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Quarterly Meeting Minutes April 17th, 2009 Lewis & Clark County CD Helena, MT

Chairman Dana Darlington opened the meeting at 2:15 P.M. with introductions. Council Members present were: Vice Chairman Rick Anderson representing the Chouteau County CD; John Chase representing the Cascade County CD; Jim Beck representing the Broadwater CD; John Venhuizen representing the Gallatin CD; Paul Gies representing the Fergus CD; Buzz Mattelin (via telephone) representing the Roosevelt County CD; Jeanne Rae Kirkegard (via telephone) representing the McCone CD; Dean Rogge (via telephone) representing the Garfield County CD; Bill French (via telephone) representing the Phillips CD; Jeff Tiberi representing MACD; Jodi Hastings representing NRCS; and Karl Christians representing DNRC. Others present were: Steve Hedstrom, MACD President; Rob Hazelwood, PPL Montana; Tom Hinz, Montana Wetlands Legacy; Janelle Holden, The Wilderness Society; Gary Slagel, BLM; Mike Ruggles, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; and Larry Cook, landowner in Chouteau County.

The meeting opened with a presentation by Gary Slagel about riparian projects in the Monument. Gary gave a brief history of the National Riparian Service Team's work and the workshop held last fall. Wayne Elmore with the NRST may be coming out this summer to complete a riparian assessment. Gary noted the progress being made on the four projects identified during the workshop:

- The large enclosure at Ford Bottom will be built soon, the permittee has been involved. The Friends group is buying materials for the 3-strand fence.
- The newsletter is about to go out, it includes articles on Gist bottom, collaboration, and the Pride & Perseverance video.
- Weed management cooperative efforts with the Knoxs at McGary Bar continue. Kenny Keaver from the Havre BLM office is also working with Chinook and Winifred schools.
- The flow management project will begin talking to the Bureau of Reclamation about changes to Tiber Dam releases. Rob Hazelwood noted that USGS has done some work showing the need for 49,000 cfs over 1 week to benefit cottonwood regeneration. A LIDAR study of the area would provide a map layer to show where the water from higher releases would go and how it would impact private property. It was suggested that Rob, Tom, and Gary work with Vicki and Jeff to prepare a summary paper for the upcoming Washington DC trip.

Gary noted the problems caused by ice and showed pictures of the ice at Judith Landing. He also noted that BLM is working to remove Russian Olive at Council Island with stimulus money and would like to work with NRCS on funding more removal. Gary offered copies of the Monument Resource Management Plan and the Pride and Perseverance video.

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

General:

1. The meeting minutes from the January 23rd, 2009 Quarterly meeting were reviewed. John moved to accept the minutes as presented, Rick seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
2. The Executive Committee reported that since the last full Council meeting, they have approved \$2,000 payment to the Lower Missouri CRM group MRRIC and WRDA outreach efforts, approved \$250 payment to the Lewis & Clark County CD for the legislative social, approved \$3,600 for Dana and Vicki to join the Washington DC trip, solicited fiscal sponsor proposals from the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana (via MACD) and member CDs, and approved initial plans for the River Rendezvous.
3. The financial report was presented and discussed. Rick moved to approve the Financial Report, Paul seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
4. Correspondence received and sent since the last meeting was presented and reviewed.
5. Coordinator's Report: Vicki referenced her monthly reports and noted that she has been setting up appointments for the upcoming Washington DC trip, drafting and sending letters of support for the Whitmore Ravine Appropriations request and the MRRIC travel funding. Additionally she and John recently presented Council information to the Great Falls Conservation Council.

Reports:

1. Upper Reach:
 - Holter Lake Cleanup: Karl reported that the cleanup will be May 30th. He is working to get sponsors for the event. The biggest expense will be the dumpster (about \$600). Additional funding is needed for garbage bags and food. Paul made a motion to ask for a small fee from the participants to cover the food expenses and allocate \$100 of MRCDC funds for other supplies. Jim seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
 - Whitmore Ravine update: John reported that the CCCD is working on a Request for Proposals for engineering services and has requested a \$6.8 million Congressional appropriation to fund work in the ravine. Malmstrom has committed \$2 million for on-base improvements that will reduce the water flows to the ravine. Dana read a letter from the CCCD requesting the Council contribute funds for coordination of the project. DEQ has already given \$5,000 and other partners where being approached. The Council noted that with the Air Force, Department of Defense, and a potential Congressional appropriation involved, there may be enough funding from other sources. No action was taken on the request.
 - Land Use Planning/ No Adverse Impact: The Council discussed previous NAI workshops held in the Madison watershed, others groups' efforts (Greater Gallatin Watershed Coalition, Great Falls Conservation Council), the difficulties keeping CDs involved with planning boards and small acreage landowners, as well as potential speakers and theme for the MWCC's 2010 Watershed Symposium.
2. Middle Reach: Regarding the CREP, Rob noted that less than 1 acre per river mile is enrolled in the riparian program. Problems with CP22 were discussed, including the mandatory 75% tree survival rate as well as cost share and rental payments. It was noted that when the new FSA State Director is appointed, more work can be done on CREP amendments.
 - Russian Olive / Salt Cedar work with BLM – Chad Krause from the BLM was unable to attend. Jodi Hastings noted that NRCS supports CDs' efforts to provide education and tools for private landowners to remove Russian Olive.
 - Monument Riparian Action Plan Update – report given earlier by Gary Slagel.
 - Monument video – additional copies of the video were provided and Vicki noted that the video will be shown on Montana PBS June 25th, July 4th, and July 5th.

3. Reservoir Reach:

- CMR Comprehensive Conservation Plan Update: Jeanne Rae, Dean Rogge, and Bill French participated via telephone. Jeanne Rae reported that the Reservoir Reach met on April 7th in Fort Peck to discuss the CMR planning process. They agreed that more information is needed on PILT funds, a Range Management Scientist should be part of the CMR Planning Team (someone from MSU, Extension, or NRCS), a pilot project with CDs managing some grazing allotments should be pursued, weeds need to be addressed, and an MOU with the CMR or regional FWS office should be started but questions about the language need to be answered. Jeanne Rae has been working with Penny Zimmerman in Sen. Tester's office to invite Sen. Tester and Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar to the area. It was agreed that an additional comment letter and a meeting with Barron should be the next steps. The financial and social implications of grazing allotments were discussed.
- Update on SJ19: Vicki noted that she, Dean Rogge, Monte Billing and Rex Phipps testified in support of the resolution before the House Fish, Wildlife and Park Committee. Several groups opposed the resolution and the committee eventually voted along party lines resulting in a tie vote. The resolution will die in committee if it is not forwarded out in the next few days. Janelle Holden with The Wilderness Society explained that they opposed SJ19, noting that many groups did not have the opportunity to attend the CCP meetings like the Conservation Districts do. She noted the power of people coming together with recommendations on the CCP and hoped to work with the CDs on a stakeholder group and on setting up tours of the area. She noted the success of other locally-led stakeholder groups such as the Blackfoot Challenge.

4. Lower Reach:

- MRRIC update: Vicki reported that they have formed work groups and that the Montana members are participating in each of them: Missouri River Recovery Program, Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Program; and Independent Science Panel (ISP). The next issue MRRIC will deal with is the similarity of appearance listing (SOA) being proposed for shovelnose sturgeon, which would have the greatest impact on the commercial fishing industry in the lower basin. Mike Ruggles reported that he is participating in the ISP work group. Additionally, a May 5th meeting is planned for the Montana stakeholders to prioritize the Corps' Montana recovery projects, including the Intake fish passage and flow modifications at Fort Peck. He also reported on a pilot project for sloughing easements funded at \$80,000 for the Yellowstone and lower Missouri.
 - LoMo CRM: Vicki reported that \$2,000 would be provided to the LoMo per the executive committee's decision.
5. MACD: Steve Hedstrom discussed the U.S. Army Corps' Sediment Management Plan with \$30 million available for project funding. Jeff Tiberi briefly discussed the 404 permit mitigation program, EPA nutrient loading research, and the YRCDC tour planned at the confluence later this summer.
 6. DNRC: Karl reported that they are following HB2, the conference committee hearing is today. Funding cuts include a 7% vacancy savings cut and a 3.2% across the board cut.
 7. NRCS: Jodi Hastings introduced herself and noted that she is in the position temporarily.

New Business:

1. Involvement in Watershed Symposium: The Council supported Vicki's time helping plan the Watershed Symposium with an emphasis on land use planning as the theme.
2. Legislative Update: Addressed during previous reports.

Old Business:

1. Grocery bag project: No update.

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2. Flood photo archive update: No update.
3. Hotel promotional products update: No update.

Public Comment: None.

Next Meeting Date: June 4th on Holter Lake for the River Rendezvous.

With no other business coming before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM so Council members could attend the Legislative Social hosted by the Lewis & Clark CD.

Submitted by:

Approved by unanimous vote on July 13th, 2009:

Vicki Marquis, Coordinator

Dana Darlington, Chairman