

The McCone Conservation Board of Supervisors met on August 6, 2014 at 7:00pm at the USDA Building in Circle, MT. Those present were Steve Wanderaas-Chairman, Jenny Garoutte-Vice Chair, Matt Beery- Rural Supervisor, Brant Quick- Rural Supervisor, Larry Nagel-Urban Supervisor, Casey Nay-Urban Supervisor, Johnna Blankenship-NRCS, and Mary Hendrix-Administrator. Meeting was called to order at 7:10pm.

Meeting minutes and Treasurer's Reports from June 2014 were reviewed. Casey made a motion to approve the minutes and reports and Larry seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Meeting minutes from July 2014 were reviewed. Steve made a motion to approve the minutes and Casey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Reports from July 2014 were reviewed. Brant made a motion to approve the reports and Matt seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Following Correspondence & Visitors

DEQ—sent an authorization letter for short term water quality standard for turbidity related to construction activity for an unnamed tributary in McCone County. The board noted the location on the landownership map, determined that this authorization is due to road construction in the area. The letter will be on file at the District office.

MACDEO—sent an invitation to all districts for supervisor and administrator of the year awards. Recognition will take place at state convention.

Public Comments on District Business

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

Administrator's Report

UPCOMING EVENTS:

McCone County Fair: The fair will be August 14-16, 2014. The district will have a pollinator booth. FSA has agreed to pay for booth as the district paid for the AG Show booth back in January. Mary will be in training on August 14th and FSA agreed to watch the booth unless a supervisor is available and willing to man it. Literature and seed packets were given to each supervisor. Besides the pamphlets, seed packets and kids activity pages (coloring, word searches, etc.), we will also have a drawing for flower seed bombs tool kits.

Mary asked the board last month if we would either consider selling or donating the binding machine to the Extension Office. They use it every year for fair literature and we no longer use it. The board voted to donate it to Extension with the stipulation that they let us use it should we ever need to.

Town and Country Days: This event is for September 20th. The district will not have anything scheduled for this event.

Christmas Open House: The date has not been set yet, but will probably be December 12th or 19th. Mary asked the board if we should host an open house. This may also be a good time for a "thank you" to Emily Guldborg and a "welcome" to Ashley Kiehl, NRCS. Casey wondered if an open house may be better suited to the summer where we might have a barbecue. He even offered to b-b-q! No decisions were made at this meeting.

HAPPENINGS:

Area 1 Meeting: Our area meeting will be held in Jordan this year on September 26th. All supervisors are encouraged to attend and meet other districts in our area as well as agency people.

MACD Convention: The Montana Association of Conservation District annual meeting will be held November 17-20 at Fairmont Hot Springs west of Butte. All supervisors are encouraged to attend and if interested, let Mary know for possible scholarships.

ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING:

310 Training: Mary will be attending the Rolling Trailer and 310 training in Sidney on August 14th. Supervisors are encouraged to attend the 310 training hosted through DNRC.

QuickBooks Training: Mary shared an email that she received from Julie Goss and Sidney Job Service. They are planning on providing a QuickBooks training if there is enough interest.

YOUTH OUTREACH:

Wildlife & Habitat: 7th & 8th graders will have an opportunity to learn about wildlife and their habitats. We will work with Martin Ellenburg with NRCS, date and details not available at this time.

Envirothon: Shonny (Fergus CD) has sent a CD with Envirothon materials. Mary asked if there was an FFA group in the area, but was advised that there wasn't. She will get in touch with the new Science teacher and 4-H group.

EQUIPMENT TO PURCHASE:

Fire swatter: Due to the occasional fire during haying season, Steve requested information on fire swatters. Mary got in touch with a Nupla distributor who could provide these at \$59 each (regular retail is \$85 plus shipping). The board would like to table this until the next meeting.

Tension meter: Johnna passed around a tension meter that measures moisture in the soil. Usually used by irrigators, she thought it was a useful tool for local producers, too. The board would like to table this until the next meeting.

WORKSHOPS:

Fall Grazing Workshop: Per the 223 Grant we had submitted, we will be hosting a workshop this fall on Range Conservation Management. The board was asked if a range workshop should happen regardless if the grant is approved or not. Brant made a motion to organize a fall workshop and Steve seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Winter Cover Crops Workshop: Garfield County is interested in joining forces with McCone and Petroleum County Conservation Districts to have a cover crop workshop in January 2015. They would like to have Dr. Dwayne Beck with Dakota Farms (SD) as the main speaker. Brant made a motion to organize a winter workshop and Casey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

OTHER:

Local Working Group Meeting: As we are coming up on the new year, Mary asked the board if we should have a local working group meeting to set our Annual Plan of Operations. We will need to plan this for some time between now and November. Steve asked if there may be a way of incorporating some of these events. Not sure since topics are varied.

Cooperators Dinner: Discussed the possibility of a cooperators dinner in the future.

COVER CROP UPDATE:

Producer #3 stopped by to say that due to extensive hail damage to his cover crop, he will be tilling it into the soil. He does not have the equipment to plant directly over the thick-stalked sunflowers. He thought that he will still benefit from the cover crops as they decompose in the soil.

Steve asked the board if they thought there would be any interest in the county for a no-till disc drill. The other supervisors thought that if there was one available to rent through the district, more producers may try to plant cover crops. The district will look into a grant for purchasing one.

Field Office Report

Menoken Farm and Training in North Dakota: Johnna spoke about Menoken Farm, an educational site of 150 acres of cropland owned and operated by Burleigh County Soil Conservation District. Jay Fuhrer is the DC that started up the project in 2009. She mentioned "poor field #3"—the continuous spring wheat crop that showed severe signs of depletion. She was excited by the training in North Dakota as a whole and encourages everyone to stop by and visit Menoken Farm.

Johnna passed around a power point presentation from the NADC – Soil Training Site. There are many trainings and power point presentations on various interesting topics. She will forward the link to Mary to provide to each supervisor.

She asked if the board would be willing to purchase a projector for power point presentation. Casey has one available that he is willing to donate to the District and NRCS to use.

2014 CSP: 9 contracts have been approved for a total of 50,000 acres. Two clients did not receive CSP contracts and there was some negative feedback and she referred them to the area office. Supervisors were asked to sign conservation plans for each CSP contract.

Board went into closed session at 8:21pm. Meeting resumed at 8:30pm.

Old Business

CWA with DNRC & NRCS: Per David Pratt, this is still at the State Office awaiting signature. This will be noted in the old business section until completed.

223 Grant – Post Pounder: Conservation Planning on Grazing Lands. We are scheduled to present by teleconference call on September 11 at 12pm.

Baseline Groundwater Monitoring: Letters sent to 5 producers from Category A & B wells yielded no interest or response. We had 5 producers from Category C submit applications and payments. These have been forwarded to MSCA. Round 2 of applications will be accepted until September 30th. Advertisements have been sent to both the Circle Banner and Wolf Point Herald for weeks of August 4th and August 11th.

Regional Soil Health Tours: (Hand-outs provided)

IN FALLON COUNTY:

Producer Bart Burdick began cover crops when he lost leased acres for grazing. He plans to graze 500 acres of cover crop in 30-50 acre paddocks this year. Burdick said that he saw a 3lbs measured weight per cattle that grazed in cover crops. The Little Beaver Conservation District operated a rainfall simulator on property that showed 5 different soils types)—chemical fallowed fields took in the most water, but the soil remained dry and impervious throughout. All attendees were very surprised by this demonstration.

Producer Sikorski began no-till in 1998. He uses JD 750 drills and discussed niche markets for diverse crops. Unfortunately, his farm sustained extensive hail damage the night before the tour, so we were not able to tour operations there.

Producer O'Connor began no-till in 2004. He practices crop rotation along with cover crops. In an area that gets 12" of rain, the methods that he uses has helped improve the soil for better moisture retention. He discussed the no-till disc drill that his farm uses and answered many producer questions.

IN MCCONE COUNTY:

Producer Guldborg took a group of local producers to his second cover crop planting located in adjacent fields. He plans on grazing it in the fall.

Producer Haynie began cover crops in 2010? and plans to leave it in the field for soil health purposes. He plans on planting winter or spring wheat after. The soil pit that had been dug in the field was 8' deep and it showed moisture all the way down the sides to the bottom.

IN BURLEIGH COUNTY:

Producer Bauer showed us his grazing systems. His practices are cover crops for grazing, semi-permanent fencing for better management of land, animal health and weed control.

Producer Williams started with cover crops 10 years ago. We visited a soybean field that had been used to grow corn the previous year. This field will be grazed by livestock owned by his cousin. This is a multiple family and extended family operation.

Producer McPeak and family are starting over in newly purchased farmland that they are improving for their cattle operation. They are converting cropland to a multi-purpose pasture/hay land. Recently, they added pollinator plantings at the edges of their fields. They use bio-windbreaks with hay bales and snow berms and feed cows in pastures all winter. By feeding in a different location everyday there is an even distribution of urine, manure and soil armor. They have been calving successfully in May/June for the last 14 years.

Producer Doan's operation supports intensive grazing management that uses cover crops and to enhance soil health, wildlife habitat and guiding that generates income for a multi-generational ranch. Cattle grazed in the field all winter and in the past year, they did not provide any supplemental feed to their cows. He mentioned that over the small hill from the cover crop field we were standing in, 1700 yearlings were grazing on 160 acres!

There are a lot of producers working with cover crops, crop diversity, soil health and alternative grazing management systems. And it works!

Bison Ordinance: We are awaiting verbiage on fence specs from Laurie Zeller.

Mill Levy updates: Permissive mill levy meeting will be held on August 20th at 7pm. The district will vote on the final budget and for a permissive mill levy for district employee group health insurance. There will be a public notice in the Circle Banner on August 7th and August 13th. The general public is welcome to comment and to attend the meeting.

CMR updates: Steve will be attending the MRCDC quarterly meeting in Townsend on September 2nd and 3rd. The Monitorfest has been rescheduled, date, time and location to be determined.

New Business

Board Meetings, dates & times: Steve asked if it was feasible to have board meetings early in the morning (7:30am). It was decided that while it may work for some supervisors who are farmers or ranchers, it doesn't for those who work for others/companies. It was decided to keep the meetings at 7:00pm for now.

As Steve will not be here on September 3rd, the other supervisors were asked if they would like to still have the regularly scheduled board meeting then or change it to the following Wednesday. The supervisors chose to have the next board meeting on September 10th at 7:00pm.

Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44pm.

Next board meeting will be held on the second Wednesday of the month, September 10, 2014.

Mary Hendrix
Mary Hendrix, Administrator

9/10/14
Date

Steve Wanderaas Chm
Steve Wanderaas, Chairman

9-10-2014
Date