

The McCone Conservation Board of Supervisors met on May 6, 2015 at 7:00pm at the USDA Building in Circle, MT. Those present were Steve Wanderaas-Chairman, Casey Nay-Vice Chair, Larry Nagel-Urban Supervisor, Brant Quick-Rural Supervisor, Josh Murphy-Rural Supervisor, Dusty White-Rural Supervisor, Johnna Blankenship-DC, NRCS and Mary Hendrix-Administrator. Jenny Garoutte was absent. Meeting was called to order at 7:03pm.

Visitors

Catherine Wightman, FWP Sage-Grouse Coordinator teleconferenced and spoke to us on the Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

- In 2010, greater sage-grouse listed as warranted but precluded by prior candidates
- Lawsuits filed with US Fish & Wildlife services and based on court-ordered settlement, a final decision must be made on sage-grouse by September 2015
- Executive Order-2-2013: Governor Bullock establishes Advisory Council in 2013.
- McCone County added to core area in late 2013.
- Advisory Council gave its recommendations to the Governor in January 2014.
- Executive Order-10-2014: General Provisions honors valid and existing rights; honors private property rights; does not expand the authority of any state agency; prioritizes conservation in core areas but acknowledges value of other sagebrush habitat; and creates a Montana Sage-grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) which is different from the Advisory Council. The MSGOT will be made up from heads of agencies (e.g. DNRC, DEQ etc.)
- There are certain Core Area and General Habitat stipulations.

She also discussed management recommendations and the Montana Sage-grouse Stewardship Act SB261 that needs the Governor's signature. Once signed, SB261 develops a program for incentive based conservation on private lands.

She mentioned that FWP's focus is on the management of the species, not habitat. FWP primarily has conservation easements on private lands where they would negotiate hunting access and grazing management standards for sage-grouse. These conservation easements are for 30 years with some development restrictions.

Catherine was asked if there were any nature conservancy easements in McCone County and as far as she knew, there aren't any.

Correspondence & Handout

- Montana Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Program Power Point
- Landowner Assistance Programs pamphlet
- Where Can Sage-grouse live article
- MACDEO Supervisor & Administrator of the Year nomination forms
- MACD APR letter
- DRWA Board of Directors
- Schillinger Minor Subdivision
- Delp 310 Applications
- Nickels 310 Application (pending)

Meeting Minutes & Treasurer's Reports

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

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

Field Day with Boris... learned about

- Glacial ice boundaries, glacial lakes and their impacts on the landscape
- Fox Hills Formation soils in the Vida area. Younger soils, product of glaciation; not enough geologic time to move salts through to lower layers in the soil profile. There you have it: Soils prone to salinity problems given enough precipitation and other factors such as farming practices.
- Clinkers: Not volcanic in origin. Product of incredible heat generated by burning coal seams.
- Hell Creek and other 'Badlands' are not the result of being beneath an ancient ocean, but rather what remains of incredibly vast swamps and slow-moving river systems. Gumbo is volcanic ash that drifted to the bottom of the water and over time deflocculating, changed to clays. Very cool.

Day One: Frequent brief glimpses into the interior of the Sweet Chariot. Day Two: Johnna drove.

UPCOMING

Johnna: Salt Lake City Memorial Day—May 28
Temple Grandin and Curt Pate—June 2 (Tuesday)
Salinity Management Training—June 8-12

Ashley: Conservation Planning—June 1-5
Soil Health—June 8-13
Cultural Resources—June 16-18

PROGRAMS

EQIP: Funding cuts at the national level. For the foreseeable future, Miles City Area can hope for one to two EQIP contracts per District per year. One 2015 EQIP application was selected for funding for McCone EQIP 2015.

CSP: Twelve applications. Applications to be preapproved May 29, 2015.

Applications this year typically include fewer acres. Few applicants are willing to apply more challenging enhancements.

- SQL15, PLT15, SQL04, WQL32
- PLT02, WQLO3: Unwilling to change season of use, duration of grazing.

Consequently, projected payments are lower for many applicants. Four left to process to 'Preapproved' status.

EQIP: Current Local Ranking Questions

1. Does the application include practices addressing the resource concerns identified on other land uses in addition to this land use?

2. Will the practice(s) reduce erosion and/or enhance water quality in ephemeral or wooded draws?
3. Contract will directly benefit T&E and/or Candidate species?
4. Will the applicants grazing plan rotate winter feeding areas and/or calving pastures?
5. Livestock Production Limitation—Inadequate Livestock Shelter—is a resource concern and natural or artificial shelter(s) will be contracted.

Can we do better? Will put this question on next agenda of local working group.

310 PERMIT: Boring under the Redwater. Jones will receive the approved designs back from the State Engineer next week. Archeology surveys in progress. We hope to begin work within the month. Mary mentioned that FWP has indicated that this is not a project.

Other: Round trip to Sidney with pickup and horse trailer, April 22.

Administrator's Report

Envirothon update—enjoyed helping out at this annual event. First place—Hamilton High School, top test score—Helena High School. Mary spoke with John Deming, Circle Science teacher and he is interested in forming the first ever team from Circle High School to participate in Envirothon 2016.

No-Till Gardening Workshop was held on April 23rd with 13 participants. We had very positive feedback from everyone. Next year, we should plan to have another workshop, but in the evening hours to accommodate people who work during the day. Also thank you to Johnna & Ashley for their help in setting up.

Trees and fabric rolls were picked up in Sidney. Thank you to Johnna for her assistance, pickup & horse trailer. This is half of the tree order, the remaining nurseries will ship directly to Circle.

Tree Sale—727 trees for sale. Held first sale on May 2nd (sold ½ of trees) and will be open in the afternoons all the rest of this week.

151 Mother's Day hedge roses sold and will be delivered to Circle and Prairie Elk Colony Schools on May 7th. District is considering discontinuing this program.

Tree order form will be included in the fall newsletter. There will be a few changes in the ordering process for 2016.

Twenty-three pollinator posters have been submitted from the 2nd and 3rd graders of Circle School. Thirteen posters meet all requirements set by NACD judging guidelines. The supervisors were invited to judge winners in both grade categories. First place winner 2nd grade: Catalena Kuntz Second place winner 2nd grade: Renae Kluck First place winner 3rd grade: Kaitlyn Thoeny and Second place winner 3rd grade: Brayden Hale

We will be taking the Circle School 4th – 6th graders to the Ft Peck Interpretative Center & Kiwanis Fishing Pond on Monday, May 18th.

Cover crop cost share has had five participants. The program is available up to 10 producers. Mary asked the board if she should advertise for openings. At this time, we will wait to see if others sign up, may advertise later.

Statewide Administrator Training will be held in Great Falls June 9-10. The district paid for the registration fee, but submitted and was awarded a scholarship for 3 night accommodations and mileage.

310 permit: Pearl Nickels stopped in the office to discuss a 310 permit. She mentioned that the area beyond their intake on the Missouri River has eroded to within 4-6 feet of the pump station. They have moved the fuel and pump,

but still needs to move the entire station away from its present location. I have asked her to submit a 310 application. In the meantime, Douglas Jones with NRCS did a site inspection and submitted his report. The District will submit that alongside the 310 application to FWP, Corp of Engineers and DEQ. Supervisors will schedule a site visit once application is received in the office.

UPCOMING

May 18—Ft Peck day

May 25—Memorial Day off

June 2—Dr. Temple Grandin & Curt Pate Workshop in Miles City

June 3—District board meeting

June 8-11—Administrator training in Great Falls

June 19—Range Monitoring Day

July 16—Soil Health Tour to Fallon County

August 13-15—McCone County Fair

September 23 or 25—Area 1 Meeting

Chairman's Report

Steve spoke to Sparky Dreesen with Farmers Elevator about the post pounder. There had not been any progress at the time of this meeting. Sparky will talk to Loren Logan to see if they should purchase this equipment. Mary advised the board that HB223 applications submitted in September 2014 had been invited to resubmit. The District sponsored a grant for rangeland conservation management that included purchasing a high-heavy post pounder.

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: Garfield County has agreed to match us in funds (\$2,000) to co-sponsor this soil health trip. Mary has contacted the Powder River Bus Service and Ann Fischer, DC-NRCS Baker field office to re-instate this tour. The tour date will be July 16th.

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 June meeting.

District tree plot & right of way discussions update: Mary met with the County Commissioners and Tim McCloy on April 13th to discuss the final template (#4) for McKean Road. The new template moves the approach even closer to McKean Road, however, does not take the telephone poles into consideration. 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. Mary contacted the state by email to communicate this decision.

The District supervisors have asked Mary to contact the new County attorney to determine legal ramifications, if any, to continue to provide an easement on the property. Based on this information, the board will determine its next course of action at the June 3rd meeting.

Range Monitoring in McCone County: The Range Monitoring Day is set for June 19th beginning at 1pm at Quick Ranch. We will have Kirk Anderson—BLM, Robert Kilian—NRCS and Spurr Watson—DNRC there to discuss their individual agency monitoring techniques. Mary asked Casey if he could ask the Elevator if we might borrow their BBQ and also to be the BBQ chef. Steve will provide the beef for the hamburgers. We will ask that participants RSVP by June 18th so we will have a good count for food.

Sage Grouse Discussion—what now?

Two article series had been submitted to the Circle Banner. The first one in a series of 2 is: "Landowner Assistance Programs" and the second series of 9 articles: "Where Can Sage-grouse live?"

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

Administrative / 310 Grant: The District supervisors reviewed the 2015-2016 administrative grant application. Dusty made a motion to approve the application and Josh seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Adjournment of Meeting

Steve made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Larry seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:43pm. The next scheduled board meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 3, 2015 at 7:00pm.

Mary Hendrix
Mary Hendrix, Administrator

6/3/2015
Date

Steve Wanderaas Chair
Steve Wanderaas, Chairman

6-3-15
Date