

**BITTERROOT CONSERVATION DISTRICT
1709 NORTH FIRST STREET
HAMILTON, MONTANA 59840
MINUTES
January 10, 2012**

Board of Supervisors' regular scheduled meeting Tuesday, January 10, 2012, called to order at 8:00 p.m., by Chairman, Tom Ruffatto.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Eldredge, Jim Lindquist, Kent Myers, Bob Nelson, Bob Popham, Tom Ruffatto, Steve Vogt.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Chris Clancy (FWP), Jeff L. and Nancy Ince (LO), Jack Mauer (BTU), Heather Mullee (BRWF), Doug Nation (BTU), Julie Ralston (BCD), Matt Whithed (NRCS).

MINUTES:

Nelson moved to accept the BCD's December 13, 2011, minutes as sent. Vogt seconded, motion carried.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD:

- Myers explained his concerns with rock revetments and the direction CD's could legally take to identify and put into place a policy addressing this kind of practice. He would like to find out if this is something that would need a resolution presented before the Montana Association of Conservation Districts. The BCD discussed the fact that more and more landowners are choosing this method of bank and flood protection over other methods, in order to avoid the lengthy and expensive permitting process. They are also able to avoid the biological assessment and environmental impact studies required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The BCD Board reviewed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulatory guidance letter on stockpiling of material above the ordinary high water mark and buried rock revetments on federally designated navigable water ways of the U.S..
Doug Nation stated he is aware of a couple of areas where the buried rock revetments did not work. Is there any examples where this method did work? Myers asked, "is there really any advantage to doing this method just to get around the permitting process?" Vogt believed, time wise, there is an advantage. Clancy stated, Fish Wildlife and Parks is not sure how to address the issue. He stated in some cases buried revetments can work very well, like in Donaldson's case. Donaldson's installed a buried rock revetment far enough away from the river that the river was able to access its floodplain without breaching the pit. Eldredge asked Ralston to see if there was any additional information of policies being considered around the state. Mauer's biggest concern with the buried rock revetments is that once the river hits it, you end up with sheer rock banks making it difficult to start any vegetation along the bank and also you end up with large rocks out in the middle of the river. The BCD further discussed vegetative and rock buried revetments.
- BCD reviewed a notice of request for the change of Rye Creek public hearing location to the Darby City Hall. It also reviewed Ince's objection to the request. Ince's stated, their witnesses are coming from Corvallis, Kalispell, and Maine. Inces believed the Hamilton area would be more centrally located and convenient for their witnesses. Myers asked Ince's how many people they have attending?

Ms. Ince stated, not many, approximately 3 or 4 extra. Nelson was concerned about the legal capacity for holding a public hearing in the BCD conference room. The BCD Board discussed holding the hearing in the Darby Clubhouse, Grange Hall, or the Hamilton U.S. Forest Service Building. The BCD Board stated it would like to wait until after the 17th of January when all the information is required to be submitted. This could give a better idea of the possible attendees. Ralston stated, the hearing notice needs to be posted before the next BCD meeting. However, she is willing to call around to check on seating, cost, and availability. Myers stated, it sounds like the consensus of the BCD Board does not mind where the Hearing Officer decides to hold the meeting as long as there is enough seating.

- The BCD Board reviewed MACD's survey on possible changes to the annual MACD Convention. The consensus of the BCD Board was, if its not broke don't fix it.

COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORTS:

- Howard Eldredge reported, the Ravalli County Planning Board met Wednesday, January 4, 2012 to elect officers. The new Chairman is Jan Wisnieski, and the Vice Chair is Bill Menager.
- Kent Myers had no news from the Open Lands Board. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 19th.

NRCS REPORT:

Matt Whithed Reported:

- The local NRCS office has been working on getting the annual payments out for the Conservation Stewardship Program.
- The local NRCS office has been working on prioritizing the EQIP applications according to the Local Working Groups top priorities. It appears that there is going to be more program funding staying at the area and state levels, with less being distributed to the counties. Last year this county received over \$280,000.00 in funding. He expects this amount to drop significantly this year. This will also make it that much more important for the Local Working Groups to meet and set priorities.
- There are some significant budget cuts this year, 259 USDA offices will close across the nation. Two of the offices are in Montana, an FSA office in Treasure County and a Nutrition Services office in Helena. NRCS has dropped all funding for the RC&D programs and 24 of its offices will close across the nation.
- Ravalli County experienced a wind event on Dec. 27. Another high tunnel was destroyed. There has only been two high tunnels destroyed throughout the state and they both happen to be in Ravalli County. Whithed believed this would have been more acceptable if it would have happened in the eastern part of the state. There was some discussion on the integrity of the design. Whithed stated the kits for these structures are pre approved at the national level and installed accordingly. NRCS has relied exclusive on the manufactures requirements. The last structure failed at the base of the metal posts, folding right at ground level. There was some discussion as to whether a different manufacture should be used. Whithed stated, both incidences were extremely abnormal cases. The other 8 high tunnels survived both events with no problem. High tunnel funding is a special initiative, its sign-up period is currently open.
- NRCS will have Justin Morris, Range Management Specialist, give a High Intensity Grazing and Economics presentation from 3:00p.m.-4:00 p.m., at the Stock Growers meeting Saturday, January 14, 2012, in Stevensville. The local NRCS office will also have an information booth all day at this event.
- Snow pack is just under 80% of average. There has been some technical issues with NRCS's Sno-Tel web site, but he believed those issues have been resolved.

GRANT INFORMATION:

- The BCD Board reviewed DNRC's 2012 Reclamation and Development Grants Program Application Deadline of May 15, 2012.
- Ralston reported, there have been 5 BCD-Cost share application submitted: two proposed bank stabilization projects (Bitterroot River, Hughes Creek); one riparian fencing project; one fuel reduction; and one weed management. Total funding requested from the BCD is \$23629.55. Ralston is aware of at least two other possible applications, one for bank stabilization on Skalkaho Creek and another for the removal of existing bridge piers restricting stream flow on North Fork Rye Creek. Application deadline is January 17th.

NOTICES

BCD Board reviewed:

- DNRC Notice of Beaverdam Investment Co.'s Proposed Water Right Use Change.
- Little Beaver CD notice of "Hand N' Hand Livestock Solutions Workshop.
- MACD 2012 Notice of Board Conference Calls.
- Montana Conservation Seedling Nursery.
- Montana Easements Seminar.
- Ravalli County Flood Plain Department's Notice of Double Fork Ranch's Submitted Floodplain Permit Application to Replace an Existing Domestic Well.
- Soil Health Workshop February, 16, 2012.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. 310 Application BT002-2011 Eugene Henderson/Bitterroot River-bank stabilization. Nelson tabled.
2. 310 Application BT023-2011 Tom Robak/West Fork-modified design. Nelson tabled requesting another onsite inspection.
3. 310 Application BT036-2011 Remi Warren/East Fork of the Bitterroot River-repair existing rip-rap. Nelson tabled for design.
4. Emergency 310 Application BT049-2011 Winston Wanstrath/Tin Cup Creek-flood protection. Nelson tabled waiting for a design.
5. 310 Mitigation Application BT070-2011 Walter Krengel/Bitterroot River-bank stabilization. Eldredge tabled.
6. 310 Application BT078-2011 Mark Mogensen/West Fork of the Bitterroot River-repair existing bridge abutment, stabilize bank, remove gravel. Nelson moved to send a letter concerning explanation of gravel removal. Lindquist seconded, motion carried.
7. 310 Application BT092-2011 Hancock/Burnt Fork Creek-remove gravel and debris. Ruffatto moved to accept as a project with the modified submitted design and a 15-day waiver. Eldredge seconded, motion carried.

OTHER OLD BUSINESS:

- The BCD Board reviewed notices of completion on 310 projects BT077-2010, BT051-2011, T076-2011, BT077-2011, and BT081-2011.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 310 Application BT093-2011 Dan Huggans/Camas Creek-irrigation. Lindquist moved to accept it as a project. Vogt seconded, motion carried.
2. 310 Application BT001-2012 Mike & Lynne Connelly/Bitterroot River-bank stabilization. Eldredge tabled for an inspection preferably January 30th.

3. 310 Application BT002-2012 Stream Basics, LLC., Stephen Dunleavy, Peter Krause/Bitterroot River-bank stabilization. Ruffatto tabled for an inspection between the hours of 10:00a.m. and 12:00p.m.
4. 310 Application BT003-2012 Howard Anderson, PE., William Frost/West Fork Bitterroot River-flood protection. Nelson tabled for an inspection.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS:

- 310 Application BT004-2012 Dan Holland/Hughes Creek-soft bank stabilization. Nelson requested an onsite inspection. However, he was concerned there would not be much to see through all the snow.
- 310 Application BT005-2012 Don Polanski/North Burnt Fork Creek-bridge crossing and bank stabilization. Ruffatto requested an onsite inspection.

PUBLIC OPEN MIC.:

- Nation commented saying he is hopeful that MACD and DNRC can come up with an effective plan to address rock revetments. It appears the revetments could cause significant effects on natural resources.
- Mullee gave a brief Bitter Root Water Forum (BRWF) Report, 1.) Kalena Gravina, Big Sky Watershed Member, is doing a great job with the youth education assessment here in the valley. Gravina is going to start working with seventh grade class rooms throughout the county, conducting watershed classes. 2.) The BRWF has its Pint Night fund raiser coming up February 12th. The grand prize winner will win a guided Squalla hatch float for two on the Bitterroot River. Tickets for this are \$5.00 a piece or 5 tickets for \$20.00. 3.) The BRWF in partnership with the Clark Fork Coalition will provide two different Realtors Classes, Friday, Feb. 3, at the Bitterroot Valley's Board of Realtor's Building. The classes will focus on water rights and how to understand water rights located on water front properties, and resources available to stream front property owners. Mullee, thanked the BCD for its support.
- Mauer commented saying he is very concerned about the effect buried rock revetments will have on the character of the Bitterroot River. He hopes someone steps up to the plate and addresses the issue.

DISTRICT BUSINESS:

1. Vogt moved to approve the Treasurers' report and pay the bills. County checks 105022-105036. Myers seconded, motion carried.
2. Myers moved to keep the same BCD Officers and Committee Assignments, as is. Vogt seconded, motion carried.
3. BCD reviewed its annual plan.

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE:

The BCD Board Reviewed:

1. Agroforestry Notes
2. Conservation District Newsletters: Lewis & Clark CD, Meagher CD, Rosebud CD.
3. E-mails: BRWF Looking Downstream, Talking About Water, Even On The Amtrak; DNRC WPAG 2012 Grant Applications, Management of Federal Lands; MACD Montana's Stateside LWFC Program, MACD RFQ Contractor to Operate Irrigation Water Management Program, Outdoor Recreation Federal Grants, Video Webcast, Montana Watershed Coordination Council, Listing for Solar Powered Stock Water Systems, State Conservationist, AIS Stakeholder Meeting, Larry King In View Series, MACD Board of Directors; Northern AG

- Network; Wolf Coordination Taskforce.
4. Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology
 5. NACD Forestry Notes
 6. Northwest Power and Conservation Council Quarterly
 7. Office Depot
 8. RC&D Newsletter
 9. The Teller
 10. Water Management

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

The next board meeting will be held Tuesday, January 31, 2012 at 8:00 p.m.

Tom Ruffatto
Tom Ruffatto, Chairman

Julie Ralston
Julie Ralston, District Administrator

Date: 01/31/2012