

The McCone Conservation Board of Supervisors met on March 4, 2015 at 1:00pm at the USDA Building in Circle, MT. Those present were Steve Wanderaas-Chairman, Casey Nay-Vice Chair, Larry Nagel-Urban Supervisor, Josh Murphy-Rural Supervisor, Jenny Garoutte-Rural Supervisor, Johnna Blankenship-NRCS and Mary Hendrix-Administrator. Brant Quick and Dusty White were absent. Meeting was called to order at 1:05pm.

Following Correspondence & Visitors

Nancy Stempel, County GIS Coordinator was here to show the board a McCone County wall map that she had developed. She requested feedback and input on it. The board thought that it was a good product, but requested to add more details on the Charles M Russell Refuge boundaries. Mary to provide Nancy with USFWS contact.

Jerry Meissner spoke about the possibility of the board forming a Range Committee. In the past, this committee worked with and provided education to 4-H Clubs. He mentioned that Carla Delp, Michelle Gibbs and Patsy White had been involved before and suggested possibility of approaching them for assistance. Steve mentioned that Karl Christians with DNRC may be of assistance as well. He could provide the board with ideas of what other areas are doing with this committee. Mary will invite Karl to the next board meeting.

Jerry also discussed DRWA and the possibility of district secured grants to add stock line pipeline for individuals who would eventually add onto the DRWA main line. This may be years in the future.

Finally, he inquired about the CD forming a Redwater Watershed Noxious Weed team to control knapweed. As noxious weeds was identified as a natural resource concern in the county, the board will be looking for grants/funding for this effort. Johnna suggested contacting the Montana Weed Control Association (MWCA) for funding opportunities.

In order to enhance producer participation:

1. Provide incentive, perhaps a cost share for chemicals
2. Provide rental equipment
3. Look at assisting a private applicator to get started in the county (from LWG meeting)
4. Look at funds to help pay for a part-time labor force

Meeting Minutes & Treasurer's Reports

Meeting minutes from February 2015 were reviewed. Larry made a motion to approve the minutes and Steve seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Reports from February 2015 were reviewed. Casey made a motion to approve the reports and Josh seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Public Comments on District Business

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

Field Office Report

CSP

- 10 new applications
- Sign up deadline 3/13/2015

EQIP

- 4 applications
- Ranking deadline – 3/20/15
 - Pre-approval by 3/27/15
 - With pre-approval we'll know which applications to keep working on and which ones will have the opportunity to defer.

Field office appraisal

- Sometime this late this spring but no set date

Acting State Conservationist visit

- Ray Dotson, Acting State Conservationist, has tentatively scheduled travels to Eastern MT the week of March 23rd. He would like to see the area and meet with employees. Instead of a large area meeting there will be a couple, more personal meetings –possibly one in Culbertson and one in Miles City.

Johnna asked if any supervisor wanted to attend this visit. Casey thought he had a meeting already scheduled for that day in Miles City, so may be able to be there to meet Ray.

Administrator's Report

The Spring Newsletters are at the printers and will be mailed out next week. The color version is already online.

Tree orders: We have 15 orders to date. We will be taking orders until March 20th.

Cover crop cost share: So far, we have had one person sign up. It is also advertised in the newsletter, so hopefully more will sign up. Mary still needs to order the Solvita testing kit.

Grants: Mini education grant deadline is April 8th. We still need a plan for the 4th – 6th graders. Also, we may be interested in submitting one possibly for the range monitoring day if we need to pay for a private consultant.

Last 223 grant of this cycle is due by April 30th. There isn't much money left for projects. Mary asked the board if they were interested in submitting any project grants at this time and the board declined.

District development grant is tapped out for 2014-2015.

We will need to review and accept budgets at next month's meeting as the 310/Administrative grant will be due by May 1st.

Chairman's Report

Steve attended the Soil Health workshop in Jordan on February 17th. He thought that it was a good workshop with Todd McPeak and Ken Miller returning to the area to speak.

The CMR Community Working Group meeting held at the Ft. Peck Interpretative Center was well attended and the new refuge manager, Paul Santavy was introduced.

Steve has been appointed to the Invasive Species Council. He mentioned that this council is predominately from the Western side of the state and the council appreciated a voice from this side of the state to balance it.

Old Business

Winter Workshop Recap

We had a good turnout for the soil health workshop. There were 46 people with 25 local producers, the remaining people were with the Conservation District (6), MRCDC (3), MACD (1), Weed/Extension (2), NRCS (5), and presenters (4).

Mary handed out the producer workshop feedback to the supervisors. Based on 24 evaluations received, 14 people rated the workshop as excellent and 10 rated it as good (zero for the okay and needs improvement categories). Topics of interest were more soil health (17), range health (14), programs (2) and noxious weeds (9). Thirteen people were interested in a soil health tour, (10) for a fall workshop and (7) for more information on other tours/workshops from in and around the state. The best time to have a workshop is (21) February followed closely with (17) January. Most people liked the all-day format with lunch (18), but many preferred half day sessions that started in the afternoon. Maybe we could consider having half day sessions that had a meal before or after the workshop.

Local Working Group Meeting Recap

The LWG meeting was held on Monday, February 23rd. There were 23 people in attendance with 10 local producers, the remaining people were with the Conservation District (6), NRCS (1), BLM (1), USFWS (1), DNRC (2), MSU Extension (1), DRWA (1), and FSA (1).

Mary handed out the compilation of the local natural resource concerns that were identified at the meeting.

Top Priority – Range Health (5), Soil Health (3) and Small Dam Safety/Maintenance (3)

Medium Priority – Soil Health (5), Noxious Weeds (3) and EPA fuel containment (3)

Low Priority – Noxious Weeds (6), Roadway Chemical Drift (3) and stockman-ship / livestock handling (2)

Ranking based on the total numbers per category:

1. Range health: top priority (5), medium priority (2), low priority (0)
2. Soil health: top priority (3), medium priority (5), low priority (1)
3. Noxious weeds: top priority (1), medium priority (3), low priority (6)

Grants

We were awarded \$2,200 through a 223 grant for a Soil Health tour to Fallon County. This is half of the requested amount. Tour buses usually run around \$3,600. Steve asked Mary to contact Carie Hess as he recalled that Petroleum County may still have funds in reserve for a tour bus. This will be discussed further in the next board meeting.

Post Pounder: Sparky Dreesen with Farmers Elevator stopped by the office and met with staff & supervisors. Steve explained the need for a post pounder in the county. Sparky will discuss this with his board and he hopes to have one available to rent to producers by this spring. Mary will contact Farmers Elevator in May before the board meeting on the 6th with an update.

No-till disc drill: Districts received an email from MACD asking if there was any interest in a possible partnership with Pheasants Forever purchasing no-till disc drills. We responded that we were interested in more information. Steve asked Mary to contact MACD for further updates.

Bison Procedures: Steve is still working on procedures for the bison ordinance.

Annual Plan of Operations: Based on the feedback received from the Local Working Group meeting, Mary will put together a draft plan for the board to review at the next meeting.

District tree plot & right of way discussions update: Mary and Larry with Kyle Groh met with the County Commissioners and Tim McCloy on March 2nd to discuss options for McKeen Road. The board had voted that they would like to implement the original design from 2012 and the commissioners and road department concurred. Mary resubmitted that design for reconsideration to the state road engineering department and is awaiting feedback. We will visit with the commissioners and other interested parties when there are more details.

Road / dam safety consideration on W. Duck Creek Road and Hudiburgh Reservoir: Leonard Schock and Frank Wright brought their concerns to the LWG meeting and the conservation district regarding the safety of the dam on the reservoir. The road is a gas tax road that the county maintains. Leonard said that the spraying of weeds on the sides of the road caused erosion and instability. Mary will be looking at funding options for stabilization through either the state or through a conservation organization. We will visit with the commissioners and other interested parties when there are more details.

String of Pearls: Brant had inquired about the "string of pearls" in the last meeting. Steve will discuss that with Rachel Frost, MRCDC and report back to the group at the next meeting. This will remain under "Old Business".

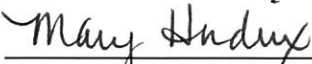
New Business

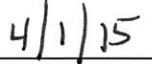
Range Monitoring in McCone County: Mary asked the board to consider hosting a Range Monitoring Day in McCone County this summer. She thought that a half day event with 3-4 stations showcasing monitoring techniques from the BLM, DNRC and NRCS. The fourth component might be Roland Kroos, a private contractor. Will discuss this further at the next board meeting.

Garden Show: Steve mentioned that Ann Fischer, DC NRCS in Fallon County discussed people showcasing their gardens with a local show. He also mentioned a *Garden to Table* program where people pick veggies on their tour and bring it to the chef who would prepare a fresh meal for the participant. Mary suggested that we may plan for something like that in the next year.

Adjournment of Meeting

Steve made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Casey seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30pm. The next scheduled board meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 1, 2015 at 7:00pm.


Mary Hendrix, Administrator


Date


Steve Wanderaas, Chairman


Date