



April 25, 2003

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Lynda Saul: 406-444-6652; lsaul@state.mt.us

Karen Filipovich, 406-994-1910; kfilipovich@montana.edu

The Montana Wetland Council is pleased to announce the **2003 Wetland Stewardship Awards**, a biennial event. Awards will be given to an outstanding public servant and to a private citizen who demonstrates an extraordinary level of commitment to protect, conserve, and enhance Montana wetland resources for present and future generations. The award ceremony will be in the Montana State Capital on May 8th from 9:45-10:30 in the Old Supreme Court Chambers. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend. Governor Martz will be offering remarks and will be on hand for the awards.

Private Sector Award: Larry Weeks is a retired Smurfitt-Stone Container employee who has volunteered to partner with Smurfitt-Stone to manage and restore corporation land along the Clark Fork River since 1998. These restoration and management efforts are helping protect the river and has improved wildlife habitat in an area facing increased development and habitat degradation. Larry's efforts as a volunteer include fencing two miles of cottonwood bottomlands along the Clark Fork and adjacent upland riparian areas to keep out cattle and allow recovery of shrubs and cottonwood trees, removed tons of trash and old fencing, convinced Smurfitt-Stone to divert water to form a new year-round 40 acre freshwater pond that has become exceptional waterfowl habitat, and has led extensive revegetation and weed eradication efforts.

Public Sector Award: Gordon Stockstad is the Section Supervisor for the Resources Section in the Environmental Services Bureau of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Gordon is responsible for management and policy decisions in the development of a nationally recognized wetlands mitigation program for MDT. Gordon has embraced cooperative and collaborative approaches to wetland and aquatic protection including the creation of an interagency mitigation review process for MDT wetland projects and the development of a wetland monitoring program to evaluate the environmental effectiveness of the MDT's wetland mitigation projects. Gordon has provided direction and interagency collaboration on projects including: stream restoration at Big Spring in Lewistown; restoration of Camp Creek, near Sula; restoration of the degraded Kleinschmidt Spring Creek which serves as an important spawning tributary to the North Fork of the Blackfoot; development of wetlands in the abandoned sewage lagoons in Roundup; and is currently involved in the planning and development of wetland mitigation and wildlife crossing efforts from Evaro to Polson. These projects have been used as models and are at the cutting edge of approaches to minimizing developmental and road building impacts to wetland and aquatic resources in Montana and have been adopted by many other DOT's in the Western United States.

Montana Wetland Council is a statewide forum that promotes cooperative wetland resource management in Montana. Our mission is to develop coordinate efforts to protect, conserve, and enhance Montana wetland resources for present and future generations. The Wetland Stewardship Awards ceremony will be part of the upcoming Montana Wetland Council meeting. **For more information** about the awards or the Council, contact Lynda Saul at (406) 444-6652 or lsaul@state.mt.us or visit <http://nris.state.mt.us/wis/wetlands/>