



# Gallatin Conservation Corner

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**Merry Christmas and  
 Happy 2009!!**

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## Cities and Towns Experience Pine Beetle Attack

We all know about the pine beetle and budworm epidemic that is taking place in our forests, right? Now cities and urban communities are experiencing attacks on their ornamental and landscape trees.

In September 2008 the city of Manhattan removed several Scotch Pines from Taylor Park and numerous residential trees have been infected. Residential trees in Three Forks, Belgrade, Bozeman, and outlying areas have also been impacted by the pine beetle.

Many experts claim we are truly in an epidemic. It was previously thought that the pine beetle only had a travel range of 3-4 miles; it is now thought that the pest can actually travel up to 20 miles. Weather conditions, especially high and frequent winds have added to the influx of pine beetles. It is also true that infected firewood that is not completely utilized over the winter releases the bugs when the weather warms up.

Pine beetles typically attack trees that are five or more inches in diameter. They bore through the bark into the inner trunk, disrupting the tree's circulatory system. The pests also carry a blue-staining fungus that further disrupts the flow of water and minerals.

Trees that are stressed due to drought, disease, old age, and overcrowding are more susceptible to being attacked. Trees growing in groves, with lack of thinning, are great targets for the pine beetle because the groves offer an enormous food supply.

Trees most susceptible to attack include ornamental spruce, limber pine, lodge pole pine, non-native Austrian pine, native ponderosa pine and Scotch pine.

The beetles are quite ingenious, actually, when they target a tree. Adult beetles fly during the summer, typically during July and August searching for suitable trees. Once a suitable tree is found the beetles emit a chemical odor that attracts hundreds of beetles, creating a mass attack. The beetles chew a tiny hole in the bark and the tree, in defense, produces pitch in an attempt to repel the bugs. The pitch tubes resemble 'popcorn' and is the first visual sign of attack. Once the pitch tubes are noticed it is often too late to save the tree. The female lays eggs while burrowing and the larvae hatch and begin to burrow. This activity leaves noticeable sawdust at the base of the tree.

Trees that are mass attacked will not recover. The trees are girdled by the feeding activity cutting off water and nutrients to the tree but the tree remains green in color for several months. (Like a Christmas tree where the needles remain green.) Although trees are green - they are most likely already dead.

Many people struggle with the thought of cutting down a green tree that is under attack but that is generally the best and only solution to prevent further infestations.

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# NRCS News

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## Grazingland Management Workshop

On Tuesday, January 20, 2009, the Bozeman Field Office will host a free Grazingland Management Workshop to be held in the conference room of the USDA Building at 3710 Fallon Street in Bozeman. The workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end around 4:30 p.m. Topic areas include range livestock nutrition, dealing with drought, riparian grazing, weed management, grazing systems for profit, NRCS assistance available, and more. NRCS is seeking approval for pesticide applicator points

for participants interested in those. If you plan to attend you must **pre-register by Wednesday, January 14, 2009**. Call 522-4018 for more information or to register.

**The Gallatin Conservation District will be providing lunch.** Please register (522-4018) to attend so that we may obtain an accurate lunch count. We look forward to seeing you there.

## Field Office Staffing Change

The Bozeman Field Office (FO) regrets to announce that Diane Fitzgerald is being transferred to the Helena FO effective December 8, 2008. Diane has been in the Bozeman FO since early 2006 and has worked with many Gallatin County agricultural producers providing countless hours of valuable assistance. While unfortu-

nate for us, the move will significantly reduce Diane's daily commute to work as she and husband Cory operate the family ranch near Whitehall. We wish Diane the best in her transfer and future endeavors.

## Farm Bill Update

The passage of the 2008 Farm Bill last June required that federal regulations for farm bill programs be written by September 2008. The process of rule-writing involves a series of steps and approvals before those regulations can be released to the public, so while they have been written they are not ready for public release.

Currently the conservation program rules are in the review process and we are hopeful that they will be released in December or January. If history repeated then the rules will be released as interim, or temporary, regulations and the public will have an opportunity to comment on them.

This process impacts the NRCS efforts during farm bill years because it delays financial assistance that we provide. In this case, those conservation program applicants that applied by the July 1 cut-off date are on hold until the regulations are released. However, the 2010 application cut-off of June 1, 2009, will be here very soon so now is the time for anyone interested in exploring new farm bill opportunities to come in and sign-up for potential 2010 assistance. If you want to explore more information about changes in the new farm bill visit the Montana NRCS website at <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/index.html> or call 522-4018.

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- ◆ Gallatin CD Annual Banquet - Tentative dates for the banquet are either March 13th or 20th. The venue and banquet activities are going to change also and we are anxious to host the best little banquet in Gallatin Valley. Updates will be posted on our website: [www.gallatincd.mt.nacdn.net](http://www.gallatincd.mt.nacdn.net)
- ◆ A representative from the Gallatin CD attended the Area 6 meeting in Emigrant on October 1st. Area 6 consists of the following CD's: Lewis & Clark, Meagher, Broadwater, Mile High, Jefferson Valley, Beaverhead, Ruby Valley, Madison, Park, and Gallatin. The group passed a resolution for biological control for hounds tongue and one for assessing a fee for 310 inspections. The group also toured a major rip rap project on the Yellowstone and a unique water-gap system on the Nelson ranch.
- ◆ 36 Years - Congratulations to Bill Wright for 36 years of dedicated service to the Gallatin Conservation District. We are honored to have his expertise and service on the CD Board. Thanks, Bill.
- ◆ BSSA publication - The Gallatin CD is no longer an active partner with the Big Sky Small Acres publication. Any BSSA inquiries should be directed to MSU Extension.
- ◆ 25 Years - Congratulations to Tom Milesnick for 25 years of service to the Gallatin Conservation District. Thanks, Tom.
- ◆ Retired - Our best wishes go out to Don McAndrew who has resigned his position as Associate Supervisor for the Gallatin CD. Don served many, many years on conservation issues and we are grateful to him.

There has been only one Christmas - the rest are anniversaries.

-W.J. Cameron

## CD Calendar

December		January		February	
4	310 Applications Due	1	New Year's Day, Holiday	5	310 Applications Due
9-10	310 Inspections	2	310 Applications Due	10-11	310 Inspections
18	Board Meeting-10:00 am	6-7	310 Inspections	16	Presidents Day, Holiday
25	Christmas, Holiday	15	Board Meeting-10:00 am	19	Board Meeting-10:00 am
		19	Martin Luther King, Holiday		

*Board meetings are held at the USDA Building, 3710 Fallon Street in the west wing conference room.*

# CD Loan Questionnaire

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The Gallatin CD is considering a loan program in Gallatin County. If this interests you, please complete this survey and return to the CD office at: 3710 Fallon Street #B, Bozeman, MT 59715. This information will be used to assess the need for a loan program and will not be shared. Thank you for your participation. (If you'd like to complete this electronically please call 522-4011)

If the Gallatin Conservation District made available Ag loans for specific projects which offered an attractive interest rate, would you be interested?  Yes  No  Maybe

As with normal loan programs, State Statue would require the Gallatin CD to require a security interest on projects. This collateral would vary depending on the project but may require security interest on real estate i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> mortgage. If this were required, would a loan still interest you?  Yes  No  Maybe

Which of the following projects would interest you? Rate the project with 1 representing "not interested and 5 representing "very interested:

	Not Interested			Very Interested	
Wind Energy	1	2	3	4	5
Solar Energy	1	2	3	4	5
Irrigation Monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
Soil Conductivity and Mapping	1	2	3	4	5
Tools for Precision Ag	1	2	3	4	5
Stockwater System	1	2	3	4	5
Stream Restoration	1	2	3	4	5

If the Gallatin CD were to loan on farm equipment, what type of equipment would interest you? This includes large farm equipment and equipment for small acreage landowners:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If you currently have an Ag related loan, what were the biggest challenges in securing and maintaining the loan?

Are there specific projects you would like to implement on your land but just don't have the time or money? If so, please list:

If a loan program is not offered by the CD, would a CD sponsored cost share program interest you?  Yes  No  Maybe

If so, what type of cost share projects would you be interested in?

Optional: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Or phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Pine Beetle Con't

Trees must be cut down over the winter and managed by either chipping, burning, or burying infected trees. It is especially important to manage infected trees during the cold season so adult beetles do not have the opportunity to seek new feasting grounds. If people choose to cut the tree for firewood the wood must be consumed over the winter. Pine beetle larvae will continue to develop in dead standing or downed trees, including firewood.

Preventative measures to take to help safeguard your trees include thinning, spraying, preventing other tree diseases, and mimicking the beetle attack. It can be costly to take preventative measures but it is also very costly to replace a 30 foot tree!

There are several brands of commercial insecticide available, just make sure the product lists bark beetles on the label. Check with your local nursery or 'box store' to find applicable products. It often takes specialized equipment and thorough coverage of the entire tree trunk to equate success so hiring a certified applicator may benefit people who do not have the equipment to adequately treat the tree.

Applying a chemical called Verbenone, which mimics the 'no vacancy' message that beetles send out after an infested tree has become too crowded, is an effective tool.



*Mountain Pine Beetle*

The synthetic hormone is sealed in a permeable plastic pouch and then attached to the tree. At least 2-4 pouches should be attached to the tree and needs to be applied each year. This treatment can be ordered directly from two companies, Phero Tech Inc (604-940-9944) or Synergy (604-454-1121). Both have websites for additional information.

It is to the benefit of everyone if infected trees are managed properly. Neighbors should work together to ensure a successful management plan. Resources for more information include the following websites:

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/Assistance/Pests/mtnpine.asp>

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r1-r4/spf/fhp/publications/byregion/Bark%20Beetles\\_Brochure2006\\_Ir.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1-r4/spf/fhp/publications/byregion/Bark%20Beetles_Brochure2006_Ir.pdf)

The bottom line - if you have an infected tree, take care of it this winter. The Gallatin CD is part of a task force attempting to help the public address this epidemic. The CD is currently working on cost effective replacement trees and information will be posted on our website:

[www.gallatincd.mt.nacdn.net](http://www.gallatincd.mt.nacdn.net)

*Written by Marcie Murnion-Learn with the use of other local sources.*

## Cheat Grass Control

Lately, it seems like weather conditions have been ideal for cheat grass establishment and encroachment into disturbed areas as well as areas considered to be in permanent vegetation. Spring of 2008 was no exception. The best way to control cheat grass is with competition from perennial vegetation. Jim Jacobs, NRCS Plant Material Specialist and Don Feist, NRCS District Conservationist in Plains, were involved in a study, where herbicide treatments were applied to control spotted knapweed and cheat grass before seeding perennial grasses. There were five grass species seeded, a native grass mix and a plot with no seed added. The following species were seeded as monocultures; Crested Wheatgrass, Russian Wildrye, Smooth Brome, Pubescent Wheatgrass, and Orchard Grass.

Each of the seeded plots had one of the following four treatments; No chemical, Journey at 16 oz/acre, Plateau at 8 oz/acre, or Roundup at 12 oz/acre. Journey is a combination of Plateau at 6oz/ac and Roundup at 5oz/ac. Tordon at 1 pt/ac was added to the Journey, Plateau, and Roundup treatments for control of Spotted Knapweed. All rates are within the label recommendations. The labels for Journey and Plateau recommend a fall application to control cheat grass, and the Roundup label rec-

ommends a spring application. Always read and follow the label when applying herbicides. Applying too much herbicide can cause permanent harm. The plots were sprayed October 11, 2006 and seeded in early November, 2006.

The results showed 70-80% control of annual grasses where Journey or Plateau were used. Plateau is effective as a pre-emergence in either the fall or spring. Tordon controlled the knapweed. The native mix, Orchard and Pubescent had the most successful germination. A few natives came back on all plots.

If you are dealing with perennial forages and smaller patches of cheat grass within a pasture, you can spot spray with either Journey at the 16 oz/acre rate or 12 oz/acre of Roundup. Spray in early April or when the cheat grass begins to actively start growing. A week after you spray, prepare the area with a harrow, double the seeding rate if broadcasting perennial grasses, and then lightly harrow or roll. Remember, perennial grasses are keeping the cheat grass out, so manage your grazing in order to maintain healthy and productive forages in your pastures.

*For more information contact Wendy Williams @ 522-4012*

The Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot have a nativity scene in Washington, D.C.  
This wasn't for any religious reasons. They couldn't find three wise men... -Jay Leno



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### Useless Facts?

- ◆ On average, a 4-year-old child asks 437 questions a day.
- ◆ 75% of Americans are chronically dehydrated.
- ◆ **Lowest USA (48 contiguous states) temperature:** -69.7° F, Rogers Pass, Montana, January 20, 1954.

Orders are currently being accepted for conservation seedlings and landowners have until March 1st to place a seedling order. The Montana Conservation Seedling Nursery still has a variety of trees available for conservation projects. Conservation projects include: windbreaks and shelterbelts, wildlife habitat, riparian habitat improvement, erosion control, living snow fences, reforestation, and other accepted conservation practices. Visit the D N R C website at: [www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/nursery](http://www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/nursery) to obtain inventory and prices. Orders and information may also be obtained at the GCD office, 3710 Fallon Street, Bozeman.

Deciduous tree and shrubs are sold in lots of 50 and conifer seedlings are sold in lots of 25. The minimum order for new plantings is 250. Trees will be delivered to the Gallatin County Fairgrounds in April, 2009.

The seedlings are very reasonably priced and orders can be made through the Conservation District or directly to the Nursery. Payment can be made at the fairgrounds, but must be made in full before trees are released. For questions or additional information contact Marcie at 522-4011.

