

The McCone Conservation Board of Supervisors met on April 1, 2015 at 7:00pm at the USDA Building in Circle, MT. Those present were Steve Wanderaas-Chairman, Casey Nay-Vice Chair, Brant Quick-Rural Supervisor, Josh Murphy-Rural Supervisor, Jenny Garoutte-Rural Supervisor, Ashley Kiehl-NRCS and Mary Hendrix-Administrator. Larry Nagel, Dusty White and Johnna Blankenship were absent. Meeting was called to order at 7:07pm.

Visitors

Karl Christians-DNRC Conservation Districts Bureau and Heidi Crum-DNRC Rangeland Resource Coordinator teleconferenced to brief supervisors on Range Committees. Range committees have been inactive in the state for over ten years and both DNRC and the District are interested in starting one in McCone County.

Ken Nelson-MSU Extension and Scott Heide, McCone Weed Board were on hand to discuss noxious weeds in McCone County. As not to replicate efforts or resources, Steve asked what urgent concerns needed to be addressed. Ken mentioned one area of concern is weeds in riparian areas within producers' fields that are not being treated. This allows weeds to spread through water and/or fowl sources. Another concern is hiring seasonal personnel. At the present time, a two person crew is spraying the majority of roads in McCone County. It was also indicated that additional resources or funding for seasonal help would greatly enhance the existing weed program. In a competitive labor market, a slightly higher than minimum wage does not attract many applicants. Some ideas were exchanged such as providing cost share for chemicals and looking into grants that might help subsidize wages.

Scott Kaiser-DNRC Conservation Districts Bureau was on hand to discuss the Soil Health Project. He discussed how the District could be more involved with Rangeland by sponsoring some activities such as a Youth Range Camp (Rosebud County this year), Governor's Range Tour (Lake County this year) and/or a Winter Grazing Seminar (this past January in Yellowstone County). He also suggested the District sponsor a resolution for the Area Meeting in support of a weed control initiative.

Correspondence

- MACD postcard—thank you for paying dues
- MACD President's Report—Spring 2015
- MRCDC March 2015 Activity Summary
- MT DPHHS—Hantavirus precautions email
- MDOL—Avian influenza email
- ARS Cover Crop Chart
- Email from Facebook asking about Henry Mountain bison
- APR year round grazing emails

Meeting Minutes & Treasurer's Reports

Meeting minutes from March 2015 were reviewed. Brant made a motion to approve the minutes and Casey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

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

- ❖ Tentative meeting scheduled with Ray Dotson, Acting State Conservationist
 - April 14th and 15th
 - One meeting in Culbertson and one in Miles City
 - Possible field office visits
- ❖ New State Conservationist has been appointed.
 - Lisa Coverdale
 - Starts May 4th
 - Previously SC in Connecticut
 - Assisted with Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts through EWP and other conservation funds
 - Assisted Connecticut producers who experienced collapsed high tunnels due to the large blizzard in 2013
 - Focused on honoring women in agriculture, new and beginning farmers, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring access to NRCS's technical and financial assistance programs throughout the state of Connecticut.
- ❖ Circle Field Office hosting an employee NUTBAL training – Thursday, April 2nd
- ❖ Currently working on twelve CSP applications.
 - We have finished up with preliminary office visits. Waiting for the CMT tool to be finished so we can proceed with the contracting process.
- ❖ Possibly only one EQIP application will be obligated. Still waiting for a final decision from MCA.
- ❖ Field Office Appraisal – April 27th
- ❖ Lots of training in June
 - Johnna
 - June 8-12 for salinity training
 - Ashley
 - June 1-5 for Conservation Planning
 - June 8-12 for Soil Health and Sustainability
 - June 16-18 for Cultural Resources Training

Administrator's Report

Tree orders –30 orders to date, 4055 trees ordered, 3328 trees sold (if all 650 hedge roses get sold)

Tree sale – 727 trees for sale—May 8th & May 9th

Cover crop cost share – have five people sign-up so far

Local heroes – your hardworking pollinators' poster contest

Envirothon – April 19-21 (20th Year)

Statewide Administrator Training registration form: Would like districts to pay for registration and accommodations. \$372.64 (\$100 registration & 3 nights x \$90.88) Will be applying for scholarship (604 miles x .575 = \$347.30, but not sure I would get the full amount) Scholarship meeting is on May 6th.

May 18th— taking 4th-6th graders to Ft Peck & fishing

Important Dates:

April 8th—Spring Garden Workshop in Jordan

April 19-21—MT Envirothon (20th year) in Lewistown

April 21—State tree delivery in Sidney

April 22—Lincoln Oakes tree delivery in Sidney

May 6—MACDEO scholarship meeting; chamber meeting & district board meeting

May 8—Admin/310 grant due

May 15—Saline seep workshop (tentative date)

May 18—Ft Peck day

May 25—Memorial Day off

June 2—Range Monitor Day (tentative day)

June 3—District Board meeting

June 8-11—Administrator training in Great Falls

We will need to review and accept budgets at next month's meeting as the 310/Administrative grant will be due by May 8th.

Chairman's Report

Steve and MRCDC will be meeting with Paul Santavy, new Refuge Manager, in Lewistown on April 2nd. Topics will pertain to sage grouse and other general discussions.

Steve attended the Invasive Species Council teleconference. This newly formed council elected a Chair and Vice-Chair, and is establishing by-laws, mission statement and duties. The next meeting is scheduled at the end of May in Helena which Steve plans to attend in person.

Old Business

Bison Procedures: Steve is still working on procedures for the bison ordinance. This will remain under "Old Business" until completed.

Bus Tour Grant: 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 spoke with Karl about the possibility of submitting another grant in the next fiscal year to supplement the dollars already received and he thought we could do that. Mary asked the board if we should request that the contract termination date be extended to October 2016

to allow for a bus tour next summer. The board agreed to request new termination date, but in the meantime, to continue to explore alternative travel options for this tour.

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. This has been tabled until the May meeting.

District tree plot & right of way discussions update: Mary met with the County Commissioners and Tim McCloy on March 16nd to discuss options for McKean Road. After the March 2nd meeting, Mary resubmitted the original design from 2012 to the state road engineering department. We received template #3 for consideration. This design moves the approach closer to McKean Road by 130 feet, but still requires a large area of McKean Road to be removed and shifted to the west. The County Commissioners and Road Department considered it not feasible to undertake this project at this time and asked Mary to let the state road engineering department know. She did and received template #4 as a final solution for McKean Road. A meeting with the County Commissioners and Tim McCloy to discuss this template is scheduled for April 6 at 11am.

Range Monitoring in McCone County: Mary asked the board to consider hosting a Range Monitoring Day in McCone County on June 2. The monitoring day would be a half day event that begins about 1pm at Quick Ranch. It would have 3 stations showcasing monitoring techniques from the BLM, DNRC and NRCS. Since many area producers will be branding at that time, June 2nd would not be a good date. June 12th was selected as an alternative date, however, the office staff will be in training that whole week. June 19th will be the date for this event.

Mary also mentioned the "GrassSnap" app that is a good rangeland/pasture management and photo-monitoring tool to use. Thank you, Little Beaver CD for this interesting information.

Sage Grouse Discussion—what now?

As McCone County has been recently added to the list of counties that have core sage grouse habitat areas, the District decided to become better informed. John Fahlgren—MACD SGI guy, Dale Tribby and Kirk Anderson—BLM, and Dave Pratt—NRCS have been here to discuss how the Sage Grouse Initiative will impact McCone County. We have invited FWP and USFWS, but have not been able to meet yet. The board decided that with the information gathered thus far, that it would be pertinent to begin education by having a SGI series and/or press releases at the local level. Mary will contact Brad Sauer—another MACD SGI guy on articles for submission to the Circle Banner.

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" until completed.

New Business

Saline Seep Workshop: Mary spoke with Jane Holzer regarding a saline seep workshop. Jane suggested that we try to schedule one prior to EQIP signup deadlines, so May 15th was tentatively scheduled. The workshop could be scheduled for a couple of hours in the afternoon. Mary asked the board if it would be a good time of year to schedule a workshop and was told no. It was discussed that this topic may be a good fit for the winter soil health workshop that we will most likely schedule in February 2016. Mary to contact Jane to cancel tentative date.

Quick Info Sheet on Range Committee from DNRC (Karl & Heidi)**Operation:**

The CD Chairman will appoint a district supervisor to chair the range committee. *Once the CD board has appointed a chair, that person is not allowed to leave that post unless they find their own replacement.* The Range Committee may only make recommendations to the board. The entire conservation district board would then, if necessary, vote to approve any actions or financial expenditures of the range committee.

Membership:

Individuals of the general public, agency personnel, and other individuals interested in Range may be member of the committee:

Scope of Responsibilities:

The responsibility of the range committee is to ensure continued range health through demonstration projects and education efforts for adults and youth. The committee will bring the latest information to the conservation district, its constituents and partners. The committee should attend workshops, educational events and tours as available to stay informed of current events and activities related to range management. Develop a set of annual goals and plan or work. Develop an annual budget to fund such activities. The Chair shall give a brief report of any activities or progress at each CD board meeting.

Committee Goals:

- Promote education and conservation on county grazing lands,
- Sponsor educational events, demonstrations and workshops
- Provide rental equipment, post pounder, drill, roller, etc.
- Initiate range monitoring program
- Support the CMRCWG, Sage grouse sub committee
- Provide advice, support, guidance to agencies, organizations,
- Initiate necessary measures to promote/sustain range health.
- Pursue grant monies to apply/demonstrate grazing land technologies in the District

Potential Partners and/or Resources to Committee:

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Local office
Department of Natural Resources Trust Lands: Area Office
MSU Range Specialist
Society of Range Management: www.rangelands.org/
Rangeland Resource Executive Committee (RREC)
Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD)
County Extension Agent

Range Chairman selected: Steve appointed Josh Murphy—Rural Supervisor to chair the Range Committee and he accepted. Casey made a motion to approve the appointment and Jenny seconded the motion. Motion passed. First quarterly meeting date to be determined.

Adjournment of Meeting

Steve made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Brant seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:58pm. The next scheduled board meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 6, 2015 at 7:00pm.

Mary Hendrix
Mary Hendrix, Administrator

5/6/15
Date

Steve Wanderaas Chm
Steve Wanderaas, Chairman

5-6-15
Date