

VOICE OF THE MISSOURI

Mission Statement

To understand, conserve, and enhance the unique ecological and recreational resources of the Upper Missouri River Watershed.



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UMOWA Updates

by Sherry Meador, UMOWA Board Chair



Photo credit : John Chaffee

I am thrilled with the falling rain as I write and am crossing my fingers for a wet spring. Unfortunately, after a dry winter following a dry summer, the Missouri flows look to be low again this year regardless of springtime precipitation. While keeping in mind the need to give fish a break on high water temp and low flow days, we hope you find the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the Missouri all the same

- We are excited to introduce two new board members, John Smigaj and John Chaffee, in addition to our new outreach/membership coordinator, Kelly Harrison. John Smigaj is a Montana native and is co-founder and current CEO of the outdoor product company Trxstle. John Chaffee is also a Montana native and is in elementary education. Kelly Harrison is native Montanan as well and has worked several years as a guide in western Montana. Her experience in administration, management, and customer service will be a great addition to our team. We were sad to see Jess leave, but new opportunities to influence public policy drew her Eastward.
- UMOWA has completed a revegetation project on the riverbank above Craig with a Fall planting of local trees and shrubs and a spring planting of willows.
- A big win for us this year - we received grant funding from the Noxious Weed Trust Fund to expand our weed management project to more landowners and cooperative groups.
- Thanks to generous donations of lodging from the Missouri River Ranch, and Bill and Elaine Ryan, we are proud to report we raised over \$10,000 in our Winter Raffle!
- UMOWA has completed the first phase of our Aquatic Health Summary report

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with an interactive website we are currently user testing and will have live this summer.

- In collaboration with DEQ, we are expanding our water quality testing to tributaries flowing into Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

- On August 20th UMOWA will be co-hosting the 2nd annual Bashin' Trash river clean-up with the Sun River Watershed Group and Pat Barnes' Trout Unlimited. This event will be followed by our Rendezvous and auction at the new Ten Mile Brewery in Craig. We

hope to see you all there!

- We will be raffling a brand new RO Drift Boat (2022 RO LSG 16') of your choice – winner to be announced at the Rendezvous. Tickets will be available on our website as well as in-person through our board members.

Want to stay in the know and keep current on all the UMOWA projects and events? Be sure to follow us on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and stop by our website frequently.

We appreciate your continued support for UMOWA. ■

Keep 'Em Wet

by John Chaffee, UMOWA Board Member



Imagine hooking a large brown after hours of casting and finally getting it to the boat. You want to capture the moment with a picture but if not done correctly, your big catch may float belly up as it's released and ruin the experience. Catch and release is a practice most fly anglers have embraced because it allows fish to swim away and continue life unharmed which ensures a continuous supply of fish for the future and makes fish slightly smarter which adds challenge to the sport.

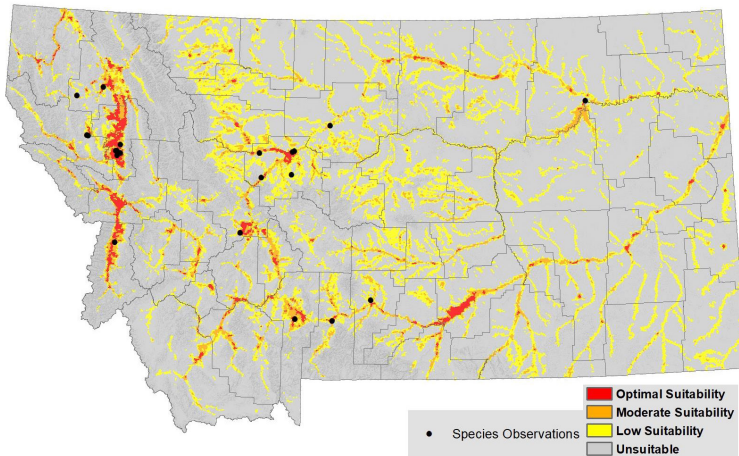
To make your fishing experience positive for both you and the fish, consider a few suggestions. Fish secrete slime that helps them fight off fungal and bacterial infections which is essential to their survival. Remove gloves and wet your hands before touching fish and taking pictures and make sure they only touch wet surfaces. This keeps slime on the fish and protects them against infection. Reduce the amount of time you handle fish as well. Use a rubber net, barbless hooks, and a hook removal device to be more efficient in the time between catch and release.

Fish need water to breathe, so holding a fish out of water is like holding a person under the water. Minimize the time fish are exposed to air or out of the water to 10 seconds or less. Keep fish wet even when taking pictures, especially when they are stressed by warm water temperatures. When handling fish, always hold them over the water or over a net. That way if you drop the fish, it goes safely back into the water rather than in the bottom of the boat which can be significantly harmful. Be creative and photograph fish in or under the water so you can feel good about the experience when you look back. If possible, let your guide hold the fish for the picture. They are usually very good at it and will produce pictures you will be proud of.

When fishing this summer, remember why you love the sport and take small efforts to preserve the health of the watershed and help ensure fish survival. **#KEEPEMWET.** Photo credit: John Chaffee. ■

Noxious Weed Information: Purple Loosestrife

by Josh Wagoner, Noxious Weed Task Force Coordinator



Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a Montana Priority 1B Noxious Weed, meaning it has a limited presence in Montana, and if found, eradication or containment and education is required. It's a riparian plant, growing along shorelines and invading the water on the edges of rivers. The reason it's such a high priority on the state list is because it can spread rapidly, with a single plant capable of producing over 2 million seeds annually, it's difficult to control, and it can easily form dense stands that crowd out native plants. When this happens, it at best alters and disrupts fish habitat, and at worst destroys it. Purple Loosestrife is already found in limited amounts on the Missouri River, mostly in and near Great Falls, and in waterways in the Helena Valley. The potential for it to spread along the Missouri between Helena and Great Falls is high. Plants have easily seen pinkish purples flowers on long spikes at the top of the plant in late summer, the color of which makes them sometimes mistaken for Fireweed or Dame's Rocket. If unsure, the stems can be felt, and they are distinctively square.

Purple Loosestrife is a robust plant and can grow to 6' tall or taller, although it isn't always that big. To prevent it from establishing and diminishing recreation opportunities and habitat, look for it when on the river. **If you suspect you've found it, take a picture and get GPS coordinates, then contact Josh Wagoner, Noxious Weed Task Force Coordinator, (406) 444-7880, Josh.Wagoner@mt.gov or Jasmine Chaffee, State Weed Coordinator, (406) 444-3140, JChaffee@mt.gov, or download the EDDMapS app and report it.**

Quick ID

- Stems can be felt to be distinctly square, five or six-sided, and up to fifty stems per plant.
- Showy pinkish purple flowers on long spikes at the top of the plant, blooming late in the summer, with individual flowers having five or six petals.
- Opposite or whorled, lance-shaped, stemless leaves with smooth margins.
- Plants are often head height or taller at full maturity, although they are regularly smaller too.

Toxicity: Non-toxic

Best Management Practices:

Biological for larger infestations; chemical, but specialized aquatic herbicides must be used and used with appropriate precautions; mechanical, clipping and bagging seed heads and pulling smaller plants, although it is difficult to remove entirety of root system and plants can resprout from stem fragments; it is an escaped ornamental – do not buy seeds or plant in gardens.

Habitat: Canals, ditches, ponds, wetlands, marshes, roadsides, islands, moist soil, shallow water, frequently flooded areas below high-water mark, shorelines of any waterbody.

Root: Taproot and rhizomes

Lifespan: Perennial

Important Information: Can survive 20 months underwater with no plants parts above the water surface; often grows in difficult to access sites, requiring boats and wading; hard to find among other plants in riparian habitat, often intermixed with tall and dense stands of willows or cattails, especially before it flowers, easily being mistaken for plants like wild mint when small; creates monocultures that can impede waterflow and recreation and diminish wetland plant diversity and wildlife habitat. ■



Photo credit left to right: Eric Coombs, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, bugwood.org; Linda Wilson, University of Idaho, bugwood.org.

PO Box 377
Helena, MT 59624

www.umowa.org

<Smart Addressee>
<Address Line 1>
<Address Line 2>
<City>, <State>, <Postal Code>

New Board Members:

John T. Smigaj IV, Board Secretary



I am a fifth generation Helena, MT native and have been finding ways to enjoy the incredible outdoor resources that Montana offers my entire life. I am very proud of and grateful for my Montana heritage and have a passion (read,

“obsession”) for fly fishing and archery hunting. Professionally, I am a Mechanical Engineer (BSME, MSME) and have been fortunate to work in a vast array of industries designing products from electron microscopes and other research instruments to construction tools and equipment, to complete locomotives for the Machu Picchu rail line. I lived and worked in Olympia, WA for about 15 years before finally moving back to Helena. I am the co-founder and current CEO of the outdoor product company Trxstle as well as an acting partner at Oak Avenue Engineering.

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be a part of UMOWA. I’m excited to help raise awareness for this organization through local and national campaigns and believe that this group will continue to make a huge impact on the preservation and improvement of the Upper Missouri River Watershed.

John Chaffee, Board Member



I grew up right here in the Missouri watershed and have spent my entire life recreating in Montana’s wild places. After graduating from Helena High, I attended college at both MSU in Bozeman and UM in Missoula and finished

with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education.

I started my teaching career in the Flathead Valley but moved back to Helena a few years after to be closer to the Missouri River and prime elk country. I spent eight years as a special education teacher with the Helena school district, and recently took on a new adventure teaching at a country school in Canyon Creek. A few years back I started working at Wolf Creek Angler during the summer and now I guide fly fishing trips on the Missouri.

I really enjoy the best of both worlds, teaching during the school year and spending my summers on the river. Montana has been my home for the last 40 years and I know the importance of conserving its wild places so in the future others will be able to have the same recreational opportunities that I’ve been lucky to have enjoyed.