



## AFFILIATE CORNER

### Laurel Rod & Gun Club

The Laurel Rod & Gun Club is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1923. The organization's purpose is to foster a casual association of hunting and fishing enthusiasts and to provide a place to exchange experiences and to hone skills.

The Laurel club (LR&GC) has been meeting in the quaint log clubhouse in Riverside Park on the banks of the Yellowstone River for decades. Members maintain a clubhouse and two trap ranges in the Park. In addition to these facilities, the Club maintains a rifle/pistol range three miles east of Silesia, MT on Moser Dome Road (Silesia Road). Due to Laurel's proximity to its bigger cousin, Billings, LR&GC does count numerous residents of that bigger city in its ranks sometimes absorbing the overflow of hopeful members for a slot in the Billings R&G Club which has a cap on total membership. BR&GC and LR&GC certainly share many members; indeed, BR&GC president, Irv Wilke, is Vice President of LR&GC.

LR&GC has a unique and distinctive identity all its own that shines brightly. Interested sportsmen in Laurel gathered on March 23, 1923 to organize a local rod and gun club and its first regular meeting was held on April 4, 1923. J.B. Hines opened the meeting and they discussed issues current at the time: planting fish in the Stillwater River area, predatory animals, trap shooting, and building a club house near Mystic Lake. Much has evolved since the early days. Soon afterward, on May 30, 1923 they hosted the formation of the Southeastern Sportsman Association that sponsored its first project: obtaining funding from MT Fish and Game for rain ponds on the Stillwater River and Rock Creek. In 1936, LR&GC joined 36 other sportsmen's clubs to help organize Montana's first state-wide umbrella group, Montana Wildlife Federation.

LR&GC consistently supports strong conservation efforts and public access to public wildlife and public land. LR&GC was among the most vocal opponents to the so-called "Wildlife Partnerships" in 2002, a Ranching-for-Wildlife scheme which would have privatized and commercialized big-game licenses. This sensitivity towards conservation and hunting and fishing issues can be illustrated by the fact that Laurel's Legislative Advocacy Phone Tree is larger than most others in the Billings area. Laurel has been an enthusiastic participant in the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership efforts to map wildlife sustaining habitats prized by hunters and anglers.

LR&GC's serves the community of Laurel in several ways: shooting facilities are continually expanding; their trap and skeet facilities were recently upgraded, educating hunters and anglers on timely conservation issues, and it takes pride in being one of the first sportsmen club to offer Hunter Safety courses educating youth to be good hunter's and good sportsmen.

LR&GC is in good company as one of the first MWF affiliates. LR&GC can be counted on to consider and most-often support MWF conservation efforts. LR&GC is not simply the little brother of Billings-based sportsmen's and shooting clubs but stands on its own two feet. For more information contact President Herb Stoick at 1-406-628-6495, or by emailing him at: [laverna1@hotmail.com](mailto:laverna1@hotmail.com).