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MISSOURI RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS COUNCIL

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Executive Committee Conference Call Minutes August 24, 2011

The Executive Committee met on August 24, 2011 beginning at 7:06 a.m. by telephone conference call. Those present were Nick Schultz, Chair; Dick Iversen, Lower Reach; Ron Garwood, Reservoir Reach; Jim Beck, Upper Reach; John Chase, Upper Reach; Jeff Tiberi, MACD; Karl Christians, DNRC Laurie Riley, Coordinator; and Carie Hess, Secretary.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes were reviewed and Dick moved to approve as submitted, Jim seconded and the motion passed.

Financial report and approval of bill payments: The budget, financial, and unpaid bills reports were read. Ron moved to approve as submitted and Jim seconded; the motion passed unanimously. Jim Beck moved to pay the unpaid bills and Karl seconded; the motion passed unanimously. Carie noted that the council was awaiting final payment from DNRC for the fiscal year 2011 and that the grant contract and advance invoice for \$20,000 are both in at DNRC so it should not be long.

Coordinator's Update:

Bison- Laurie reported that Arnie Dood's report is on the FWP web site and that she was disappointed that the Council had not been contacted when it was released. She states that the report is approximately 140 pages long and is primarily background information; there are no management recommendations.

Noxious Weed/ AIS- Laurie reported on the quarantine status for EWM and that there would remain a light temporary quarantine for the next year. After that the next step is to designate management areas but this is being held up on the issue of live bait. There was an email from Celestine Duncan stating that in the last survey from Notch Bottom to Pennington Bridge there was no evidence of new invasives. It was noted that the Department of Agriculture has kits available for sampling for EWM but it might be too late in the year for that. Karl noted that DNRC has some funding available for weed projects and for potential surveying in some areas. Karl noted that EWM fragments do not have to root to remain viable, but can float and live in the water column for long periods provided adequate nutrients are in the water. The root system for EWM is mechanical and it does not uptake nutrients. Laurie noted that EWM threat to MT is primarily from the Great Lakes area, whereas the primary threat to ID is from NV. Laurie was to touch base with Patricia Gilbert with the Corps of Engineers to see what is being done at Fort Peck with the dredge cuts and the hatchery intake and to see if the Council could possibly be of any help by obtaining DNRC grant funding. Karl's thought is that if it is in the dredge cuts it should be hit hard to keep it in check or even eradicate it there.

CMR NWR CWG- Laurie reported that at the CMR NWR CWG meeting held on August 4th there was low turnout. The feedback from the group was that it was time to move on and take some action. It was noted that the group has been lean on rancher attendance. Stan Benes focused on the positive economic impacts to the communities from BLM presence and activity.

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

It was thought that he could also have talked about the BLM's benefits in agriculture. Karl feels that we can do a better job of explaining the positive impacts of grazing and agriculture on public lands, i.e. these lands are feeding America and feeding the world. The public owns the lands and should be proud to take credit.

All agencies need to work together and promote the benefits of public grazing. It was thought that having signs in the recreation areas explaining the importance of public lands to feeding America (and the world) is an idea worth pursuing. He also mentioned that there is talk of the NRCS and DNRC partnering up for a 50:50 cost share for on the ground projects that benefit producers. It was noted that the working group has arranged a tour of the CMR for September 19th with a no host barbeque afterwards at the Elk Viewing area (RSVP required). The next meeting is scheduled for October 6th in Malta and Melissa Hornbein will present on the MT Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission and Steve Hedstrom will present on MT Conservation Districts. Laurie needs to contact Steve and confirm. Bill Milton and Laurie are talking about expanding the small planning subcommittee to a larger role in preparing background work in developing a work plan that will then be presented to the full group as a starting point.

String of Pearls – Laurie noted that the USFWS Acting Regional Director (can't read signature) responded to Nick's letter dated June 7. The letter states that they are focusing their attention on other conservation projects along the Missouri River in NB, ND, and SD. They feel the Yellowstone confluence is ecologically important and would like to collaborate with willing landowners and conservation districts if interested in conservation efforts in the future. Jim noted that the Beaverhead CD knew nothing about the Big Hole Valley Conservation Area, even though they were listed in the Preliminary Project Proposal as having been consulted and supporters. They have since contacted the USFWS for an explanation of the erroneous statement.

Monuments – Laurie had no updates. However, a Council member mentioned that the suit against BLM over the Missouri Breaks National Monument Plan by environmental groups has been dismissed. Laurie will research the status of the suit and send info to the Council.

MRRIC/ ACOE – Laurie noted that the next MRRIC meeting is scheduled for October 18-20th in Denver and that Dick and she would be seeing who is going.

BLM RAC- Laurie noted that the Council has been invited to a dinner with BLM Director Bob Abbey and State Director Jamie Connell on Sunday September 18th in Fort Benton. It was thought that 4-6 people could attend this meeting to discuss concerns and projects. Laurie stated that in an email from Stan Benes he suggested that a talking point could be the BLM taking a larger role in the CMR Community Working Group. Nick suggested that the Council members in attendance should have a good presentation and a hand out with talking points to give to them. Dick also mentioned bringing up the scoria mining royalties issue in the lower reach area.

Cottonwood Regeneration – The working group meeting has been rescheduled for September 13th in Lewistown. One of the things to be discussed is surveying regeneration from the flooding and how to do some long term monitoring. A Council member mentioned a new initiative out on regeneration. Dick stated as well as did a couple other members that the re-growth is coming in well but some producers are spraying it out to get ready to plant crops for next year. Ideas were thrown out about possible projects and funding to support sloughing easements and riparian buffer payments to keep some of the growth. Laurie was to follow up with Joyce Swartzendruber and Jim Darling.

River Rendezvous – no update.

State Water Plan – no update.

Residential Development – no update.

Additional Business:

The Council discussed the next quarterly meeting; it was decided to hold the meeting in the Lower Reach and Dick had some good ideas for a tour. The committee discussed and set the date for September 26th in Culbertson. More details will follow. Laurie reported on the mock ups for the River's Edge Trail signs that she and John had been working on. There is one about the MRCDC, one about aquatic invasives and one on historical flood levels. She was going to get with Karl for the flood data and DNRC has to work further on that sign. She also noted that Tom Hines had called and talked to her about the Missouri-Madison CREP addendum. He has talked to Stephanie with Tester's office and suggested that Laurie contact her as well to make sure things keep moving forward.

Next Conference call time & date: The next conference call is scheduled for October as there will be none with the quarterly meeting being held in September.

With no additional business being brought before the Committee, the call adjourned at 8:40 AM.

Submitted by:

Approved by unanimous vote on October 24, 2011

Carie Hess, Secretary

Nick Schultz, Chairman