

The McCone Conservation Board of Supervisors met on February 11, 2015 at 1:00pm at the USDA Building in Circle, MT. Those present were Steve Wanderaas-Chairman, Larry Nagel-Urban Supervisor, Brant Quick-Rural Supervisor, Josh Murphy-Rural Supervisor, Dusty White-Rural Supervisor, Johnna Blankenship-NRCS, Ashley Kiehl-NRCS, David Pratt-NRCS and Mary Hendrix-Administrator. Casey Nay-Vice Chair tele-conferenced in. Jenny Garoutte was absent. Meeting was called to order at 1:05pm.

Following Correspondence & Visitors

Brianne Grewe was here to administer the oath of office to Josh Murphy and Dusty White. There are now seven board supervisors for the District.

Dale Tribby, Wildlife Biologist and Kirk Anderson, Range Specialist with BLM was here to discuss sage grouse. BLM is nationally revising their land plan (RMP) and this needs to be completed by the end of September 2015. It is mainly sage grouse specific. There are two core areas for sage grouse—the Great Basin Area which includes Utah, Nevada and Dillon, MT. The other area is the Rocky Mountain Area and that includes Wyoming, the rest of Montana and the Western Dakotas. These are very diverse geographic areas and a one plan fits all doesn't really work for everyone. Local offices have had some input but most of this is determined on a national level.

Livestock grazing is still valid for BLM lands, but there may be some changes. Before renewing grazing permits, BLM will be mandated to collect more data. If allotments fails grazing management practices, the common practice is to look at correcting it and may be given up to five years to implement corrections. BLM will request permittees' assistance in collecting data (e.g. number of cows in a certain location).

Mary shared correspondence from the law office of Lucas & Tonn. They sent a plan of dissolution for the Eastern Plains Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. and a ballot voting for or against dissolution. David mentioned that Eastern Plains RCD was formed in the 1990s and were supported by NRCS by means of office space and technology. With the 2008 Farm Bill, NRCS was required to withdraw its support of RCDs. Many RCDs are still functioning through alternative funding sources, however, Eastern Plains office in Sidney were closed in late 2012, early 2013. Steve made a motion for dissolution and Dusty seconded the motion. Motion passed. A yes for dissolution ballot will be mailed in.

Meeting Minutes & Treasurer's Reports

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

Treasurer's Reports from January 2015 were reviewed. Steve made a motion to approve the reports and Larry 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

PROGRAMS

CSP 2015

- Six applications in 'Pending' status. Two more potential applicants at least.
- Deadline to apply: February 27, 2015.
- **WHAT'S NEW:** Any entity (business or organization) that submits an application for Farm Bill programs though the NRCS must

- Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.
- Be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM).

*From Information for Farm Bill Program Applicants Fact Sheet, USDA NRCS January 2014:
"As required by the Federal Finding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, all entities using an EIN (Employer Identification Number) and doing business with NRCS must have a DUNS number and current registration in the SAM database. This pertains to ALL financial assistance, easement programs, and watershed programs as well as grants, cooperative agreements and contribution agreements...this currently does not apply to Farm Service Agency's entitlement payments".*

The Field Office initiates a conversation about these requirements with any potential applicants during the first visit or phone call. Applicants who wish to apply as an entity are referred to PTAC in Billings for assistance with the DUNS/SAM enrollment process. Although it is possible to apply without assistance (online), the process has proven to be difficult; we are instructed to go through PTAC.

We are told that soon we will not be able accept applications from entities that have not yet acquired a DUNS number and are not registered with SAM.

CSP Renewal

McCone has two 2011 CSP contracts; these will expire in 2015. The participants have been notified and will be offered the option to renew their contracts later this fiscal year.

EQIP 2015

Steve Becker and Byrhonda Lyons (Public Affairs Specialist) initiated a marketing campaign for the EQIP Energy Initiative targeting Hutterite Colonies within the state, including Prairie Elk Colony in McCone County. We have not heard from the Colony.

We currently have four active 2015 applications; two deferred. Ashley is working on two conservation plans in order to fulfil requirements for her planning certification.

WHAT'S NEW: PROGRESSIVE VS RMS LEVEL CONSERVATION PLANS

From Montana Bulletin MT300-15-3:

2015 EQIP will refer to two categories of conservation program contracts based on how the applicant wants to be considered for funding in select fund codes.

RMS contract: *Based on a conservation plan that was developed to the RMS level as requested by the applicant. All essential practices for the RMS level are either being contracted or they have already been satisfactorily implemented by the applicant. Practices that support or facilitate an essential practice are eligible for contracting if contained within the conservation plan.*

Progressive contract: *This category will consist of applications that are not contracting all practices that are required to achieve and RMS-level.*

Instead of attempting to create a conservation plan that addresses an entire suite of relevant resource concerns for all of the land in a particular land use or the entire operation, applicants may now choose to address one or a few resource concerns on a part of the land use. For example, a progressive plan may address the concern of lack of

adequate water in Section 6 and the North Pine pasture. Progressive plans do not require the inclusion of practices such as Prescribed Grazing or Nutrient Management.

When offered the choice, all 2015 McCone EQIP applicants (four; range) elected to apply for a progressive conservation contract.

PROGRAMS TIMELINES:

January 30th – SAM registration deadline for all general EQIP applications
 February 27th – CSP FY2015 Sign-up Deadline
 February 27th – SAM Registration Deadline for FY2015 CSP applicants
 March 20th – EQIP Ranking and Eligibility Deadline for all FY2015 EQIP
 March 27th – EQIP Preapproval Deadline
 March 31st – CSP Renewal Application Deadline (NB300-15-13)
 March 31st – SAM Registration Deadline for CSP Renewal Applicants
 June 12th – EQIP Obligation Deadline


There were **no EQIP Special Initiatives** (Organic, Seasonal High Tunnels, and On-Farm Energy) applications in McCone for FY 2015. There were **no AFO/CAFO**, Wildlife Habitat Conservation or National Water Quality Initiative Fund Pool applications in McCone for FY 2015.

FIELD OFFICE CHECKUP: David Pratt met with Field Office Staff to visit about contract status, applications, Ashley's training plan and other items. David appears to be satisfied with FO operations at this time. David is surprised at the amount of traffic in the Field Office and interest in Farm Bill Programs. He shared some advice with the District about the LWG and LWG meeting.

ASHLEY: INTENSIVE GRAZING with Justin Morris. A couple of producers were interested in intensively grazing their crested wheat and Sue FitzGerald mentioned that Justin Morris out of Missoula could possibly come down to visit them. Ashley inquired if there was any interest through the board and David suggested that she contact Terry Heck to start the process.

Information about Soils and Soil Health

MSU Extension


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AGRICULTURE

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See Faculty
Soil Fertility
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 Cover Crops
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 Extension Publications
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 Home Gardening
 Intro to Soil Fertility
 Manure Nutrient
 Management
 Newsletters & Reports
 Nitrogen Research
 Nutrient Deficiencies
 Phosphorus Research

Soil Fertility Extension Program

The Soil Fertility/Nutrient Management program at MSU focuses on the processes that affect nutrient cycling so that they can be managed more sustainably. Soil testing can detect low nutrient levels that lead to possible crop nutrient deficiencies. In addition, soil testing allows for timely adjustments in fertilizer applications, reducing input costs. Understanding the economics of fertilizing, yield goals, and crop quality, along with soil fertility management can assist the producer in meeting profit goals. Currently, the effects of cropping systems and tillage systems on nitrogen and phosphorus availability are being investigated. Research conducted at MSU, the Agricultural Research Centers, and throughout the region, are synthesized into fact sheets, modules, and presentations geared toward extension agents, crop advisers, farmers, ranchers, and/or homeowners. If you have any questions on the Soil Fertility Extension program or materials contained in this web site, contact Dr. Clain Jones.



Montana State University College of Agriculture Soil Fertility Extension Program

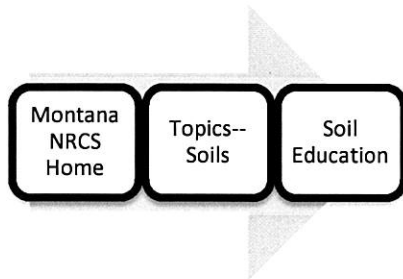
<http://landresources.montana.edu/soilfertility/>

[soilhttp://landresources.montana.edu/soilfertility/thesoilscoop.html](http://landresources.montana.edu/soilfertility/thesoilscoop.html)

Montana NRCS

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/mt/home/#>

Or just type **Montana NRCS Home** in the search bar.



Videos
Webinars
PDFs
Links to publications, other
Internet sources, etc.

Administrator's Report

Mary updated the board on the Salt Cedar Team meeting held in Jordan on February 9th. The group will be targeting resources on 7 Blackfoot within the CMR and Garfield County over the next two years.

We have had 13 tree orders for a total of 1,147 trees. 2,347 trees have been ordered, so there will be extra trees available for a tree sale this year.

We will have hedge roses available for area school children to purchase for Mother's Day. The order forms will be sent out April 13th with a request for it to be returned by April 23rd.

Mary asked the board if she could go assist with Envirothon in Lewistown again this year. The dates will be April 19 – 21. The board agreed that she could go and help.

Nancy Stempel will be attending the next board meeting to discuss providing county wall maps. She will bring in a sample. At this time, the district does not produce wall maps.

Tree planter tires need to be replaced. It will cost approximately \$142 per tire. As it is within the budgeted expense, the board agreed to purchase the tires from Farmers Union Oil.

Chairman's Report

Steve attended the Legislator Meet and Greet in Helena on January 22nd. Sixty out of the 100 legislators were there and he had the opportunity to meet Senator Eric Moore from Miles City. He mentioned that the meet and greet was open to any supervisor and thought that it was a worthwhile event to attend.

Brant made it to the High Plains No-till Conference in Burlington. We will ask him for his report at the next board meeting.

Upcoming Events

February 17th - Soil Health Workshop, VFW Hall, Jordan

February 18th - Soil Health Workshop, McCone County Fairgrounds

February 19th - CMR Community Working Group Meeting, Ft Peck/Glasgow

February 19th - Missouri River Conservation Districts Council (MRCDC) Meeting, Ft. Peck/Glasgow

February 23rd - LWG Meeting, McCone County Fairgrounds

February 24th - LWG Meeting, Garfield CD, Jordan

Old Business

Winter Workshop

The winter workshop is on track. Mary has been in touch with Scott Ravenkamp, guest speaker from Colorado and Dan Buerkle, guest speaker from Plevna. Rachel Frost, MRCDC will be here along with Ann McCauley with MACD. Mark Henning, NRCS will present first on crop rotations.

Advertising dollars were used with an ad in the Free Trader. Postcard mailers were sent out and flyers are posted at the post office, Farmers Union Oil, Wooden Nickel and Circle Country Market. Additionally this event was posted on our website, Facebook page and the Credit Union marquee.

Mary spoke with Kay Wolff regarding meal numbers. Based on last year's numbers, we ordered 60 meals. We will submit the bill to Curtiss Repair, our lunch sponsor, after the event.

Local Working Group Meeting

Postcards were sent out at the same time as the workshop mailer. An ad and press release was included in the Circle Banner for the February 12th and February 19th editions. Additionally this event was posted on our website, Facebook page and the Credit Union marquee.

Johnna was asked to contact BLM, FWP and other NRCS staff. Steve will contact USFWS, MSU Extension & Weed Department. Mary will contact FSA, DNRC and McCone County commissioners.

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. Mary asked the board how we may brainstorm to either come up with the balance or look at alternative transportation. Another option was to submit another 223 grant and postpone the trip until 2016. 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.

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.

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

Annual Plan of Operations: This is tabled until after the Local Working Group meeting.

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

District Property land approach / right of way: Mary updated the board regarding the district property approach / right of way. She has been in discussion with the State, County road department, Larry and the producer. There are a couple of options that we may pursue, however, she stated that if there is no resolution, this will be an ongoing situation for the board and the producer using the easement. Two options were discussed and option #2 is the

preferred approach. Dusty made a motion to approve that option and Josh seconded the motion. Motion passed. Mary will schedule a meeting with the County Commissioners, Tim McCloy, Larry Nagel and producer.

Adjournment of Meeting

Steve made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Dusty seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:56pm.

The next scheduled board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 4, 2015 at 1:00pm.

Mary Hendrix
Mary Hendrix, Administrator

3/4/15
Date

Steve Wanderaas Chair 3-4-15
Steve Wanderaas, Chairman Date