



Montana Natural Heritage Program Report July through September 2014

Prepared for the October 8, 2014 Commission meeting
by Allan Cox, Lead Program Manager, MTNHP

This report represents the accomplishments of the MTNHP staff

Goal One – Content: MSL acquires and manages relevant quality content that meets the needs of Montana library users.

- The Wetland and Riparian Mapping Center of the MTNHP has updated its status map, which can be found at http://mtnhp.org/nwi/images/wetland_status.jpg. To date, nearly 2.4 million acres of wetlands and riparian areas have been mapped by the center.
- A major effort is currently under way in MTNHP to update Species of Concern (SOC) mapped occurrences. The SOC occurrences are used daily by MTNHP for its geographic review of various projects across the state. Zoology and Information staff continue to manage and expand the point observation (POD) animal database. POD forms the basis of much of the evaluation of the occurrences for our Species of Concern.

Goal Two – Access: MSL provides libraries, agencies, and its partners and patrons with convenient, high quality, and cost-effective access to library content and services.

- MTNHP's newest version of MapViewer was released in June. This version replaces Tracker, which has been our primary mapping application since 2005. This new version is significantly faster, runs on multiple browsers, and is easier-to-use with many new features including a new Add Observation function with the ability to attach photos. <http://mtnhp.org/mapviewer/>
- In July and August, MTNHP successfully converted from BIOTICS 4 (locally hosted on an Oracle server) to BIOTICS 5 (a cloud based installation hosted by NatureServe). BIOTICS is NatureServe's software for managing Species of Concern information—species ranks, occurrences, and descriptive information. It is the system MTNHP uses to maintain the compatibility of Montana's data with the rest of

the Natural Heritage network (per MCA 9-15-302) and enables us to incorporate our state data in the global database maintained by NatureServe.

Goal Three – Training: MSL provides appropriate trainings and training resources so that the best use can be made of the resources offered.

- Karen Newlon (MTNHP Ecologist/Project Manager) and Kyla Zaret (MTNHP Ecologist/GIS Specialist) provided training in July to the Environmental Protection Department of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe on wetland assessment field methods.
- Allan Cox, (Lead Program Manager MTNHP) provided training to the Montana Department of Transportation in the use of MTNHP species data and the newly released updated version of the MapViewer.

Goal Six – Sustainable Success: MSL is efficient and effective (measured against user outcomes), and is engaged in fulfilling its mission.

- The Natural Heritage Program hired a new Botany Program Manager to replace Scott Mincemoyer (who left the program in September 2013). The Program is pleased to announce that Andrea Pipp of Helena has accepted the position of Botany Program Manager. Andrea is slated to begin her new job with MTNHP on October 6. Andrea has a career in biology spanning 28 years. She has an MS in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana with an emphasis on plant and lichen ecology. She has extensive experience in the private sector and has also worked for the USFS and BLM. And, she has done contractual work for the Heritage program over the past few years.
- The Ecology Program has entered into several agreements for projects that support or complement our core activities. We received a grant from the Bureau of Land Management for wetland mapping in southwest Montana; we were awarded two grants from the Environmental Protection Agency to improve our wetland mapping and assessment products and make them more accessible to users; and we have contracted with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to evaluate the current distribution of western pearlshell mussels, a Montana Species of Concern.