1601 2nd Ave. North, Ste. 601
Great Falls, MT 59401

MISSOURI RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS COUNCIL

Phone: (406) 454-0056
mrcdc@MissouriRiverCouncil.info
www.MissouriRiverCouncil.info

Quarterly Meeting Minutes
July 13th, 2009
Beartooth Wildlife Management Area
Holter Lake, MT

Chairman Dana Darlington opened the meeting at 3:00 P.M. 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; Ron Garwood representing the Valley County CD; Buzz Mattelin representing the Roosevelt County CD; Dean Rogge representing the Garfield County CD; Tom Ruffatto representing the Richland County CD; Jeff Tiberi representing MACD; Karl Christians representing DNRC; and MRCDC Coordinator Vicki Marquis. Larry Cook, a landowner in Chouteau County, also attended the meeting.

The meeting opened with a brief discussion of the "Cash for Grass" program recently proposed by the World Wildlife Fund for CMR National Wildlife Refuge grazing permittees. A recent article in the Great Falls Tribune about the proposal was discussed. The Council noted that the article inappropriately portrayed livestock and wildlife as being in conflict. They noted FWP work at the Wall Creek WMA proves that both can exist and thrive together. Additionally, problems with bison and the state's brucellosis-free status were discussed and it was noted that more economic data on the impact was needed.

General:

1. The meeting minutes from the April 17th, 2009 Quarterly meeting were reviewed. Rick moved to accept the minutes as presented, Jim seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
2. The financial report was presented and discussed. Buzz moved to pay the unpaid bills, John seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Rick moved to approve the Financial Report as presented, Ron seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Paul moved to have the Council apply for a 223 grant to obtain additional funding for office support staff, Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
3. Correspondence received and sent since the last meeting was presented and reviewed.
4. Coordinator's Report: Vicki referenced her monthly reports and noted that she has been working with Fleming Graphics on a smaller, more portable display. The Council suggested that she use Rick's quote from the larger display, but look for a more current photograph of livestock and elk together. Vicki also noted that she was invited to participate in the state's Noxious Weed Trust Fund committee. The Council agreed that she did not have the time to participate.

No Council members present were able to participate either, but asked Vicki to extend the invitation to the Council Members not present, then to the CDs, then to MACD. Vicki also passed out information on logo jackets available to order through MACD.

Reports:

1. Upper Reach:
   - Holter Lake Cleanup: Karl reported that the cleanup was held May 30th. Five dumpster, one full truck load, and 8 tons of garbage were removed from the lake. The cleanup was a cooperative effort with the BLM, local cabin owners, and interested members of the public. The Council contribution was less than $150. Karl noted that Walleyes Unlimited did not participate in the cleanup. They had initially wanted to bring a Boy Scout troop out to help cleanup, but determined that liability issues prevented them from participating. The Council discussed cleanups at Canyon Ferry and other lakes in future years.
   - Whitmore Ravine update: John reported that the CCCD finalized a Request for Proposals for engineering services last month and will soon review the proposals. John also discussed the work being done on Malmstrom Air Force Base, their inability to use base funds outside of the base, and the CCCD's request for a Congressional appropriation. John requested a partner contribution for the project, the request was previously sent in writing to the Council and briefly discussed at the last Council meeting. Paul moved to donate $1,000 to the project, Buzz seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
   - Land Use Planning/ No Adverse Impact: Vicki reported that she is involved with the Watershed Symposium planning committee. The Symposium will focus on land use planning issues as well as conflict resolution between current and proposed land use changes. Additionally, Vicki reported that new model subdivision regulations are being developed by the Department of Commerce.
   - CREP Update: The draft letter was discussed. The Council agreed that a meeting with Bruce Nelson, the new state Executive Director for FSA, should be held prior to sending the letter. Additional changes to the letter were changing 35% on line two of bullet #3 to 25%, inserting the appropriate measured survival rates, as available from NRCS, adding a 4th bullet stating that at the end of the contract, the land would go back to its former land use and specify the term of the contract; also note that the program should be available to all riparian areas along the river, regardless of current condition.
2. Middle Reach:
   - Russian Olive / Salt Cedar work with BLM – no progress was noted on this project.
   - Monument Riparian Action Plan Update – no additional items to report since Gary Slagel's presentation at the last Council meeting.
   - Monument video – the Council noted that it would be beneficial for schools to have a copy of the video for use in their Montana history curriculums.
   - Monument RMP – the draft letter in support of the Monument RMP was discussed. The Council asked Vicki to check with Ray and/or Don McIntyre about including a sentence about the Council providing statement of support or testifying if the plan ends up in Court (note: Vicki checked and was advised against including it).
3. Reservoir Reach:
   - CMR Comprehensive Conservation Plan Update: The draft letter to Barron Crawford was discussed. The Council approved the letter with the following changes: Change the 2nd line of the 3rd bullet on page one to read "…the State NRCS Range Management Specialist and MSU Range Program should be invited to participate in the CCP Planning process."; remove the reference to a week or date in the last paragraph; and include the DOI Washington DC contacts on the cc list.

- Cooperative Work/Range Assessments: Buzz noted that multiple use, good science, and the local economies should be emphasized. Dean noted that he had talked to John Lacey, a private range consultant, and was advised that they need to obtain wildlife counts on grazed versus un-grazed land.
- The Council continued discussion of the WWF "Cash for Grass" proposal. Dean provided a copy of the letter from the WWF to the permittees. The Council discussed sending a letter to the permittees, it was noted that mailing lists were necessary and Vicki would work with the District Administrators to support this effort. The Council noted that more attention needs to be given to SJ19 and the Council proposal to have CDs manage sections of grazing land. Key points to highlight are: scientific data used gained from the Undaunted Stewardship Program; positive use of range science; CD-managed grazing should be a "front page" news item; emphasize the original purpose of the refuge; prescriptive grazing needs to be defined; need to keep the state's "Brucellosis-free" status; request a moratorium until more data is gathered; need to look at the range condition and the economic situation all together. Additionally, the Council should pursue interviews with Taylor Brown on the Northern Ag Network.

The Council took a break from the meeting for dinner followed by a public speaking workshop.

4. Lower Reach:
   - MRRIC meeting report: Buzz reported that MRRIC has reached consensus on two substantive issues, the Similarity of Appearance listing and the Purpose and Needs statement for the MRERP study. MRERP public scoping meetings will be held this fall. The next MRRIC meeting will be in Pierre and the September meeting is scheduled for Montana.
   - MRRIC Travel Funding Update: Buzz noted that Larry Mires drafted a letter that was signed by most stakeholders and sent to several Congressional offices requesting support. Liz Ching from Sen. Baucus' office suggested that the Corps pay each state to host the meeting, then the states could reimburse the members' travel expenses.
5. MACD: Jeff noted that "elevator speeches" should be developed for use at Convention, possibly with some practice interviews with the Northern Ag Network. MACD will present a variety of funding options for CDs to consider at the Area meetings, including: an additional fee on hunting licenses, inclusion of incorporated Cities in CD boundaries, inclusion of weed districts, and consolidation of CDs.
6. DNRC: Karl reported that they are looking at some budget reductions. A CD "peer review" process is beginning with the first one at the Lewis & Clark County CD next month. 10-minute trainings have begun and should be part of monthly CD meetings. DNRC is helping the 8 CDs form a committee that will address Coal Bed Methane issues. Additionally, DNRC received an increase of $80,000 for grants that CDs are eligible for.
7. NRCS: No report.

<u>New Business</u>:

1. FY10 Budget Approval: Buzz moved to approve the budge as presented, Tom seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
2. Fiscal Sponsorship: The Council had a lengthy discussion about the two proposals, one from the Petroleum County CD and one from the MACD. Items discussed included: cost to the Council, impact on the employees and employee benefits, value to the grassroots effort, and mechanics of the monthly paperwork. Buzz moved to approve the Petroleum County CD as the new fiscal sponsor with consideration of MACD for bookkeeping or other services, Paul seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
3. Legislative Interim Committees: Jeff noted that he will follow these and update the Council as appropriate. It was noted that fire suppression issues previously dealt with by the Fire Suppression Committee will now be handled by the EQC. Additionally, it was not clear which

committee would have oversight of the State Water Plan. Jim Beck agreed to attend the meeting to discuss the State Water Plan with Paul Acevedo and representatives from the YRCDC.

Old Business:

1. Grocery bag project: No update.
2. Flood photo archive update: No update.
3. Hotel promotional products update: No update.

Public Comment: None.

Next Meeting Date: The Council agreed to tentatively keep the first part of September open in case issues arise; otherwise, the next meeting would be at MACD convention in November.

With no other business coming before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 PM.

Submitted by:

_____
Vicki Marquis, Coordinator

Approved by unanimous vote on Nov. 17th, 2009:

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Dana Darlington, Chairman