



Blaine County Conservation District



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*District Meeting / USDA Building Chinook, MT
July 21, 2015*

PRESENT: Gary Unruh, Bruce Anderson, Kurt Hansen, Sonny Obrecht, Shannon Sattleen, Danny Pratt (DC NRCS) & Ben Hauptman (MSU Extension). Guest: Miles Hutton. Vice Chair supervisor, Kurt Hansen opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. Bruce Anderson motioned and Sonny Obrecht seconded the motion to approve the May 2015 meeting minutes as distributed. The Motion passed.

NO JUNE MEETING DUE TO LACK OF QUORUM.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Shannon Sattleen

Expenditures for the month of June 2015 are as follows: In Fund #2310 Soil Conservation, expenditures were: Salaries of \$2,192.51, Office Supplies of \$55.18, Dues of \$0.00, Professional Services of \$40.00 and Travel of \$0.00. For a Total of \$2,287.69 spent. Fund #2313 Balance of \$2,000. In Fund 2314 Administrative Grant #2314 No expenditures because account has been fully expended. In Fund #2141 Weed Management Grant, no expenditures. The board reviewed the May 2015 Budget. Kurt Hansen moved and Bruce Anderson seconded the motion to pay all bills and approve the May and June 2015 financial reports as reviewed.

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT (DC NRCS)

Danny Pratt

Danny Pratt, Blaine County District Conservationist, report: Danny stated that he attended a meeting with Chief Weller yesterday in Bozeman, MT. Chief Weller spoke about the future of NRCS and the opportunities he sees on the horizon. He focused on keeping NRCS as a technological leader in conservation planning, strengthening and leveraging our partnerships with conservation districts and other entities, and keeping ourselves apprised of new opportunities to get conservation planning on the ground. His background is in public policy and his career in Washington DC began when he started with the Office of Management and Budget. It was interesting to hear that his interest in agriculture and natural resources was sparked when he came to Big Timber, MT for a summer job on a ranch.

The status of employees in the office is that we weren't able to hire a Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) from the job announcement earlier this year. We offered the position to 4 different applicants and 3 of them turned it down while the fourth never called us back. We are going to attempt to get Civil Engineering Technician (CET) in future instead of an SCT. The CET position has a similar requirements as an SCT (i.e. no formal degree required), but it does have a higher salary range that might allow us to retain a high quality employee here in Chinook, MT. The other difference is that a CET would focus on planning and implementing conservation engineering practices versus an SCT that assists with general conservation planning and implementation. Danny stated that he would entertain using volunteers in the office. Sonny Obrecht and Shannon Sattleen thought that this would be well received. Suggestions to use senior 4-H and FFA members, and community members were discussed.

Action: The Blaine County Conservation District and NRCS will continue to reach to volunteers and encourage them to assist

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361134 MISCFILE Pages: 4
STATE OF MONTANA BLAINE COUNTY
RECORDED: 08/26/2015 9:30 KOI: MINUTES
SANDRA L. BOARDMAN CLERK AND RECORDER
FEE: \$0.00 BY: *Laurie Sue Rigg*
TO: BLAINE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Local Working Group. Danny informed the board that he has been given the latitude to use his discretion under the advisement of the conservation district to set resource management goals for county. Everyone at the meeting agreed that the Local Working Group wasn't working the way it needed to for various reasons - the local working group doesn't involve the day-to-day partners of NRCS and the Conservation District, the Conservation District and NRCS meet monthly to discuss the resources of the county and the Local Working Group only meets once. Danny suggested that we should and will allow the interested public to attend Conservation District meetings and voice their opinion and/or learn about Natural Resources in the county but agreed that the time for trying to create these partnerships out of nothing is past. Shannon Sattleen informed us that all meeting times and dates are publicized in the Blaine County Journal so the public would know when CD meeting are so they could attend.

Action: The Blaine County Conservation District discussed bringing this idea of revamping the Local Working Group process to the Area III meeting in September.

Prairie Pothole Wetland and Grassland Retention Program (PPWGRP) The payment schedule for the Prairie Pothole Wetland and Grassland Retention Program (PPWGRP) offered through EQIP was discussed. Danny noted the program is designed to focus EQIP financial assistance on retaining or creating grasslands and wetlands in the prairie pothole regions of Montana and North Dakota. The program will be offered one more time during NRCS fiscal year 2016. During this funding period we paid producers \$227 an acre to preserve/create dryland wildlife habitat and \$229 an acre to preserve ephemeral wetland habitat. These payments go for 3 years and, because of the high rate, made it very difficult to fund multiple contracts. Danny asked for the Conservation Districts input on suggesting a more reasonable payment rate so that we could spread the financial assistance amongst more acres/producers. Sonny Obrecht said that they charged \$45 and acre to cash lease out CRP acres for farming. Gary Unruh suggested keeping the \$229/acre payment rate on the wetland areas and then lowering the dryland acre payment rate.

Action: The Conservation District is going to write a letter of support to maintaining the current wetland payment rate and lowering the dryland payment rate to \$75/acre. Shannon Sattleen and Danny Pratt will assist with drafting the letter.

MSU – Extension – Ben informed the group that there will be a Pest Management Tour being offered Monday, October 5th starting at 8:40 held at Wallner Hall in Chinook. Ben noted that this is an opportunity for private applicators to obtain recertification credits before the January 1st deadline. Each program will offer 3 credits for attending either the morning or afternoon sessions. You may attend both sessions to accumulate 6 recertification credits. Also, Commercial/government applicator credits will be offered. There is no fee for the presentation and lunch will be on your own. Contact Ben for more information 357-3200. An e-mail regarding tour specifics will be sent at a later date.

OLD BUSINESS:

MACD Dues – Bruce Anderson moved and Sonny Obrecht seconded the motion to pay MACD 2nd half dues of \$549.55. Motion passed.

2015-2016 Administrative Grant – Shannon informed the board that Blaine County will be receiving \$10,595.07 from DNRC for CD (\$9,700) and 310 (\$895.07) administration.

MRCDC – Bruce highlighted discussions from the MRCDC quarterly meeting held in Valley County on June 18th. On July 16th he took in the CMR CWG sage-grouse sub-committee meeting. The topic of discussion was the effort to keep the sage grouse off of the endangered species list by proposing local control to manage population. The Governor along with partners that included MACD and the NRCS would like keep leading the local effort in the protection of the Sage Grouse.

Bruce discussed the upcoming 2015 River Rendezvous to be held Tuesday August 25th at the Devil's Creek Campground, Fort Peck Lake in Jordan Montana. The plan is to combining the Saltcedar Team Meeting with the River Rendezvous. The group will travel to Devil's Creek, board US ACOE boats and travel on the lake to the Seven Blackfoot drainage cooperative control project along with other saltcedar sites of interest on Fort Peck. The tour will conclude at 2:00 pm and the Montana Saltcedar Team Meeting will take place at 3:30 to 5:00 in Jordan. If anyone would like to go please let Bruce know. Shannon will forward the flyer for the event once she receives it.

Soil Health/Salinity Workshop – Shannon, Ben and Danny all commented that they thought the Soil Health/Salinity control workshop was a success. Approximately 38 people attended the event. It would have worked out better if it was not raining so much that we could have used the rainfall simulator to its potential. A few producers have contacted Danny to possibly start on addressing their saline seep issues.

Fair Booth – Shannon noted that FSA agreed to pay the \$25 booth rental for the Fair display. Also, thanks to Danny and Dez for help with the set up and take down of the informational booth display.

NEW BUSINESS:

Administration Salary– Bruce Anderson moved and Sonny Obrecht seconded the motion to approve a .30/hr increase to the base rate for the administrative assistant's salary. Discussion. Motion approved. This would make the rate to \$17.53/hour.

Insurance –Gary Unruh moved and Bruce Anderson moved to pay liability Insurance premium to the PayneWest Insurance Company in the amount of \$1,103.00. Discussion. Motion approved.

DNRC June Notes – Shannon reviewed DNRC notes for June with the board. Highlights include the following:

Beginning July 1, the new contracting law takes effect. It gives conservation districts the option of hiring contractors without formal bids for construction projects and equipment purchases under \$80,000. It applies only to construction projects and equipment purchases. The same rules/law will apply for hiring engineers and consultants.

310- The 310 committee made changes to the joint application form. The revised version of the application and the instructions sheet is available on the DNRC website. Shannon has forwarded copies of the updated documents to those who we deal with regarding projects.

CD Minutes – Beginning July 1, (Title 76, chapter 15, part 3) conservation districts must submit their approved minutes within 30 days to the county clerk and recorder for storage.

Area III Meeting – Shannon informed the board that the next MACD Area III meeting will be September 29th, in Fort Benton and held in the Museum of the Northern Great Plains/ Montana Ag Center. Registration will be \$15/person. Deadline to register is September 4th.

Public Comment: None

CORRESPONDENCE: DNRC & MACD “The Montana Conservationist.”

Sonny Obrecht moved and Gary Unruh seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

The next meeting will be **Tuesday, August 18, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.**

Submitted by:

Shannon Sattleen
BCCD Administrative Assistant