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Hello Broadwater County Community! It's time for the Broadwater Conservation District newsletter, The Steward! The purpose of our newsletter is to inform the community of all BCD endeavors, community events, and projects, and to celebrate conservation efforts throughout the community.

This edition of *The Steward* provides a look into what the Broadwater Conservation District has been up to over the months of July, August and September 2026. It has been a busy few months and BCD is excited to share the projects we've been working on!

With all that we do, we always try to put into practice our motto "Local Common-sense Conservation". Thanks for reading!

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Update: Beaver Creek Watershed Restoration Plan







We are still awaiting EPA approval on our Beaver Creek Watershed Restoration Plan. We expect to hear back in the next few weeks.

In the meantime, we are in the process of applying for a $20,000 DNRC grant to fund a geomorphic assessment of lower Beaver Creek, classified as chronically dewatered by FWP. This assessment would guide future channel restoration work in the lower watershed, with the goal of increasing floodplain connectivity and water availability for agricultural producers.

We spent some time in the field this summer taking photos and GPS points to better understand the issues facing the stream system, particularly below the highway. We saw lots of downcutting, erosion, and cobble deposits from the 2011 flood. See photos.

As always, please reach out with any questions or ideas for future restoration projects!





STOKE Mini Camp





In July, BCD hosted a 4-day Summer Camp for middle school students, in collaboration with STOKE. Presenters taught campers about wildlife, forestry, soils, and watershed health through scientific exploration, games, and hands-on activities. Seven campers learned how to use bear spray, identify wildlife tracks, take core samples from trees to determine age, identify and measure trees, test water quality, identify macroinvertebrates, and so much more!







6th Grade Conservation Day



In September, BCD hosted 6th Grade Conservation Day, a longstanding partnership between BCD and Townsend schools. 6th graders learned about bears, beavers, rivers, trees, sun printing, compasses, noxious weeds, and the water cycle. Students also got to explore White Earth Campground!





Both education events were made possible by amazing partnerships with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Prickly Pear Land Trust, Montana Discovery Foundation, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana Department of Agriculture, and Round River Conservation Studies.

Big Sky Watershed Corps Member Update



Ksenia was busy this summer coordinating presenters, schedules, and logistics for our education events. She led stations at both our STOKE summer camp and 6th Grade Conservation Day, including how to use Biltmore sticks to estimate tree height and volume (left), an interactive game about the water cycle, and sun printing (right).



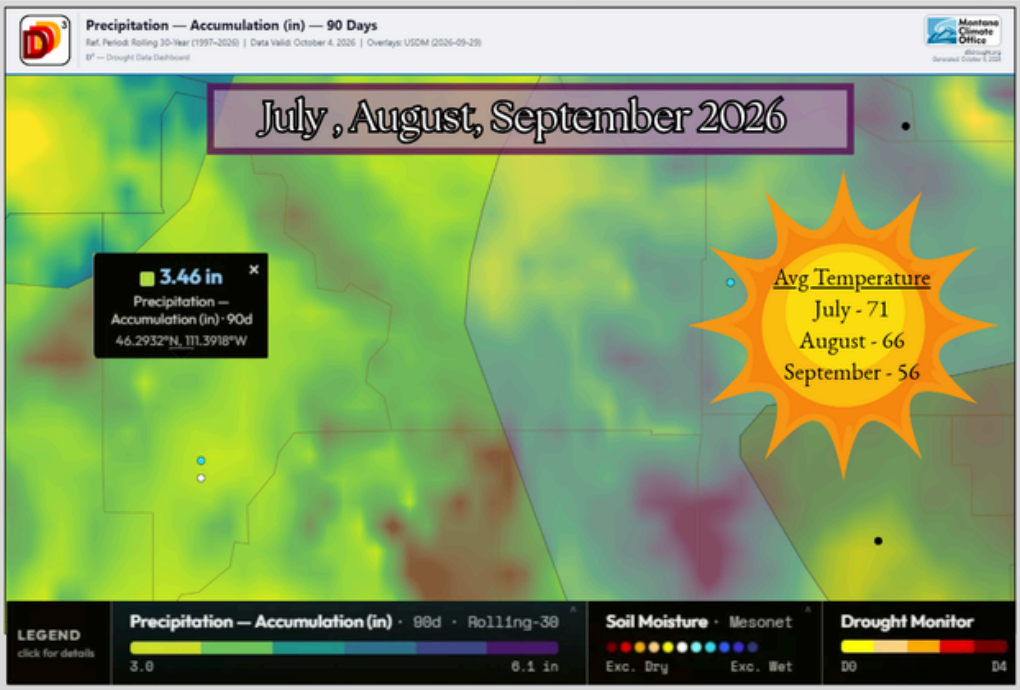
Ksenia also spent lots of time in the field this summer, joining NRCS staff on project site visits and continuing to assist Jim Beck with streamflow monitoring on Deep Creek and Beaver Creek. In August, she had the opportunity to assist fisheries biologists from Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and researchers from the University of Montana with genetics research on the genetically pure population of Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Staubach Creek. She also collaborated with other BSWC members to map noxious weeds on public land in Helena's South Hills (right).





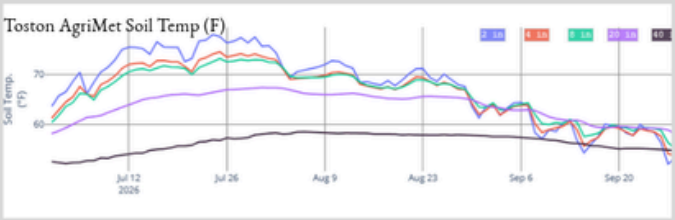
Ksenia has continued to volunteer with organizations around the state including weed pulls with the Lewis & Clark County Weed District, tabling at the Helena Watershed Festival with Prickly Pear Land Trust, Helena Middle School field day with Montana Discovery Foundation, and a riparian restoration project in the Nez-Pierce Wilderness in Idaho (left). These events give her exposure to other facets of the conservation field while building capacity for local organizations.

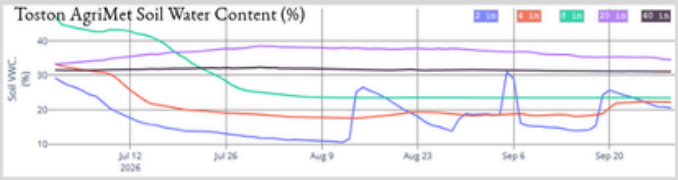
Broadwater County Drought Resiliency Report



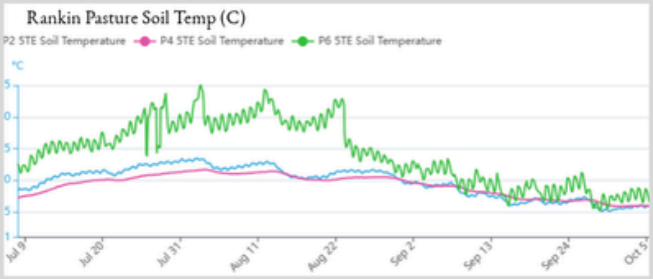
Based on the U.S. Drought Monitor, Broadwater County currently has a D0 classification or is considered "Abnormally Dry".

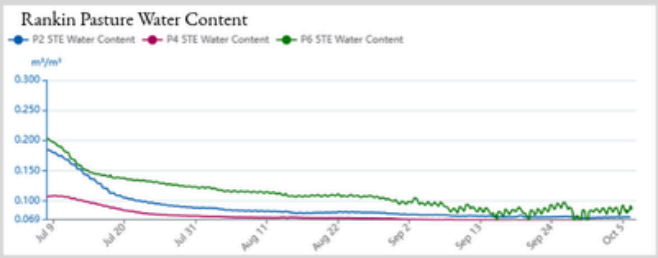
The Montana Mesonet was designed to support decision-making for statewide drought assessments, precision agriculture and rangeland and forested watershed management. For Broadwater County the monitoring location is at Toston. https://climate.umt.edu/mesonet/

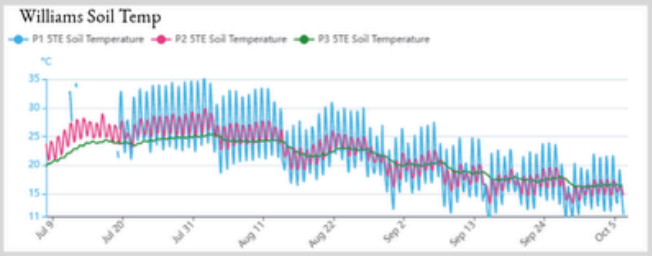


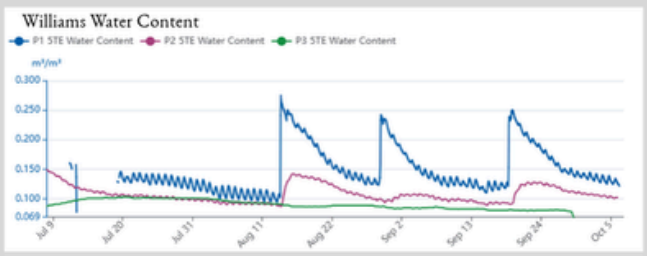


BCD has 2 soil moisture loggers installed in the county. Rankin Pasture is located in the north east part of the county. Williams is located in the south west part of the county.









Canyon Ferry Reservoir						
Date	Current (KAF)	Last Year (KAF)	Median (KAF)	Capacity (KAF)	Current % Capacity	Last Year % Capacity
July 31, 2026	1664.3	1636.8	1681.8	2043	88.2	86.8
August 31, 2026	1563.5	1508.6	1611.3	2043	82.9	79.9

Invasive species

Japanese Beetles in Montana: Fall Prevention and Management

As summer begins to wind down, Montana homeowners, gardeners, landscapers, and nursery operators should keep an eye out for Japanese beetles (*Popillia japonica*). This invasive insect is a serious plant pest that can damage a wide variety of trees, shrubs, flowers, fruits, vegetables, and turfgrass. Japanese beetles have become established in the Billings area, but preventing their spread to new locations remains an important priority for Montana.



Figure 1: Japanese Beetle & skeletonized appearance
Photo Credit: Megan Hoyer

Japanese beetles have a wide host range. Adults feed on numerous plant species, with roses, grapes, cherries, apples, raspberries, and lindens among their preferred hosts. Adults typically emerge from mid to late July and remain active through September. Their feeding creates a characteristic "skeletonized" appearance, where the tissue between leaf veins is consumed while the veins remain intact. Heavy feeding can cause significant defoliation and plant stress.

Why Fall Is Important



Figure 2: Sod/turf damage from Japanese Beetles
Photo Credit: iNaturalist

While the adult beetles may be disappearing by late September, the problem does not necessarily end. Female beetles lay eggs in the soil, particularly in lawns and other grassy areas. The eggs hatch and the developing grubs feed on plant roots throughout the late summer and fall. As temperatures drop, the larger grubs move deeper into the soil to overwinter.

This makes late summer and early fall an important time to monitor turfgrass and take action when Japanese beetles are confirmed. Look for irregular patches of yellowing, thinning, or dying grass. A simple "tug test" can help identify possible grub damage—if sections of turf pull away easily from the soil, investigate beneath the sod for grubs. Keep in mind that several other Montana beetle species also produce white grubs, so proper identification is important.

Prevention Starts with Movement

One of the most important things Montana residents can do is avoid accidentally transporting Japanese beetles or their larvae. The beetle's soil-dwelling life stage creates particular concerns with nursery stock, potted plants, turf, and soil.

When purchasing or moving plants, pay attention to where they originated and avoid transporting potentially infested soil or plant material from areas known to have Japanese beetle populations.

Invasive species

Nurseries and landscapers should follow Montana Department of Agriculture requirements for regulated material and should take particular care when handling plants and growing media.

Homeowners should also inspect plants for adult beetles during the summer and report suspected Japanese beetles.

Managing an Infestation

Management should be based on confirming the pest and determining whether treatment is warranted. Chemical controls are available for both adults and grubs in Montana, but products and application methods change, so always consult the current pesticide label, Montana State University Extension or the Montana Department of Agriculture before treating. Fall treatments targeting grubs are generally most effective before the larvae move deeper into the soil for winter.



Figure 3: Japanese Beetle Grub Treatment option

Japanese beetle traps can be useful for monitoring, but they should be used carefully. The pheromone used in traps can attract beetles from considerable distances and may actually increase beetle activity around plants if traps are placed incorrectly. Traps are therefore better considered a monitoring tool than a stand-alone solution.

If You Find a Suspected Japanese Beetle

If you find a beetle that you suspect is Japanese beetle, collect a specimen if possible and preserve it in rubbing alcohol. Record the location, date, host plant, and other relevant information. Suspected specimens can be submitted to the Montana State University Schutter Diagnostic Lab or the Montana Department of Agriculture for identification. You can also report through the iNaturalist app. Go to www.iNaturalist.org or scan the QR code!

Japanese beetle may be small, but its potential impact is large. Early detection and preventing the movement of beetles and infested soil or plant material are among Montana's best tools for keeping this invasive pest from becoming more widespread. As fall approaches, take a few minutes to inspect your lawn, landscape plants, and nursery stock—and report anything suspicious.



Figure 4: Japanese Beetle
Photo Credit: iNaturalist

NRCS

USDA Increases Investment in Regenerative Pilot Program to Lower Farmer Production Costs and Advance MAHA Agenda

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced increased financial assistance for the Regenerative Pilot Program from $700 million to $1 billion in fiscal year 2027, providing more producers with the opportunity to adopt conservation systems that improve soil health, water quality, and long-term farm resilience. Producers can now apply for assistance with regenerative practices.

Additionally, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is making improvements to the program, including using NRCS's locally led conservation model to allow State Technical Advisory Committees to add conservation practices that reflect local resource concerns, production systems, and producer needs.

Local Working Group Meeting will be held towards the end of the year.

Local Working Groups assist the USDA in matters relating to the implementation and technical aspects of conservation programs under Title II of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill). The Local Working Group may be composed of the local Conservation District (CD), agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock or poultry raised within the local area, nonindustrial private forest land owners, and other professionals representing relevant agricultural and conservation interests and a variety of disciplines in the soil, water, plant, wetland, and wildlife sciences who are familiar with private land agricultural and natural resource issues in the local community.

In prepartion for the Local Working Group Meeting take our Natural Resources Concern Survey BCD Natural Resource Concern Survey

Townsend Service Center
Natural Resources Conservation Service
(406) 266-4253

Montana FSA Updates/Deadlines

Report Banking Changes to FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) program payments are issued electronically into your bank account. In order to receive timely payments, you need to notify your FSA servicing office if you close your account or if your bank information is changed for any reason (such as your financial institution merging or being purchased). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.
If the bank account was closed due to the death of an individual or dissolution of an entity or partnership before the payment was issued, please notify your local FSA office as soon as possible to claim your payment.

Disaster Assistance for 2026 Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in Broadwater County are eligible to apply for 2026 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on non-irrigated grazing acres.
LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land. County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. The Working Families Tax Cut lowered the threshold for producers to qualify for a one-month payment with payments now triggering after four consecutive weeks of qualifying severe drought (D2 on the U.S. Drought Monitor) conditions instead of eight weeks. And producers may receive a two-month payment if D2 drought conditions continue for seven out of eight consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period. The change is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2026. You must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 losses.
For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact the Broadwater County USDA Service Center at 406-266-4253 ext 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Broadwater County FSA Office
Office Hours:
Tuesdays & Wednesdays
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Contact:
Amber Amsbaugh CED
(406) 266-4253 ext 2
amber.amsbaugh@usda.gov

Broadwater Conservation District Community Rentals

Electric Fencing

BCD has 3 sets of electric fencing that can be rented. Cost is $5 per day:

- **Speedrite S500 Solar Powered Fence Charger**
  - **Powers up to 48 km / 30 miles, 100 acres of fence**
- **Speedrite Extreme Poly Wire 800 meter**
  - **2640 ft**
- **Speedrite Wire Spooler**
- **Pigtail 34″ white**
- **Speedrite Bungy Gate 11′ – 23′ wide**

Tree Planter

BCD has a tree planter that is loaded onto a trailer. You will need a 2″ ball and a 6 – prong round or 4 – pin flat plug-in to haul. Will need at least a 40 HP tractor to pull the planter. Tractor needs a 3 pt hitch. Note: This tree planter is over 20 years old.

- **$0.04 per tree up to 1,000 trees**
- **$0.02 per tree over 1,000 trees**

Fabric Layer

Fabric Layer – $0.01 per foot

ATV Broadcast Seeder

145 lb capacity 12V Broadcast Seeder designed to be mounted on an ATV. Adjustable spread with of 5 to 45 feet. Included is a wireless on/off remote. Rental fee is $10 per day with a $100 deposit.

MSU Extension: NO - TILL DRILL RENTAL

Broadwater County MSU Extension is offering county residents a NO – TILL DRILL for lease.

NO-TILL DRILL SPECS:

- **Great Plains 1006 10-foot drill width with 7.5 in spacing**
- **Legume/Small Seed Box**
- **Grass Seed Agitator**
- **At least 75 horsepower tractor required**

- **$20 per acre or a minimum of $400. Acreage is determined using the acre meter on the machine.**
- **$500 security deposit and signed lease agreement are required to hold dates. Deposit is returned after use and inspection by the County Extension Agent or authorized representative.**
- **Leasee must provide transportation for the drill from the Broadwater County Fairgrounds to site of use. It must be towed by tractor or 3/4 ton truck not to exceed more than 20 mph. The leasee must provide the hitch and hitch pin. A light adapter and overwidth signs can be provided if needed.**
- **If drill is returned uncleaned, a $50/hr charge will be assessed to clean it.**

Please call the MSU Extension Office at (406) 266-9242 for more information https://www.montana.edu/extension/broadwater/cropsandlivestock/greatplainsnotilldrill.html

310 Stream Permitting: It's Free, Easy, and the Law

Planning to do work in or near the banks of a perennial stream? You'll need a 310 permit! This permitting process helps protect our local stream and rivers.

Activities subject to permit include, but are not limited to:

- channel changes
- clearing brush or trees along the stream or river
- boat ramps
- roads crossing creeks
- new diversions
- rip rap & stream bank protection
- dams or reservoirs

It's simple and free- obtain your permit easily through our website or by stopping by the Conservation District Office. In case of emergency action, please notify the Broadwater CD via an emergency form within 15 days. Learn more about the 310 process on our website.

Be advised that you are in violation of state law if you perform any of these activities without obtaining a 310 permit.

310 permits are free of charge and are generally valid for one year after the date of issuance.

BCD Monthly Board Meetings

Interested in learning more about what Broadwater Conservation District is doing within the community and how the Board of Supervisors works? Our monthly Board Meetings are open to the public! Our Board Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. We would love for you to join! Now with a virtual option: Online: Microsoft Teams Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 271 090 393 348 1 Passcode: iM35PG9S

BROADWATER
Conservation District

www.broadwatercd.org

broadwatercd@gmail.com or
broadwatercd@macdnet.org

(406) 521-3014

BroadwaterCD

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broadwaterconservation