

MONTANA CURRENTS



Fall/Winter 2008

Collaboration, teamwork come together at Hebgen Dam

On the road to Yellowstone National Park, about 50 miles southeast of Ennis, you'll pass PPL Montana's Hebgen Dam on state Highway 287.

It's easy to miss. The earthen-concrete dam, nearly 100 years old, doesn't generate electricity. Instead, it creates Hebgen Lake and is used to regulate flows into the Madison and Missouri rivers downstream. The remote, scenic setting is popular with fishermen, boaters and cabin owners, and is visited by an abundant display of wildlife.

Sometime the afternoon of Aug. 31 something went wrong with the dam's intake structure, which controls water flow from the lake into the Madison River, sending 3,400 cubic feet per second into the river. This volume of water is common in spring when snow is melting on the nearby mountains, but unprecedented in late summer when tourists, campers, anglers and cabin owners come to the area.

With cell phone signals and wireless access almost nonexistent in the sparsely populated Madison Valley, rumors spread more quickly than accurate information.

Addressing rumors was not the only problem PPL Montana employees had on their hands —

Hebgen Lake was losing water rapidly.

"We were fighting Mother Nature," said Pete Simonich, manager-Fossil Generation Assets for PPL Montana. "Many engineers and craftsmen told me this was the most challenging problem they ever worked on."

For three weeks in September, Hebgen Dam buzzed with activity. PPL Montana employees from Madison Dam and other PPL Montana



PPL Montana engineers and contractors work on the intake structure at Hebgen Dam.

hydro facilities worked long hours preparing the platform of the intake structure to accommodate modern construction equipment.

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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 Monty Lesh

Monty Lesh is the owner of Frontier Consulting LLC, an agriculture consulting firm in Miles City, and a licensed real estate agent and operator of a cattle feeding business. Prior to his current business interests, he was

a banker for 21 years in Montana and North Dakota. A Montana resident for most of his life, he joined the PPL Montana Community Fund Advisory Board in 2006.

How do you see the role of the advisory board?

It's been a great experience for me and my family serving on the PPL Montana advisory board. I feel that our role is to review the many applications from around the state, and, after thoughtful discussion, fund those that best meet the goals of the community fund. The diverse membership of the board from across the state allows for robust debate as we look at the immense need for charitable funding statewide.

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

Listen, learn and do good. I really enjoyed reading the applications and learning about the various projects in communities across Montana.



Serving on this board has made it very clear that PPL Montana and its employees are a real asset to the state of Montana. It's personally rewarding to me knowing that I had a small part in making important economic, educational and environmental projects across Montana become a reality.

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

I'm married to a beautiful woman and my best friend, Sherry. We have four children that keep us very busy with their sports and school activities. We enjoy all outdoor activities, traveling and friends.

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"Losing five inches of water a day from the reservoir, we were working against the clock and in difficult conditions," Simonich said.

Team members came up with a plan to reduce the flows — a specially fabricated 7-ton steel bulkhead. But they were forced to abandon the idea because water pressure in the intake structure made it impossible to safely install guides that would have held the bulkhead in place.

Through ingenuity, hard work, and trial and error, workers eventually brought the flows down to typical late-summer levels by replacing

damaged stoplogs in one of the four bays of the intake structure. Stoplogs, timbers similar to railroad ties, are stacked in the dam's bays and used to regulate water flow. Once the water flows were under control, additional stoplogs were replaced and steel plates were added to the upstream side of the structure to reinforce the intake and reduce the probability of another problem through the winter months.

PPL Montana is investigating what caused the structure's malfunction, and will propose a corrective, long-term course of action. Because of the seismic activity in the Yellowstone

region, upgrades to the Hebgen intake structure have been in discussion for many years. In coordination with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, plans for this upgrade will be integrated with this current repair.

"The appreciation I have for our employees and the local contractors who responded to both the technical and community relations challenges of this incident can't be measured," Simonich said. "We proved that a team of dedicated people can solve the most difficult problems by using their leadership, ideas and skills."

The scenic and sensational Missouri River runs through this family's veins

By JON JOURDONNAIS

My childhood in Great Falls was accompanied by adventurous stories about my great-great grandfather J.C. Adams, which led to my lifelong fascination of the rugged beauty and history of the Missouri River.

My dad read to me a published history about how J.C. Adams came to Montana up the Missouri River to Fort Benton via steamboat in 1864, at age 16, after being orphaned in Kentucky during the Civil War.

He worked until 1872 as wagon boss for the Diamond R. Wagon Co. hauling freight by overland horse team from the steamboats at Fort Benton to Walla Walla, Wash., along the Mullan Trail. He's depicted in the C.M. Russell painting "Wagon Boss." J.C. Adams later established a large working horse ranch, complete with classic stone barn, now on the National Historic Registry, near the town of Sun River outside Great Falls.

From this beginning, the Montana generations of the Adams and Jourdonnais family trees merged and all worked and enjoyed the great outdoors from the eastern front range of the Rockies downstream along the Sun and Missouri rivers to Great Falls. This family legacy includes many tall, and apparently true, tales of early day dangers and adventures on the great Montana prairie and rivers of the area that amazed my brothers and me.

Jourdonnais was the name of the French river captain of the keelboat "Mandan" in "The Big Sky," a historical book about life of the early mountain men coming up the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountain West by Pulitzer-Prize-winning author A.B. Guthrie Jr.

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 hydroelectric facilities across Montana. The following column, which ran Sept. 4, is republished here with the newspaper's permission. Jon Jourdonnais, PPL Montana's director of hydro licensing and compliance, received bachelor degrees in life sciences, chemistry and wildlife biology from the University of Montana in Missoula, and completed several years of post-graduate research at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station.



Jon Jourdonnais above the wild and scenic section of the Missouri River.

True to our family history and boyish imaginations, my brothers and I made time — around work, school and sports — to hunt, fish, float, swim and otherwise explore these great rivers in our own backyard.

Below PPL Montana's Morony Dam near Great Falls, we floated our kayaks down the Missouri River from Carter Ferry to Fort Benton hunting ducks and geese as the fall weather turned to winter and migrant waterfowl came through the area in impressive numbers.

We still reminisce about summer thunderstorms that forced us off the river and under protection of overhanging river banks that kept us from getting home until well after dark. It was truly a Huck Finn childhood filled with many days of relative freedom in these big outdoors.

I now work in this same Missouri River area for PPL Montana. I'm responsible for managing, in consultation with our many agency

and private partners, public recreation opportunities and stewardship and enhancement of fisheries, wildlife, water quality and cultural resources related to our statewide federal hydropower licenses, including the one that covers our five Great Falls dams.

My favorite section is the 47-mile remote wild and scenic section of Missouri River from Coal Banks Landing downstream to the Judith Landing. Here, as you canoe along, you find little evidence of modern civilization or change to the landscape since Lewis and Clark.

You'll find amazing scenery, including great white cliffs, good seasonal fishing and hunting, deep canyons to explore, Indian teepee rings on many ridge tops and historic Lewis and Clark campsites. It's a unique section of river that my real-life and fictional great-grandfathers helped pioneer. Working with PPL Montana and our many partners, I'm proud to help preserve and restore this special place in Montana.



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River Fund grant supports improvements at Giant Springs State Park

PPL Montana's River Fund grant program continues to support projects to enhance and protect Giant Springs State Park in Great Falls.

A newly awarded \$40,000 grant will help Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks replace the aging Roe River Island bridge, which connects the picnic areas in the park with Roe Island and provides visitors with views of the springs from different angles.

A previous \$30,000 River Fund grant helped the state agency build five handicap-accessible fishing platforms this year along the shoreline of the park's Family Fishing Pond. The platforms provide universal access to the pond, allow safer access to the water — particularly for children, and help protect



shoreline vegetation and prevent erosion.

"These projects would not be possible without the assistance of the PPL Montana grants, said Matt Marcinek, manager at Giant Springs State Park. "We have one great project completed with the help of this grant program, and now one more is in the works that will help us to design and build a replacement bridge that complies with historic preservation requirements.

"The new bridge will also maintain universal access to the popular fishing station on Roe Island, where visitors enjoy fishing in Rainbow Reservoir."

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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