

Conserving, protecting, and restoring coldwater fisheries in Montana's Missouri, Little Blackfoot, and Smith River watersheds.

# PBMR NEWS

PAT BARNES MISSOURI RIVER TU • [www.patbarnestu.org](http://www.patbarnestu.org) • SPRING 2009

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– Thank you for your continued support of the Pat Barnes Missouri River Chapter of Trout Unlimited. –

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**Be sure to update your email address so that you don't miss important messages from TU National and PBMRTU. We periodically send messages with information about upcoming events or other timely chapter news.**

**Contact Membership Chair, Lisa Verzani with questions about Chapter membership, [mtfishgirl@aol.com](mailto:mtfishgirl@aol.com) or 406-449-6702.**



Bob Jacklin shared his passion for fly fishing with approximately 70 people on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> at PBMRTU's annual fly casting clinic. See story on page 11.

## Thank you for your continued support of Trout Unlimited Renew your membership or ask a friend to join today!

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# Dust off your fishing gear-spring is here!

Well it is springtime in the Rockies once again and time to dust off the fly fishing gear and take to the streams. I'm personally looking forward to floating as many Montana Rivers as possible in the upcoming months; at least one river a week ought to be enough.

It has been a very busy year as we wind down and head into summer. Thanks to the hard work of Nola Freestone and her Banquet Committee we had a tremendous banquet for our first time holding the event at the Helena Civic Center. We have received a lot of feedback on the event, the facility, the food, and the good time, so expect us to at least match that effort again next year.

Our Conservation Committee, led by the capable John Wilson, has continued to make strides. A major accomplishment is the successful award of a \$9,500 National TU Embrace a Stream grant for stream rehabilitation work on the Little Blackfoot (see article in this issue), and committee member Arne Wick is hard at work representing the Chapter on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Task Force.

Geof Ferguson and Lisa Verzani have managed another successful Trout in the Classroom year for 10 Helena area classrooms. Geof also provided support so that the Whitehall schools could start up a program. As Geof retires from his position as Trout in the Classroom coordinator, we would like to thank him for his hard work over the past six years. Members interested in helping with the Trout in the Classroom project should contact me at [therbert@bresnan.net](mailto:therbert@bresnan.net).

And we have begun an exciting new program, the Montana Healing Waters Project. This will represent Montana's first Chapter with the National Healing Waters Project, a program devoted to assisting in the rehabilitation of veterans through the healing processes that fly fishing offers. Please consider assisting in this program, and if so please contact Garrett Fawaz at [noclearline@hotmail.com](mailto:noclearline@hotmail.com).

Indeed it has been a busy and productive year. Have a great fishing-filled summer, and be safe.



*Tony Herbert is a long time Helena resident and conservation-minded fisherman.*



Board of Director Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month from September through April. Non-board members are invited and encouraged to attend.

**President, Tony Herbert**  
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PBMR News is a quarterly publication of the Pat Barnes Missouri River Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Chapter 055. It is published by and for the members of the Chapter. © 1980-2009.

Articles, letters, and artwork related to conservation, restoration, and preservation of Montana's coldwater fisheries are welcome. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit any material submitted. Guidelines for submission format, methods, and deadlines are available upon request by emailing [patbarnestu@gmail.com](mailto:patbarnestu@gmail.com), or calling publications coordinator, Melissa Brown 406/495 2309.

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## 2009 Legislative Wrap-Up

by Mark Aagenes

Montana has now completed 61 legislative sessions, as with all others before there were high points and low points.

From the outside this session probably seemed fairly amicable where legislators largely got along with one another.

From the inside, however, it seemed like a very different beast. I can't help but think of the bumper sticker that says, "if you aren't outraged you aren't paying attention!" because so many legislators wanted to blame the downturn of the economy on our "strict" environmental laws. Therefore, the goal seemed to be to create a process where little or no public review or input was necessary on any new industrial development. Montana Trout Unlimited is actively trying to balance the needs of an open and interactive public process with the ability to permit and develop SB 475, our oil and gas notification bill, being a good example.

All that said we did have some significant victories this session. The most public and obvious is the **passage of the bridge access bill**, HB 190. Even after 16 months of careful negotiations with diverse interests Sponsor Rep. Kendall Van Dyk (D-Billings) was tireless in his efforts to pass this bill. The end result is great for anglers, recreationists and landowners. The bill allows the public to utilize every county road right of way in Montana to access the stream or river. It also allows for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to build gates, stiles or walkovers where it seems necessary or where disputes may have arisen. There are not many problem areas out there right now but as property and ranches change hands this bill is critical to protect our rights and opportunities.

The Legislature also greatly improved

**requirements for notifying the public** when the State proposes to lease state tracts for oil and gas development. Sponsored by Sen. John Esp (R-Livingston), SB 425 requires greater up-front notification, wider circulation of published information on leasing proposals and high quality maps on Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's (DNRC) website. Problems in the way Montana's DNRC notifies the public were apparent when the agency proposed lease sales last year along and under the Yellowstone and Boulder Rivers.

### Additional Advances for Conservation

Working with local irrigators and a bipartisan cadre of legislators, Montana TU worked hard to convince the Legislature to approve \$13 million in money bills, HB 5 and HB 8, for **repairs at the Ruby River Dam** in Madison County. Significantly, this appropriation includes money to expand the storage capacity of the reservoir so that the extra stored water will be available for maintaining instream flows downstream in the Jefferson River. Once this project is completed, it will provide significant benefits to the Ruby and Jefferson's fishery.

Secondary, but still important, priorities of Montana TU that passed included SB 200, sponsored by Sen. Ron Erickson (D-Missoula), a bill **banning the use of phosphates in dish detergent**. Phosphates in detergents are a leading source of nutrient pollution that occurs in some surface waters. Also passing was SB 343, introduced by Sen. Verdell Jackson (R-Kalispell), it establishes authority for



*Passage of HB 190 was a significant victory this legislative season. This bill allows the public to utilize every county road right of way in Montana to access the stream or river.*

a state agency initiative **preventing and responding to invasions of harmful non-native aquatic species**, such as quagga mussels and zebra mussels. Further, the Legislature approved millions in bonding **authority to help pay for lands acquired from Plum Creek** through the efforts of Sen. Max Baucus and the Nature Conservancy. Though not as romantic as the bridge access bill but arguably more important were a number of good pieces of legislation that **protects Montana's instream flows**. HB 39 HB 40 and HB41 are all bills that were sponsored by Rep Jill Cohenour (D-East Helena). Her leadership during the interim on the water policy committee was crucial to getting these important bills passed.

### Bills That Didn't Go Our Way

The session included several disappointments. SB 437, sponsored by Sen. Gary Perry (R-Manhattan), would have required owners of new fish ponds that use groundwater to

WRAP UP continued on page 5 ...

# PBMRTU and MRFF Team Up for a Productive Missouri River Clean-up Day

by Garrett Fawaz

With trash bags, gloves and drift boat in hand, several chapter members participated in the annual Missouri River clean up on April 18, 2009. This was a very successful joint effort between PBMRTU, members of the Missouri River Fly Fishers TU Chapter (Great Falls), local river residents and the Montana Department of Transportation. Between the two chapters and residents, trash was collected along the river and the river



*Dennis Cates proudly displays a bag of trash collected during the Missouri River clean up day that took place this April.*

frontage road from Holter Dam to Pelican Point. A very gracious Frank Cooper hosted a BBQ of bratwurst and hamburgers for all of the hungry participants at his cabin near the

Stickney Creek boat access site-Thanks Frank! **Both chapters wish to thank all of the participants for their time and support and look forward to continuing this event next year.**

...WRAP UP continued from page 4

obtain a groundwater permit. It passed the Senate by a large margin, but once it hit the House it was tabled by a tie vote in committee – the result of a wave of misinformation and hyperbole generated by consultants who make money from building new ponds, brokers of recreational ranch properties who profit from well-to-do clients who want ponds, and current pond owners who were told, incorrectly, that the measure would deem existing ponds illegal. Because the bill didn't pass, it means that pond development will continue apace in the state without any

consideration of how this consumptive water use affects nearby streams or senior water rights.

Also disappointing was passage of a measure that will result in all anglers, and perhaps hunters, paying for operation and maintenance of the sprawling, overbuilt, warmwater species hatchery at Fort Peck. SB 425, sponsored by Sen. Keith Bales (R-Otter), eliminates the 1999 commitment when the hatchery was authorized in which warmwater anglers agreed to pay for operation and maintenance at the hatchery with proceeds from a \$5 stamp

required for most warmwater angling.

Once again, we can put another legislative session to bed and look forward to the next. Critical to our success was our grassroots' effort and time spent contacting their legislators and testifying. This is definitely a team effort and we are already working on creating a better system next session to get even more TU members involved. If you have further questions about any of the MTU legislative priorities please contact Mark Aagenes at Montana Trout Unlimited 449-9933 or [mark@montanatu.org](mailto:mark@montanatu.org)

## Little Blackfoot and Merritt Spring Creek Rehabilitation Projects Underway This Summer

by John Wilson

*Through the leadership of the PBMRTU Conservation Committee the chapter has engaged as a financial and work partner in two important trout stream rehabilitation projects scheduled to begin this summer.*

### Little Blackfoot River

This project will restore fish habitat, stream channel integrity, and riparian health in a 2.6 mile section of the Little Blackfoot River on the RV Ranch from Telegraph Creek to the Highway 12 crossing near Elliston, Montana. The project area is in need of restoration due to degraded fish habitat, unstable channel geometry, eroding streambanks, degraded riparian vegetation, and infestations of noxious weeds. These problems have been created by a combination of the effects of historical floods, past stream channel and stream bank alterations, and livestock over-use. An assessment performed on 32 miles of the Little Blackfoot River from the Helena National Forest boundary to the Clark Fork River in 2001 by the Deer Lodge

Valley Conservation District ranked this 2.6 mile reach as the second highest priority for restoration based on severity of problems, restoration feasibility, and potential for recovery.

The Little Blackfoot River from its headwaters to its mouth has been identified as a “core area” for native bull trout. Westslope cutthroat trout are present throughout the entire Little Blackfoot watershed but in limited numbers. The project area also supports populations of brown and brook trout, as well as mountain whitefish.

The overall project is a joint venture between the Deer Lodge Conservation District, Montana Upper Clark Fork Natural Resources Damage Program, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks’ Future Fisheries Program and PBMRTU. PBMRTU’s financial contribution came in part from a grant from TU National’s Embrace a Stream program.

Our hats are off to the landowners of the RV Ranch for their willingness to undertake this restoration effort and maintain it as well.

The primary goals of this Upper Little Blackfoot River Restoration Project are to improve trout habitat, stream channel and riparian integrity, and water quality. Secondary goals are to implement improved grazing management practices, to enhance

recreational opportunities in the Little Blackfoot River, and to encourage other similar restoration projects by demonstrating methods and benefits to area landowners and watershed stakeholders.

There are five components of the overall project as listed below. PBMRTU is participating solely in component # 2 - Enhance fish habitat and stabilize actively eroding banks, and #5 - Public Education.

#### 1. Adjust channel geometry.

Localized adjustments in channel geometry are recommended in order to better mimic natural conditions. Locations requiring adjustments are generally associated with areas of excessive bank erosion and geometry adjustment will be incorporated into bank stabilization techniques. River sections with overly wide/shallow channel will be narrowed and deepened.

#### 2. Enhance fish habitat and stabilize actively eroding banks.

Channel stabilization measures are required in order to curb erosion and allow revegetation to be successful. Accelerated bank erosion will continue unless some form of bank stabilization is applied at selected sites. Erosion is generally associated with lack of bank side riparian vegetation and sediment deposition associated with bank erosion immediately upstream. The selected bank treatment options will increase resistance to shear stress and erosion during the short term until riparian



*Increasing width/depth ratio and declining vegetative condition.*

vegetation can become established to the degree that is able to provide natural control of bank erosion. In the long term, these banks will be allowed to migrate but at a much slower rate, thus allowing the riparian vegetation to become established on the point bars while maintaining a functional width/depth ratio.

Structural improvements and overhead cover are also needed within the project area to create and enhance available fish habitat. The diversity of fish habitat types is low within the project area and habitat features such as pools, undercut banks, overhanging vegetation, root wads, woody debris jams, and rock clusters are limited. Fish habitat components will be incorporated into the design techniques for stabilizing banks and adjusting the channel geometry. At least 50 bank stabilization/fish habitat structures, including rootwads, log vanes and woody debris jams, are planned in addition to reconstructing 515 feet of streambanks with major erosion problems. Two large woody debris jams will also be created to emulate similar habitat features elsewhere in the project reach.

- 3. Restore and protect riparian vegetation.** The long-term health and functionality of the river will be dependent on the establishment of a healthy riparian vegetative community. The plant community will need to be mature enough to control meander migration rates and to dissipate flood flow energy. All reconstructed and disturbed areas within the project area will be revegetated with native transplants and sprigs, reseeded with native seed, and treated for noxious weeds. An estimated minimum of 120 mature willow

plants and 5,000 dogwood, willow, and cottonwood sprigs will be planted in the project area. Species will be selected that are native to and commonly found in the Little Blackfoot drainage.

- 4. Maintain project improvements and monitor their effectiveness.** Long term success of the project is contingent on working with the landowner following project construction to protect and enhance the riparian corridor through the restored project reach. This protection will include riparian fencing and development of a grazing management plan. The riparian corridor throughout the project area will be excluded from grazing for at least 5 years after the project construction has been completed to allow riparian vegetation to mature and the streambanks to stabilize. A “before-and-after” monitoring plan will be implemented to evaluate changes in aquatic habitat, stream channel, riparian, fisheries, water quality and land use variables over time in order to gauge project success, evaluate grazing management relative to riparian restoration goals, and to make appropriate adjustments.
- 5. Public education.** Significant value can be added to this project by sharing restoration methods and demonstrating overall benefits with area landowners, watershed stakeholders, and the interested public. Following full implementation of the on-



*Unstable banks, declining riparian vegetation and limited fish habitat in mid/lower project reach.*

the-ground improvements, one or more public tours will be arranged in cooperation with the Deer Lodge Valley Conservation District and PBMRTU. The purpose of the tour(s) will be to demonstrate innovative and cost-effective restoration measures, to explain project benefits, and to encourage landowner interest in pursuing additional restoration projects within the Little Blackfoot watershed.

The overall project is fully funded with PBMRTU contributing \$11,000 cash plus in-kind labor to the fisheries enhancement component. The total cost of the fisheries enhancement component is \$59,058. The project is currently in the environmental permitting phase and work is scheduled to begin this summer.

## Volunteer labor needed

PBMRTU members who wish to get their hands dirty by contributing volunteer in-kind labor during the restoration phase should contact John Wilson, conservation Committee Chair at [jwilmt@msn.com](mailto:jwilmt@msn.com).

*PROJECTS* continued on page 8 ...

# Conservation

...PROJECTS continued from page 7

## Merrit Spring Creek Channel Restoration

The goal of this project is to restore the Merrit spring creek for spawning purposes by migratory trout from Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena.

Merrit Spring Creek is a tributary to Lake Helena and Hauser Reservoir. The creek has consistent flows and a temperature regime favorable for wild trout spawning. The creek is one of a limited number of spawning tributaries to Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena and arguably the best candidate for rehabilitation for trout spawning and recruitment. Past agricultural practices channelized the creek removing the natural oxbows converting it into a straight ditch.

This project will add and enhance more natural channel length and improve salmonid spawning and rearing habitat. It is being completed in cooperation with the landowner and in partnership with Pennsylvania Power and Light (PP&L) Montana (Steve Leathe former Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks biologist now heads up fisheries research and rehabilitation for PP&L). Specifically, the straightened channel will be returned to its original meandering location at the upper and



lower ends of the project area (see map on page 9). Re-routing into the old channel in these locations results in a new channel length of 5,445 feet.

Re-routing of creek into old natural channel will occur in two locations. Sods and functional riparian vegetation will be stockpiled and used to protect and enhance the new channel. Spawning gravel will be added to approximately 180 tailouts. The landowner has agreed to long-term grazing contracts which will protect the rehabilitated section of the creek

PBMRTU is a financial partner in this project and will provide in-kind labor as requested. The estimated total cost of the project is \$47,200. While the creek will be closed to angling during spawning periods, the landowner has agreed to allow angling at other times of the year on a case by case basis. Stop and ask.

**For more information contact PBMRTU Conservation Committee Chair, John Wilson at [jwilmt@msn.com](mailto:jwilmt@msn.com)**

## UPDATE: Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan Workgroup

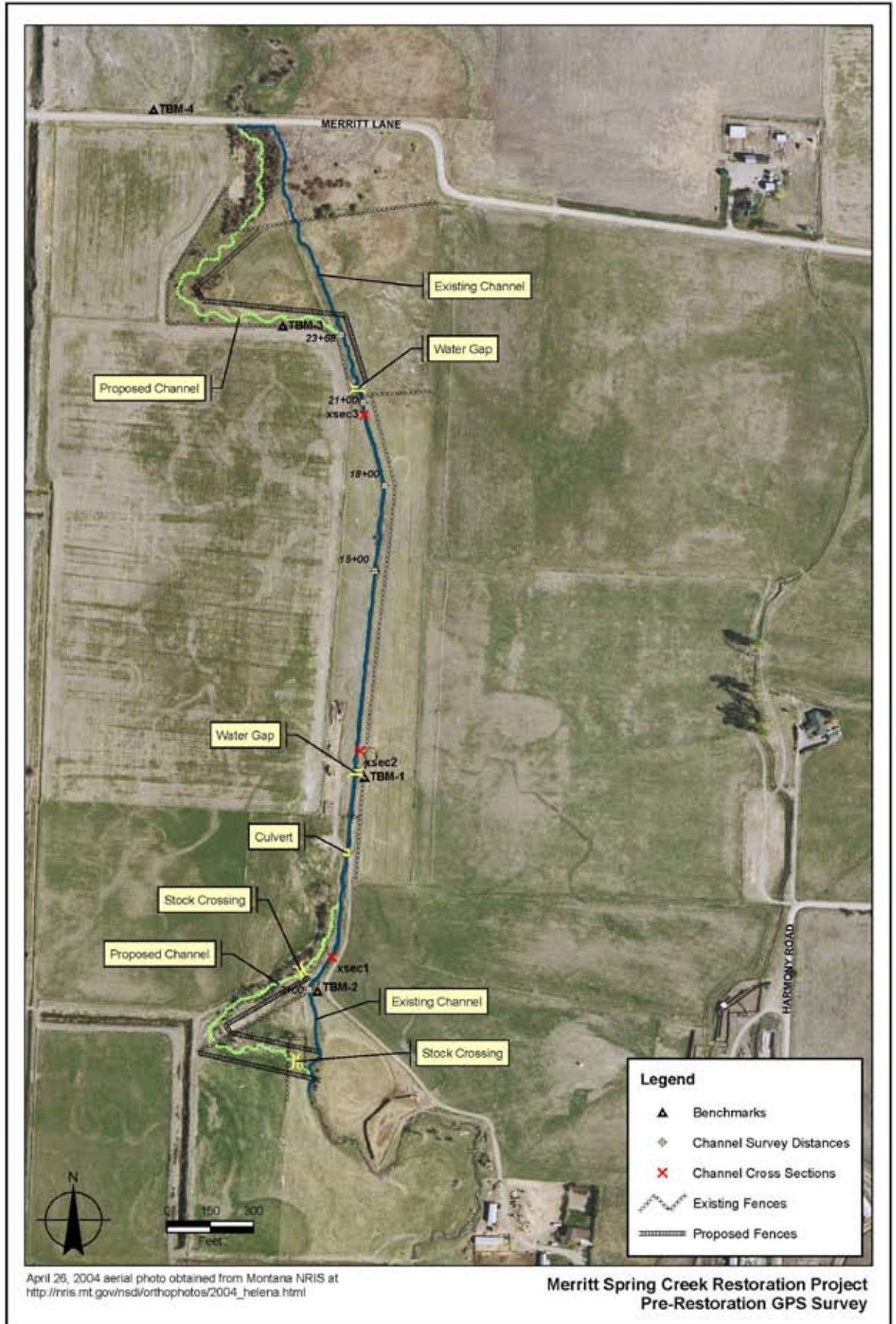
The PBMRTU Conservation Committee is currently representing the chapter at UMRRFMP workgroup meetings. Meetings have occurred monthly since January. The workgroup continues to review fisheries data covering the last 10 year management cycle on the Upper Missouri

River Reservoir system. Additionally, the current UMRRFMP management plan is being reviewed. The workgroup is moving toward development of consensus management alternatives which will be recommended to FWP. Alternatives will likely be submitted to Montana Fish, Wildlife &

Parks by October 2009.

**Please submit questions, suggestions or concerns to: [arnewick@hotmail.com](mailto:arnewick@hotmail.com).**

# Map of Merritt Spring Creek channel restoration project area



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# Annual Banquet a Great Success

by Nola Freestone

Thanks to the tremendous support of our members and sponsors, the annual fund raising banquet held on March 21, 2009 was a huge success. The Helena Civic Center was our new location this year and everyone enjoyed dinner catered by Chili O'Brien's.

The fine art, fishing gear, gift certificates and many other gifts were donated by generous business owners and local artists. This resulted in the PBMRTU raising enough capital to continue funding the numerous projects currently on our agenda. Remember to shop locally and support the

businesses that support Trout Unlimited.

Mike Cooney donated his time as the auctioneer and Mike McNeilly volunteered as the event Master of Ceremonies. Staff members from Anderson ZurMuehlen were on hand to handle the bookkeeping details for the evening.

Trout in the Classroom students and teachers were in attendance and gave an entertaining speech telling us all how much they enjoy having trout in the classroom sponsored by our local chapter.



The Helena Civic Center provided a refreshing atmosphere for the 2009 banquet.

**Thanks again to  
all of you for your  
participation in this  
annual event.**

*Banquet coordinator, Nola Freestone, poses with one of several students from Helena area schools who shared their experiences with the Trout in the Classroom program.*



## Thanks Banquet Donors

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Stefano's  
Taco Del Sol  
The Base Camp  
The Man Store  
The Trout Shop  
Tony Perpignano  
Topper's Cellar  
Valley Bank  
Z101

# Jacklin Gives Another Winner of a Fly Casting Clinic

by Lisa Verzani

Bob Jacklin, owner of Bob Jacklin Fly Shop in West Yellowstone, shared his passion for fly fishing with approximately 70 people on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> at PBMRTU's annual fly casting clinic. This year the event was held at East Valley Middle School and proved to be a success for all involved.

Jacklin taught about the theory of fly casting, choosing equipment for fishing and answered many questions about the sport. He provided instruction on several casts, including the roll cast, which is great when fishing along brush and trees. He encouraged the use of targets for practicing your casting for consistency.

He taught about the importance of control of the line (quality) over how far you can cast (quantity). He noted that people want to cast as far as the can to reach a fish when in most cases fish will be within 20-30 feet of you.

Jacklin encourages you to get out and fish, try new areas and enjoy the sport by yourself or with others. Everyone has a "special" cast they can call their own, but remember the basics and you will go far.

A special thanks to the chapter members, Gary Stocker with Montana Fly Goods, Cross Currents and all others who assisted in the success of the day.

# A New Partnership: Project Healing Waters and Pat Barnes Missouri River TU

by Garrett Fawaz

*"It's the whole notion of being on the water and getting your mind off things."* Tony Herbert - President, PBMRTU

With this simple statement and the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, PBMRTU officially became a sponsoring partner with Project Healing Waters, Inc., forming the Montana chapter. Project Healing Waters is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active duty military personnel and veterans through fly fishing and fly tying education and outings. The close proximity of the VA hospital at Fort Harrison and the support of PBMRTU will positively benefit Montana veterans receiving VA care and those serving in the Montana National Guard.

The Montana Chapter of Project Healing Waters has already established a management team, including six local community members: Randy Dix, Garrett Fawaz, Bob Gomes, Carroll Jenkins, David Lechner, and Jim Smith.

The team recently held its first meeting where they began to formalize their 2009 objectives, establish selected business processes, and develop a calendar of events.

The significant objectives for 2009 are:

1. Organize a one-day Missouri River float trip in August for a group of 6 to 8 Veterans.
2. Organize two, 2-hour fly-tying sessions.
3. Organize one or two half-day group fly-casting lessons.
4. Develop a strategic communication plan that includes all media venues, VA, Montana National Guard, private businesses, and Veteran associations.

As the team continues to develop over the next few months, look for more information on up-coming events on the PBMRTU website and in your local media venues.

PBMRTU is truly honored and thankful for the ability to support brave and professional Montana Veterans and their families.

To learn more about Project Healing Waters, visit their website:

[www.projecthealingwaters.org](http://www.projecthealingwaters.org)



## From the Eyes of an Egg: Trout in the Classroom

by Lisa Verzani

I was spawned on December 16, 2008 and first eyed (my little black eyes “popped” out so you could see them) on January 1, 2009. My mom is a four year old female rainbow trout weighing in at six pounds and 27” in length. My dad is also a rainbow trout and three years old, four pounds and 23” in length. I am one of 8,000 eggs that came to be. I am one of approximately 900 eggs that traveled from the Jocko Fish Hatchery in Arlee, Montana to be placed in the aquariums in the Helena area for the Trout in the Classroom project. The students check the aquariums daily to make sure I have the right PH and ammonia levels so I can live and grow safely.

Around January 12th I started my first transformation from the egg stage. I became a sac fry. At this stage I start to develop into my body – my head and spine are formed and I have a large belly “sac” that I eat from. I am wiggling around at this time but unable to swim. Around mid-February I transformed into a small fingerling and started to swim around. I am fed tropical fish food or shrimp brine at this time. The temperature of the aquarium will range from 50 – 60 degrees. The warmer the water the larger I will grow but too warm of water is damaging to me as it will heat me up too much. Mid-May to the first of June the students will release me into either Spring Meadow Lake or the duck pond at the Fairgrounds. I will be around 2-3 inches at this time and be ready to join others and grow nice and big. Maybe you will cast your line in the lake and catch me next year!

One of the goals of the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program is to incorporate fish anatomy (how they grow and develop) and the importance of water quality and natural resources. The students are able to incorporate the program into their English, Math, Science and Art classes just to name

a few. Schools have many projects during the spring that they take part in celebrating my life and progress, some of which are celebrations at the release in May.

If you would like to visit me this spring, I can be found at the following elementary schools; Broadwater, Smith, Central, Hawthorne and Warren or CR Anderson Middle School, Helena Middle School or East Valley Middle School, Helena High School or Capital High School. Broadwater, Smith, Central and Hawthorne have me in common areas so it makes it easy for you to stop by and ask about me. Come on by, I'd love to

see you and have you check me out along with my other fingerlings!

This year we started a new program with local companies assisting in the costs of this program. We are proud to announce that Valley Bank of Helena is our first sponsor to assist in costs associated with TIC.

If you would like to be part of the TIC program or would like to be a sponsor of the program, please contact Lisa Verzani at [mtfishgirl@aol.com](mailto:mtfishgirl@aol.com) or 406-449-6702.



Students watch tiny trout hatch and develop in coldwater tanks as part of the Trout in the Classroom program sponsored by PBMRTU

