

OUR MISSION

We will provide an open forum in which all interested parties may work in a collaborative effort to sustain our rural quality of life and protect and enhance our natural resources. We are committed to research and educating our Valley residents and the public about our Watershed and the steps we can take to preserve and maintain the integrity of the river, the land and the beauty of our Valley. We will endeavor to bring together public, private and government resources, funding, and grants to achieve our goals.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Mike Lorash, Chairman
- Cindy Green, V. Chairman
- Theo Yanzick, Secretary
- Greg Frokjer, Treasurer
- JO Hash
- Tom Kircher
- Noel Keogh
- Bill Mytton
- Sandra Peck
- Doug Robinette
- Tim Schaff
- Olaf Sherwood

Lindsey Clark,
SVWC Coordinator

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Stillwater Valley Watershed Council



Message from the Chairman, Mike Lorash

What an amazing year 2013 was for the SVWC. Our success as an organization has achieved another milestone in obtaining a 223 grant through the DNRC and having a river assessment of the upper Stillwater River and select tributaries. We found that this was going to be essential for future projects involving bank stabilization, head gate infrastructure, weed control and overall river health. This assessment will serve as a baseline and provide guidelines for future projects on the Stillwater. This project has been a major success in the evolution of our Watershed Council into the organization we have envisioned it to be. We learned a few lessons along the way and look forward to having more major tributaries of the Stillwater River assessed to benefit the water users and recreationalists that enjoy these rivers. Thanks to Warren Kellogg and crew for the amazing work and Lindsey for writing the grant!

Our small landowner spray program continues to be a success with many new and repeat landowners being involved. The results have been amazing and with the help of SVWC members spreading the word throughout

the community, this program will continue to help prevent the spread of noxious weeds. Thank you to the Nye Community Foundation and the Absarokee Area Community Foundation whom have continually given grant money to help with this project. We also received a RAC grant to help fund the cost-share for spray week. Again, this project would not be possible without the help of our community.

Through the benefit of a RMEF grant we have been able to greatly reduce and eradicate weeds that came on due to the Derby Fire and on the fire lines. Thank you to all who have been involved in this multi-year effort to control weeds in this area. The RMEF has been an avid supporter of the SVWC and many landowners have been assisted by the cost-share program. It has been a great asset and we will continue to work with the RMEF to bring more programs like this to our community members.

The annual SVWC BBQ was a huge hit this year! With the help of many members, volunteers and auction donors, we raised record funds in 2013. A big thank you to

all who donated items and those who took home some incredible items; the SVWC is very appreciative of all your support. The Fishtail Basin Ranch did an amazing job hosting the event this year and to Brian, Mindy and the boys for great auction entertainment!

A big thanks also goes to Lindsey for all her hard work in keeping us going. She does a great job and we appreciate the efforts in all our projects. Lindsey's knowledge of our grant process and dedication to seeing our projects come to life is essential to what we do. We are very lucky to have Lindsey and look forward to a new "helper" this spring. Congratulations Ryan and Lindsey on the upcoming new addition to your family.

With the wonderful amount of fall moisture we received, spring 2014 looks to be a great one. I look forward to another year packed with new projects, seeing new faces join our organization, and continuing our commitment to better our watershed.

Mike

UPCOMING EVENTS

- January 18th – Beartooth Stock Association's Annual Meeting & Banquet*
Anipro Events Center, Absarokee
- February 1st – SVWC Annual Meeting & Potluck*
3:00 pm, Fishtail Community Center, Fishtail
- Spring 2014 – Water Seminar: Presentation of the final report for the Upper Stillwater River Assessment, Warren Kellogg*

Stillwater Valley Watershed Council

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2013 In Review

In 2013, the SVWC again set some lofty goals to accomplish:

- ◆ Increase awareness of SVWC's programs and membership numbers (membership increased to 182 in 2013)
- ◆ Utilize funds from numerous grants, as well as money raised from the annual BBQ and auction, to support continuing watershed goals (noxious weed control, water quality/quantity improvement, forest health improvement programs)
- ◆ Continue cost-share for noxious weed control programs for landowners within the SVWC's boundaries
- ◆ Host a successful Stillwater River float & noxious weed pull to increase awareness about noxious weed control
- ◆ Increase the focus on water quality/quantity improvement projects

The positive impacts of grants on our Watershed

2013 grants utilized for cost-share on noxious weed control and water projects within the SVWC boundaries

Grantor*	Target Area/Audience	Grantee**	Grant Amount	Year(s) Received	Year(s) Expended	Amount Remaining	Acres Treated/Improved	# of Participants
NWTF	Midnight Canyon/Trout Creek WMA	SCWD	\$21,121	2012	2012-2013	0	1224+	6
NWTF	Fishtail Basin Weed Management Area	SCWD	\$60,000	2012+2013	2012-2014	\$28,256	1870+	11
NWTF	Beaver Creek Weed Management Area	SCWD	\$60,000	2012+2013	2012-2014	\$19,093	2087+	12
RMEF	Noxious weed control on land on or adjacent to elk habitat (>20 ac)	SVWC	\$15,000	2012	2012-2013	\$6,188	282+	10
RAC	Small Landowner Weed Control Program	SVWC	\$7,484	2012	2013	0		
NCF	Small Landowner Weed Control Program	SVWC	\$2,000	2013	2013	0	33+	84
ACF	Small Landowner Weed Control Program	SVWC	\$4,000	2013	2013	0		
DNRC	Coordinator Salary & Project Support	SVWC	\$9,900	2013	2012	0	NA	NA
DNRC	Garrigus Ditch Efficiency Improvement	SVWC	\$2,772	2013	2013	0	760+	8
DNRC	Stillwater River Assessment	SVWC	\$13,500	2013	2013	0	NA	NA
Total grants received for use within SVWC boundaries: \$ 195,777						\$ 53,537	6256+	131

*NWTF (Noxious Weed Trust Fund)-MT Department of Ag

*RMEF (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation)

*RAC (Resource Advisory Council)-US Forest Service

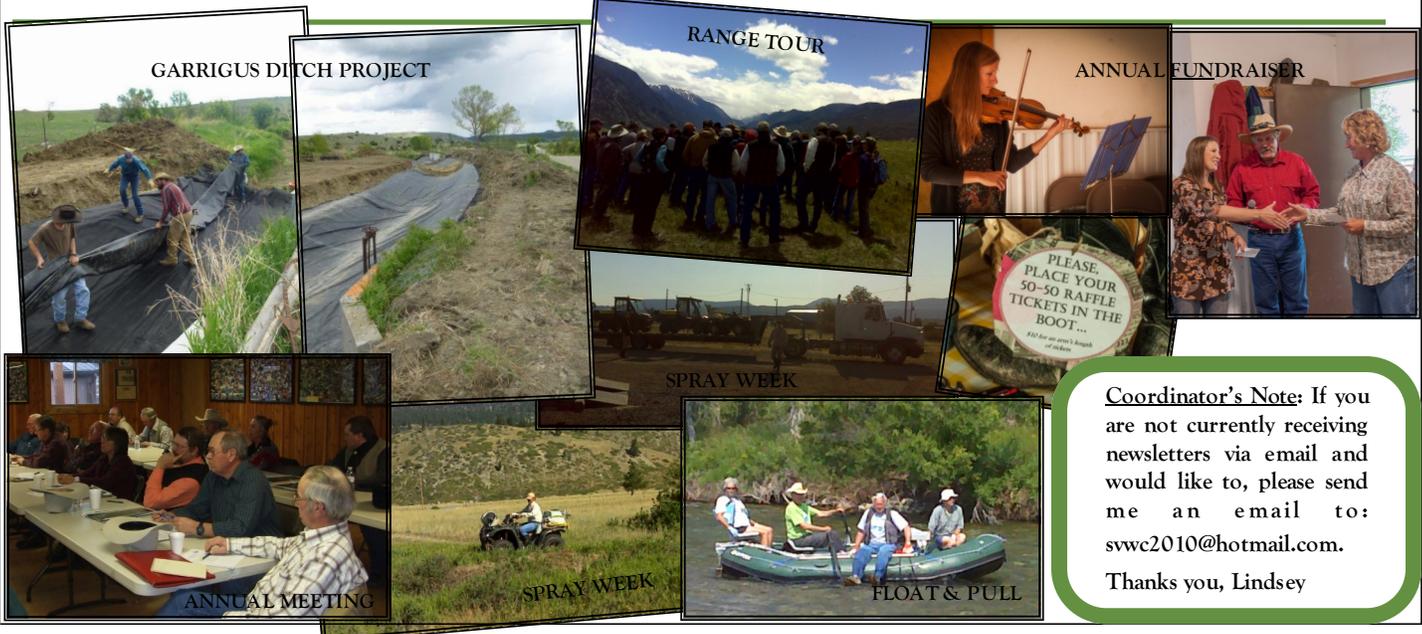
**SVWC (Stillwater Valley Watershed Council)

*NCF (Nye Community Foundation)

*ACF (Absarokee Community Foundation)

*DNRC (Dept. Natural Resources Conservation)-Stillwater Conservation Dist.

**SCWD (Stillwater County Weed District)



Coordinator's Note: If you are not currently receiving newsletters via email and would like to, please send me an email to: svwc2010@hotmail.com.

Thanks you, Lindsey

2013 in Review: The positive impacts of cost-share on weeds in our Watershed

SMALL LANDOWNER WEED CONTROL PROGRAM:

Below is a summary of the 3rd consecutive Small Landowner Noxious Weed Control program. This program could not be made possible without generous support from both the Absarokee and Nye Community Foundations who provided grant funds (\$4,000 and \$2,000, respectively) for cost-share for landowners throughout the Stillwater River’s corridor to treat noxious weeds. Additionally, a Resource Advisory Council (RAC) grant for over \$7,000 was secured.

Impact: It is our hope that this project continues to have a positive impact on the communities of Absarokee and Nye. The “top down” approach we maintain to treat noxious weeds is a systematic way to eliminate weeds up-river while working to eradicate weed infestations downriver until the entire Stillwater River has been scouted and treated. It is evident, this being our third year in the project, that treating noxious weed infestations along the river’s corridor decreases the weeds, and thus weed seeds, that would otherwise relocate downriver and further infest/impact adjacent lands and tributaries.

In 2013, 84 landowners signed up to participate in the weed control program. The target area again began at the Forest Service boundary on the upper stretch of the Stillwater River and continued to Spring Creek Bridge, targeting landowners with 20 acres or less and noxious weeds such as spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, houndstongue and Canada thistle.

“Spray Week” 2013, the true reason for the program’s success: Right—Tanya Daniels, Ranchwise; Far Right—Noel Keogh, Bob Montgomery and Mike Larson make a plan.

Within this region, approximately 33 acres were treated for weeds on 925 participating acres (3.5% infestation rate). In comparison, in 2012 64 acres were treated out of 725 participating acres equating to an 8.8% infestation rate. Meanwhile in 2011, 352 acres were enrolled in the project and 46 acres were treated (12.9% infestation rate). With the aforementioned figures, it is clear the direct impacts of this project are impressive with a significant decrease in the infested acres (12.9% in 2011 compared to 3.5% in 2013). Although the indirect impacts of this project are difficult to quantify, many downstream and adjacent properties would be at risk for contamination by these upstream infestations if this project had not taken place.

Goals Achieved: Weed treatment is now at a standstill until warmer weather comes

It is the SVWC’s hope that with the persistence of this project, along with an increase in participation in years to come, there will continue be a significant reduction in the weed infestations which will enable the pristine beauty of the Stillwater Valley to continue.

next spring and we can now look back at this past year to determine if the Stillwater SVWC’s project goals were reached. The coordination, volunteer efforts of local landowners, as well as the efforts of four local commercial applicator businesses (10 applicators total), helped to accomplish our objectives:

- 1) Increase/create landowner awareness of noxious weed issues and educate this target audience in order to prevent the spread of weed seeds.
- 2) Tackle the weed problem (namely spotted knapweed) along the Stillwater River and decrease infestations on the land involved in the project.
- 3) Prevent future spread of current and new invader species.

As evidence of the decrease in weed infestations over the past three years, our project has undoubtedly accomplished what it set out to do—decrease the noxious weed population. Additionally, community awareness and the importance of controlling noxious weeds have been reinforced.

If you are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity in 2014, please fill out the form on page 11 and return it to us. Questions can be directed to Lindsey at 406.780.1249 or svwc2010@hotmail.com.



All funds raised from our auction, as well as other fund-raising activities, remain in the watershed to continue our community education and cost-share programs.

2013 in Review

Annual BBQ & auction brings in record support!

On August 10th, 2013 the SVWC celebrated the success of the past year by hosting the 5th Annual BBQ and Auction Fundraiser. The evening event was a huge success with record attendance and funds raised.

Thanks to the faithful organizers, volunteers and numerous newcomers who brought their support for an event where a little summer wind and rain couldn't even dampen the mood. Nearly \$8,000 was raised, made possible because of the many generous folks who donated auction items, as well as the all the hot hands that were lucky enough to win the highest bid.

Fishtail Basin Ranch purchased the high ticket item, an original Tom Wolfe mixed media watercolor

painting for \$1050. Ed and Rozzie Davis bought the second high priced item for \$700, an authentic wagon ride and cookout for six donated by Bill & Janice Mytton.

A huge thank you goes out to Franny and Franny Abbott of the Fishtail Basin Ranch for all their help with the planning and for providing the beautiful event location. Brian & Mindy Young and their boys were a ton of help with the outstanding auctioneering and ringmen services. A Touch of Country Catering provided the tasty meal while Laura Blond entertained the crowd with her stellar violin skills.

A good time was had by all!

Stillwater River Float & Weed Pull

On Sunday August 26th, following the success of the 5th Annual BBQ and Auction, 21.5 dedicated weed fighters joined in the fun to hunt down noxious weeds, but most notably spotted knapweed, on the islands and banks of our county's namesake river. Six boats successfully navigated and eradicated from Old Nye to Moraine Fishing Access. According to our veteran weed warrior, Noel Keogh, this was the most successful float & pull event he has been a part of on the Stillwater

River! However it was very evident that the efforts of the Small Landowner Spray Program are definitely paying off. Thank you all the volunteers for your time and hard work, as well as Stillwater Mining Company for providing the delicious sack lunches which were prepared by the Fishtail Store.

BBQ & Auction: Left—A local youngster shows an auction item; Bottom Left—A whole barrel of wine donated to the auction by SVWC members; Bottom—David Joys, Franny Abbott and many other BBQ attendees enjoying the evening



Stillwater River Float & Weed Pull: Top—Pat Cunningham packing the coolers; Below—John & Laurie Beers and Gail Larsen forging the Stillwater River in search of spotted knapweed

Photos by Bud Chenault

Upper Stillwater River and Select Tributary Hydrologic Assessment Complete

During the summer of 2013, with financial assistance from a DNRC 223 grant, the Stillwater Conservation District and the Stillwater Valley Watershed Council were able to commission a comprehensive stream assessment on the upper Stillwater River and selected tributaries. Warren Kellogg, with over 35 years of experience working on streams and restoration projects throughout Montana, was contracted.

The stream assessment included the Stillwater River (30.3 miles), the West Fork of the Stillwater River (6.2 miles), Lodgepole Creek (4.7 miles), Limestone Creek (2.1 miles), and Little Rocky Creek (2.3 miles). Each waterway was walked in late July and August of 2013. As part of the assessment, Warren also spoke with several landowners and water users along these streams.

The primary objectives for the assessment were to: a) collect and summarize resource information with special attention given to irrigation infrastructure, riparian area restoration, and noxious weed infestations, and b) provide recommendations and prioritization on restoration opportunities. According to Kellogg, human impact has occurred in the upper Stillwater Valley over the last 120 years, but compared to many streams in Montana, their impact is minimal. For the most part, the upper Stillwater streams are in good condition.

A potential long-term impact is the extensive small tracts began to sell and were developed of bank stabilization to protect houses and maintenance or replacement, domestic water withdrawals. Individual tracts by themselves have a can provide long-term threats to stream

“For the most part, the upper Stillwater streams are in good condition.”
Warren Kellogg, Stream and Watershed Consultant

development of small tracts. During the 1960s, in earnest. Many of these tracts have various types outbuildings, septic systems that may need maintenance from the streams, and noxious weed infestations. Minimal impact on the stream, but cumulatively health.

Restoration opportunities are commonly associated with irrigation diversions and turnouts. Irrigation infrastructure is often 50 to 100 years old and in need of replacement. Recommendations and options will be suggested on making some of these in-channel structures more functional, cheaper to maintain, and compatible to the changing conditions of the stream.

Warren Kellogg will be giving a presentation of his results and recommendations at the Stillwater Valley Watershed Council’s Annual Meeting on February 1, 2014 (agenda below). However, the comprehensive stream corridor assessment report, with project maps, will be produced and presented to the Stillwater Valley Watershed Council in March 2014. This assessment report, including recommended restoration priorities, conceptual alternatives, and GIS reference maps based upon field observations and landowner interviews will be included and distributed for review by the SVWC. Warren will formally present the final report at the SVWC’s annual water seminar later this spring.

SVWC’s ANNUAL MEETING AND POTLUCK—February 1st, 2014

WHEN: Saturday, February 1st
WHERE: Fishtail Community Center
TIME: 3:00 pm – Meeting will be followed by a potluck dinner

AGENDA

- 3:00 pm * Introductions
- 3:15 pm * Current fisheries projects under Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks: Jason Rhoten, Fisheries Biologist
- 3:45 pm * Horseman Flats Fuels Reduction Project: Drew Grimes, USFS Fire Management Specialist
- 4:00 pm * Stillwater River & Select Tributary Assessment: Warren Kellogg, Stream & Watershed Consulting
- 5:15 pm * Board Member Elections
- 5:30 pm * Social Hour and Potluck Dinner

Garrigus Ditch Efficiency Improvement Project a Success!

The Garrigus Ditch Efficiency Improvement Project was a success due in large part to a \$2772 grant the SVWC and Garrigus Ditch users received through the Stillwater Conservation District and DNRC. Additionally, the SVWC board voted to donate another \$4000 to help offset additional project costs not covered under the grant.

“The thing I really appreciate is that everybody came together as ditch owners and pitched in to help get the ditch fixed properly.” Stanley Pelton, water rights owner/user on the Garrigus Ditch

The efficiency of irrigation water flow was significantly increased along 3700' of the Garrigus Ditch which is located south of Absarokee. Previous water losses measured in September 2012 were between two and 10 cubic feet per second (cfs), causing former pasture and cropland to be inundated with substantial amounts of water, resulting in severe ponding and flooding. According to the Stillwater NRCS, in one particular location where a culvert was replaced and the ditch was lined as part of the efficiency improvement project, water flow measurements taken in June 2013 measured nearly 27 cfs, compared to only 18 cfs the previous fall.

By reducing the excessive ponding and flooding caused by structural issues on the Garrigus Ditch, the 360 acres of inundated land was reclaimed and produced quality hay and pasture during the summer of 2013 (the first time in years). Additionally, another 400 acres was able to be properly irrigated, maximizing its productive capability as well.

After only one season, according to several of the ditch users, the impacts of the project were evident. Hay was harvested throughout the summer in areas that have not seen a swather in nearly 35 years. Pastures and hayfields, previously so inundated with water that irrigation was not necessary, were being irrigated efficiently and producing quality grasses in 2013. Although not a conservation benefit, one water user was quoted as saying, “The thing I really appreciate is that everybody came together as ditch owners and pitched in to help get the ditch fixed properly.” This may provide more long-term benefits for the Garrigus Ditch’s preservation than any excavator ever could.

Livestock Fence Laws: In Versus Out

Jeff Mosely, Extension Range Management Specialist, MSU

Understanding the legal rights and responsibilities of land ownership is an important part of rural land stewardship in Montana. Weed control laws and water rights, for example, are two common topics where lack of understanding can lead to unnecessary conflicts with neighbors. Livestock fencing laws are another potential source of misunderstanding.

Every rural Montana landowner should know whether they are responsible for fencing their land to keep their own livestock within the confines of their property, or whether they are responsible for fencing their land when they want to prevent other people's livestock from roaming onto their property. The answer depends upon whether the land is legally classified as "open range" or "closed range." In "open range" the property owner is responsible for fencing neighboring livestock out; in "closed range," the livestock owner is responsible for fencing livestock in. If a rural subdivision is adjoined by open range, it is the responsibility of the subdivision lot owner to fence their property boundary if they don't want livestock from the open range area roaming onto their lot.

Most of Montana is classified as open range, but closed range exists within all incorporated cities and towns. Closed range also exists within unincorporated, rural areas designated as "herd districts." Montana fence law allows county commissioners to create herd districts when a majority of the land ownership in the proposed district petitions the county commissioners in favor of the new designation. Most landowners in open range are not compelled by law to exclude livestock from their property. In fact, some landowners purposely do not fence out livestock from some or all of their property so that livestock grazing can reduce the threat of wildfire and so that fences do not impede wildlife travel or detract from aesthetics.

Finally, the responsibility of maintaining a boundary fence between neighbors is shared equally. Each landowner is responsible for maintaining one half of the boundary fence. The portion designated for you to maintain is determined by standing at the midpoint of the shared boundary and looking toward your neighbor's property. You maintain the half that is to your right.

For more information on proper fence repair and maintenance techniques contact a local rancher or the MSU Extension Office at 322.8035.

	Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2013	
Income		
Memberships		5,235.00
Donations		5,165.00
Grants		
Nye Community Fndtn	2,000.00	
Absarokee Community Fndtn	4,000.00	
RAC	7,848.12	
Grants Total		13,848.12
Cost Share		
Weed Spraying	4,257.32	
Cost Share Total		4,257.32
Fundraisers		
Auction	6,138.05	
Donations	249.00	
T-Shirts	55.00	
Raffle	440.00	
Fundraisers Total		6,882.05
Small Landowner Spray Program	4,732.50	
Interest Income	40.59	
Total Income		40,160.58
Expenses		
Booth Space		250.00
Membership		60.00
Food/Drink		2,988.29
Porta Potties		65.00
PO Box Rent		58.00
Postage		200.47
Landowner Reimbursements		
Garrigus Ditch Project	4,000.00	
Cost Share Noxious Weed Trtmt	2,203.11	
Total Landowner Reimbursements		6,203.11
Small Landowner Spray Program-Contractors		10,093.75
Small Landowner Spray Program-Chemical		748.00
Office Supplies		1,218.07
Professional Fees		203.00
Administration		3,195.00
Phone-Cell		142.47
Insurance-Liability		755.00
Clothing Expense		500.00
Total Expenses		26,680.16
Net Income		13,480.42

Stillwater County is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. We hope this program will help enhance the quality of your life. Respect your neighbors' livelihood and property, and be aware that your actions impact your neighbors, human and otherwise.

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2014 DUES?

The Stillwater Valley Watershed Council relies on people like you to match project funds and provide essential operating support. In order for you to benefit from SVWC's programs you are encouraged to become a member. Annual dues are \$25.00. Please consider donating to our non-profit, tax deductible organization.

Send membership or support to SVWC,
PO Box 112, Absarokee, MT 59001.

WE ARE TRULY THANKFUL TO THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN OR ARE CONSIDERING A GIFT!

New members will receive a complimentary window decal!



THANK YOU for your generous donations and membership contributions!

2014 Memberships to Date

Nancy Arthun * Charles Barker & Pam Young * Bill & Sandra Coverley * Jim & Bev Coverley * Richard & Virginia Cross * Jess & Cindy Donohoe * Nate & Fay Espeland * Tom Fries * JO & Erica Hash * Ken & Peg Joki * David & Sandra Joys * Patrick King * Nels & Gail Larsen * Raymond Lien * Theodore Nelson, Stillwater NRCS * Michael & Rosemarie Reynolds * Clint & Mary Teegardin * Vincent & Leslie Ziegler

Donations

Stillwater Mining Company * Sidney E Frank Foundation * Beartooth Ranch * David & Sandra Joys

Named Donations

From Tom Fries *"In the name of Noel Keogh for his kindness and generosity"*

SVWC Board of Director Position Openings

Due to term expiration, four positions are open for the Stillwater Valley Watershed Council's Board of Directors. If you are interested in applying for a three-year board member position, please return this form to the address below by January 24th. The Council (that means you) will make the final decision on board appointments at the annual SVWC meeting on February 1st, 2014.

Name: _____ Home Phone: _____

Address: _____ State: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Business/Occupation: _____



Why do you wish to serve on this Board?

Signature _____

Date _____

Return application to: Stillwater Valley Watershed Council
PO Box 112
Absarokee, MT 59001

Stillwater Valley Watershed Council
Landowner Cost-Share Commitment & Membership Form

Landowner Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Local Telephone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Stillwater County Property Location: (physical address, section/township/range, subdivision)

Approximate # of acres in the project: _____

Please check all that apply, sign and return.

I am interested in participating SVWC's project.
The project I am interested in receiving assistance for is [i.e. corral relocation, weed spraying (identify targeted weed species), bug releases, etc]:

I do not wish to participate in the SVWC project but in doing so, recognize that I am required to comply with the existing Montana Noxious Weed Law.

Yes, I want to join the Stillwater Valley Watershed Council. Enclosed is my \$25.00 annual membership fee.

I am already a member of the Stillwater Valley Watershed Council.

Please indicate your contact information and property location even if you do not wish to participate in the program. This will let us know if we have made contact with all landowners.

Signature Date

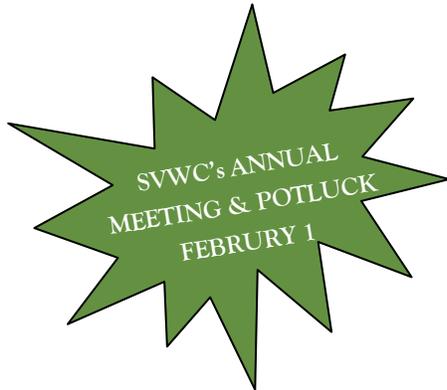
Please return to:
Stillwater Valley Watershed Council
PO Box 112
Absarokee MT 59001
406-780-1249
www.StillwaterValleyWatershed.com



STILLWATER VALLEY
WATERSHED COUNCIL

SVWC
PO Box 112
Absarokee, MT 59001

406.780.1249
svwc2010@hotmail.com
www.StillwaterValleyWatershed.com



We are a volunteer group of local residents and interested representatives who are working together to enhance the quality of our rural Montana lifestyle by protecting, restoring and conserving our abundant natural resources, through good stewardship and community involvement for this and future generations.

Stillwater Valley Watershed Council

Stillwater Valley Watershed Council

ABSAROKEE



FISHTAIL



DEAN



NYE

