

Madison County Interagency Coordinating Group
Ennis Forest Service, Ennis, Montana.
Thursday, April 14, 2106
1:00 P.M.

Attendees:

Ron Nye	Madison County Commissioner (District 2)
Jim Hart	Madison County Commissioner (District 3)
Travis Horton	Ennis National Fish Hatchery, Fisheries
Connie Keeler	Ennis National Fish Hatchery, Fish Biologist
Tim Eagan	Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, Dillon
Dale Olson	Madison Ranger District, US Forest Service
Abigail Dennis	The Madisonian newspaper
Dean Waltee	Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Wildlife Biologist
Cornie Hudson	Field Ranger, Dillon Field Office, Bureau of Land Management
Kris Inman	Wildlife Services

Commissioner Jim Hart brought the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. with introductions.

Approval of Minutes: Cornie Hudson moved to approve the minutes from the January 14, 2016 meeting, with corrections. Dean Waltee seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

INFORMATION SHARING:

Cornie Hudson:

- Spanish Q has added about 35 horses to the herd. Now have about 1,000 horses. All have been rounded up.
- No timber sales coming up.
- Doing a watershed assessment in the South Tobacco Roots.
- Busy with the sage grouse implementation.
- The Ruby Reservoir project needs an appraisal but the BLM can't do an appraisal without a willing landowner.
- Revenue Flats project is still in the information gathering stage.
- New hydrologist is on board – Sean Claffey. Also have a new seasonal hire – Chris Haugland?

Ron Nye:

- Twin Bridges Senior Center is scheduled to be completed on April 15 but still a few small projects to complete.
- Working on two rip rap projects:
 - Pennington Bridge – completed; very pleased with it
 - High Road – still needs to go a little further but that will be in the next permit.
- High Road Boat Ramp needs some work. Have been talking with SRI about allowing the county to improve the access. Hopefully SRI will allow some excavation to make the ramp less steep.
- Children's Center is applying for a TSEP grant to complete the water and sewer.
- Fair Grounds in applying for a planning grant – they have more exhibitors than space.
- Working to get everyone at the table on the Ruby Reservoir Project.

Dean Waltee:

- Have closed the advertising for Kevin Hughes replacement and interviews should start soon.
- Dave Green has been keeping up the general winter maintenance.
- Animal Counts:
 - Spring Mule Deer – Numbers are about the same. Fawn mortality high, starvation mortality in older animals. No decline but no growth.
 - Moose surveys complete except western district. Healthy numbers. Calf production is low but last year was the highest calf count in a while. Numbers will likely bounce back next year.
 - Wolf harvests were up from 13 last year to 17 this year. State population estimates greater than or equal to 536 from last year's 554.
 - Lions in 2 of the 3 districts filled very quickly, season is still open until the 15th.
 - Have been doing evening flights of hayfields in the Ruby and Jefferson for Whitetail counts.
 - Winter elk counts in the Tobaccos are up to 1183 over the 800-1200 last year. The Gravellys are at 8600 - 6400 to 9600 is the target. Had tremendous harvest numbers this year – 250, a 53% increase from last year.
 - Working on Sage Grouse counts. Numbers are up over last year for the fifth consecutive year
 - Bears are out and about, season opens April 15.
 - Big Horn Sheep in the Ruby have a healthy sex and age ratio; may send a proposal for limited harvest. The transplants from Quake Lake are doing well, only 2 have left the herd – one went back to Quake Lake and one went to Indian Creek.
 - Spring Turkey Season is the 9th – 15th. Have had some good nest years. Flocks are up from 20 to 130. Some turkeys have been seen north of Ennis.
- Working with Dan Durham to pilot a sportsman program to do evergreen removal work. Landowners and sportsmen would work together to each benefit.

Dale Olson:

- Doing scrub burning over the next few weeks.
- Still need a road grader operator for a seasonal position.
- Have a new FMO – James King
- South Gravelly EIS is on track to have the draft out this winter.
- Finalizing the resource crews for fisheries and wildfires.
- Moving to a new building in Sheridan in May and selling the current building by September.
- Kevin Barnes, resource assistant is gone now and that GS5 position needs to be filled.
- Small NEEPA project at Hill Reservoir
- Another project at Narrows Dam above Elk Lake Resort as part of a grayling restoration project.
- Looking at a project at Potosí Campground where the higher flows are flooding the roads to the campground.
- Litigation regarding Indian Creek is set to go to trial in August but its open in the meantime.
- Bear Creek Days will be May 10-12.
- Have a Greenhorn project in the Gravellys and have requested a NEMPA team.

Tim Eagan:

- Have been conducting trainings:
 - Fire training refreshers in Twin Bridges, Ennis, and Whitehall.

- Project Stare, training for sheriffs teaching fire safety, evacuations, teamwork, and initial attack crews.
- Basic Wildland Fire
- Meeting with Bonnie Stiles regarding fencing around the Nevada City Cemetery.
- Will have 6 firefighters for the summer.
- Update on the SRI land exchange in the Beaver Chew area.
- Possible new sage grouse lek reported in the Dillon area.

Connie Keeler: discussed the following topics:

- As a result of the Oregon standoff, had two federal law enforcement agents at the hatchery for two weeks.
- Held an "avoiding violence training" for staff.
- Has three YCC spots for summer employment.
- Budget is up and vacancies are filling.
- Constructive Wetland project is gearing up and will be completed in September. This will be the only project at a hatchery in the US.

Kris Inman: discussed the following topics:

- Update on the carcass compost projects:
 - One in the Big Hole hope to have up and running soon.
 - No funding this year for the carcass pick-up project.
 - Ruby Conservation District is looking at a site in Alder.
- Bear Smart Big Sky project is underway swapping garbage cans for bear resistant trash cans. Currently, no signage on the bear resistant cans to ensure proper usage.
- Wildlife Friendly Fencing helped with 2 miles of fencing through a cost share project.
- Wildlife Summer Speaker series kicking off soon. Update on the topics and locations.

Travis Horton: discussed the following topics:

- Snowpack is at average. Northwestern Energy reports 25% of the snowpack has melted above Hebgen.
- Hebgen Dam project almost complete, will change how to manage the river. The spillway will not be operational this year.
- History of grayling in the Madison area and efforts to bring them back.

Jim Hart: discussed the following topics:

- Update on the courthouse renovation project.
- Beginning budget discussions with 34 departments in May.
- Excited to be working on collaborative green projects with Beaverhead.
- Blaine Springs and Varney Bridges progress updates.
- Future bridge projects: Laurin Bridge and Gien Bridge.
- Holding a TIF/TED discussion in Big Sky in April.
- Counties old annex in Virginia City is for sale.

Next meeting is July 14, 2016, at the Axolotl Lakes Cabin including the annual BBQ potluck.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Leona Stredwick, Planning Technician