

## MRCDC Coordinator's Meeting Report

<b>Who:</b>	Laurie Riley, John Chase
<b>What:</b>	Meeting convened by Cascade County CD to discuss recent developments in Whitmore Ravine restoration initiative.
<b>Where:</b>	Mountain West Bank (Cascade County CD offices) basement conference room, Great Falls.
<b>When:</b>	March 4, 2011
<b>Why:</b>	<p>The Cascade County CD has been striving to address the severe on-going erosion occurring in Whitmore Ravine and subsequently reduce the resulting sedimentation to the Missouri River since about 2000. To date, they have seen small successes such as the creation and leadership of the original Whitmore Ravine Stakeholders Group, the completion of a feasibility study conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2003, and the publication of a much more detailed study completed by Thomas, Dean and Hoskins in 2006. They have hosted a number of tours to the site including those attended by Montana State Legislators, representation from the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Congressional Delegation, and many, many others. Over the years, they have applied for and been awarded grants from the DNRC totaling over \$78,000. However, in spite of the many steps forward, they have also endured some setbacks.</p> <p>Over the last year, the Cascade County CD has participated regularly on the Whitmore Ravine Collaborative Conservation Committee (CCC), a group that was created in 2008 with the assistance and encouragement of the United States Air Force. This group has taken the place of the original Stakeholders Group and includes membership from Malmstrom Air Force Base, MT DEQ, Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Fish, Wildlife &amp; Parks, the landowners, and others. With the help of a grant from the DNRC, the CD also hired an engineering firm to write a Preliminary Engineering Report and apply for a \$100,000 grant from the DNRC Renewable Resource Grant &amp; Loan Program and a \$300,000 grant from the DNRC Resource Development Grant Program. The CD also crafted a grant application to fund a coordinator position for the project, though they eventually withdrew the application feeling it would compete too directly with the other grant applications.</p> <p>In October the CD learned that neither of the grants was recommended for funding by the 2011 Legislature. In addition, efforts put toward other funding opportunities are unlikely to be successful at this stage. With this bleak outlook for possible funding, the CD was forced to cancel the contract with their engineer and is now seriously, realistically reassess their plans and role for Whitmore Ravine.</p> <p>Because the Board of Supervisors of the Cascade County CD still believes that the Whitmore Ravine project should be addressed somehow, they are appealing to many groups and agencies to assist. They believe that as a group they must examine all of the challenges and opportunities and determine what the best way to move forward might be.</p>
<b>Accomplished:</b>	Meeting attendees included representatives from NRCS, MAFB, Great Falls

	<p>Development Authority, Cascade County Commission, Cascade County Attorney's Office, engineering firms, landowners, MT FWP, DNRC, City of Great Falls.</p> <p>An entity needs to be identified who can take the lead role in this project, obtain funding, handle liability issues, contract and oversee construction, maintain the infrastructure for the long term. The Cascade County CD is not the entity to handle this function. Construction estimates range from \$1,000,000 (NRCS) to \$11,000,000 (engineering firm). The landowners are unwilling to tackle this role. Malmstrom Air Force Base has stated in the past that this project is outside their jurisdiction.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chris Murphy with MAFB will take ideas back to Base management and see if there are any ways for the Base to take the lead.</li> <li>2. Jane Weber, Cascade County Commissioner, will investigate the idea of missile road maintainers.</li> <li>3. Brian Hopkins, Cascade County Deputy Attorney will look into the idea of establishing a drainage district.</li> <li>4. Matt Crampton, NRCS, will put together a presentation on a Pondera County irrigation district as a potential model. Matt will invite irrigation district members to the next meeting.</li> </ol>
<b>Follow Up:</b>	<p>We should continue to attend meetings and stay apprised of the proposals and ideas. The Cascade County CD will host another meeting after April 15.</p>