less than a year with MRCDC, I can't think of a better cause than helping coordinate the efforts of our state's greatest conservationists – Montana's farmers and ranchers. Despite a global pandemic, MRCDC has remained focused and productive and I'm thrilled to report on the good work we've been doing within the Missouri River watershed.

- **Ranching for Rivers is still accepting applications on a rolling basis.** The program is designed to assist landowners manage their riparian land by offering a 50% cost-share for fencing material, off-site water infrastructure and developing grazing management plans. In 2020, Ranching for Rivers provided cost-share funding for 5,300 feet of fencing, benefitting 35 acres of land and 3.5 miles of stream bank. It also funded the development of grazing management plans for 2 landowners. More information on the program as well the application can be found on SWCDM's website.
- **The CMR Community Working Group's next meeting will be held virtually on December 9<sup>th</sup> from 1-3pm.** The meeting will provide agencies, local governments, organizations and landowners the opportunity to check-in and discuss any new accomplishments, challenges faced, or opportunities available since we last met in-person almost a year ago. While nothing beats the face-to-face interaction our group is known for, we hope to simulate this cooperative discussion as best we can through a virtual format. The meeting topic, *A Year in Review*, is quite fitting since the group has been unable to meet in person for just short of a year. A finalized agenda will be shared with conservation districts soon and anyone interested is welcome to participate.
- The United States Army Corps of Engineers intends to test the flows coming from Fort Peck Dam in hopes it will benefit pallid sturgeon recruitment. Their proposal, presented in March, was incredibly problematic for the approximately 100 irrigators downstream of the Dam. **With help from the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council, local conservation districts were able to convince the Corps that the information they were using to assess the economic impact to irrigators was both inadequate and outdated. As a result, the Corps agreed to postpone release of the Draft EIS until after they had completed a thorough pump site survey and economic analysis.** Conservation districts and MRCDC have helped coordinate the economic analysis and pump site surveys this summer. Collectively, 102 irrigation pumps were surveyed. The Corps is reviewing this information before selecting their preferred alternative in the Draft EIS, which will be published in December and initiate a 60-day public comment period. MRCDC plans to assist irrigators and other stakeholders participate in the commenting process.
- **A more thorough account of MRCDC's work can be found in our 2019-2020 Annual Report which is shared on our website, [missouririvercouncil.info](http://missouririvercouncil.info).**

Sincerely,

*Liu Holt*

MRCDC Coordinator

406-454-0056 or [mrcdc@macdnet.org](mailto:mrcdc@macdnet.org)