

OUTDOORS

Erickson named MLR managing director

Jay Erickson has been promoted to the position of managing director in the Helena office of the Montana Land Reliance (MLR), a non-profit land trust formed in 1978. Erickson has been with MLR since October 1999.

Erickson, a lifelong resident of Montana, lived in Reserve and Lewistown before graduating from high school in Libby. He received a law degree from the University of Montana and a master's in taxation from the University of Denver. Previously, he was employed as a trial and estate tax attorney with the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Erickson enjoys fly-fishing, hunting and skiing. He and his wife, Ann Gilkey, have two children, Sam and Zoe.

As a managing director, Erickson helps Montana landowners provide long-term protection to private lands. He assists landowners in reaching their conservation goals.

The Montana Land Reliance is a leader in private land conservation and holds more than 466,000 acres in 480 conservation easements throughout Montana. MLR's goal is to preserve Montana's open space, agricultural heritage, and pristine ecosystems. The Montana Land Reliance has offices in Helena, Billings and Bigfork.

Data: Rainbow trout populations fall

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populations in the three reservoirs can't be overstated because so many game fish in the three reservoirs rely on yellow perch for a major part of their diet.

Canyon Ferry rainbow

Canyon Ferry rainbow populations continue to fall. Biologists are searching for explanations and they are involved in efforts designed to identify the cause of the decline.

The planting of rainbow fingerling in Canyon Ferry during the past two years has been a disappointment. Spoon said that low water conditions around the state prevented some Montana waters from receiving rainbow plants during 2001. The result was that a higher than normal number of rainbows (750,000) were planted in Canyon Ferry. Fall and winter surveys failed to find those plants and it's believed they may not have survived.

"The past two years the plants haven't taken," Spoon said. "We're not sure why. We're going to try fall plantings with larger (8 inches) fish. We're also going to try different (species) of rainbows and see how they fare."

Typically, rainbow trout are planted when they are between five and six inches long. Three species of rainbow — Eagle Lake, DeSmet and Arlee — are traditionally used as plants.

Hauser Reservoir

Hauser Reservoir is experiencing problems similar to Canyon Ferry. Dalbey began by stating that his data shows the health of Hauser Reservoir is directly related to the amount of water flowing through the system.

According to Dalbey, rainbows planted during the late 1990s, 2000 and 2001 haven't done well. Also, more than 1 million kokanee have been planted in Hauser since the crash caused by high water during the spring of 1997

and those kokanee haven't resulted in any improvement in that population.

Dalbey said the walleye numbers in Hauser are down a bit from the highs reached in 1998 and 1999. But, he added, walleye numbers (two walleye per net) during 2001 were close to the three year average (2.7 per net) and very close to the management plan target of 2.3 walleye per net.

Yellow perch in Hauser during 2001 (two per net) are well below the target (seven per net) but Dalbey believes recent efforts to improve spawning habitat in Hauser will eventually improve the number of perch.

"We sunk 349 bundles of Christmas trees in Hauser last year and we plan to continue that effort," Dalbey said. "I believe that'll help perch numbers rise in future surveys."

Holter Reservoir

Data indicates Holter Reservoir remains in fairly good condition. Rainbow numbers during 2001 surveys were 5.9 rainbow per net with a management target of eight rainbow per net. The management target for Holter walleye is three per net. The three-year average has been 6.2 walleye per net and the 2001 survey result was 4.5 walleye per net.

Holter perch are well below management goals but the biologists agreed that traditionally perch populations fluctuate widely and a good spawn could bring perch numbers up in a matter of a few years.

Many in attendance seemed to agree with Terry McArdle's assessment of the meeting.

"I thought the meeting was much more positive than any meeting about this I've been in in many years," McArdle said. "Most everybody was real positive, and I think that now we're all pulling in the same direction."

Director: Ranchers work with TNC

continued from 1C

Valley weren't that interested in easements, they were more interested in weed control," Williams said.

By helping the ranchers with weed control, TNC created a strong relationship with the community and opened doors to creating a conservation easement program in the Centennial Valley.

Williams said that ranchers should not feel threatened by the efforts of TNC. "The work we've done is symbolic of our opinion that

economic activity, ranching and preservation can go hand-in-hand, he said. "We recognize the incredible conservation efforts that private landowners are making. Our goal is to be a resource for private landowners and sustaining their needs through non-confrontational, voluntary actions."

Statistics for 2001 showed that TNC has protected more than 406,000 acres in Montana including 36,982 acres of preserves, 227,697 acres in conservation easements and 142,221 in cooperative projects.

OutdoorsBriefs

Last Chance Audubon Society news

Ulm Pishkun State Park manager Connie Jacobs will give a slide show and talk about the natural history of this important buffalo jump site south of Great Falls at the Last Chance Audubon Society monthly meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. at the Lewis and Clark Library. Jacobs will also discuss the park's new development, including recent land trades, information on new trails, and interpretational efforts.

A field trip is planned for Sunday, Feb. 24. See bald eagles, ducks, dippers and other species at the Missouri River trail below Hauser Dam. Meet at the southeast corner of the KMart parking lot at 10 a.m. Bring food, water, a guide book (if you have one) and binoculars, and wear warm clothes and boots. Trip will return about 1 p.m. Call Cedron

Jones or Sara Toubman 9442-1271) for more information.

Also make sure to mark your calendars for the annual Natural History Lecture series — Latitudes with an Attitude: Cold Environments and the Animals That Inhabit Them. Weekly lectures on the flora, fauna, and ecology of arctic regions will take place every Wednesday from March 6 to April 4.

Helena Outdoor Club's February trips

Feb. 16-18 (President's Weekend), Marias Pass — Join Joanne Thun for two ski tours. Saturday will be a 6-mile car shuttle on the Autumn Creek Trail. Sunday will be the Firebrand Pass ski for intermediate to advanced level skiers. Make your own reservations at the Dancing Bear Motel by calling 406-226-4402. Double rooms (two beds) are \$50,

and single rooms (one bed) with jetted tubs are \$45, per night. Call Joanne for details at 449-7971.

Feb. 17, Sunday, Grassy Mountain — This is an intermediate level ski trip around Grassy Mountain in the Big Belts. Expect an all day point-to-point ski with 1,200 feet elevation loss. Length of trip will be about 8 to 12 miles depending on the conditions. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Department of Transportation parking lot at 2701 Prospect Ave. Call Jeff Van Tine if you have questions at 443-1312.

Feb. 23, Saturday, Stemple Pass — This is an advanced beginner to intermediate level ski of moderate duration and relatively strenuous. The trip will ascend a ridge southwest of Stemple Pass parking lot, then connect to the Continental Divide Trail and up a steep chute back to the parking lot. Call Tim at 444-1613 (day) or 442-1619 (evenings), if you have questions. Meet at 9 a.m. at the top level of the Park Avenue parking ramp.

Belmont: Lift tickets were once only \$1.50

continued from 1C

writer Doc Bowler. "The skiers were towed a short distance to the area from Marysville by Jay Lyndes with his sleigh and team of horses."

In 1943, Belmont hosted the state high school ski championships.

During the war, Alke and Harry Reinig were ski troopers in the 10th Mountain Division in Italy; Rudio served in the 2nd Division at Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge.

In 1946, after the men returned from the war, the Belmont Ski Club was formed, and Roy Riley was elected its first president. Besides those previously mentioned, other original members included Reinig, Anna King Rudio, George Savage, Shirley Davis Williams, Donna Kelly Burgess and Jack Emery.

The club's initial projects were major endeavors. They upgraded the original tow to a 1,800-foot electric powered rope-tow, which took skiers from the sand dam to the top of the "Highballer" and "Pow-erdrive" (so named because it followed the power line). They also utilized a snow-cat service to transport skiers from Marysville to the base of the hill.

In addition, "Two warming tents were in use at hill bottom, and a telephone service was installed to assist in timing racers," according to an IR report from that time.

Lift tickets sold for \$1.50. In 1946, Dr. Amos "Bud" Little, a paratroop doctor during WWII, won the alpine events at the NRMSA championships at the Ennis Ski Hill. The next year, Little successfully defended his Northern Division crown at Belmont, and placed second at the first annual Belmont Invitational behind Morris Willey of Billings.

John Quigley's Frontier Town established a run in 1947-48, complemented by a rope tow and night skiing. Elaine Phillips Power broke her leg there, and while being transported down the hill on a toboggan, she rolled off when the sled took a corner too fast.

The IR reported in 1947 that "serving as Belmont's ski school instructors are Reinig, Dick Vorhees, Chuck Bradham, Hal Erickson, Bill Downs and Dr. Little. Members of the Belmont Ski Patrol are Kneedler, Morrison, the Rileys, Reinig, Erickson, Chuck and Elizabeth Bradham, Alke, Anna Rudio, Martin Clark, Carl Tower, Jack Kinney, Lucille Aagard, Tom and Janet Hawkins and Dan Schofield." Some of the other dozens of volunteers from those early days were: John Hollow Sr., Noral Johnson, Ward Thomp-



An aerial view of the 'Haire-Aire' chalet, built in 1966, atop the Belmont Ski Hill.

son, Glen Child, George Lang-dorf, Bruce Fisher, Mary Little, Patsy Downs, Jock Palmquist, Clint Peck, Les Rudio, Ray Johnson, George Huber, Howard Wright, Stan Carlson, Franklin Blackmer, Dr. Jack Burgess, Jim Hahn and Joe Black.

In 1948, with the help of Lewis and Clark County, a winding road from Marysville to the base of the hill was built. A parking lot was added the next year, and the chalet was then constructed with donations of \$1,000 cash and \$4,000 worth of materials. Volunteer builders included Con Mannix, Bob VanDyke, Ken Lindstrom, Erickson, Downs, Paul LeRoux, Mel King, Dick Ley, Ken Kinney, Tower, Jim Zugel and Fisher. The chalet became known as "The Cotton Club," and was a friendly gathering place for many memorable events.

Two new runs, "The Face" and "Rattlesnake," were

built in 1949. Alke, who served as Belmont's manager for 39-years (1946-1984) until it was sold to Kevin Taylor, said that at one time during the 1950s there were four rope tows in operation at the hill. In 1956, the "Haire-Aire" run was cut, and a chalet was constructed at the top of the mountain. A ski jump was built in 1958; a Poma-lift for "Broadway" was installed in 1962; and the first T-Bar was used in 1966.

The vision of "The Ski Mountaineers" 60-years ago, and the pioneer spirit, hard work and love of sport of all the past and present volunteers has provided memories

for skiers for almost three generations. And some of the early-day club members, now in their 70s, still schussing and weddelling down the slopes of the Great Divide include Harry Reinig (who survived a near fatal crash into a tree in a 1952 race), Dick Porte, Harry Harlan and Red Drennon.

Curt Synness, an IR paperboy from 1965-68 and a local sports historian and freelance writer, decided to switch to water skiing after taking a header on Belmont's "Highballer" in 1966. His e-mail address is curt52s@hotmail.com.

ANNUAL MEETING
February 28th
7 PM
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Building
1420 East 6th Ave.
Everyone is invited

TONIGHT! 7:00 PM
Gosford Park
 From Director Robert Altman
 (Oscar®). Short Ozzy (Cedron) Park deserves comparisons with his very best. It is a Dame Agatha Christie murder mystery in the same sense that his "M*A*S*H" was a war film. *Rated R*

Amélie
 From France and visual mastermind Director Jean-Pierre Jeunet (*The City of Lost Children*). Amélie stars Audrey Tautou as a Parisian waitress, devising elaborate schemes. *Rated R*

TONIGHT! 7:15 PM

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