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## Quarterly Meeting Notes April 8th, 2010

Ganger Ranch Tour: Rob Hazelwood led a group of about 17 people through the Granger Ranch's CREP project. This project on O'dell Creek was started in 2004 by the Laszlo Family and has since grown into incorporating 4 different agency partners, non-profit groups, and many area landowners. In the first waterfowl brood survey there were just 9 pair and in May of 2008 they counted 83 pair. After the tour everyone met at the Madison River Foundation conference room to further discuss what has been happening at the ranch with the project, who is involved, and the CREP program in general. Rob noted that it is not an either raise cattle or do restoration but the ability to do both. PPL's involvement was discussed and it was noted that they have a 40 year license that is re-evaluated every 10 years. As part of their agreement they give \$300,000 to wildlife resources, \$400,000 to fisheries and also some money for recreation. It was discussed that with the CREP program there is a 5 to 1 match and that in the past the PPL money has been used for a part of the match. Richard Lessner, PhD the executive director of the Madison River Foundation addressed the Council after the tour and noted that the agricultural community has been an integral part of the valley and the conservation projects completed there

Business Meeting at the Bear Paw Restaurant in Mc Allister: Dr. Clayton Marlow gave a presentation on livestock grazing to enhance wildlife habitat and provide fire fuel reduction. Dr. Marlow noted that most European countries depend on livestock grazing in wildlife refuges to enhance habitat. Additionally, several species of small birds, like the grasshopper sparrow) depend on habitat that includes patchy areas with grazed short grass next to tall ungrazed grass with no trees. Livestock can be used to protect grouse habitat – big sage will die in a fire but cattle won't eat it so cattle grazing can be used to take out heavy grass fuels while leaving big sage intact to provide some fire protection. Dr. Marlow noted that deer and elk prefer rabbit brush. Additionally, Russian Olive out competes buffalo berry, box elder, and green ash because it thrives in warm, mild winters. Dr. Marlow felt that there are not enough federal and state agencies with enough funding to preserve wildlife; therefore, private landowners are a crucial part of habitat conservation. He also suggested that livestock be marketed to enhance habitat, protect homes, enhance water yield – all of these functions that livestock provide can be marketed as a service.

There were only 2 council members present therefore no quorum, the meeting was informational only.

### General:

1. The minutes were read by the council members. John Chase noted some corrections and Jeff Tiberi noted a typo.

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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

2. The Executive Committee minutes were included in the council packets and each member could read them on their own.
3. Carie read the council's financial report, and Vicki noted that under contract labor the council could update the display panels to correspond with the brochure and possibly look at visiting with the CD's along the CMR and do an outreach. She thought that maybe contracting Bill Milton as a facilitator would be beneficial.
4. Correspondence received and sent since the last meeting was presented and reviewed.
5. Coordinator's Report: Vicki reported that the council is now on Facebook and that Carie and she were working on the council newsletter.

Reports:

1. Upper Reach:

- ❖ Whitmore Ravine Update: John Chase reported that the preliminary engineering report was complete and that there have been appropriation requests submitted to Senator Baucus and Senator Tester. It was noted that Senator Baucus would like to do it in phases. It was also noted that there is a lack of money to do a whole lot and that Malmstrom would not be able to help outside of the base.
- ❖ Meadowlark Country Club: John Chase noted that the project did not include car body removal but there was work done on a section of bank that was collapsing. Joe Christians with BLM harvested about 15,000 willow stems in September and October for the project. The riverbank restoration began three weeks ago, mostly with volunteers. They layered willows then a one foot vertical lift of soil which was covered by fabric then another layer of willows. The car body removal would have to wait due to money and the fact that the golf course does not want heavy equipment moving across the fairway. The Golf course feels that a barge would be better and be able to do 300-400 feet of riverbank at a time.
- ❖ CREP Update: Glen Patrick stated he would like to add some grazing language, perhaps similar to WRP which was recently changed to allow the landowner some grazing. In the Addendum, FSA is proposing a payment on riparian areas without woody vegetation of \$50 plus a 40 % incentive equaling \$70 per acre plus a signing incentive equaling \$100.00 per acre. It was thought that they should conduct a survey to see who is interested in participating.

2. Middle Reach:

- ❖ Monument Riparian Action Plan Update –It was noted that the Cottonwood task force would be meeting in Fort Benton on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the Ag Museum.

3. Reservoir Reach:

- ❖ The schedule and upcoming review of the Draft CCP was discussed. It was noted that the turn-around time required for the review would be very short.
- ❖ The stakeholder group proposal was discussed and the meeting participants noted that it would be best to include all CMR users and allow the group to self-determine its direction and organization.
- ❖ A potential “bison summit” that provides information from accurate sources on all sides was discussed. Jeff suggested that one of the Congressional offices be contacted about sponsoring the panel and to emphasize the goal of the panel should be to find a “win-win” situation.

4. Lower Reach

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- ❖ The draft 223 grant was discussed and it was noted that it will have to be approved by the executive committee prior to submission.
  - ❖ The Corps will host their spring AOP meeting in Fort Peck on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Vicki did not know if the meeting would include discussion of the other Corps Missouri River efforts, including MRERP, MRAPS, and MRRIC, as requested by the Council.
5. MACD- Jeff noted that in a recent Landscape Conservation Cooperative meeting, there will be a workshop to discuss climate change and what that means to livestock and wildlife.
  6. DNRC- Karl noted that the funding cuts for the council did not come to fruition and that they will soon begin looking to fill Steve Schmidt's position.
  7. NRCS- Joyce noted that they are changing some goals and aiming to revise funding to use a regional approach instead of targeting individual Conservation Districts one at a time. This approach would facilitate completion of bigger goals on a larger scale. Additionally, she noted that they have a new watershed team coming on board in May.

### New Business:

- ❖ Vista Program: Vicki noted that the council had filled out the paperwork to put their name in the hat and thought that it would be possible to put \$4,000 toward an admin. fee for the volunteer.
- ❖ It was noted that the last monument was just dropped on us. It was also noted that there should be no secrecy about future monuments and that the Council and Conservation Districts should respond in some way.

Old Business: no updates to the old business projects were provided.

Public Comment: Glenn Patrick with FSA noted that Conservation Districts are important to future projects and implementing many conservation goals. Kit Fischer with the National Wildlife Federation spoke of their involvement with the CMR National Wildlife Refuge. Additionally, Carie provided copies of a booklet designed for teachers to use in the classroom. The booklet was compiled by a retired teacher in Winnett and they were seeking funds to help with the printing and publication. The booklet would cost \$3,400 to print, they have raised \$2,300 so far. Joyce Schwartzenrubner noted that if a brief passage about becoming a Conservationist were added, NRCS could provide funding.

### Next meetings:

June 3<sup>rd</sup> CMR Tour

River Rendezvous in July

With no further business coming before the council, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Submitted by:

Approved by unanimous vote on June 2, 2010:

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Carie Hess, Secretary

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Dana Darlington, Chairman