3/6/2025 Local Working Group Meeting

Resource concerns & items noted from the meeting:

* Eagle Scouts project support
  + Grants for their projects and education on conservation.
* Noxious Weeds
  + Ventenata & Sulfur Cinquefoil
    - Duck Creek & Blue Creek areas have reached out to the county weed district for help with treating both Ventenata and Sulfur Cinquefoil patches that are spreading quickly across neighbors.
  + Russian Olives, Salt Cedar
    - YRPA has been working on removal in parks that they manage around Billings, would like to see a larger scale effort with removal.
  + Invasive weed pressure becoming more of an issue in parks around Billings
    - Education for recreationists needed.
    - Boot brush stations are helpful at reducing spread.
* Soil Erosion on Cropland
  + Working to help keep more cover on the ground through soil health, cover crops.
* Soil acidity (Dryland Crop)
* Pollinator habitat restoration
  + Encouraging pollinator habitat development on idle ground, vacant lots, and in neighborhoods/backyards.
  + Provide education about what can be done on small acres.
    - Moth walks and bat walks have been happening around Billings, look into doing more with some of the groups that are already doing a lot with pollinator education.
    - Montana Moth Project
* Grazing infrastructure
  + Water, fence, etc. to help with grazing management
* Fish habitat in Yellowstone River
  + Maintaining hatcheries for healthy rivers
* Trees
  + Living snow fence - these have been successful, and it would be nice to see some more put in around the county.
  + Also trying to get some more shelterbelt/windbreaks planted.
* Small acreage landowners
  + Water efficiency and timing for irrigation
  + Tree and shrub design for landscaping
    - Reducing future risk of fire through spacing
  + Small vertebrate management
  + Pests on urban lawns and gardens
* Irrigation
  + Huntley Irrigation Project has put in for a water conservation and resiliency grant as part of the water savings commodity program to help update infrastructure in needed areas. They have identified project areas, cost estimates, and just submitted their work plan for approval. They estimate 3 years for completion of updates.
  + Sizing of culverts/pipes
    - Installation of limiting culverts/pipes contribute to the loss of stream connectivity for aquatic species. Education around the installation and how impacts can be minimized.

Outreach/education ideas for the upcoming year:

* Pollinators
* Soil acidity
* Small acreage landowner conservation items to consider
  + Water usage on lawns/fields (irrigation)
  + Managing pests and nutrients
  + Trees/Windbreak Planning

Priority Resource Concerns for FY2026 LWG are as follows:

* #1 Urban Priority – Improving Pollinator habitat
* #1 Ag Land – Irrigation efficiency, primarily focusing on the Huntley Project Irrigation District.