

# MONTANA CURRENTS



Summer 2008

## Wetlands restoration film premieres at land conservation conferences

“Restoring the Treasure,” a PPL Montana-sponsored film about the O’Dell Creek wetlands in southwestern Montana, premiered in May at two major conservation, recreation and wildlife conferences.

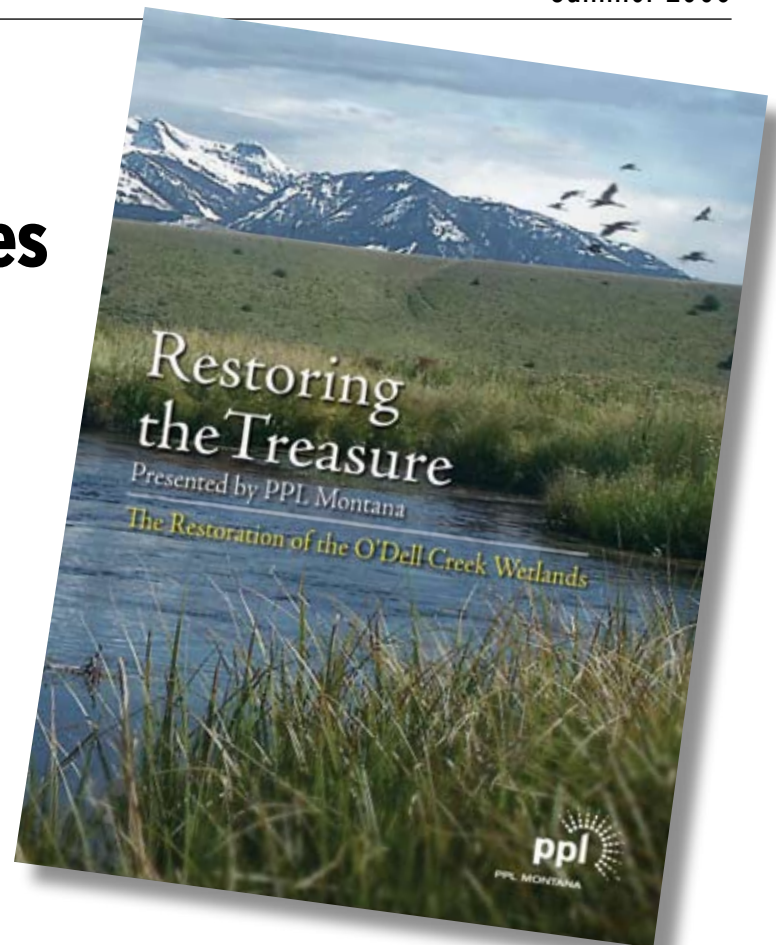
“PPL Montana is pleased to present this 16-minute video, which shares a remarkable story about how many diverse people and organizations came together to bring back an expansive spring-fed wetland complex on traditional ranch lands near Ennis,” said Jon Jourdonnais, PPL Montana’s director of Hydro Licensing and Environmental Compliance.

“PPL Montana was involved early on in this project as part of its river resource stewardship in Montana related to our federal operating license,” he said. “We’re proud of our involvement in this important project and with all our partners who are proving that great things can be achieved when we work toward the worthy goal of preserving both river resources and Montana’s ranching operations.”

The film was shown at the Partners for Conservation Conference, hosted by the Blackfoot Challenge and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in Seeley Lake. It was also shown at the “Forging a Partnership Between Recreation and Wildlife Planners” forum, hosted by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Missoula.

In the 1950s, the O’Dell Creek, a tributary of the Madison River, was channelized and drained for cattle grazing. Vast riparian and wetland areas dried, which subsequently reduced the quality of aquatic and streamside wetland habitat.

Through this cooperative restoration effort, begun in 2003, thousands of acres of wetlands and riparian areas and watershed lands have been restored in the Madison



River Valley, home to many wildlife species, migratory waterfowl and wild trout.

The film was produced by filmmaker Dickson Sorensen, who visited the wetlands over the past several years to collect footage of the progress at the O’Dell Creek wetlands. His friend of many years, fellow filmmaker and rancher Jeff Laszlo, co-produced the film.

The professional outdoor film features footage of the wetlands restoration, the return of wildlife and native fish, and interviews with biologists, land conservation professionals, Laszlo, Jourdonnais and Brad Spencer, PPL Montana’s vice president and chief operating officer.

# Get to know your PPL Montana Community Fund Advisory Board members

Montana Currents is introducing members of the PPL Montana Community Fund Advisory Board, a group dedicated to making a difference in the lives of Montana families and their communities. Twice a year, PPL Montana's Community Fund awards grants to nonprofit groups to address quality-of-life issues related to education, the environment and economic development.

As a major corporation with 500 employees in Montana, PPL Montana is committed to working with Montana communities and this board to improve the quality of life for today and tomorrow.

## Meet Marysue Costello

Marysue Costello is executive director of the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce. A Montana resident for more than 30 years, she joined the PPL Montana Community Fund Advisory Board last year.

### *How do you see the role of the advisory board?*

We have the privilege to help determine the most worthy projects from among a wide variety of worthy projects. Each funding cycle, I am again struck by the number of committed, passionate people there are in this state. The time, energy and effort that so many Montanans give to preservation, culture, youth and those in need is impressive and humbling. Much of Montana's character has been and is forged in the small communities where neighbors care about neighbors. This couldn't be more evident than in the many proposals for PPL's Community Fund grants. I have been honored to be part of this board.

### *What do you hope to accomplish during your term on the advisory board?*

It is my hope to recommend projects that can make a real difference to



Montana places, particularly to small rural communities. It is important to me that projects help re-establish economic self-sufficiency where it has been eroded. Because I believe in sustainability, I tend to favor projects that "teach a person to fish," rather than only "feed" him outright.

### *What are your other interests when you're not working with community fund grants?*

Faith, family, friends and community are my interests and where I expend the vast majority of my attention and energy. I have been most fortunate to experience these interests and especially to do so in Montana.

## PPL Montana sponsors Yellowstone Valley Bird Festival

PPL Montana was the major sponsor of this year's Yellowstone Valley Bird Festival, co-hosted by the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, an event that brought together more than 150 people from all over the state.

"As the major corporate sponsor, PPL Montana provided significant funding for the event," said Steve Hoffman, executive director of the Montana Audubon Society. "The company's \$2,500 donation

helped keep registration fees low so that many senior citizens on fixed incomes could participate."

More than a dozen field trips explored a variety of habitats and recorded more than 100 bird species.

Participants learned about bird photography, Yellowstone River bird studies, and Montana Audubon's plans for expanding community education programs for children and families.



The violet-green swallow, common in the Billings area.

"PPL Montana has supported the Montana Audubon Society over the years," said Lisa Perry, community affairs manager for PPL Montana.

"When we heard of the bird festival, we knew it was a perfect fit with our support of education," she said. "It's a great thing

having people interested in educating themselves, learning more about our fellow habitants in this great environment."

Next year's festival will be June 5-7 in Great Falls.

**Endless hatches, lots of access make the Mo ideal fishery**



Steve Leathe proudly holds the bigmouth buffalo he caught in the Missouri River.

*The Great Falls Tribune is featuring in its “Life Outdoors” column PPL Montana employees who describe their favorite places for outdoor recreation on the rivers, lakes and lands around the company’s 11 hydroelectric facilities across Montana. The following column, which ran June 5, is republished here with the newspaper’s permission. Steve Leathe, who holds a master’s degree in biology from Montana State University, is a member of PPL Montana’s Hydro Licensing and Environmental Compliance group. He spent 28 years with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and headed the Fisheries Division in Region 4, which includes Great Falls.*

From the first moment I cast my line in the Missouri River and heard the light plop of the freshly tied nymph, I knew this was a special place to be.

I first fished on the Missouri in 1981 with a friend of mine from college. I was just astounded by the magnificence of it. Living in Kalispell at the time, where the water is clear and cold and the trout small, the

Missouri River just blew me away.

Here you see endless hatches of mayflies and other water bugs in spring and summer, and the trout seem to be everywhere rising up to get them.

My favorite place to fly-fish is between PPL Montana’s Holter Lake and Cascade, a 35-mile stretch that offers some of the best trout fishing I know of anywhere. PPL Montana’s Hauser Dam, about 30 miles upstream, is another great place for outdoor enthusiasts.

For anglers like me, the big advantage here is access. There are many shore access points and boat ramps. When you get to know the river, you’ll discover many different areas to fish. There’s lots here to enjoy.

I tend to stick to the middle and lower parts of the river closer to Great Falls, where there often are fewer people. Working for PPL Montana on fisheries issues on the Missouri and its tributaries gives me lots of opportunities to appreciate the significance of this historic river.

When folks ask me about my fly-

fishing techniques, I tend to recommend nymphs — basically insect larva — with a floating indicator. As a fisheries biologist, I’ve noticed over the years that trout are always eating nymphs and eat dry flies only at certain times of the year.

A good nymph on the Missouri River is the “bead head pheasant tail nymph.” It imitates a mayfly nymph, and there are lots and lots of mayfly nymphs in the Missouri River. They’re a major part of the trout diet. Tying one is fairly simple.

First, slide a small gold metal bead on a

hook. Then tie in and wrap on some fibers from pheasant tail feathers for the tail and body. Use some peacock tail feathers for the thorax, and then pull a covering of pheasant tail fibers over the top to imitate a wing case.

The Missouri River is a dramatic landscape, with really good quality fishing and diverse wildlife that ranges from white pelicans and heron to mink, muskrat and otter. What more could you ask for?

Access: One of Steve Leathe’s recommended access sites is at Cascade’s North Park, a waterside recreation area with a new boat ramp, picnic area and parking area. PPL Montana helped redevelop the park, which was dedicated last year. It’s a half mile north of Cascade on the frontage road. From I-15, exit at the Town of Cascade and follow the signs to the park. There are many Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks access sites along the Missouri River between Holter Dam and Great Falls. The Wolf Creek Bridge and Craig sites are very popular put-in spots and are heavily used. For directions, visit <http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/searchfas.aspx>

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## Come enjoy sights, sounds at Cochrane Dam

PPL Montana opens its Cochrane Dam in Great Falls for public use several times a year, allowing hikers easier access to a popular trail system on both sides of the Missouri River.

PPL Montana works with Recreational Trails Inc., a nonprofit organization that oversees the River’s Edge Trail, which meanders through Great Falls and



connects parks and other points of interest along the Missouri River.

The organization provides security at the dam and other staff to look out for people’s safety. Opening the crossing allows the connection of the North shore and South shore trails. The public can hike or bike all the way around with the crossing open.

Cochrane Dam will be open to the public:
July 26-27
Aug. 9-10
Aug. 30-31
Sept. 13-14
Sept. 28

*Montana Currents* is your source of information about PPL Montana’s commitment to the environment and our communities. It’s just one more way we’re putting our energy into Montana communities.

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