



AGAI Ripple

Association of Gallatin
Agricultural Irrigators

April 2007

Spring Update

A Word from Walt

As our Secretary reminds me to get my article in for the newsletter, I wonder how we have progressed. Last spring I wrote about the “change” our valley is going through and how we need to stay involved, steering it in the best direction possible. I do see an improvement from where we were last spring to this spring. The work of your AGAI board members is starting to reach you, as members, but not in a way that you may have wished for.

We have been working with planning boards, commissioners, state officials and other groups that share growth concerns and land use changes that affect our use of water. This work has resulted in many of our Ditch members being contacted for their input on concerns as some of the changes take place. This is a great step forward, one that may seem trivial to some but is to the outcome of many hours of meetings.

When you are contacted by someone regarding impacts to your waterway, or a land use change taking place somewhere along it, it will mean that you have to spend extra time and meetings away from farming to address the issue. In the past we have spent more of our time farming and ranching, day to day chores, rather than protecting the right to continue farming and ranching. I am afraid each of our members will have to allot some time dealing with these changes, which seems frustrating at times, but will benefit you greatly in the future.

This is where AGAI can help you with ideas and ways others have addressed the same problems. AGAI hopes to be somewhat of a clearinghouse for information and also help represent you if needed at meetings when asked. There are many options available to you as water users; unfortunately there is not a “boiler plate” fix. Ditches and canals that have been working through some of these change issues are more than willing to share what has worked, helping out other members.

Remember that the work you do today will pay you back many times, if you take the time to enter into the process understanding that water is and will be one of the most important items we have on the ranch. If you think you don’t have time to address these issues now, take a minute and think of the upcoming problems you’ll face by staying out in the field. Again, I offer AGAI to help you in any way we can to get you up to speed, and informed with new ideas. There is a lot of good work being done to help us be proactive instead of reactive.

In the annual Ditch meetings I have attended this spring, quite often I have heard “the days of cheap water are over.” I can understand why this is being said, but I am grateful that we have the chance to stand up for our rights, and by staying involved we will be able to continue to have these rights protected for the future.

Thank you for your continual support, as always I welcome your calls. Walt Sales

Upcoming Events

Spring Water Meeting

Sponsored by Judge Holly Brown and Judge Bruce Lobel, the meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 31 from 7-9 pm at the County Courthouse Community Room. John Tubbs, Administrator from DNRC Water Resources Division, will be the featured speaker, and Dave Pruitt will discuss ditch encroachment permits.

Gallatin Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring “Basic” Training Workshop June 1 & 2

Participants gain experience and skills in the use of chemical monitoring kits and aquatic insect collection and identification. Free and open to the public. Contact Jody Fagan with the Greater Gallatin Watershed Council at jodyfagan@imt.net or 406-585-2870 or Ted Sedell with the Montana Watercourse at edwin.sedell@montana.edu or 406-994-6317.

AGAI’s Mission

The mission of the Association is to be the guardian and advocate of the Gallatin River system and its historically decreed water rights.

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Legal Committee Update

The AGAI legal affairs committee has been active in representing the interests of the membership. The county/city notice of development affecting ditches is almost complete. Ditch directors will be notified when a development will occur on land through which the canal or ditch easement passes. Hopefully, conflicts will be resolved prior to pre application to the government entity having authority over the subdivision. Developers will be furnished with a statement of basic Montana water law and a sheet for signatures evidencing notice to the canal. AGAI continues to monitor applications to DNRC for new water permits and has filed an objection to one that did not include provisions for mitigation of the adverse affect to existing senior water right holders.

Sixty nine water bills were introduced to the sixtieth Legislature. Of these, at least four are likely to reach the Governor for signature. One repeals the "water tax" we paid last year on our property, and another reestablishes the Interim Water Policy Committee. The third requires water right owner update to the DNRC when the title to the water right changes. AGAI participated in Helena as proponents for the three bills. The bill to replace "net depletions" to ground water to sustain surface flows, HB 831 sponsored by Representative Walt McNutt, R-Sidney, will make a major and positive change in the permitting of ground water in closed basins such as ours and has become law. This is the augmentation concept that AGAI has been working towards the last few years. Vigilance on behalf of the membership continues as the legal committee's focus.

Community News from Al Lien

AGAI has been working hard to establish communications with both City and Counties agencies in regards to development issues. A committee from the Association of Gallatin Agricultural Irrigators has met with the Manhattan City, Belgrade City, Bozeman City, and the Gallatin County Planning Departments. AGAI is now recognized as a source of information and point of contact in regards to many canals, ditches, and laterals that cross the valley. As you are all aware, the valley's irrigation is being impacted by the rapid development we see all around us. The planning departments are becoming more aware of the importance of irrigation infrastructure as it relates to agriculture. They have expressed interest in working with AGAI to preserve both.

The Gallatin County agencies have been the most interested in getting help and direction from AGAI. This interest over the past year has resulted in policy being created, forms of contact developed, and mitigation being signed during the application process. The policy, procedure, and forms developed are the direct result of Gallatin County Planning Department's request for assistance from individual canals or ditches through your AGAI organization. On site visits by the planning director, planning staff, canal directors, and AGAI directors have taken place, which further indicates a sincere interest on the part of planning in regard to agriculture.

AGAI urges any of the organized canals, ditches, or individuals that have concerns about development, are expecting impacts, or want to offer input about any of the above issues to contact an AGAI director. Keeping the lines of communication open and working are a priority for AGAI directors.

Managing Herbicide Resistant Weeds

"The widespread and repeated use of glyphosate-based herbicides had put tremendous pressure on weed species to either develop resistance or to shift from those easily controlled by the label range of glyphosate to those more tolerant to it," says Stevan Knezexic, weed management specialist with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Herbicide resistance is not a new issue, and every year more weeds are identified as herbicide-resistant. The following are management strategies for avoiding and managing herbicide-resistant weeds:

- 1) Use herbicides only when necessary.
- 2) Rotate herbicides by mode of action.
- 3) Apply herbicides in tank-mixed, prepackaged, or sequential mixer.
- 4) Rotate crops, particularly those with different life cycles to break up weed life cycles.
- 5) Use mechanical weed control practices whenever possible and identify the weeds that were present.
- 6) Make post harvest weed control part of your regular field practices.

*List from Weed Management Handbook 2006-2007 Montana, Utah, and Wyoming

Conyza canadensis, commonly known as horseweed or marestail, has become glyphosate resistant. Control recommendations for marestail or horseweed:

- Apply before horseweed plants are 4 to 6 inches tall.
- Emerged plants can be controlled with 2,4-D ester (1lb.ai/A) or Sencor plus Gramazine.
- Since the plant is an annual, hand pulling plants is effective. Wear gloves and bag plants if they have flowers or seeds.

For more information contact the Gallatin Country Weed District at 582-3265

Horseweed or marestail



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