

AGAI Ripple

AGAIMT.com

AGAI's mission is to be the guardian and advocate of the Gallatin River system and its historically decreed water rights.

A Word from Walt

In this issue:

A Word from Walt	1-2
Legal Update	2
Community News	2
Stormwater Group	3
Mapping Project	3
Website Update	3
Annual Meeting Reminder	4
Watershed Tour	4



AGAI Directors

Walt Sales, President
 Al Lien, Vice President
 Jennifer Mohler, Secretary / Treasurer
 Mick Seeburg
 Nick Schutter
 Spencer Smith
 Susan Duncan
 Alan English
 Dan Triemstra
 Maynard Flikkema

We have heard a lot of talk this election about change. My thoughts today have been on our change, in AGAI's work over the years. This also begs the question of what changes we will see down the road.

Many of you remember the fall of 2004 when AGAI was formed, setting out to bring a group of surface water users together to work on water issues. Our main concern was setting up the groundwork to represent the views of varied users, protect the resource and its use. We roped some willing souls onto a steering committee, worked out a mission statement, set up membership basics, funding, and elected a board of directors. Then it was off to work on issues, we hit the ground running... ..right into the 59th Montana Legislative session, meetings with work groups, county meetings, ditch/canal meetings, DNRC meetings, possibly more meetings than one cares to remember. Then back to square one, another Legislative session and the cycle continues as we are facing the third Legislative session since our beginning.

These meetings were either attended by a Director or member of AGAI, while they were also working their everyday jobs, expressing the need and benefit for protecting our water rights (during some of the driest years in our valley... hopefully). Working relationships and education has changed some viewpoints of policy makers, various groups and individuals throughout Montana, by hearing the interests and effects upon senior water users; this would have never evolved without the effort back in 2004. It's been said before if you're not at the political table then you're on the menu.

To take a closer look at the meetings and changes that have taken place over the last year, read through the committee reports in this newsletter, and plan on attending our annual meeting on the 20th of November. I always invite any calls to discuss what we have been working on or for needs that we may overlook.

Another welcomed change was the abundant snow pack and cooler temps this summer that allowed the river flows we experienced. One thing that DID NOT change was the working relationship between users to help each other and work together to keep our flows sustained and the River Commissioner at home (mostly). Thank you senior and junior water users for your cooperation, and thank you George for keeping us informed.

continued pg. 2

Mark your calendar!

AGAI's Annual Membership Meeting

Thursday, November 20, 2008 @ 7pm at the

Gallatin Gateway Community Center

Committee Reports / Local & State Update / Outlook for 2009 / Q&A

Guest Speakers:

John Tubbs, Administrator of the Water Resources Division, DNRC
 Kerri Strasheim, DNRC Bozeman Regional Office Unit Manager
 Sean O'Callaghan, Gallatin County Planning Department

Community News

During this past year, AGAI has continued to work with the county planning department on the revised subdivision regulations. The revised regulations will require developers to communicate with the agricultural irrigation canals, ditches, and laterals that are on the property and allow those directly impacted have a voice regarding impacts to the ditch. Due to AGAI's hard work, developers are now required to obtain the signature of the ditch company, individual, etc on the plan in order to be reviewed by the County Commissioners for preliminary plat approval. The irrigation infrastructure must be considered upfront before any development work begins. AGAI will direct any requests to the respective canal companies, ditches or individuals that may be involved. The Gallatin County Commissioners signed the revised subdivision regulations into effect in September 2008. Should any AGAI member or individual feel further amendments are necessary, contact AGAI.

The next step is to contact the planning departments of the various cities in Gallatin County (Bozeman, Belgrade, and Manhattan) and present the revised subdivision regulations and push for adoption. Two irrigation systems either pass through or end in the Bozeman city limits, and a third ditch is being encroached upon. Belgrade also has experienced tremendous growth, and ditches in the Belgrade planning area are also being affected.

by Al Lien

A Word from Walt *continued*

Now for the upcoming change, all those meetings!! It has become evident to me that we have exhausted our Board in the last four years. It is difficult to find willing board replacements as we continue to retire original members. As I see it today, we have two options: 1) Scale back to quarterly Board meetings and less community involvement 2) Hire a lobbyist/executive director and continue our efforts. I feel option one has immense opportunities for senior water rights and AGAI to go backwards. Option two will require up-front work to set up and fund, but return a positive continuing investment for that commitment.

Back in '04 we looked into this position (option 2), how it would be possible to fund, control and maintain. With hindsight being 20-20 vision, I dropped the ball and focused on our immediate concerns. I regret not keeping this in our foresight. I am confident that we can pursue this without having to scale back our work, while meeting the upcoming changes.

We have taken steps to address our future needs, but we need to hear from you, our membership. We continue to see increased pressure on water....its availability, use (historic and new) and protection. I encourage all of you to attend the annual meeting, to help us continue *at the table, and not on the menu.*

By Walt Sales

Legal Committee Update

AGAI's legal committee has remained as active as ever over the summer months. The county has (finally) adopted the protection for the canals and ditches that was three years in the making. Canal directors / water users will be involved early in the treatment of the water conveyance facility by the applicant and the director's/ water user's input will carry forward to the subdivision process. The AGAI board will be attempting to get the other government agencies in our county to conform to the now extant standards. Other local activities have included assisting in the withdrawal of the E. H. Miller amendment in the water court, activity to resolve the Manhattan objections while protecting the Baker Ditch, filing an amicus brief with the Montana supreme court concerning local Judge J Brown's decision concerning the Lazy J subdivision near Big Sky and monitoring a new application from the developers north of Bridger ski area. The legal committee also offered testimony and monitored the Legislature's Water Policy Interim Committee to see that senior water rights were protected. The committee has recommended six bills as bi-partisan improvements in the existing water law. AGAI expects to favor them all when they are presented to the legislature but is watching for any unacceptable changes that may arrive. Additionally the committee created and transmitted a 29 page grant request to ensure that AGAI will remain active in its legal representation of senior water rights in both state and local forums. The Legal committee remains vigilant on behalf of the membership.

By Mick Seeburg

Stormwater Work Group: Low Impact Development

AGAI participated in the Greater Gallatin Watershed Committee's Stormwater Work Group to explore the feasibility of implementing LID designs locally. LID is an innovative stormwater management approach with a basic principal that is modeled after nature: manage rainfall at the source using uniformly distributed decentralized micro-scale controls. LID's goal is to mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source. These landscape features are the building block of LID. (Urban Design Tools: www.lid-stormwater.net)

The Work Group met to discuss options for encouraging LID designs in new development. Using the Metropolitan Council Urban Small Sites Best Management Practices Manual by Barr Engineering, the group chose several LID designs and summarized guidelines for implementing LID. The specific designs include: constructed wetlands, bio retention, on-lot infiltration (rain gardens, rain barrels, soakaway pits), driveway designs, parking lot designs, and filter strips. These designs provide options and flexibility. GGWC presented the guidelines to development professionals on August 29, 2008. Our next step is to continue promoting LID to planning review boards and other development professionals and incorporating their feedback in to the guidelines. For more information or to request a presentation please contact Debbie Earl at 994-1910 or dzarnt@montana.edu.

By Debbie Earl

Debbie Earl is the Interim Director for the Montana Watercourse at the Montana Water Center, Bozeman, MT.

AGAI Water Conveyance Facilities Mapping Project

Thanks to a cooperative working partnership with the Gallatin County GIS office, MSU and the Gallatin Conservation District, AGAI is pleased to announce that a longtime goal to GPS map Gallatin Valley canals and ditches in a standardized method has begun!

Diana Cooksey is a GPS Lab Manager/GPS Mapping Instructor in the Dept. of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences at Montana State University. She teaches a course called LRES 357 GPS Fundamentals & Applications of Mapping. One of the course assignments for the students is to work on an outside mapping project. Each year the City of Bozeman 911 department presents their list of new apartment buildings and subdivisions that need to be mapped. This helps the emergency responders find addresses quickly. AGAI presented their mapping project to Diana and she was keen to add us to the program.

This past fall Allen Armstrong the Gallatin County GIS Manager, along with an AGAI representative, presented the AGAI Water Conveyance Facilities Mapping Project (canals and ditches) to the class. MSU students Curt Leibrand, Curtiss Swets, Jordan Beamer, Steven Tilden, Chris Fredin and Robyn Wanken all signed on to the project. As this course is offered each semester, we anticipate ongoing supply of student volunteers to work on the map while fulfilling at the same time a course requirement. Other than time spent with the students, there is no cost to AGAI. We are thankful for the level of cooperation and interest we have received from all the entities involved. The first ditch to be mapped will be The Lowline Canal. Please join us at the AGAI Membership meeting November 20 to hear more about this worthwhile project.

AGAI would like to thank Diana Cooksey of MSU, Allen Armstrong and Frank Dougher of the Gallatin County GIS Department, and Marcie Murnion-Learn of the Gallatin Conservation District for all their help putting this project together.

Website Update: AGAIMT.com

AGAI Board member Alan English generously donated the use of many beautiful photos showing how water moves through the Gallatin Valley. You can see them under the photo section of the website. We are also putting the final touches on a document about water rights in Montana to add to the FAQ and Glossary Section and should have that up by the end of the year. The more information that people can get from the AGAI site, the more useful it becomes to them and they will visit more often.

Don't forget!

AGAI's Annual Membership Meeting

**Thursday, November 20, 2008 @ 7pm at the
Gallatin Gateway Community Center.**

Greater Gallatin Watershed Council Fall Tour

This is the second year AGAI was involved with the Greater Gallatin Watershed Council's watershed tour. The tour followed the Bozeman Creek watershed from the Gallatin Range to the East Gallatin River. Stops included City of Bozeman's Water Treatment Plant, Bogart Park, and the City of Bozeman's Water Reclamation Facility Outfall. The speakers were great and a big thank you goes out to AGAI directors Sue Duncan and Al Lien, and AGAI member & GGWC director Tom Milesnick for presenting the agricultural perspective.

Sponsors: Greater Gallatin Watershed Council, Gallatin Local Water Quality District, Association of Gallatin Agricultural Irrigators, Gallatin Conservation District, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, and Gallatin Association of Realtors.



Thanks goes out to Sharlyn Izurieta,
GGWC's Watershed Coordinator, for
putting together a great tour!