

A regular meeting of the McCone Conservation District Board of Supervisors was held on April 2, 2014 at the McCone County USDA field office. Those in attendance were Steve Wanderaas-Chairman, Jenny Garoutte-Supervisor, Larry Nagel-Urban Supervisor, Casey Nay-Urban Supervisor, Johnna Blankenship-NRCS, David Pratt-NRCS and Mary Hendrix-Administrator. Matt Beery was not in attendance. Meeting was called to order at 1:05pm.

Meeting minutes from March 2014 were reviewed. Larry made a motion to approve the minutes and Jenny seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Reports from March 2014 were reviewed. Steve made a motion to approve the reports and Jenny seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Following Correspondence & Visitors

Steve read a letter from the Town of Circle appointing both Larry Nagel (Term Renewal) and Casey Nay (New Supervisor) as representatives to the Conservation Board. Thank you Larry! Welcome aboard Casey!

Steve also read a letter from Emily Guldborg resigning her position on the board effective immediately. We would like to thank Emily for seven years of service and wish her the best in all of her endeavors.

Brant Quick was invited to attend the meeting to observe and possibly consider a position on the board.

Dustin from FES spoke to the board about the Wheatheart High and Heavy Post Pounders. The board is considering purchasing one for use in the county.

Public Comments on District Business

There were no public comments on the Districts business at this meeting.

Administrator's Report

Cost Share Program: Mary reported that we have 6 producers who have signed up for the cover crop cost share program

Tree Orders: We have a total of 38 orders for 2592 trees. Have ordered 3681 trees so will have 1089 various trees/shrubs available for the tree sale. Trying to schedule trees to all arrive the week of May 5 and have tentatively scheduled the tree sale on Saturday, May 10th. Mary has contacted McCone Electric to have the power turned on May 1st. She asked the board if they know who to contact regarding water at the building and Larry will let her know. Fifteen rolls of fabric have been ordered through Richland County that should arrive in Sidney by mid-April. The District will need to pick it up there. Twelve rolls have been pre-ordered. Have received an invoice for \$1800.00 from Richland County which will be expensed this month.

Have a couple of people interested in renting out the tree planter/fabric layer for their tree rows. Mary will be contacting people for additional help. Seats and jack have been installed on the equipments.

Kids Programs: Mary will be meeting with Helen Murphy on Friday to discuss Makoshika Field Trip and Mother's Day Lilac program.

Administrators Workshop: The training in Miles City on March 25 was very informative and covered a large range of administrator duties and conservation district business.

Field Office Report

Johnna updated group that she is still ranking EQIP applications. So far, there is little interest in EQIP for 2015, with one application to date. The deadline for 2015 EQIP is June 1, 2014. They are on a holding pattern for CSP. CSP contracts are for five years with \$40,000 max annually.

Suggestions were solicited regarding getting the word out on programs etc. Board members thought that in addition to The Circle Banner, The Wolf Point Herald, Facebook, McCone New & Used (FB), The Free Trader and radio stations could be options. David thought it would be possible for the Conservation District to promote NRCS projects on District's Facebook and website.

David discussed the CWA with the board. He re-emphasized that the districts may use NRCS vehicles on official business and only if districts have insurance coverage.

Eighteen fax machines have been reduced to one central fax housed in Miles City. This cost saving measure eliminates 18 fax lines and machines. Customers may still fax documents as needed to the central number and it will be forwarded electronically to the appropriate field offices.

Through managed print services (LincPass), new leased copiers at USDA offices offers client confidentiality as well as scan capabilities and photocopies.

The new Farm Bill has passed legislation but the rules still need to be transitioned into law. It consolidates a few programs such as the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) that has been incorporated into EQIP. At least 5% still needs to be slated towards wildlife habitat.

The Conservation Stewardship Program cap changes from 12 Million Acres to 10 Million Acres in the new Farm Bill. With those changes, you may also rollover old cap to the new cap. This will not affect the 10 Million Acres (new cap). It will require the minimum 2 eligibility requirements and looking at adding a 3rd conservation practice to renew.

The Wetland, Farmland and Grassland Easement Programs as individual programs are being phased out to be consolidated into the Agricultural Easement Program.

NRCS is exploring and addressing flowing artesian wells due to a drop in the water tables. North Dakota has taken the initiative by capping these wells.

Emergency Watershed Threat Program is a **preventative** program that addresses watershed issues (such as potential flooding) before it happens.

NRCS has a 30 year agreement with FWP regarding the Sage Grouse Initiative. For those producers who are already working on the Sage Grouse Initiative, a predictability assurance (between producer and certifiable experts) makes the producer not legally responsible for a take if a grouse is harmed accidentally.

Old Business

Financial Book Audit: We will contact Tax Masters in Glasgow after tax season to complete an audit. This will be noted in the old business section of the agenda until completed.

CWA with DNRC & NRCS: Has been approved, but still waiting on final agreement for signature. UPDATE: Per David Pratt, this is still at the State Office awaiting signature.

Conservation District credit card: Credit card application requires a signature from the Chairman of the Board. Once obtained, Mary will submit the application to the Credit Union.

Equipment purchase: The board is still interested in purchasing a post pounder. Steve will contact our insurance carrier on liability and its additional costs, Mary will look at our finances to see if the district can provide supplemental dollars towards this purchase. This has been tabled until the next board meeting.

Baseline Water Monitoring: Category A & Category B producers will be contacted to gauge interest in baseline water monitoring. There are 6 wells total in both categories. When producers with the most impacted wells are contacted, we will consider working through the pages of wells listed in Category C. Mary will call each well owner in Category A & Category B. The cost that will be charged to each well owner will be 10% of the cost or \$120.00. Steve made a motion to charge \$120.00 and Casey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

New Business

Vice Chairman: As Emily has resigned, the Vice Chair seat is now vacant. Steve made a motion to elect Jenny Garoutte to Vice Chair, Casey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Treasurer: For additional checks and balances for the district, a Treasurer seat has been created. Steve made a motion to elect Larry Nagel as Treasurer, Jenny seconded the motion. Motion passed.

New Board Member: Brant Quick has been appointed as a new board member filling Emily's term. Steve made the motion to nominate Brant, Larry seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Signers on the District Account: It was discussed to keep three of the four signers on the account. Signers will be Steve, Larry and Mary.

Appreciation and Open House: The board requested a "thank you to Emily" and "welcome to new board members" article in the local media. Mary will submit articles to The Circle Banner, The Wolf Point Herald and also post on the website.

The Open House will be held in December, dates to be determined.

Administrative Grant: Mary passed out the 2014-2015 Administrative budget spread sheet for discussion. A few alterations were suggested and final budget approval went for vote. Steve motioned for approval of the budget and Casey seconded the motion. Motion passed. Mary will send the approved budget to Karl Christians for feedback and submission.

District Savings Account: As part of the administrative grant, Karl suggested that the district include a \$10,000 buffer (savings) for operating expenses. In the past, the district had CDs which were used for capital expenses. Dollar amounts were not discussed at this time, but Steve made a motion to approve that the district begin contributions to the savings account and Casey seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Field Trip: Steve discussed the possibility of hosting a “field trip” to Rick Bieber’s farm in Trail City, SD followed by a stop in Bismarck, ND to see some operations there. Steve made a motion to have a field trip, Casey seconded the motion, motion passed. Steve will contact Garfield County to see if there is any interest in working cooperatively with us. Mary will contact Little Beaver CD to find out details of their program and update board at next meeting.

MRCDC: Steve attended the MRCDC Full Council Meeting & Social in Lewistown on March 20th and he reported on the good deeds this group is doing and it’s the newly elected board:

- New Chair & Reservoir Reach—Dean Rogge
- Lower Reach—Dick Iverson
- Middle Reach—John Chase
- Upper Reach—Jim Beck

Park County is under the designation of surveillance for brucellosis (elk population). MRCDC is monitoring new monuments (for outgoing President Obama), weed projects and the sage grouse initiative.

The board went into executive session at 4:06pm and reconvened at 4:21pm.

Upcoming Events:

4/17/2014 CMR Community Working Group, Circle

Steve made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:46pm and Larry seconded the motion. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned.

Next board meeting will be held on the second Wednesday of the month, May 14, 2014 at 7:00pm.

Mary Hendrix, District Administrator

Steve Wanderaas, Chairman