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## Quarterly Meeting Minutes January 13, 2010 Moccasin Room of the Yogo Inn Lewistown, Mt.

Chairman Dana Darlington opened up the meeting at 3:30p.m. Council members present were: Vice Chairman Nick Schultz representing Petroleum County CD; John Chase and Galya Wortman representing Cascade County CD; Jim Beck representing Broadwater County CD; Paul Gies representing Fergus County CD; Dean Rogge representing Garfield County CD; Dennis Mitchell representing Blaine County CD; Dick Iverson representing Richland County CD; Karl Christians representing DNRC and the MRCDC Coordinator Vicki Marquis. Also present were Warren Kellogg with Mt. Conservation Districts, Jeff Hagener with American Prairie Foundation, Dr. Don Woerner with Natural Animal Systems, J.T Korkow and Mike Waite with Congressman Rehberg's Office, and Liz Chung with Senator Baucus' Office.

Dana adjusted the schedule to allow Jeff Hagener with the American Prairie Foundation to address the Council. Jeff noted that the APF would like the opportunity to give tours and answer any questions the Council, Conservation Districts, or others may have. The APF is assembling a wildlife preserve but still has cattle grazing on some properties. Their bison are considered "livestock". As far as disease issues, Jeff stated that the APF bison are thoroughly tested and APF is not taking quarantine bison. APF understands fencing concerns and they have worked with their neighbors and have had no trespass problems to-date. Jeff also noted that the APF does not intend to turn the preserve over to the government; they want to stay private but will all public access. The Council asked questions about economics, vaccinations, and the carrying capacity and number of bison that APF has set as a goal. Jeff responded that they have completed an economic study and agreed to mail several copies to the Council. Additionally, he noted that they have a range specialist on staff and work with the federal agencies to determine the carrying capacity.

### General:

1. The minutes were read by the council members. John Chase moved to approve the minutes with the corrections to remove Big Horn Dam and insert Rainbow Dam in the coordinator's report. Dennis Mitchell seconded, the motion passed unanimously.
2. The Executive Committee minutes were included in the council packets and each member could read them on their own. Executive Committee ballots were collected and for those who did not have ballots Vicki handed out blank ballots and they were turned in.

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Gallatin Conservation District  
Broadwater Conservation District  
Lewis & Clark Conservation District  
Cascade County Conservation District  
Chouteau County Conservation District

Blaine County Conservation District  
Big Sandy Conservation District  
Fergus County Conservation District  
Petroleum County Conservation District  
Phillips Conservation District

Garfield County Conservation District  
Valley County Conservation District  
McCone Conservation District  
Roosevelt County Conservation District  
Richland County Conservation District

3. Vicki read the council's financial report and asked for comments on the format. Dick Iverson moved to approve the report as submitted and John Chase seconded, the motion passed unanimously. The council discussed the budget for the FY2012 & 2013. Karl mentioned that the council needed to identify needs in a prioritized manner and know where they can cut. Gayla noted the mention of a new computer and vehicle. Vicki also made mention of the Administrative fee and that it needs to be changed from 5% to 10% per the agreement with Petroleum County CD. Vicki stated that she would make the noted changes and send a new budget out to everyone and have the Executive Committee approve before sending to DNRC. Karl mentioned that estimates are due to DNRC by the end of the month. The council then discussed how to accommodate the 10% holdback and where they could cut from. After a lot of discussion the group came up with a plan and that would be written up and sent to DNRC.
4. Correspondence received and sent since the last meeting was presented and reviewed.

Reports:

1. Upper Reach:

- ❖ Whitmore Ravine Update: John Chase noted that the CCCD is submitted a WRDA request through Congressman Rehberg's office and will next work on an appropriations request to fund the project.
- ❖ Meadowlark Country Club: John Chase noted that the project is proceeding with grant funds provided by PPL Montana.
- ❖ CREP Update: Dana Darlington noted that he, Vicki, Rob Hazlewood and Jeff Laszlo met Friday with Glenn Patrick and Bruce Nelson to refine changes to the CREP, including rental payments for riparian areas that are only fenced but not planted with trees, and provisions for natural regeneration. Both Liz Ching and Mike Waite noted that the Congressional offices can contact the state FSA office to express Congressional interest in the proposed changes. JT Kurkow noted that each state can set state-specific policies and that NRCS would need to be on board with any changes to the 75% tree survival rate.

2. Middle Reach:

- ❖ Monument Riparian Action Plan update – Cottonwood Workshop: Vicki noted that she, John Chase, and Rick Anderson attended the BLM's Cottonwood Workshop in December. The workshop was well attended and ended with the BLM agreeing to form a Task Force to begin the process of manipulating flows on the Missouri River to facilitate large spring flows that will help with cottonwood regeneration. Warren Kellogg noted problems with relying on the Marias River to facilitate flows on the Missouri, the need to formalize a coalition with the Sun and Marias, and the need to clearly identify what the Task Force wants to accomplish. Dick Iversen suggested they use the ice flow studies completed on the lower river and noted the need to keep the local CDs involved. Gayla Wortman suggested that the Council send an informational letter to the affected CDs urging their active participation, the Council agreed.
- ❖ BLM RAC Update: Vicki and Nick, who is also a member of the RAC, briefly discussed the RAC meeting that concluded just prior to the Council meeting. They noted that the RAC created two sub-groups, a bison sub-group and a fee sub-group. During the public comments, The Wilderness Society noted that they were in settlement discussions with the BLM over their lawsuit. Nick also noted that the BLM has stewardship contracts with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for elk habitat work.
- ❖ MACD Resolution: Recent press on the Council and MACD support for the RMP was noted. Additionally, the resolution will be distributed to the federal agencies and Congressional offices during the trip to DC.

3. Reservoir Reach:

- ❖ CMR Comprehensive Management Plan Update: Vicki noted that there is not a range management specialist on the planning team which leaves a gap in the planning team. The CMR doesn't currently work with ARS at Fort Keogh. They have discussed some of Lance Vermeer's research in the past but have not incorporated it in the planning process. Mike Waite with Congressman Rehberg's office and Liz Ching with Senator Baucus' office noted that the USFWS could enter into a third party contract for an assessment, by ARS at Fort Keogh or another entity. They also noted that there is a good neighbor policy and that the USFWS is expected to manage the land for grazing and wildlife. Medicine Lake and the Red Rocks Refuges are two in Montana that are managed successfully with livestock grazing.
  - ❖ Stakeholder Group Proposal: The council discussed the idea of having a stakeholders group for the CMR. Funding for this group was also discussed. Jim Beck moved to approve the CMR stakeholder group project and Paul Gies seconded, the motion passed unanimously.
  - ❖ MACD Bison resolution: The DC delegates will take the resolution to DC.
4. Lower Reach
- ❖ MRRIC Meeting Update: The next meeting Larry Mires will be taking Vicki's place as she will be on vacation.
  - ❖ Travel Funding Update: The DC delegates are going to talk in DC about possible funding for MRRIC. It was also discussed to apply for another 223 grant with Petroleum County.
  - ❖ LoMoCRM Report: CRM Annual meeting will be January 27<sup>th</sup> at Fort Peck. USFWS, FWP, and the stakeholders will update one another on the progress made.
5. MACD- no report at this time
6. DNRC- Karl said that the budget is a primary concern at this time, especially planning for expected budget cuts. He stated that the Conservation District programs alone could be facing \$54,000 to \$110,000 in cuts. At this time DNRC will not be signing any new contracts until they know that they will have the money and they will not be filling Steve Schmidt position for a while.
7. NRCS- no report at this time

New Business:

1. Changes to the Ground Rules – Provisions for Secretary, Treasurer, and Ex. Com. (tabled until next meeting)
2. Work Calendar: The calendar was looked over and a few dates were set, including a tour of ranches adjacent to the CMR Refuge on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.
3. Review DC Talking points: Gayla stated that there were too many items and that the delegates should focus on 1-2 top concerns. Jim Beck moved to have the DC delegation use the talking points as a guide for their discussions and presentations in DC and to use their judgment as things arise. John Chase seconded, and the motion passed.
4. State Legislative issues: (tabled until next meeting)

Old Business:

1. State Water Plan: Jim informed the council that 3 members from DNRC – Ann Schwend, Paul Acevedo, and Jim Robinson had met with - Vicki, John, Jim and Allan Rollo on Jan. 7<sup>th</sup> and discussed the plan. They received some additional insight on how the process is being developed and the purpose of the plan. DNRC will gather the basic data available but will probably have gaps. The council stated they had already done a study that could possibly help. The initial data would be an overview and then they would have to go by basin or locality to catch the raw data. Ann is in the process of diagramming the process. It was thought that they would then get the goals for those who use the state water. The council would not have to make decisions on who is right and wrong. The council will draft a letter of interest to Ann Schwend stating that they are interested in an advisory capacity as of now and will continue as the process develops.
2. Brochure Updates – Vicki informed the council of the changes made and stated that the brochures were at the printers.

Public Comment:

Representatives from Denny Rehberg's office talked with the council about the Land- Water Conservation Funds and the possibility that the council could tap into the funding. The group must have a 501-3-c status to receive public funding.

Next meetings:

- ❖ April 8<sup>th</sup> in Bozeman
- ❖ River Rendezvous

With no further business coming before the council, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Approved by unanimous vote on April 8th, 2009

Submitted by:

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Carie Hess, Secretary

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Dana Darlington, Chairman