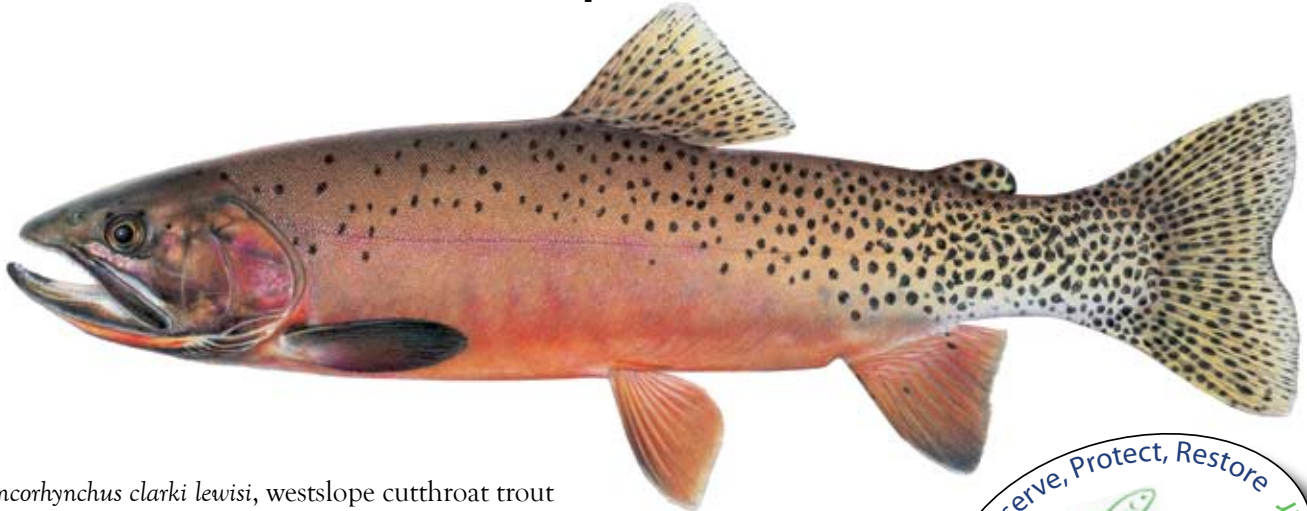


Conserving, protecting, and restoring coldwater fisheries in Montana's Missouri, Little Blackfoot, and Smith River watersheds.

PBMIR NEWS

PAT BARNES MISSOURI RIVER TU • www.patbarnestu.org • WINTER 2009

Get your tickets for the **Annual Banquet, March 21, 2009.** See page 8 for details.



Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi, westslope cutthroat trout

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NEW STICKER FOR CHAPTER SUPPORTERS INSIDE!



PAT BARNES MISSOURI RIVER CHAPTER
Chapter No. 055
PO Box 275
Helena, MT 59624-0275
info@patbarnestu.org

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

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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 info@patbarnestu.org, or calling publications coordinator, Melissa Brown 406/495 2309.

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To reach board members by email, send messages with the board member's name in the subject line to info@patbarnestu.org.

Wear Them Proudly!

As many of us let our fly rods rest for just a bit (though I suspect there are some of you hardcores out there right now) and move into the end of the year, the Chapter board has been busy in many areas. Our Conservation Committee, led by the capable hands of John Wilson, has been active in the development of a National Embrace a Stream grant for \$9,500 for stream bank remediation and habitat improvement on the Little Blackfoot River. This is joint project with the R/V Ranch on a 2 1/2-mile stretch of the river above the Elliston bridge.

John Wilson, Arne Wick, and Mark Aagenes provided comments on behalf of the Chapter regarding the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Smith River Management Plan recently released. Public comments were due by mid January and this team provided comments regarding fisheries issues within the plan, and are intending to avoid some of the other management issues raised in the plan.

Arne Wick was nominated by the Chapter and selected by FWP to join the FWP Citizens Workgroup for the Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan for 2010-2019. This group will lead an effort to identify, define, and recommend fish management alternatives related to Holter, Hauser, and Canyon Ferry Reservoirs, and their river system. The group will conclude its recommendations by the end of 2009. The board appreciates Arne's willingness to represent us; we know he will do a great job.

Our Trout in the Classroom (TIC) Project is off and running, with eggs arriving in the first week of January. Geof Ferguson and Liza Verzani will work with ten (10) area schools to share these eggs, monitor their improvement, work with the teachers and the students throughout the year, and work towards a successful release of the fry in the spring. Our TIC program is the largest and most successful in the State, and Geof is even assisting a classroom in Whitehall in starting a program. Look for updates relating to the program and the release of the fry at Spring Meadow Lake or the Fairgrounds pond.

Our annual banquet fund raiser is scheduled for Saturday, March 21, and for the first time ever will be held at the Helena Civic Center. Nola Freestone is leading this effort and is pushing for a new environment, with new food (catered by Chili O'Brien's), a new program, and great auction items. With many new members in attendance it is sure to lead to a great event, and I hope that you will plan to attend. Mark your calendar and invite a friend or two. It should be memorable.

One last activity is the development of new chapter stickers (mailed with this newsletter). Place one on your vehicle, and/or boat, or trailer to help raise awareness in the community about the issues we represent. Hopefully many will note that there are a good number of us trout enthusiast around. Wear them proudly, and if you need more just let us know.

Happy New Year!



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.



Fly Tying: Feb. 11

Nola Freestone and friends will provide fly tying demonstrations of streamers, nymphs, wet flies and various dry flies including attractor patterns and hoppers as well as traditional dry fly patterns. Several tables will be set up in a large conference room so that everyone has a hands-on experience. This popular event is free and open to the public. Refreshments provided.

LOCATION: Knights of Columbus
DATE: Wednesday, February 11, 2009
TIME: 7:00-9:00 PM

Free Casting Clinic: May 2, 2009

Certified casting instructor from West Yellowstone Bob Jacklin will teach a free casting clinic for the general public. Whether you are a beginner or an advanced level fly caster, Bob comes with excellent tips and instruction, including roll casts, target casting for accuracy and consistency, and one-on-one coaching outdoors. After lunch (provided) Jacklin will present a slide presentation about leaders, tippet, reading water, and many other topics. If you are interested in assisting with the clinic through sponsorship or volunteering your time, please contact our clinic chairperson, Lisa Verzani at mtfishgirl@aol.com.

LOCATION: East Valley Middle School
DATE: May 2, 2009
TIME: 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Annual Banquet: March 21, 2009

LOCATION: Helena Civic Center
DATE: March 21, 2009
See page 8 for more details.

Fisheries Report Well Attended

Thanks to Grant Grisak, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Fisheries Biologist for his presentation of the "Missouri River Fisheries Report" on January 15. Grisak's account of the state of the fishery provided interesting insight into the effects of Missouri River water flows and water temperatures on brown and rainbow trout populations over the past several years. As usual, this annual event was well attended.

Wick Selected to Join Citizen Workgroup

Conservation Committee member Arne Wick was selected by Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks to be a member of the Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan Workgroup. The Workgroup was invited to serve based on interest in working in a collaborative process to evaluate management alternatives on the upper Missouri reservoir system. The workgroup is scheduled to meet monthly. Feel free to contact Arne (arnewick@hotmail.com), with questions, suggestions or concerns.

Smith River Plan Released

The Smith River Management Plan Draft was released recently by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. PBMRTU comments were submitted by the Conservation Committee. Priorities include habitat as well as management and implementation of revenues placed into the Corridor Enhancement Account (CEA). The formal comment period ended January 30, 2009.



PBMRTU Board Welcomes Lehl

Brian Lehl joined the PBMRTU board of directors this winter. Brian is a fly fisher, Alaska fishing guide, and owner of Wapiti Green Builders, a sustainable building firm located in Helena, Montana.

13 Join PBMRTU

As of January 15, 2009, PBMRTU has 380 members representing 41 different zip codes! Welcome to these 13 new members:

Douglas Baranek, MSU - Bozeman,
Joshua Crunk, Isaac Henslee, Cliff
Hobbs, Joey Holmlund, Steve Lynn,
Chris Moraifolri, Earl O Neil, Ted E.
Obroslnski, Victoria Speer, Jim Turner,
Elisabeth Van Woert

Visit www.tu.org to join or renew your TU membership. Be sure to select Chapter #055, the Pat Barnes Missouri River Chapter.



Chapter E-mail and Website on the Fritz

The chapter's email address, info@patbarnestu.org, and website, www.patbarnestu.org have been out of order since early December. We are working to get these services back up and running as soon as possible. In the meantime, if you need to contact the chapter, please email or call chapter president, Tony Herbert at therbert@bresnan.net, 406 449 7252. Thank you for your patience as we work to resolve this issue.

EDITORS NOTE: *The following article is adapted from an excerpt used with permission from an issue paper produced by Natural Resource Defense Council and Montana Trout Unlimited. We recommend that you go to www.montanatu.org for a complete detailed version of the issue paper.*

Principal Author: Steven Kinsella; **Contributing Authors:** Theo Spencer, Natural Resources Defense Council, Bruce Farling, Montana Trout Unlimited; **Adapted by:** John Wilson

FEELING THE HEAT

CASE STUDIES ON THE IMPACTS OF GLOBAL WARMING ON TWO MONTANA RIVERS



BIG SKY FISHING [www.bigskyfishing.com]

Big Hole River

A famous trout fishery, and one of the last of a handful of free-flowing rivers in the West, the Big Hole is considered by many to be Montana's most beautiful river. It begins in the Beaverhead Mountains as the outlet of Skinner Lake, and then flows for 155 miles before emptying into the Jefferson River near Twin Bridges, Montana.

Known worldwide as an incredibly diverse fishery, the Big Hole is home to wild populations of rainbow, brown, cutthroat, and brook trout. The river has been considered one of the nation's most vibrant fishing destinations and is referred to as "Montana's last best river."

While the Big Hole is well known for its populations of wild trout, it also contains the last population of native stream-dwelling, or fluvial, arctic grayling in the lower 48 states. The fluvial grayling is a member of the trout family. Its most distinguishing feature is its large dorsal fin. Although a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act,¹² the

federal government has thus far refused to list the fish, a decision that has been widely criticized.¹³ Still, ask anyone in Montana which trout fishing river system will likely feel the greatest impacts due to global warming, and many will cite the Big Hole. The health of the Big Hole, like other free-flowing rivers in the interior West, depends heavily upon snowpack. The river is almost completely dependent on snowpack-based runoff from the Beaverhead, Pioneer, and Anaconda Mountains.

The ongoing 10-year drought in Montana—coupled with decreased snowpack, earlier snowmelt, and air temperatures that were 2.1 degrees Fahrenheit warmer from 2003 to 2007 than the average for the period from 1901 to 2000—has decreased flows on the Big Hole and increased its water temperatures.¹⁴ Irrigation withdrawals from the river have further compounded the problem of low flows.

Records compiled by the U.S. Geological Survey have revealed that the Big Hole historically enjoyed healthy fish sustaining flows. In recent years, though, spring and summer flows on the river have at times dropped dramatically.

In the summer of 2007, near Wisdom, Montana, flows on that section of the river were a mere 13 percent of median flow—far less than levels fisheries experts have determined necessary for minimum survival conditions for the river's coldwater fish.¹⁵

A voluntary drought management plan was established on the Big Hole in 1997, and as a result the river has seen

mandatory fishing closures on many of its reaches during the past nine summers. In some reaches, closures have been put in place every summer to help protect its resident trout and grayling from stress caused by fishing.¹⁶

The current problems experienced by the Big Hole—low flows and high temperatures brought on by drought, reduced snowpack, and irrigation withdrawals—could be compounded dramatically by further warming and climate changes. The river's trout face a great deal of uncertainty if stream conditions continue to deteriorate. Recent stream surveys have shown decreased populations of spawning-age grayling—less than 30 per mile on some reaches of the river—which biologists attribute to low flows in the spring when the fish traditionally spawn, as well as diminished water in summer when temperatures are high. And according to a 2005 environmental assessment by the State of Montana, populations of brown and rainbow trout have also decreased significantly on portions of the river due to drought and increased stream temperatures.¹⁷

For the angling industry in the region, any negative impact on the Big Hole will be widely felt. According to a survey conducted by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, in 2001 and 2002, nonresident tourists spent more than \$25 million, including \$1.4 million on outfitters, in Beaverhead County, which includes most of the Big Hole River. The survey also concluded that 17 percent of those surveyed identified fishing as the primary attraction in the county.¹⁸

“Feeling the Heat” is a continuation from the story, “Trout in Trouble” in our last issue, which examined the impacts of climate change on the West and suggested ways that each of us can help address the issue. See the Fall 2008 issue of PBMR News for this story, or visit www.montanatu.org for a complete detailed version of the original paper.



BIG SKY FISHING [www.bigskyfishing.com]

Big Horn River

One of the most famous trout fishing destinations in the world, the Bighorn River in Montana has in the past been synonymous with large populations of big trout. The fishery has been so robust that fish counts during the 1980s found as many as 11,000 wild rainbow and brown trout per mile in the tailwater section of the river.¹⁹

The construction of Yellowtail Dam and the Bighorn Reservoir near Fort Smith in 1965 created the famous tailwater fishery. And while one might think that the existence of the reservoir—which backs up more than 70 miles of water into canyons hundreds of feet deep—would make the cold-water fishery below the dam impervious to the impacts of global warming, the opposite could be true.

Prolonged drought and reduced snowpack, two of the more commonly predicted features of global warming, have caused reservoir elevations in recent years to drop to some of the lowest levels since the dam was built. In the fall of 2007, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation reported that inflows to Bighorn Reservoir had fallen to 54 percent of average. That announcement confirmed that yearly inflows into the lake had fallen below

normal for seven years.²⁰ At times reservoir levels have fallen so low that some boat launches on the lake have become unusable. Not coincidentally, data from the U.S. Western Regional Climate Center showed that Montana recorded its hottest July ever in 2007.²¹

For the fabled 13-mile trout fishery below the reservoir, reduced inflows into the reservoir have meant bad news. The Bureau of Reclamation reduced flows down the river in 2007 to as low as 1,500 cubic feet per second

to help raise reservoir levels. Those releases were well below the 2,500 cubic feet per second that fisheries experts believe is necessary, in the long term, to sustain healthy trout populations. State of Montana officials have estimated that reduced flows on the river due to drought and reduced snowpack have decreased populations of brown trout on the river from 9,000 per mile in 1997 to around 2,000 today.²²

The operation of the reservoir and the amount of water the Bureau of Reclamation releases down the river have resulted in a growing dispute between the States of Montana and Wyoming. Reservoir users and promoters in Lovell, Wyoming, want the operators of the dam to reduce flows out of the reservoir to help keep lake levels higher, ensuring that boat ramps at a nearby marina are touching water and thereby encouraging development of a tourism economy. Trout anglers and other river advocates want outflows to be maintained at levels necessary to protect trout habitat in the tailwater reach, as well as the \$30 million in annual economic activity the fishery brings to local communities such as Fort Smith, Montana. It has been estimated that between 70,000 and 90,000 angler

days are spent annually on the trout waters below the reservoir.²³ The debate over how to balance competing water uses associated with Bighorn Reservoir and the Bighorn River trout fishery provides a glimpse at what a future under global warming holds, not only for that particular tailwater fishery, but similar fisheries throughout the interior West. Drought, reduced snowpack, higher air temperatures, and competing demands for a dwindling supply of water due to over-allocation will mean that tailwater fisheries such as the Bighorn River will continue to face serious—and possibly even greater—challenges into the future.

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- ²⁰ U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation Montana Area Office, *Yellowtail Reservoir Operations -- Water Supply Forecasts and Reservoir Operations*, October 1, 2007, http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/yellowtail/yt_oct07_most_probable.pdf, accessed January 21, 2008.
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Invaders in your waders? Become a Clean Angler

Until whirling disease hit Montana's waters few anglers were aware that invasive species could have a huge impact on our sport. Sure we knew that having creatures introduced to our rivers and streams was not a good thing. However, none of us really realized that something like a microbe from Europe had the potential to ruin our fishing.

Today we all know that invasive species threaten to wreak economic and environmental damage on Montana. The spread of New Zealand mud snails shows how easy it is to move invasives around as part of our daily activity. The discovery of zebra and quagga mussels in California, Colorado, and Utah has resulted in new restrictions on boating and boat fishing. New Zealand has banned the use of felt soled waders, an action that is likely to spread. In short, responding to invasive species threats is having an increasing impact on all of us who enjoy fishing.

Here in Montana we have been a little lucky so far. Whirling disease, mud snails, and didymo have not yet permanently impacted our fisheries. However, there are a host of new invaders that can have huge impacts and we all have to work to keep them out of our state. Achieving this will require a new approach. We as citizens must join with our government to adopt new regulations and behaviors that work to protect our waters.

Take Personal Responsibility

At the personal level, it is time to stop pretending that we are not a part of the problem. The simple fact is that, as anglers, we are partly responsible for moving invasive species between waters. We are doing this to ourselves and it is up to us to stop. How? By each of us individually taking responsibility to insure that we are not spreading invasives species when we go fishing. This is very easy to do. After every fishing trip you must **inspect, clean, and dry** your equipment before you use it on a

different water.

This is easy stuff. When you are done fishing **INSPECT** your gear. Do you have mud on your boots? From weed seeds to whirling disease spores, mud is a major vector in spreading invasives and it is easy for us to eliminate. **CLEAN** your gear carefully before you leave the site. You don't have to worry about cleaning with water on site since any invasives you have on your gear came from that water. Clean your boat, trailer, waders or any other gear that might harbor invasives. Finally, **DRY** your gear to the best of your ability before you use it again. A thorough drying will kill most invasive species and many of us can easily dry our gear if we make it an important priority.

It is time for each of us to clean our equipment after every trip. This needs to be a new habit that is an automatic part of every trip. Become a "Clean Angler" take the Clean Angling Pledge at www.cleanangling.org and teach others that every good angler cleans after every trip. Working together we can develop a Clean Angling ethic that every angler is proud to espouse.

Support Legislation

Finally, we need to make sure that our resource managers have all of the tools they need to fight against invaders. Montana has some good regulations in force but there are gaps. Recognizing that there are weaknesses in state law government officials have worked to identify what is needed to make sure we have all the tools we need for this fight. The result is Senate Bill (SB) 118 (<http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2009/billhtml/SB0118.htm>) which will provide comprehensive invasive species legislation for Montana. This bill will create a statewide Invasive Species Council and grants additional authorities to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Montana Department of Agriculture to advance programs that will reduce the spread of

invasives. This legislation is important to anglers and we all need to give it our full support.

Let's Work Together

Invasive species issues are becoming an increasing part of our world. Now is the time for us all to become champions of a new way of doing things. Let's all work together to prevent future disasters. **INSPECT, CLEAN and DRY** after every trip, teach others to do the same and help support our State leaders as they fight for our resources. Trout anglers have always been conservation leaders and now is the time for us to once again show the world that we are prepared to do whatever is best for our fish.

Take the Pledge



Inspect • Clean • Dry
after every fishing trip

www.cleanangling.org

Bob Wiltshire is Executive Director for the Center for Aquatic Nuisance Species. www.stopans.org

"The Center for Aquatic Nuisance Species is dedicated to promoting voluntary actions that reduce the human caused spread of invasive species."

Smith River Conservation Legacy

The home waters of PBMRTU, those that we directly conserve, protect, and enhance, include the Missouri, Little Blackfoot, and Smith Rivers. The Smith River has the greatest percentage of protected private and public non-wilderness lands of any trout river watershed in the West. Over the last two decades Montana trout rivers have succumbed in varying degrees to the real estate boom. The Smith remarkably has dodged that bullet and remains pretty much as it was in the 1970s. How did that happen?

Over twenty years ago the chapter began investing its hard earned revenues and energies in a partnership with the Montana Land Reliance (MLR), protecting the private lands portion of the Smith River...both watershed and riparian viewshed. The results have been stunning and arguably unequaled.

MLR is a successful statewide land trust based in Helena. Over those twenty years of partnership with TU, MLR has tirelessly worked with landowners and conservation buyers in the Smith watershed to complete 23 conservation easements on private lands, many fitting in like puzzle pieces with adjacent public lands creating a mosaic of continuous protection along the floating stretch of the river. Those 23 easements protect a remarkable 111 miles of the river mainstem and tributaries and 52,400 acres of watershed.

Make no mistake that the lion's share of the credit for these stunning conservation gains goes to MLR, credit they in turn regularly attribute to the landowners. MLR has literally invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in time, effort, and cold cash to make this conservation success a reality. Why then is PBMRTU's relatively small financial contribution important? MLR was able to use PBMRTU's ongoing contribution as concrete substantiation of support for Smith River private land conservation



Smith River in June (Photo by Clay Scott).

by the local community of anglers who both use and are devoted to the river in a convincing way with larger donors and conservation buyers. That demonstrated local support was an important ingredient in MLR's success.

A specific example of TU and MLR working together was an instance when TU had exhausted all of its legal remedies in thwarting a new bridge across the Smith to a pending subdivision. MLR was able to step in, find a conservation buyer for the whole property, prevent the bridge and subdivision and place the property under conservation easement protecting it in perpetuity.

PBMRTU's investment and partnership with MLR in the Smith River corridor has yielded an unequaled and lasting legacy of conservation helping to perpetuate one of America's finest trout rivers. Our thanks go to our PBMRTU predecessors who had the vision to make this investment.

Learn more about the
Montana Land Reliance at
www.mtlandreliance.org

the Montana LAND RELIANCE

Get Involved

Become a Sponsor

Many organizations are finding that contributions are tougher and tougher to obtain, and TU is no exception. In an effort to work with sponsors in a consistent manner the board has adopted a sponsorship program with three levels: Gold, Silver, and Bronze.

- Gold Sponsors donate \$1,000 and receive a gold table (seats 8) at the annual banquet.
- Silver sponsors donate \$500 and receive four tickets to the annual banquet.
- Bronze sponsors donate \$250 and receive two tickets to the annual banquet.

All Gold, Silver, and Bronze Sponsors also receive the following benefits:

- Advertisement in our quarterly newsletter
- A link on our webpage to your website
- Special recognition at the Annual Banquet and throughout the year
- Trout Unlimited window stickers to display your support

We need your help getting the word out. Consider whether you or someone (or organization) you know might find real value in assisting the Chapter.

Our greatest needs are for cash donations, or items for sale at the banquet. We accept donations for any goods or services such as artwork, fishing equipment, outdoor recreation gear, gift certificates, guided trips, or overnight accommodations. All donations are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible.

Join the Banquet Committee

Preparation for the upcoming PBMRTU banquet is already in full swing, but there is much more yet to do. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

We would love the opportunity to add more members to the Banquet Committee! You may do as little or as much as you want. Every hour donated by you, our members, helps to increase the amount of revenue we can put back into our Montana waterways. Remember, these are your fishing spots that you are helping to protect and restore!

What needs to be done to prepare for the banquet? Here are a few suggestions.

1. Request donations from the businesses that you frequent.
2. Make a donation from your business.
3. Sell raffle tickets at work.
4. Sell raffle tickets at the boat display for an hour or more.
5. Sell dinner tickets.
6. Help set up the day of the banquet.
7. Volunteer to work at the banquet.
8. We'll think of more if you have more time!

We have tools and tips to assist you when asking for donations. Please let us know if you are interested in lending a hand!

Call Nola at 495-2675 or send an email to nolafreestone@yahoo.com with your donation, questions, or to request notification of the next banquet planning meeting.

Mark Your Calendar for the Annual Banquet

The **March 21, 2009** banquet will be held at the **Helena Civic Center** and catered by one of Helena's finest - **Chili O'Briens**.

Mark your calendar and invite your friends. Call 406 495 2675 or email nolafreestone@yahoo.com for **banquet tickets**.

Don't forget to buy **raffle tickets** for a chance to **win a raft!** Raffle tickets are available now. Watch for the raft to be on display at local businesses.



Please note: The casting clinic, which typically occurs the same day as the banquet, is scheduled for May 2, 2009. See page 3 for more details.