

THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER

NEWS of ENNIS and the MADISON VALLEY, MONTANA for DECEMBER 2021



Trout live in nice neighborhoods



➤ **MADISON VALLEY DECEMBER “HAPPENINGS”** → The Ennis **Christmas Stroll** featured Santa, ice sculptures, tree lighting, a gingerbread house competition, dancers, carolers and bell ringers plus



shops open late, followed by the 2nd Annual **Lighted Truck Parade!** There were lots of strollers, young & old! → The VC Elks Lodge held a **Christmas Potluck and Ugly Sweater Contest.** → There were **Candlelight Tours** at Lewis & Clark State Caverns. → Kids enjoyed **Skate with Santa** at the Virginia City Skating Rink. → There was a **Christmas Stroll in Virginia City** with a Chili Cook-off at the Pioneer Bar! → The

Madison River was impeded for nearly two days due to a malfunction at the Hebgen Dam, cutting flows by 70%! Google it! → **Yellowstone’s Winter Season** began December 15th. → **Ice Fishing Season** has begun. Be prepared and be safe on the ice! → There will be a public hearing on the intent to create a **Madison & Ruby Valley Rural Ambulance District.** For more information, go to <https://madisoncountymt.gov/424/PublicLegal-Notices>. → **Willie’s Distillery** is expanding their facilities so they can provide even more fantastic spirits to the world! → **And the Madison River “gorged”!**



➤ **MADISON VALLEY JANUARY “HAPPENINGS”** → The 7th Annual Virginia City **Pond Hockey Tournament** will take place on the ice January 1 – 2. → A **Winter Rancher Roundtable** on Livestock Vaccinations will be held on January 11. For more info call (406) 682-3181. → The first **Chautauqua** of 2022 will be held on the 15th at the Elling House Arts & Humanities Center in VC. Call for more info (406) 843-5454. → *And you can still ski, x-country ski, snowmobile, eat, drink, bowl, and go shopping!*

➤ **LOOKING AHEAD.** → The **Blue Moon Saloon** will re-open in February. → Sign up for the **Big Sky Winter Fest**, Feb. 3-6. [Winterfest – Outlaw Partners](#). → Jack Creek Preserve still has openings in their **Winter Outdoor Skills Camp!** It is a 3-day, 2-night program, for 14–18-year-olds, March 25-27. It will include classroom and field instruction focusing on winter backcountry safety, snow science and avalanche awareness, plus wildlife and habitat. Registration will open January 2nd and limited to 20. Check the [WINTER OUTDOOR SKILLS CAMP](#) webpage for more information and updates.



➤ **MONTANA NEWS** → On January 1, adult-use recreational **marijuana** will become available for purchase in Montana. → **Avalanche** danger is growing across Western Montana. → The long-term forecasts call for a **cold, snowy winter** in Montana. → The **U.S.- Canada border** is now open to non-essential travel for the first time since March 2020.

➤ **FISHING REPORT** → *From Big John.* Happy New Year everyone! 2022 is going to be a great year. I can just feel it. I believe we are past the ugliness of this virus thing, and we will all be seeing a little more “normal” in the coming year. On other good news - we are currently sitting at 109% of our snowpack. While yes, it is early and there is still lots of winter to come, we are off to a great start. Keep up those snow dances. I hear Willies has a special “*snow dance*” cocktail that helps.

So far, the dam has had 30 continuous days of operation, with no more malfunctions. Hey, we’ll take the little wins. I think we are in the clear and I hope NW Energy has learned their lessons and set up some new triggers for alarms. In other good news, stop by the store and see the new employee. His name is DEETS, and he is a black lab puppy. He is named after my favorite character, Josh Deets, from the book, Lonesome Dove. You’ve not read Lonesome Dove, you say? Well, winter is a great time to dive into this American classic and it is my favorite book of all time. Maybe we should start a winter book club!

If you’re in the fishing mood and need to get that January fish, there is still hope. Right now, the river, from the lake to around town, is “gorged,” thanks to the cold snap we got for a Christmas gift. If you want to go fishing, try below Ennis Lake or upstream above Lyons Bridge. The standard winter fare of stone flies, midges, eggs and worms should find that winter fish. Remember, the fish are all in the deeper, slower water and once you find one, there are sure to be more. Think heavy tippet. And if you’re still not getting them, add weight. If you want to try a new bobber/indicator, stop by the store. We have the new Oros indicators. They are all the rage, and all the cool kids are using them. We are giving the river another month or so of rest, as she has had a difficult time in 2021. We will have plenty of days on the river this year, and winter is a time for other things. But, if you want to fish, pick a good day. Above freezing helps, as well as little-to-no wind. I know, I know, those days are limited, in January.



New product should start to arrive this month for the upcoming fishing season. Stop by the store for the free coffee and advice. In fact, I just thought of a new promotion. Anyone who buys \$500 on-line or in store this month, gets a free copy of Lonesome Dove! Fishing gear and reading material. What more could you want?! Have a great January, fishing people. Set some resolutions that you can stick to, with benchmarks, and plan for a great year. I believe, if collectively, we all believe that 2022 will bring great things, it will. *Good Fishing and God Bless*, from **John Way**, Owner of **The Tackle Shop**, <http://www.thetackleshop.com>) Ennis, Montana, the **CULTURAL EPICENTER OF TROUT**. (406) 682-4263, or cell: (406) 370-5206.

Check out other fishing reports at:

- ✚ Madison River Fishing Company at: <http://www.mrfc.com/MadisonRiverMontanaFishing/MadisonRiverReport.aspx>.
- ✚ Dan Delekta at <http://beartoothflyfishing.com/flyfishingreports/uppermadisonriver.htm>.
- ✚ The Madison Valley Ranch at <http://www.madisonvalleyranch.com/blog/>
- ✚ Joe Dilschneider’s Montana Trout Stalkers at <http://www.montanatroutr.com/>
- ✚ Yellowstone Fly Fishing at <http://www.yellowstoneflyfishing.com/madisonreport.htm>.

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➤ **WEATHER** → December was warmer and dryer than usual and we barely had a white Christmas! The first day of the month was the warmest, at 59° and the last day of the month was the coldest, at 7°. We finally caught up with winter! The nighttime high was 47° and nighttime low was -12°. The mountains are snow-capped, running down into the valley. **The snowpack is at 109%!** The Madison River has gorged and flooded Lions Park! Check out snow conditions at: <https://bigskyresort.com/snow-report>.

➤ **REAL ESTATE TIPS → 2022 HOME TRENDS** change with the seasons, influenced by everything from television and movies to world events. The pandemic, especially, has changed the way people view their homes. So, what's in store for 2022? According to Liz Dominguez of RISMedia, a new Zillow report claims that homeowners will be focusing on spaces in which they can thrive: feeling comfortable, calm, energized, inspired, safe and healthy.

- **Down to Earth Color Schemes** – Trending paint colors in 2022 will lean toward natural hues such as greens, blues, taupes, and browns. In fact, the Behr 2022 Color of the Year, Breezeway, is a silver shade of green, that's inspired by elements in nature like sea glass.
- **Sustainability and Green Living Spaces** – Homeowners will be prioritizing home features and products that promise sustainability and energy efficiency.
- **Old is New** – Rather than spending on new furniture and décor, we may see a resurgence toward secondhand purchases, providing a modern twist on plaster finishes, wallpapers and all-wood kitchens.
- **Comfort Over Style** – With people spending more time at home during the pandemic, comfortable furniture has come into the spotlight, with curved couches and fabric upholstery leading over leather or sharp-edged furniture.
- **Fury-Minded Features** – Pet ownership has increased dramatically over the course of the pandemic, and so homeowners are putting more emphasis on home features for their pets. These can include custom feeding stations, built-in pet beds and pet playrooms. Homes with a doghouse often sold for more than expected last year, while homes with a fenced yard or dog run sold faster than similar homes without these features.
- **Renovating to Meet Needs** – Perhaps rather than purchasing a new home, homeowners will focus more on improving their current living spaces to meet evolving needs. According to Zillow, nearly three-fourths of surveyed homeowners said they would consider at least one home improvement project in the next year.

“The pandemic forced a lot of people to reevaluate what’s most important in their lives and in their homes,” said Zillow home trends expert Amanda Pendleton for the report. *“For many, 2022 is the moment to start living those values. That could be investing in sustainable home features, designing a space with well-being in mind or leaning into comfort and function over high style.”*

➤ **HOME FOR YOUR SOUL. FEATURED PROPERTY OF THE MONTH. News Flash!** Instead of featuring one property here this month, I just want to report that, in spite of rumors to the contrary, ***THERE IS STILL INVENTORY FOR SALE IN THE MADISON VALLEY!*** **Current List:**

- 19 Residential properties, priced from \$375,000 to \$2,275,000
- 8 Commercial properties, priced from \$300,000 to \$7,900,000
- 40 Vacant lots, priced from \$95,000 to \$750,000
- 3 Ranches, priced from \$1,795,000 to \$7,995,000



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➤ **CURRENT REAL ESTATE NEWS** → WASHINGTON (December 29, 2021) - Pending home sales slipped in November, receding slightly after a previous month of gains, according to the National Association of Realtors®. Each of the four major U.S. regions witnessed contract transactions decline month-over-month. Year-over-year activity mostly retreated too, as three regions reported drops and only the Midwest saw an increase.

The **Pending Home Sales Index (PHSI)**, a forward-looking indicator of home sales based on contract signings, fell 2.2.% to 122.4 in November. Year-over-year, signings slid 2.7%. An index of 100 is equal to the level of contract activity in 2001.

"There was less pending home sales action this time around, which I would ascribe to low housing supply, but also to buyers being hesitant about home prices," said Lawrence Yun, NAR's chief economist. *"While I expect neither a price reduction, nor another year of record-pace price gains, the market will see more inventory in 2022 and that will help some consumers with affordability."*

Yun notes that housing demand continues to be high, explaining that homes placed on the market for sale go from "listed status" to "under contract" in approximately 18 days.

"Buyer competition alone is unrelenting, but home seekers have also had to contend with the negative impacts of supply chain disruptions and labor shortages this year," he said. *"These aspects, along with the exorbitant prices and a lack of available homes, have created a much tougher buying season."* Yun adds that a countrywide surge of the omicron variant poses a risk to the housing market's performance, as buyers and sellers are sidelined and home construction is delayed.

Realtor.com®'s Hottest Housing Markets most recent data showed that out of the largest 40 metros, **the most improved markets over the past year** were Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL; Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL; Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX; Jacksonville, FL; and Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO.

November Pending Home Sales Regional Breakdown. Month-over-month, the Northeast PHSI declined 0.1% to 99.4 in November, an 8.5% drop from a year ago. In the Midwest, the index fell 6.3% to 116.8 last month, up 0.2% from November 2020.

Pending home sales transactions in the South ticked down 0.7% to an index of 148.2 in November, down 1.3% from November 2020. The index in the West slipped 2.2% in November to 105.5, down 4.6% from a year prior.

The National Association of Realtors® is America's largest trade association, representing more than 1.5 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

➤ **LOCAL REAL ESTATE MARKET STATISTICS:** We survived 2021 and are looking forward to a few slower months, to catch up, clean up and reorganize before the busy selling season starts up again! Historically, sellers wait until spring to list properties, but who knows what they will do this year! My crystal ball (*I'll bet you didn't think I had one!*) is holding back on predictions. I'll make a full report when she starts up again! **Big Sky Country** Multiple Listing statistics for the Madison Valley area (including Ennis, Cameron, McAllister, Norris, Virginia City, Nevada City, Harrison, Pony), for the month of **DECEMBER** were as follows: *my crystal ball*→



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- **HOMES:** 25↑ homes listed (\$260,000 to \$2,950,000); 10↓ pending sales (\$435,000 to \$1,350,000); and 140 homes sold in 2021 (\$121,000 to \$3,450,000), totaling \$92,939,628, at **98.9%**↓ of list prices.
- **LAND:** 49↓ vacant lots listed (\$57,000 to \$4,997,000); 22↓ pending sales (\$154,000 to \$575,000); and 256 lots sold in 2021 (\$32,000 to \$1,900,000), totaling \$46,997,019, at **98.7%** of list prices.
- **RANCHES:** 3 ranches listed (\$1,795,000 to \$7,995,000); 1 pending sale (\$1,250,000), and 5 ranches sold in 2021, totaling \$12,165,000, at **96.6%** of list price.
- **COMMERCIAL:** 8 listed (\$300,000 to \$7,900,000); 1 pending sales (\$465,000) and 14 commercial properties sold in 2021 (\$92,350 to \$2,057,000), totaling \$8,145,000, at **95.8%** of list price.

“The best investment on Earth is earth.” Louis J. Glickman, real estate mogul/philanthropist

➤ **MONTANA TRIVIA...** *Did you know that... the Madison River gorges?* Newcomers wonder just what is The Gorge? It is a main source of conversation around Ennis, during especially cold weather. Old timers have great stories of cows getting stuck out on ice flows in the middle of the river and the year the gorge took out the old Varney Bridge. I have been fascinated by this phenomenon ever since we moved to Ennis in 1993. It is awesome to witness and hard to understand. I interviewed some of the natives and hydrologists as well, trying to find out the cause. In the winter of 2010, Greg Lemon, Editor of The Madisonian, our local newspaper, wrote an article that pretty much describes what causes the Gorge.



“It happens nearly every year. When the temperatures drop near zero and the wind howls mercilessly, the Madison River begins to freeze up. Around Ennis, when the Madison River will gorge becomes big topic of conversation. “Have you seen the river?” someone will ask. “Yeah. She’s froze up down by the lake,” will be the reply. “Betcha she gorges in by the end of the week.”

If you search the Internet for Madison River gorging, amongst the stories of big trout gulping salmon flies, you’re apt to find a variety of pictures and stories about ice choking the river around Ennis and pushing water out into nearby fields, overflow sloughs and pastures.

Along with the anticipation come the rumors and legends about the uniqueness of the Madison River ice jams. Some will say it’s the only river in North America to gorge this way. Some say it freezes from the bottom up because the wind blows so hard. But the fact is many rivers around southwest Montana freeze in a similar fashion, said William Locke, professor of environmental science at Montana State University in Bozeman. “It’s actually pretty common,” Locke said. Take for instance the Gallatin River, he said. The most common form of flooding on the lower Gallatin is the result of ice jamming. However, the speed the ice on the Madison River and the depth the ice reaches is impressive, said Pat Clancy, fisheries biologist in Ennis. Every year Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks close the Ennis and Valley Garden Fishing Access sites because of the ice gorging.

In a 1921 article in “Proceedings of the Society of Civil Engineers,” written by J.C. Stevens about the ice-jamming phenomenon on the Madison River. “It has been stated by local authority that the Madison is the only river in Montana which overflows from ice gorges during cold weather. This statement is not true. The Ruby, Boulder, and many small streams behave exactly in the same manner as the Madison in this respect,” writes Stevens.

Some of the characteristics that contribute to the flooding and ice gorging are the shallowness of the river, the low riverbanks and the relatively steady flow of the water, Stevens wrote. The ice gorge itself comes from a mix of frazil and anchor ice, he wrote. Frazil ice is formed on turbulent rivers when the weather is cold enough to freeze surface water. It looks like shards or chunks of ice in the river. It's also sometimes called slush ice or needle ice. Anchor ice is formed around rocks and cobbles in shallow water and is a result of "a rapid radiation of earth heat from the riverbed into space," writes Stevens. It forms most rapidly on dark-colored stones, during clear and cold nights.



← **Flooding in Lions Park from the river gorging over the banks.**

Larry Love, who is an Ennis native and on the board of the Madison Valley History Association, believes this anchor ice is really what distinguishes the Madison River from others. "

But it is still a mystery to me. When I look at the gorged river, I don't think about all those different kinds of ice and slush, I just see the amazing beauty of nature and thank God I live in the middle of so much of it. Toni Bowen

➤ **SEE YOU IN MONTANA!**

Social Distancing Champions, since 1889! Be not afraid. STAY SAFE, SANE AND SOBER!



Toni Bowen, Broker Associate and Accredited Buyer Broker representative, with over 28 years of real estate experience, covering residential, commercial, vacant land, recreational & ranch properties in the Madison Valley.

Don Bowen, with 57 years as a licensed Broker, has placed his real estate license on "inactive" status in 2021, and will be a consultant and assistant to Toni. This is a new chapter for the Bowen Team.

Our new office on the Boardwalk at the Lone Elk Mall →



Thank you in advance for your personal referrals. They are the lifeblood of our business and the greatest compliment you can give us.

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USEFUL WEBSITES TO REMEMBER → ENNIS AND THE MADISON VALLEY:

<http://www.ennismontana.org/> - for community and local government information

<http://www.ennischamber.com/> - The Ennis Chamber of Commerce website

<http://www.madisonvalleyhistoryassociation.org> – The Madison Valley History Association website

<http://www.mvmedcenter.org> – for information about the Madison Valley Medical Center

<http://www.mvvetsmemorial.org> – The Madison Valley Veterans Memorial website

<http://ennisarts.org/> - The Ennis Arts Association website for all artists!

<http://www.backroadtoyellowstone.com> – information for travelers about the route through our valley

MADISON COUNTY:

<https://madisoncountymt.gov/525/Emergency-Information> - for Madison County emergency news

<http://www.madison.mt.gov/> - Madison County Government website

<http://virginiacity.com> – Virginia City Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.jackcreekpreserve.org/> - foundation that provides outdoor education and experiences.

NEWS:

<http://www.madisoniannews.com/> - the latest news from the Madisonian newspaper for Madison Co.

<http://bozemandailychronicle.com/> - news from the big city of Bozeman, an hour northeast of Ennis

<http://www.mtstandard.com/> - news from historic Butte, an hour & ½ northwest of Ennis

MONTANA:

www.fwp.mt.gov/ - Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks website – for hunting and fishing regulations

<http://www.visitmt.com/> - Official website Montana Vacations, Recreation, Accommodations and Travel

<http://www.montanapictures.net> – for people homesick for Montana – a great visual connection

http://mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/weather/rwis_list.shtml - State Highway Web Cams

<http://montanakids.com/> - State website for all things KIDS in Montana

<https://www.nps.gov/yell/index.htm> - Yellowstone National Park – for all things Yellowstone Park

<https://www.facebook.com/Ennisrealestate?ref=hl> – Facebook page for ERA Landmark Arrow R. E.

<https://www.mtmemory.org/>. Montana Memory Project – find all about the history of Montana!

SKIING:

<http://bigskyresort.com/> – Check out latest snow conditions & things to do at Big Sky.

http://www.westyellowstonenet.com/skiing/cross_country_skiing.php - Skiing Yellowstone Park Trails

HORSEBACK RIDING:

<https://www.facebook.com/wolfpackmontana> – trail riding guides for the Madison Valley

<http://www.sphinxmountainoutfitting.com> – trail riding and outfitting guides in the Madison Valley

RANCHING:

<https://www.facebook.com/madisonvalleyranchlandsgroup/>- keeping the ranching way of life alive.

FISHING:

<http://www.madisonriverfoundation.org> - The Madison River Foundation

<http://www.montanatu.org/> - Montana Trout Unlimited

GOLFING:

<http://www.madisonmeadowsgolfcourse.com> – Madison Meadows Golf Course in Ennis

REAL ESTATE:

www.arrowreal.com – A wealth of resource information, local listings, and a portal to the Big Sky MLS

www.eralandmark.com – Our Main Office website, covering Bozeman, Livingston, Big Sky & Ennis

<http://www.realtor.com/> - The world's #1 Real Estate website. The source for all properties on MLS

www.houselogic.com – Helpful information from the National Association of Realtors

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