

Madison County Interagency Coordinating Group

Axolotl Lakes Cabin, Ennis MT

Thursday, July 14, 2016

1:00 PM

Attendees:

Dave Schulz	Madison County Commissioner (District 1)
Ron Nye	Madison County Commissioner (District 2)
Jim Hart	Madison County Commissioner (District 3)
Kris Inman	Wildlife Conservation Society, Community Partnership Representative
Cornie Hudson	Bureau of Land Management, Field Ranger, Dillon
Sunni Heikes-Knapton	Madison Conservation District, Watershed Coordinator
Dean Waltee	Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Wildlife Biologist
Matt Arno	DNRC, Local Forest Government Advisor
Charity Fechter	Madison County Planning Director
Connie Keeler	Project Leader, Ennis National Fish Hatchery
Dustin Tetrault	Madison County Director of Emergency Management
Tim Egan	Montana Dept of Natural Resources & Conservation, Unit Manager, Dillon
Gordon Ash	Forest Service, District 1 Recreation/Forester
Patrick Webb	SW Field Representative for Senator Steve Daines
Ann Schwend	Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, Water Planner, Helena
Rebecca Ramsey	Ruby Valley Conservation District, Watershed Coordinator
Abigail Dennis	Madisonian Reporter

Annual BBQ potluck began at 12:00 p.m.

Commissioner Dave Schulz brought the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Jim Hart moved to approve the minutes from the April 14, 2016 meeting, with one correction. Tim Egan seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

INFORMATION SHARING:

Dean Waltee:

- Replicating photos that were taken in early 1900s and again in 1980s to show changes in forest expansion areas. Will share them as the project progresses
- Hired Dave Green as WMA Maintenance Manager; Dave hiring additional seasonal staff
- Animal Counts
 - Survey work to document post-neonatal elk, deer, moose calf-cow ratios
 - North of Axolotl, classed 132 elk: 54 calves per 100 cows. Near Axolotl, 69 elk: 41 cows with 23 calves
 - Whitetail deer surveys in Jefferson & Ruby valleys: Jefferson is up 28%, and Ruby is down 18% from last year
 - Deer harvest in Jefferson/Ruby/Beaverhead: 3,994 last year compared to 4053 the year before

- Elk harvest: Tobacco Roots 334. Gravelly harvest complex 3,147. Both areas went from above objective to within management objective
- Bighorn sheep transplanted from Quake Lake to Wolf Creek. One with radio collar went into Indian Creek which was original release site. As of now, they've migrated to summer range.
- In Robb-Ledford coordinated grazing system, along Rock Creek will use electric fence to keep cattle out of riparian areas. Grazing system works well. Lease ends 2019
- Nature Conservancy project at Blacktail. Environment Assessment just drafted.
- Forest Service asked for assistance court-ordered response to Gravelly sheep allotment
- Internally, working on article to be published in Montana Outdoors on how we manage mule deer in Montana
- Wall Creek WMA addition project completed & was dedicated at RMEF event
- Antelope survey starts in one week
- Added 1 antlered bull moose license. Established baseline trend survey last year to monitor
- Block Management: Finished re-enrollment; all cooperators in Ruby Valley re-enrolled. Shawn Wentzel with Alaska Ranch is newly enrolled
- Coordinating with Dan Durham on evergreen removal projects
- Working with Forest Service to remove juniper on upper Ruby floodplain
- Moose harvest: Population growing in Ruby/Jefferson valleys. Complaints/conflicts up, so working with landowners/hunters on antlerless harvest opportunity

Sunni Heikes-Knapton:

- Ethan Kinard (Water Programs Manager) items
 - Had 17 Stream Team volunteers at training to collect data in Madison Watershed
 - Doing restoration photo monitoring. Got money from Belgium Brewing & Madison River Foundation for restoration
 - Stream Team also monitoring Jack Creek for microplastics & macroinvertebrates
 - Moore Creek continues to be "posterchild." Doing E.coli DNA analysis to find sources
 - Working with State on Total Maximum Daily Load documents which will eventually result in Watershed Restoration Plan
 - Tied in to Ann's work on drought planning on Missouri Headwaters
- Hired Kori Koenig as part-time administrator
- New Associate Supervisor on the Board is Jessie Weiss from Big Sky area. Total of 7 supervisors on the Board
- Successful workshop on bank stabilization on Jack Creek. Willow growth at 2 ft. Possible September tour
- Working with Dan Durham/NRCS on Moore Creek section
- Working with landowners on lower Jack Creek bank stabilization
- Working with Farm-Fork program on GROW program in schools. Nicole Bailey working 27 hrs/week
- Soil Conservation District celebrates 70 years this year; had car in July 4th parade; August 22 at Lions Club Park -BBQ at 6:30
- Partner Projects
 - 7/21 Reynolds Pass Weed Coop Day
 - 8/16 Madison Valley Ranchlands Weed Feed
 - 8/10 tour on Wall Creek

- 8/12 Land Reliance and Weed Committee bio-control workshop
- Connie Keeler asked about high arsenic level found in Blaine Springs. Sunni said several creeks have it, so she always tells people to test their wells for it

Cornie Hudson:

- Most work focused in Beaverhead county
- Will start on Blacktail 7/25
- MT Wilderness Association has a crew working on CDT. Because of new ownership at sheep station, going into 3rd-party agreement to maintain BLM
- 8/3 is second spray day on Bear Trap
- Ruby Reservoir
 - County holding off on appraisal for now
 - Jim Hart asked what kind of appraisal will be done. Cornie said a regular property appraisal, the Yellow Book appraisal is only if BLM is involved. Have submitted land-water conservation fund request for 2017 to outright purchase the 8.11 acres.
 - For Sale signs are up. If someone buys parcels, there would still be public access. Don't have willing landowner to purchase on behalf of BLM but lots of interest; would take 6-7 years to do land exchange if someone bought it to help BLM.
- Revenue Flats pretty much the same. Working with mountain bikers; decision should be out this winter/early spring
- Filling Dave Early's position
- Ellen Dougherty (Resource Assistant) retired
- Chris Nemeth (Engineer) at Dillon Field Office retired after 35 years

Dustin Tetrault:

- CFS Cost Share Program has 6 new projects
- More interest in Mammoth Area but almost out of funds
- Will be applying to DNRC to get county-wide cost share refunded
- Doing extension on pre-disaster mitigation plan
- Obtained a FEMA-backed grant for Sheridan School to install digital sign that can be accessed for emergency notifications through a computer program
- HazMat plan in county to be finished in fall
- DNRC/Big Sky project- thinning on Jack Creek upwards from mile 7
- Virginia City/Nevada City fuel breaks
- Dave Cook from DLI coming to talk about the WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) building code that was adopted by State and is up for local adoption
- Took part in Hebgen Dam exercise
- Updating Resource Manual
- County implemented Mass Notification software for cell phones
- Went through FEMA training along with Sheriff Roger Thompson & Communications Director Lynda Holt
- Have done many Pre-Construction Safety Reviews with Planning Department
- Elected Officials Training last week
- Incident Command Structures Training coming up. Various levels; anyone can attend

- Public Information Officer
 - NWS coming in September to do PIO/Social Media training
 - Bonnie O'Neill named new PIO
- Working with David Stout on dry hydrant relocation options
- IC Action Plan completed for Moods on the Madison & was sent yesterday
- Responses to earthquakes, fires, tornadoes, and funnel clouds in past 7 months
- Working with elected officials on Evacuation Plans for towns

Rebecca Ramsey:

- Restoration Projects Coordinator David Stout is working on various projects, including
 - Ramshorn Creek contract
 - National Drought Resiliency Demonstration Project
 - Working with Kris on Ruby Drought Resiliency Plan
 - About to take over weed program
 - California Creek assessment
- Contractors working Upper Ruby Weed Management Cooperative
- Received authorization for \$28,000 from RAC proposal. Will do first bug release for weed management this year, up Warm Springs where knapweed patch is
- Alder Gulch Phase I Improvement Project (kid's pond/horseshoe pond embankments in Virginia City) -culverts in & work continues; should be completed by end of summer
- Upper Missouri Flood Hazard Mapping- digitization of bank & center lines done on Beaverhead and Jefferson. Madison digitization close to being done. The problem is getting meeting dates for everyone. Possible meeting scheduled for Monday regarding strategy
- Virginia City source water protection: Haven't gotten update from MT Bureau of Mines & Geology. July or August they may start information gathering
- Working with Wildlife Conservation Society Community Partnerships Program
- Just completed most recent Wildlife Speaker Series program with 65 people showing up. Next is Moose on 7/21 in Dillon
- Working on Carcass Composting Program. Dale Smail considering being Site Manager and hosting site on his property. Will reconvene with Dale in an of couple weeks
- Strategic Partnership
 - There are four agreed Interest Statements: quiet recreation for all, mixed use, grazing, and habitat issues (wildlife & livestock)
 - Field tour scheduled 7/20 at Alder Community Center for the involved organizations. Landscape being discussed is the greater Ruby Valley area
- Save the Dates
 - 11th Annual Welcome to the Neighborhood Party- Theme was beekeeping & honey commerce
 - 1st Bear Education Program is on 9/1
 - 12th Annual Kids River Resource Day- 9/15 at Silver Springs Ranch in Twin Bridges

Patrick Webb:

- Works six counties as Field Representative for Senator Daines
- Spenser Merwin (Missoula) handles forest management issues

- Forest reform is one of Senator Daines number one issues, especially to bring more forest jobs to increase forest management
- Working on bipartisan consensus for solutions to protect projects from litigation
- Currently Senate and House are in negotiations over forest reform
- Looked at Pole Fire remnants and learned what goes into fighting fires
- Last week, named volunteer Tom Kuntz as the Montanan of the Week
- Alex Diekmann Peak in Madison County was officially named

Tim Egan:

- Hired 6 firefighters end of May
- Fire crew has been helping in Helena, Miles City, Billings, and a few mutual aid fires in Beaverhead County
- Mike Atwood (Dillon Unit Forester) accepted position in Helena as Real Estate Management Bureau Chief. Need to fill his position ASAP
- Six active timber sales; six more lined up
- Scoping process started for Environmental Assessment for the SRI Land Exchange proposal. Lots of public interest, both for and against it. State feels it's a good exchange.
- Several Douglas Fir encroachment removal requests on state land in conjunction with private land. Two requests are looking for grant money from Sage Grouse Conservation program.
- The County is helping with weed spraying
- Working on fencing requests, new water developments
- Chuck Maddox (Land Use Specialist) doing range renewals in Rob-Ledford & Blacktail WMAs
- Redoing EAs for Gravel permits and core Sage Grouse habitat areas

Ron Nye:

- New Senior Center: First meal served 6/8. Still have some construction loose ends
- Two riprap projects completed ahead of high water season
- Pennington went well; landowner happy
- High Road Bridge project had some whirlpool action but new engineering is fabulous
- Boat ramp at same bridge- Skyline Sportsmen group came. Project came together well
- Children's Center- had to change directions. About to submit grant
- Fairground planning grant submitted. Currently not enough space for vendors to exhibit
- Rebecca asked about the concept for the Children's Center. Ron said they are trying to get water/sewer redone to make it marketable. Dave Schulz said Bozeman contractor working with landowner to market property but water/sewer is the issue. Landowner Leslie Adams is very supportive of efforts
- Sunni asked what TSEP is funded by. Jim Hart said it's funded by Treasure State Endowment, which is partially coal tax fund & used for a number of bridges and water/sewer infrastructure around the county
- Discussion about the effects of coal tax fund receipts being down

Jim Hart:

- Moore Creek project going slowly. Have 3 bridge/culverts replaced of the 8 total. Project end date moved from beginning of July to September

- In District 3, one consistent project is helping town with magnesium chloride. We do grading and they do mag chloride application
- On collaborative working group called Custer-Gallatin Working Group as Vice Chair. Number of projects being considered including North Hebgen project to thin, clear cut
- Also involved with Custer-Gallatin Forest Plan overview; four-year project
- Helps with MACo Health and Human Services, specifically in Madison county with mental health issues. Works with the Sheriff's Department & Madison County Mental Health Advisory Council
- Blaine Spring project going quite well; is almost done. Ongoing since 1995
- Will probably start Varney project in 2017/2018. \$750,000 set aside from TSEP
- TIF/TEDD (Tax increment financing/Targeted economic development district) still in learning stage. Big Sky still interested in pursuing.

Gordon Ash:

- Gallatin-Custer Forest Plan revision does include update on Lee Metcalf Wilderness Plan
- Winter update
 - Mt Jefferson had outstanding program this year
 - Snowmobile industry groups: trends for intrusions on Mt Jefferson were increasing significantly. Through cost share agreement with Freemont county, had a couple of snow rangers on the ground for illegal activity
- Seeking additional grant money
- Losing both rangers
- Working with sheep station on coordinated activities
- OHV grant proposal goes to State by end of week; looking for support letters
- Bear Creek Days had over 400 kids from 5th-8th grades and one 3rd grade class. Had lots of partners
- Lost LEO. Have LEO in Dillon and another in Butte covering all of SW Montana. Much of responsibility for that area falling on Rec program
- Have had 14-15 events with over 3,000 kids & adults at OHV/Bear Aware activities
- NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) activities
 - Kevin Suzuki is lead on South Gravellies allotment management plan. Getting information to Kevin so he can complete draft
 - Annual tree roadside mitigation as part of the Farm Bill
- Fisheries/Hydrology
 - Monitoring Ramshorn
 - Grayling restoration
- Other aquatic improvements/protection
 - Sureshot Ditch blasting project
 - Potosi Campground- culvert; road improvements with County; historical diversion ditch sucking water from South Willow so trying to put in appropriate head gate to keep most water in creek
 - Crockett Lake improvements
- Fire
 - Pole Fire and Fine Fires
 - Thinned 80 acres of meadow for suppression

- Had 60 people, one 20-man Hotshot crew from Bitterroot, smoke jumper crew, and two engines
 - Local restaurants/businesses provided meals
 - Two other minimal starts on District
- Rec Program is utilizing Americorps, MT Conservation Corp, and our Forest Service Crew through grant applications
- Through RAC program, over \$30,000 has gone to Americorps
- Received Wilderness Stewardship Grant
- Weeds
 - Over 200 acres have application on. Starting at Vigilante, Warm Springs, and working their way up
 - Weed Program received RAC grant for toadflax

Patrick Webb:

- Interjected with real-time phone update on Land/Water Conservation Fund: Senate passed energy bill HR2647 that included LWCF drought provisions

Ann Schwend:

- Passed out brochure on National Drought Resilience Partnership
 - Demo on upper Missouri Basin is now focused to Headwaters Basin. It's the only national demo program
 - Working on this for 2 years to help with 8 watersheds of Headwaters Basin. Split Gallatin into Upper Gallatin and Lower Gallatin because they're very different
- Bringing in money for drought planning. One person in each watershed agreed to be a drought coordinator. Ready for Phase 2. Wants coordinators to engage communities, agencies
- Received Water Contingency Planning Grant of \$20,000
- Land Management affects drought resilience planning
- Want to have Drought Response Plan for each watershed for emergencies. Will be approximate 2-year process
- Gallatin River Task Force has started Big Sky Sustainable Solutions Forum
- National Drought Resiliency Partnership
 - Headwaters Demo getting national attention
 - People from DC are coming to do Watershed Tour the week of 10/17
- Will begin sending out monthly water supply reports

Kris Inman:

- WCS changes
 - Last winter's Reduction in Work Force was global.
 - New VP for North America is Julie Kunen, based in New York City & District of Columbia
 - In midst of strategic planning process to add to what others do and not compete
- Working on
 - Water drives everything
 - Habitat's important
 - the human footprint is expanding
- Community Partnerships Program

- Conflict resolution
- Engaging communities in conservation process
- Habitat restoration
- Bear Smart Big Sky program: 1 sub-adult grizzly seen there “doing what it’s supposed to do”
- Since 2013, grizzly-proof trash container use went from 10-20% to 60-70%
- Human Wildlife Conflict Resolution program
 - Getting funding for wildlife-friendly fencing
 - 2 miles of fencing replaced at Goggins
- Had work Day that Madison River Foundation helped on Granger ranch
- Planning workdays to target/remove old subdivision fencing
- Carcass Management Program ongoing. Building compost site sometime in September. During pilot season spring before last, 30 livestock picked up
- Bird walks in Dillon continuing
- Habitat restoration work
 - Sabo Ranch with Conservation District, FWP, DNRC, NRCS, and others
 - Assessing areas to record where it’s worked and where it hasn’t

Charity Fechter:

- Groundwater Investigation Program was to cover the entire Madison, but area too large. Working to reduce that. Conservation District also involved. Area is the interface between the alluvial fan and the fractured rock area as you hit the mountain- that’s where water problems are. Waiting to hear back on it. Probably a 2-year project
- Flood plain regulations: Hope to have them completed and adopted by end of year
- Big Sky area
 - Where most of our development is
 - Issues with affordable housing/workforce housing
 - Charity is on Trust Montana Board (a Land Trust)
 - Big Sky forming the Housing Land Trust
 - Person in Bitterroot putting farm in Trust in perpetuity
- Western Planner Conference in Great Falls will have one day on Community Planning on Wildland Urban Interface fire training for people who look at subdivisions
- Ennis-Big Sky Airport Air Fair this weekend

Jim Hart:

- \$1.8 million Taxiway tarmac improvement done per FAA due to speed and weight of aircraft
Another project later for south tarmac/parking area
- Madison Valley Manor remodel done

Matt Arno:

- Represents counties at State & Federal levels
- Has met with 17 county commissioners so far
- Regular interagency meetings keep Commissioners/counties way ahead. They have better communication and get more work done on the ground
- Pushing Farm Bill CES

- Have some Forests in Focus funding through the State

Connie Keeler:

- Wetland on schedule. Using pumps to fill cells
- Paperwork for purchase will be done by 9/1 deadline
- MT State hosting International Conference on Wetlands
- 3 YCCs are here through August; looking for programs for them
- Due to flood in White Sulphur Springs, WV, their 7 million egg commitment has shifted to Ennis for three years. This adds to the existing 16 million egg commitment in Ennis

Dave Schulz:

- Big Sky Sustainable Solutions
 - Madison County put in \$49,822 which matched what Gallatin County put in
- Reviewed RAC projects for Title II funding for this year. \$285,000 available between 3 counties that currently participate
- Per Gordon, RAC funded many interesting projects. RAC represents many diverse people
- Projects
 - South Boulder Rd stalled out; got \$20,000 that was originally for South Boulder to match \$20,000 for Mill Creek
 - Mill Creek project went from Guest Ranch to the forest gate on the county road with 18-20 ft wide road to help with disbursement of vehicles
 - Hired contractor and have 200 yards of gravel (100 stockpiled) to get up to Smuggler Reservoir approximately
 - District 1 tries to minimize magnesium chloride, but still in use at 50% applied rate
 - This year went from end of pavement above Ruby Dam to Warm Springs/Tate place
- Winding down preliminary budget work. Cannot finalize until mil rates are received from State in August.
- Closing out Administrative Building construction project in next couple of weeks
- Courthouse project starting soon; elevator, safety, possible air conditioning. \$600,000-\$700,000 budget probably not enough.
- Stone Creek- got cited for mine area roadwork/talc trucks. Meeting held to discuss learning curve, mistakes, & how to correct issues.
- Bought building on Main Street in Sheridan. Originally built for Forest Service. When they moved out, NRCS/SCS moved in. Forest Service moved in again. Search & Rescue is owner but Madison County funded the purchase, so they are repaying Madison County
- \$4 million upgrade to Twin Bridges airport done. Have been waiting for 8 years to get weather approach instruments for emergencies and recreation. FAA has been the holdup

Rebecca Ramsey:

- DEQ Abandoned Mines Program is hosting an Abandoned Mines Conference in Bozeman. Some attendees will be coming to Virginia City. Commissioners will receive an email reminder

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:17

Minutes prepared by Terri Stubbs, Fill-in Clerk