



## MISSOURI RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS COUNCIL

### Quarterly Meeting Minutes January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008 Cascade, MT

Opening: Chairman Jim Beck opened the presentations by introducing himself, other Council Members, reading the Council mission statement, and explaining a brief history of the Council, its goals, projects, and activities. A total of thirty people were present for the presentations, including 3 speakers, 11 Council members, and 16 members of the public (see attached sign-in sheet).

#### Water Reservations along the Missouri River:

Andy Brummond with the FWP Lewistown office provided information on the state's Instream Flow Water Reservations, water levels throughout the Missouri River, situations that prompt the state to call for water, and how priorities of water reservations are determined.

Ann Kulczyk and Denise Biggar with the DNRC Glasgow office provided information on water reservations held by Conservation Districts, closed basin status, and use of the water reservations.

Steve Kelly with the Lower Teton Water Users presented information on the Lower Teton River, its lack of water, the status of water rights and reservations, potential causes of dewatering, and the group's efforts to find a palatable solution.

The presentations were followed by a brief question and answer session, then Jim closed the presentations and invited all to join the Council for lunch followed by a business meeting at the Council office.

#### New Business:

Jim called the business meeting to order at 1:10 PM at the Council office. Council Members present were: John Venhuizen, Gallatin CD; Chairman Jim Beck, Broadwater CD; John Chase, Cascade County CD; Rick Anderson, Chouteau County CD; Paul Gies, Fergus CD; Boone Whitmer, McCone CD; Buzz Mattelin, Roosevelt County CD; Curt McCann, Blaine County CD; Karl Christians, DNRC; Sarah Carlson, MACD; and Keith Robertson representing NRCS. Council members B.G. FitzGerald from Garfield County CD and Ron Garwood from Valley County CD were present via speaker phone. Others present were Ray Beck, DNRC, and Vicki Marquis, MRCDC Coordinator.

1. New Council projects/revise work plan: Jim noted that the Executive committee met earlier that morning to review the project list presented at the November meeting. Jim explained the



criteria and process used to prioritize projects. Buzz made a motion to accept the Executive Committee's proposed additions to the work plan in the priority order as follows:

- 1) Historic photo archive – catalog of photos of important sites/conditions along the river; placement of high water markers from historic flood events; documentation of special areas of concern
- 2) MRRIC Travel and WRDA outreach
- 3) No Adverse Impact workshops and development of appropriate guidelines
- 4) "Save our Basin" placards

John Chase seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

2. Comments to the Legislative Fire Suppression Committee: The Council discussed the Fire Suppression Committee's call for comments and draft letter sent with the meeting packet (copy attached). It was noted that a substantial amount of funding is going into fire suppression but not into fuels reduction. John Chase presented a letter sent by the Cascade County CD to the Legislative Fire Suppression Committee (copy attached). Curt noted that there should be a program where homes built in the wildland interface should be subject to a fire hazard insurance, much like floodplain insurance to reflect the risk of fire and property damage in those areas. The Council asked Vicki to change the draft letter to make a reference to the Cascade County CD letter, include a copy of the letter, and send the letter to the Committee by the comment deadline of February 1, 2008.
3. Comments to the USFWS regarding the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the CMR National Wildlife Refuge: B.G. FitzGerald explained that the Garfield County CD felt there was a need for better access for grazing, more water developments, better weed control, more efficient fire suppression, strict predator control, and more multi-user management policies. Boone noted that the USFWS needs to reforest wildfire burn areas and address a more updated MOU with the USACE regarding joint management around the Fort Peck reservoir. Paul noted that weed control efforts on the river bottom homestead sites should be changed to allow leases for hay production. Other issues discussed included: future presentations of Fred King and FWP's work in the Wall Creek WMA, need to manage riparian areas better, need for the USFWS to be accountable to the private property owners for wildlife damage to property, crops, and hay fields. It was also noted that the CDs need to be at the table during the CCP process. The Council's response letter should ask for the surrounding CDs to be added, or at a minimum have a Council representative serve as a cooperating agency representative for the CDs. It was also suggested that they should pattern the process after the Lower Missouri CRM where all the players are at the table, not just the federal agencies. Regarding Wilderness Study Areas, Sarah noted that the current state of politics was not favorable to changing the WSAs. Vicki agreed to draft a letter incorporating the Council's comments.
4. Trip to Washington, DC: Ray noted he was traveling to Washington DC the week of Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>. The Yellowstone River CD Council was sending Don Youngbauer with him to visit and establish relationships with the federal agencies and congressional staff. Ray noted that it would be a good opportunity for the Council to do the same. Many of the concerns noted earlier regarding fire suppression and participation the CCP process could be presented to the federal agencies and Congressional offices during the trip. Additional topics that the Council could focus on during the trip include the Whitmore Ravine and MRRIC charter and travel funding. Vicki noted that there is sufficient travel funding for the trip. Rick made a motion to have Vicki join Ray and Don on the DC trip, Boone seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

5. Office Equipment: Vicki noted that the old files were beginning to stack up and asked for permission to purchase a filing cabinet for better storage of the files. Buzz made a motion to allow Vicki to purchase a 4-drawer filing cabinet, John Chase seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
6. "Meeting-ful Minutes" training: Vicki noted that the Executive Committee discussed the training opportunity, she had researched it and wasn't able to attend the January training but could attend a later training. The training would cost \$80 plus some travel costs, most likely to Helena and back. Boone moved to have Vicki attend the training at a date that fit her schedule, John Chase seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
7. Judith Basin Rural Water Project: Paul noted that the proposed project to drill three wells and pipe water to Harlotown and Roundup may have undesirable impacts on the aquifer. He suggested that the Council look for more information on the project and pursue a position that protects the aquifer. Buzz noted that a Council response to the project could discuss the need to better understand groundwater/surface water interactions while not getting into the merits of rural water systems. It was agreed that more information on the project was needed and requested a presentation at a future Council meeting.

Old Business:

1. Changes to Ground Rules to create position for immediate Past Chair: Paul moved to include the changes as presented (copy attached) John Chase seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
2. Participation in Montana Rural Water Annual Conference: Vicki noted that the trip to Washington DC conflicted with the conference. Both Sarah and Jim volunteered to attend the conference in Vicki's place and present Council information.
3. Proper Functioning Condition Workshops: Paul noted that if the BLM approached the Council about co-sponsoring the workshops, we should look into it. He agreed to approach the Fergus CD about being the local sponsor of the workshop. Paul moved to have the Council pursue the workshop, Curt seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
4. Use of Contract Labor Funding: Buzz moved to provide \$6,000 for the photo archive project, \$3,000 to MRRIC travel, \$4,000 to the No Adverse Impact Workshop, and any remaining balance to the "Save our Basin" placard project. Rick seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. It was agreed that by the next meeting a list of locations for the high water markers/signs should be drafted.
5. MRRIC – Vicki noted that the draft Charter was agreed upon at the January 23-24 meeting in Omaha. Vicki's update on the meeting was previously sent to Council members and member CDs. The Charter would be presented to the Secretary of the Army for his approval.
6. CREP Modifications Update: It was noted that the CREP amendment had been approved, Glenn Patrick was in the process of rewriting the CRP manual to incorporate the changes, and the new program should be available in April. It was also noted that crop prices may impact the CREP enrollment similar to the CRP.
7. FWP Education and Outreach Project: Vicki noted that Roger Semler at FWP indicated that the project was still slated for this spring, although he had not set the next meeting date.
8. River Festival: Rick noted that he had talked with BLM and they were in support of the river trip at Fort Benton. Additionally, PPL may be willing to sponsor a portion of it. The Council discussed using the trip to highlight weed management issues and projects, CREP projects, and the new Farm Bill, if it is available. Additionally, a variety of activities that put people in touch with the resource should be included. The event should be in May and should feature an evening public meeting/event followed by a ½-day float trip the following morning. Buzz

moved to host the event and to contract with Gayla for the event planning; Curt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Lower Reach Report: To allow Buzz and Boone sufficient travel time, Jim asked for the Lower Reach report to be given prior to moving into General business items. Buzz and Boone noted that the Lower Missouri CRM was close to hiring a coordinator and they intended to have their annual "State of the River" meeting in late March to highlight WRDA opportunities. Producers were already requesting the Double R Dredge and the CDs and agencies were completing a blanket permit for it. Some recovery projects that were being discussed with the Corps included riparian forests, pump screens, and additional river access. Additionally, it was noted that the winter releases from Fort Peck were much lower this year - about 5,500 cfs.

General:

1. Travel vouchers were distributed to Council members. John Chase noted that the mileage reimbursement rate recently changed. Vicki agreed to check and update the travel vouchers as necessary.
2. Review and approval of minutes: Rick moved to accept the November 13, 2007 quarterly meeting minutes as presented, John Chase seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. John Chase moved to accept the January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Executive Committee Conference call minutes as presented, Rick seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
3. Financial Report: Rick moved to accept the financial report as presented, John Chase seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
4. Correspondence: It was requested that the correspondence be provided earlier in the meeting so that members had more time to review it.

Reports:

1. Upper Reach: John Chase noted that a new Whitmore Ravine stakeholders group was being formed, spearheaded by Malmstrom. The first meeting was slated for late February.
2. Middle Reach: Paul noted that a large 310 project was underway on the P-N Ranch; Matt and Carla Knox may be interested in a CREP project; and Nick Economon was seeking a water development project at the Hagadone site that he leases from BLM. Curt noted that it was good for the Council to finally have representation on the BLM Central RAC, especially relative to grazing issues in the Monument.
3. Reservoir Reach: No report
4. Lower Reach: report given earlier, see above.
5. Coordinator: Vicki noted that her issues were reported during the old and new business. Her monthly report for January would be sent out soon.
6. MACD: Sarah reported that the new MACD board members were gathering and discussing priorities for MACD activities. Sarah would be attending the CMR CCP meeting in Bozeman on behalf of MACD and she already submitted the MACD resolution to the Legislative Fire Suppression Committee. Additionally, Buzz and Paul would be attending the NACD meeting in Reno and may be able to follow the two resolutions being sent by Montana (Fire Suppression resolution from Chouteau County CD and one from Rosebud CD relative to water distribution issues along right-of-ways). Sarah also noted that the Rangeland Resource Executive Committee was seeking a new member.
7. NRCS: Keith Robertson reported that Dave White was still in DC working on the Farm Bill, which was still in Conference Committee. NRCS was working to accelerate program funding allocations, especially EQIP, before the new Farm Bill passes. They currently have \$22 million allocated and \$14 million obligated statewide. In the Great Falls area they have \$6 million

allocated and \$5 million obligated. Additionally, he noted that South Dakota succeeded in obtaining \$300,000 for a sedimentation study of tributaries in MT, ND, SD, and NE.

8. DNRC: Karl noted that they were ramping up training efforts through 310, supervisor, and realtor workshops statewide. Approximately 150 people attended the recent Winter Grazing Seminar held in Sidney and they are looking for a host for next year's seminar. Dave Martin continues to work on the new Small Acreage publication. Karl also noted that he is involved with the No Adverse Impact workshop and invited CDs to attend. Ray noted that the new Deputy Director is on board and invited the Council to send him a welcoming letter. Additionally, Resource Grant applications are due May 15. Specific to the Council, the next biennium budget requests (Fiscal years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011) should be submitted to Steve by February 10<sup>th</sup>.

Next Meeting: It was agreed to have the next meeting in conjunction with the May River Festival in Fort Benton. A report on the Lower Marias River Assessment, funded with Council One-Time-Only funding should be included.

With no other business coming before the Council, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Approved by unanimous vote on \_\_\_\_\_:

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Vicki Marquis, Coordinator

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Jim Beck, Chairman