



**MONTANA
BIOLOGICAL WEED CONTROL
COORDINATION PROJECT**

Annual Report 2016

Our Mission

To provide the leadership, coordination, and education necessary to enable land managers across Montana to successfully incorporate biological weed control into their noxious weed management programs.





A Brief History

In 2012, a need for better coordination and communication amongst biocontrol practitioners and land managers was identified. In 2013, the Montana Biocontrol Working Group worked to raise funds to hire a statewide coordinator. One of the first projects was to survey land managers and other weed professionals across Montana to better understand the needs related to biological weed control. This survey indicated that educational workshops, insect collections and distribution, and monitoring training were some of the highest priorities. The results from this survey have since guided the direction of the Montana Biocontrol Coordination Project (MTBCP). The MTBCP is possible due to the contributions received from across the state as well as grant funding and is therefore ever-evolving, striving to provide the deliverables that land managers in Montana desire. In the next few years, we will survey land

managers in Montana to re-evaluate the focus of MTBCP and determine if efforts need to be redirected.

Coordination and Communication

We are continuing to work towards establishing insectaries for all commonly used biocontrol agents throughout Montana, which will lead to locally adapted insects that are convenient for all land managers to access. In addition, we are working to find prime sites for the establishment of newer biocontrol agents, which will increase the number of agents that are available for all locations in need throughout Montana and into our neighboring states.

In the fall of 2016, there was a good deal of concern over the delays of permitting new biocontrol agents for field release. These concerns were heard and some progress has been made. Four of the eight biocontrol agents that were recommended for field release by the USDA-APHIS Technical Advisory Group for Biological Control Agents of Weeds have made it through the Section 7 review and will likely be approved for field release in the near future. However, this progress was made due to a detail position within the USFWS, which means that we could face the same type of delays in the future. MTBCP will be working to ensure that there is a permanent solution to this issue in the future.

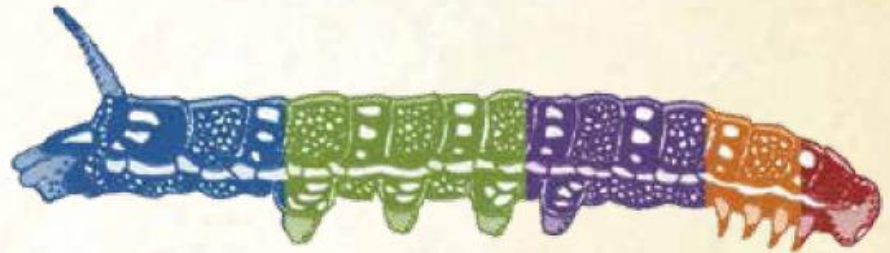
Coming Soon

A Montana Biocontrol Coordination Project website (mtbiocontrol.org)

is in development and should be up and running in early 2017.

We are working with the Montana Natural Heritage Program

to locally maintain Montana biocontrol data making it accessible to land managers.



2016 Expenses



“ The presentations were excellent in content, and well received by those in attendance. Attendees showed great interest in continuing and expanding the use of biocontrol agents on many other noxious weeds in the area as well. ”

- Katie Hatlelid, Judith Basin County Extension Agent

Workshop, Presentations, Insect Collections, and Insect Distributions

MTBCP has grown over the years, increasing the number of people reached at workshops, number of workshops held, locations of workshops, number of collection days held, and number of insects distributed.

In 2016:

34 days spent collecting insects

6 insect species collected (*Mecinus janthiniformis*, *Mecinus janthinus*, *Aphthona spp*, *Oberea erythrocephala*, *Cyphocleonus achates*, and *Larinus spp*)

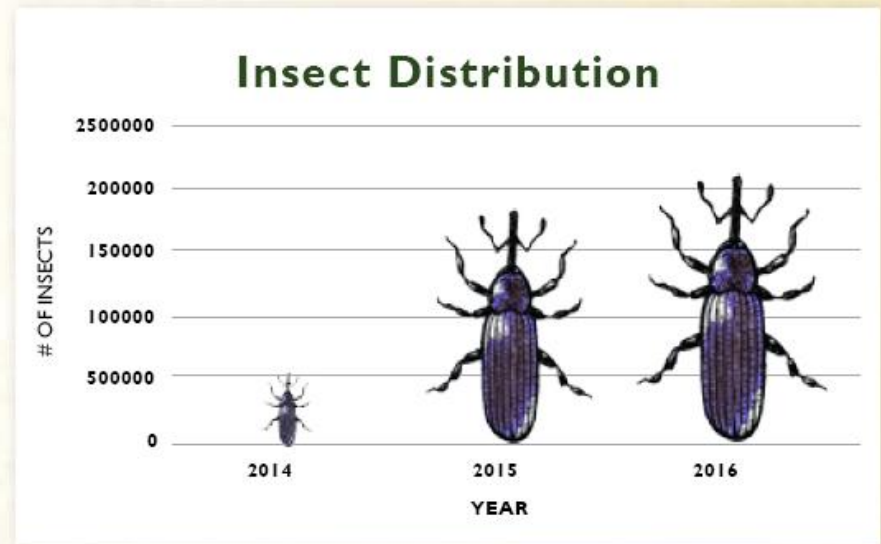
3 insect species (*Aceria malherbae*, *Hylobius transversovittatus*, and *Chrysolina hyperici*) were shipped to MT from other states for field bindweed, purple loosestrife, and St. Johnswort

42 counties collected or received insects

7 other states received insects (Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Idaho, New York, and Washington)

Over 2.2 million insects distributed

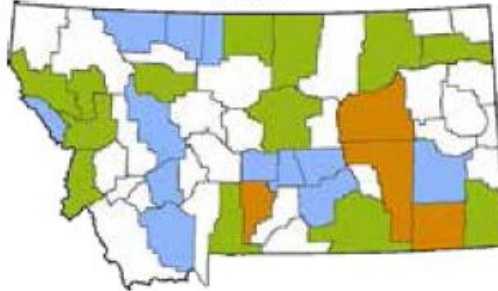
23 workshops were coordinated or presentations were given in Joliet, Helena, Bozeman, Big Timber, Augusta, Dixon, Phillipsburg, Harlowton, Colstrip, Fishtail, Eureka, Kalispell, Ennis, Raynesford, Geyser, Missoula, Miles City, Jordan, Sidney, Browning, Conrad, Plentywood, and Wibaux spanning 22 counties.





COUNTIES THAT RECEIVED BIOCONTROL ASSISTANCE

2014



2015



2016



2014-2016



LEGEND

- Workshops
- Received Insects
- Both Workshops & Insects

Program Coordinator: Melissa Maggio-Kassner, mmaggio@missoulaeduplace.org, 406-258-4223

Partners Perspective: Stillwater Valley Watershed Council

By: Lindsey Clark, SVWC Coordinator

The Stillwater Valley was one of the first leafy spurge biocontrol release areas in the state. Since the mid-80's, biocontrol agents have been used extensively as one tool for invasive species management for the difficult to manage leafy spurge. However, leafy spurge continues to gain a foothold in many areas of the watershed and so in recent years there has been a focus on bolstering populations of *Aphthona* species, *A. nigricutis*, and *A. lacertosa* in order to effectively use more of the tools in the weed control toolbox.

For the workshop, an informal but informative day was planned focusing on biocontrol systems in which everyone would be able to first gain more in depth knowledge about the most common biocontrol agents in MT in a classroom setting. Participants were given a background of the various agents and their target noxious weed species as well as an honest viewpoint for the pros and cons of many biological controls. Next, the afternoon session took the group to a local landowner's property where a collection site had been established in 2012 in a pastureland draw infested with dense leafy spurge. The purpose



of the field visit was to learn about collection and re-distribution techniques for populations of flea beetles and oberea. Participants found the afternoon workshop especially valuable and became experts in identifying the various biocontrol agents present in the leafy spurge population as well as witness the entire process of collecting and transporting the insects.

Over 25 participants—adults, youth, agency personnel, private landowners—along with MTBCP and SVWC staff and board members, were enthusiastic about collecting and learning more about biocontrol agents. The collection efforts were a great success with approximately 76,500 agents being distributed for local and regional weed control efforts. The 51 containers of “weed eaters” had an estimated value of \$5,000.

The accomplishments of the day were made even more successful by the participants and facilitators, from diverse backgrounds that brought an interesting array of rangeland and weed management knowledge with them. The conversations and relationships forged provided an opportunity to evaluate various management techniques, as well as share successes and failures. We are very grateful for the MTBCP and all those who participated throughout the day and hope that everyone enjoyed the day as much as we did and look forward to a successful event next year.

Thank you!

A big **THANK YOU** for the financial and technical support we received in 2016!

Without such supportive partners, the Montana Biocontrol Coordination Project would not be possible.

- APHIS
- Anaconda-Deerlodge
County Weed District
- BLM
- Blaine County
Community Foundation
- Cascade County Weed District
- Custer County Weed District
- DNRC
- Daniels County Weed District
- Fergus County Weed District
- FWP
- Gallatin County Weed District
- Granite County Weed District
- Golden Valley County
Weed District
- Hill County Conservation District
- Jefferson County Weed District
- Lake County Weed District
- Lewis & Clark
Conservation District
- Lewis & Clark County
Weed District
- Liberty County Weed District
- Lincoln Conservation District
- MDT
- Mile High Conservation District
- Mineral County Weed District
- Missoula County Weed District
- Missoula County Extension
- Musselshell County
Weed District
- NWTF
- Park County Weed District
- Powder River Conservation District
- Powell County Weed District
- Richland County Weed District
- Richland Conservation District
- Sanders County Weed District
- Stillwater Valley
Watershed Council
- Sweet Grass County Weed District
- Teton County Weed District
- Toole County Weed District
- USFS
- Wheatland County
Weed District
- Whitehall Biocontrol Project
- Wild Sheep Foundation

Majority of the **TECHNICAL SUPPORT** we receive comes from the MWCA Biological Weed Control Working Group.

THANKS to all of the members for your support and assistance on a variety of topics!





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