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## **Women's History Month event will honor five ranchers, oral history participants**

**HELENA, Mont.** – The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and Montana Historical Society (MHS) will celebrate Women's History Month by recognizing five women ranchers whose lives and achievements have deep roots in the Montana landscape.

Moderated by Montana Commissioner of Labor and Industry Pam Bucy, the event is scheduled from 1 – 3 p.m. on March 8, 2014, at the Montana Historical Society Auditorium, 225 North Roberts St., in Helena. Admission is free and the public is encouraged to attend.

The five women were among the first participants in a unique oral history project developed by DNRC with support from MHS. The project, titled "From the Ground Up: Montana Women and Agriculture," seeks to document the lives of Montana women who have lived and worked on the land – their roles as ranchers, farmers, mothers, and stewards of the state's irreplaceable natural resources.

The project began as an idea by Linda Brander, a Resource Specialist with the DNRC. Reviewing grant applications by ranch and farm owners in 2011, “I was struck by the vital roles women play in agriculture – the young, the old, the daughters and spouses. They’re descendents of homesteaders. They’re passionate about the land and taking care of it. Their life stories embody the values of Montana,” Brander said.

“I also realized we’re losing older generations of women who’ve lived on the land and have so much to tell us.”

The project developed to include the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD), Montana Historical Society, Montana State Library and Montana Stockgrowers. To date, a total of 14 oral histories have been completed, with more in the works.

The Montana Historical Society (MHS) and Montana State Library (MSL) have provided the technical support and expertise needed to ensure the oral histories and any supporting materials maintain quality standards needed to become part of the historical record. MACD has been instrumental in working with rural communities to nominate women for interviews.

Participants in Saturday’s kickoff event include:

- Pauline Webb of Townsend. Pauline and her husband, Earl, owned the 54 Ranch.

- Dolly McMaster of Townsend. Dolly operated the McMaster Ranch with her brothers.
- Arlene Pile of Big Timber, who operated the EOB Ranch in Big Timber.
- Esther McDonald of Philipsburg, who with her husband John W. “Pat” McDonald operate the McCattle Ranch LLC, outside of Philipsburg.
- Glenna Stucky of Avon, who with her husband, Earl, operates the Stucky Ranch in Powell County.

Each participant will give a 15-minute presentation, sharing memories, perspectives on ranching and conservation, and the importance of women in agriculture.

For more details on “From the Ground Up: Montana Women and Agriculture,” visit the DNRC Web site at

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/cardd/ConservationDistricts/OralHistoryProject/Default.asp>

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