



Fall 2011 Newsletter

Letter from the President

Fall is all around us on the Big Horn and nature is putting on a spectacular show. The cottonwoods are lining the river with shimmering gold; the geese are soaring and barking to all who will listen...and just one more thing...TRICOS. The fish are slurping up this little fly in record numbers. Sometimes it's just good to be alive and living on The Horn.

This past season has been exciting, to say the least. Record snowfall, combined with 15 inches of rain in May created water levels that haven't been since 1968. There was local flooding caused from the smaller streams in the area. Even I-90 north of Hardin was closed for a few days due to flooding in late May.

Through all of that and the 15,500 CFS flows in June, the Big Horn continued to fish exceptionally well. There were the old standbys, hoppers, scuds, and sow bugs and we were visited by some hatches of Yellow Sallies and PMDs in the summer that rivaled times before the drought years.

The higher water opened up some side channels such as Kline's Channel, Picture Channel and the African Queen. It was great to have this terrific areas open and holding fish. I can't wait for the Alliance Side Channel project to permanently open these channels. The project was delayed this year due to high water, but should be back on track shortly.

This newsletter will detail all that The Big Horn River Alliance has been doing. The Dam Run in June brought sunny skies and a spectacular venue over the Yellowtail Dam. The Carp Tournament was a huge success. Who'd believe that in sleepy Fort Smith 120 people would come to the BBQ and live music event held after the tournament? Congratulations to Steve and J.J. Hilbers who won the tournament with the most carp to the boat.

The most exciting item that is happening within the Alliance is you. We are currently 800 plus members strong. Your support has allowed us to have the resources to explore options to hire professional help and improve our communications with the Bureau of Reclamation and The Park Service. The Alliance has made a commitment to you to improve and enhance this river and it is a job we take seriously. We are working closely with the Bureau of Reclamation to communicate our water flow needs...and dare I speak out loud? I think they might be starting to hear us. More on that subject as it develops.

Thank you again for you support and encouragement. Together we will maintain and improve The Big Horn for us and those who follow behind.

Zoe Opie, President

Side Channel Update

Dennis Fischer has been working with the Bureau of Reclamation to survey and restore water flow to the Picture Channel (across the river from the Corral island) and also Kline's Channel (just downstream from the Three Rivers area).

The channels were surveyed and staked this spring, but the heavy rain and ensuing high water made it impossible to move the heavy equipment in and finish the rest of the work.

Dennis has continued to work with the Bureau of Reclamation to resurvey the side channels to try to have the excavation finished by the end of the year.

This will open up two side channels that have been without water for some time except in recent high water years.

Bighorn River Alliance Affiliates with Federation of Fly Fishers

During May of this year the Alliance became an Affiliate Club with the Federation of Fly Fishers. The Federation consists of approximately 275 Clubs throughout America and internationally as well. The Federation of Fly Fishers is dedicated to **Conserving, Restoring, and Educating through Fly Fishing**. The FFF seeks recognition and protection for native fishes, restoration of aquatic habitat, and provides educational materials and services that promote the skills, health, confidence, and environmental awareness of individual fly fishers.

These FFF goals make this partnership we've created fall right in line with the goals and purpose of the Big Horn River Alliance. Thru this alignment with FFF, the Alliance now has the opportunity to capitalize on their Conservation and Education grant programs as well as add credibility to our voice.

Our conservation projects such as the Side Channel Restoration Project could benefit. The Big Horn River Youth Adventure Project will benefit both from publicity and funding from FFF. During past years the FFF national office in Livingston, Montana, has been very helpful and cooperative with our Youth Adventure.

This affiliation with FFF will provide an opportunity for the Alliance to strengthen its position in the areas of Conservation and Education.

As an Affiliate Club the Alliance does not require individual membership in FFF but we would very much encourage our members to support the FFF as well as the Big Horn River Alliance.

2011 Bighorn River Youth Adventure

The following are quotes from the email we sent to the youngsters and parents who were to take part in the 2011 Big Horn River Youth Adventure. At the time we were more than a little concerned about the river conditions and the uncertainty of the days to follow.

“After much consultation amongst the Big Horn River Alliance Officers and Directors as well as the guides and other involved parties we have made the decision to cancel the 2011 Youth Adventure. This is not a decision we take lightly nor do we fail to recognize and understand the disappointment of the youths. “

“The heavy late winter snow (at this time 250% of average), and record and near record rainfall over the past two weeks have changed The Big Horn River to something we have not seen in the nearly 45 years that Yellowtail dam has been in place. “

“In light of the current river flow of 15,500 cfs and the anticipation of even higher flows our concern for the safety and well being of the youngsters overshadows our desire to conduct this event.”

The good news is that all of the kids have agreed to join us on the river next June for the 2012 Youth Adventure. The majority of the parents thanked the Alliance for the bold move and for our consideration of the safety and well being of the youths.

After an entire summer of record high flows the river is finally back to a fairly normal flow level and it is easier to look to the future.

We look forward to the best Youth Adventure ever next June. We thank all of you who donated time, facilities, and money for the event. It is the hope of the Alliance that the Fort Smith angling community will step forward again and make next years' event a world-class youth adventure once again. Thank you,

Frank Johnson and Pete Zaic, Youth Adventure co-chairmen.

2nd Annual “Not Just Another Dam Run”

Runners and walkers celebrated a second "once a year" opportunity to enjoy spectacular views from Yellowtail Dam. This spring, the weather in Montana was very unpredictable and at times we found ourselves facing the threat of canceling the event. To our surprise, amidst all the rainy days and high water, the sun welcomed a beautiful spring outing. The Yellowtail Dam Run gave everyone, participant and volunteer alike, a reason to get out and appreciate a day that is becoming known as the only opportunity to experience the Yellowtail Dam walls.

This community project could not be successful without the help of sponsors, volunteers, and participants. After seeing how well the 2010 "Dam Run" was received, the National Park Service co-sponsored the event with Bighorn River Alliance. This considerably reduced the time and money spent to acquire the necessary permits/fees. In addition, the National Park Service included a free park pass so participants could return and recreate in Bighorn National Park at a later time. Thank you to all the local volunteers and National Park Service Employees who helped with aid stations, race registration, timing, and security. We could not have pulled it off without these generous people! Last, but certainly not least, thank you to all the participants.

The “Dam Run” raised over \$1500 for The Bighorn River Alliance. The proceeds will be used towards Youth Adventure week hosted by Bighorn River Alliance. The 2012 “Dam Run” will take place Sunday, June 10th. Please mark your calendars, start training, and make it a family weekend on the “Horn”!

Keri McMeans, Race Coordinator

2012 Membership Drive

2011 saw a dramatic rise in membership to The Big Horn River Alliance. Membership was 432 members on 12/23/2010 and as of 10/1/2011 we are 815 members strong. I want to welcome all of the new members and thank all of our veteran members for their continued support. With your help we can continue and enhance our efforts to protect this great fishery.

In 2011 in conjunction with the new memberships and membership renewals the Alliance sponsored a raffle. With each donation the member was given raffle tickets for four nights of lodging, three days of guided fishing, and all meals. This year’s lucky member was Charles Gaffe from Evanston, Illinois.

We plan to do a similar raffle in conjunction with the membership drive in 2012. We will be publishing the details shortly after the first of the year.

Thank you one and all for your confidence and support.

2011 Carp Tournament

July 8th was the annual Bighorn Lake Carp Tournament. 25 teams entered and was won by Steve and JJ Hilbers. Afterward, a BBQ was held with live bluegrass music, silent auctions and raffles. Rods, reels and artwork were donated and auctioned off. A three-day, four-night fishing trip was the grand prize raffle. The event raised \$3000 for the Bighorn River Alliance.

The proceeds will help improve the Bighorn Fishing Access site along with help from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. They will also help for the 2012 river cleanup.

The permits for the 2012 carp tournament are already secured. Mark your calendars for July 6th and look forward to another day of fun fishing, very nice items in the raffles and auctions and great food!

ALLIANCE MEMBERS RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARDS

Two Big Horn River Alliance members were singled out for major recognition from the Federation of Fly Fishers.

The awards were presented at the National Conclave and Fishing Fair held in West Yellowstone, MT in late August. Both recipients are long term members and contributors to the organization. The Alliance is affiliated with the FFF and works together with the national organization on both conservation and education projects.

Bob Krumm (left with FFF President Phil Greenlee) is the recipient of the 2011 Lew Jewett Memorial Life Award. The criteria for this award include promotion of fly fishing thru distinguishable effort to draw more people into fly fishing and/or enhance the knowledge and ability of the fly fisher. Bob's many years of contributing his time, his teaching skills, his knowledge of fly angling, his knowledge of biology and his willingness to share this wealth of knowledge with others made him a natural choice for this major recognition.

Frank Johnson (right) was awarded the Dick Nelson Fly Tying Teaching Award. This award is presented to an individual who excels in teaching the art of fly tying to all skill levels. The person should embody the spirit of the Federation, imparting not only a love of fly tying, but also of fly-fishing and the conservation of the resource. Frank is a past recipient of the Buz Buszek Memorial Fly Tying Award – An award to a person who has made significant contributions to the art of fly tying.



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