

Southwest Montana Resource Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

June 24, 2016

RAC Members in
Attendance:

Dave Schulz
Mark Thompson
Joe Helle
Carellen Nix
Don Darling
Steve Primm
Joe Bettinger
Richaroad Stem
Liz Jones
Carolyn Lewis
Brent Mabbott

Breck Hudson, RAC Cooroadinator

Melany Glossa, Designated Federal Official

Guests/Presenters in
Attendance:

Katie Tacket, Beaverhead Watershed Committee
Jim Brammer, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Jason McClure, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Amber Burch, Beaverhead County
Jack Eddie, Beaverhead County
Shannon Freix, Montana Wilderness Association
Russ Riebe, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, call-in
Margie Edsall, Madison County
Jake Stewart, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Diane Hutton, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, call-in
Jessica Dhaemers, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, call-in
Goroadon Ash, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Dale Olson, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Rebecca Ramsey, Ruby Valley Conservation District
Scot Shuler, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Patrick Webb, US Senator Daines' Office
Jeremy Carpenter, Congressman Zinke's Office
Mike McGinnley, Beaverhead County Commissioner
Sharon Sawyer, Forest Service Grants & Agreements
Emma Spurlock, Forest Service Grants & Agreements
Dori McLaughlin, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Budget Officer

I. Introduction and Program Information

Introduction of RAC members. The committee voted Dave Schulz as chair for 2016.

Breck presented a late project that came in. It is one that was funded in previous years and has been successful in weed management. Two members voted against accepting late project and it was decided to hear the proposal and make a decision after all presentations.

Highlights of previously funded projects that are currently in progress.

Melany Glossa, Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Supervisor – Thank you members. We are always looking for members. Asked board members if they have documentation of their term to please send to RAC coordinator. Assistance with recruiting board members is appreciated. Forest priority is access to working landscapes such as bridges and roads. Discussed longevity of terms, Dave Schulz may be in end of term, will look into. Breck suggested possibility of meeting 2017 RAC in September and funding it in the blind. Dave Schulz suggested that the RAC meet to evaluate project success. McGinley requested that this RAC put together a letter to the congressionals to ask to get the SRS reauthorized. Melany suggested that we come up with photographs of before and after. Patrick Webb, senator Daines office advised that local support is always helpful.

Overview of Title II program and funding: Breck provided a background on how funds are calculated, what funds were available and what is appropriate use of Title II funds.

Funding currently available for allocation is \$252,956.

II. Discussion

Budget Summary

Breck provided the Budget Summary.

Review of Secure Rural Schools Funding

Breck provided breakdown of SRS funds that came down.

Discussion of process of SRS funding. Suggestion by presenter to show title 2 and title 3 funds.

III. Project Proposals

The committee agreed to hear all presentations in full before any discussion of recommendations.

Blacktail Ridge and Dyce Creek Weed Management presented by Katie Tacket, Beaverhead Watershed Committee. Requested two years of funding for weed spraying along public easement of Blacktail Ridge and Dyce Creek drainage. This road is heavily used for public access into the Blacktail range. The current grant runs out this year. Past efforts have been successful. It is hard to gage if treating less acres but do know that they are covering more land in monitoring. Funds will be used for a local contract in the summer. \$6,000 in other contributions are from noxious weed trust fund and county match.

Jefferson Road Stream Crossing Enhancement Projects presented by Dale Olson, Forest Service. Discussed eligibility in Jefferson County. This is the 3^{road} year Jefferson County has not had funding. There are three motorized crossings that need work that they are looking to fund. All three crossing

have West Sloap Cutthroat. The remote area requires that culverts be flown in. Two crossings are near the Whitetail reservoir and the other is the Beaver Creek Crossing. Dale reviewed pictures in proposal. Whitetail arm crossing project is to harden the crossing. Halfway stream crossing project is to replace culvert and harden crossing. Both are FS roads. Beaver Creek ATV crossing needs armoring and recontouring to solidify crossing.

Potosi Camp Ground Culvert Replacement and Road Improvement Project presented by Dale Olson, Forest Service. This project is in Maddison County. Potosi campground is up South Willow Creek and each spring the water from the stream comes up over the road. There are two crossings that need work. The pipes cannot handle the high flow in the spring and the flooding washes away road each year so each year they add gravel to maintain access to campground. This is urgent as this is an issue every year and every other year the district has to fix it. This is a very highly used, recreated, visited area. If not fully funded we will take either ford or pipe but pipe would be priority. The cost of two for two pipes is \$4,671.

Argenta Noxious Weed Project presented by Amber Burch, Beaverhead County. Presented Noxious weed identifying guide put out by the Weed Control Association. Background of Argenta area given. Three spray days where noxious weeds are treated on private, FS and BLM lands take place each year by the request of the landowners. Spotted Knapweed is the most prevalent noxious weed in Argenta. Amber spoke to priority levels of weeds. Argenta has had a lot of mining activity which has increased need for treatment. Contributions include funds from the Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant and land owner involvement. The request is for treating approximately 40 acres through spot treatment. Plan to award contract in May of 2017 and treatment would take place in summer of 2017. This is a new project that continues efforts of landowners using trust fund and expands the land base. If partially funded the county will take as much as is given.

Quartz Hill and Triangle Gulch Noxious Weed Project presented by Amber Burch, Beaverhead County. Quartz Hill is in the Wise River area just past Dewey. The county has worked very closely with the landowners in the Wise River area. Multiple spray day with up to 50 participants take place each year with close to 100 participants on the Quartz Hill Spray Day. Annual Weed Wacker Ball is the second Saturday in Sept in Wise River where significant funds are raised for noxious weed control. This is a highly recreated area. Plants of concern in that area are Yellow Toad Flax and Oxeye Daisy. The request for funding is to hire commercial applicator.

Lemhi to Bloody Dick Noxious Weed Project presented by Amber Burch, Beaverhead County. Last year RAC funded Sellway Reservoir Lake project. This project covers ground south of that area and may cover some of the Bloody Dick road. This project is important because there is potential of invasion of new invaders from Idaho over the top. Having contractor in that area allows them for monitoring and treatment. The county will match 50/50.

North Bighole Valley Noxious Weed Project presented by Amber Burch, Beaverhead County. Last year RAC awarded funds to cover county roads leading into FS. This request is to cover north of that area. In 2015 Rush Skeleton Weed was believed to be found at trailhead but not reported until winter which made it difficult to identify. Beaverhead County plant to be in the area the first week of July cooperatively with Ravalli County to identify and plan for treatment. This plant is highest priority to the state. Rush Skeleton Weed Task Force is set up to specifically target this plant across the state. Blue weed is also a concern in the area because it is in Ravalli County. Orange Hock Weed is known to be in that area as well. Asking for funding to cover county roads leading into National Forest System lands.

Birch Creek to Canyon Creek Noxious Weed Project presented by Amber Burch, Beaverhead County. Last year the county proposed this project and it was not funded. This proposal has expanded area into Pioneers into Canyon Creek. Leafy Spurge is in this area and is one of the only areas in the county that has Leafy Spurge. After 3 years without treating it is believed that it cannot be eradicated but rather just contain it and manage it. Request for funding is to hire a contractor with commercial applicator.

Pioneer Scenic Byway Noxious Weed Project presented by Amber Burch, Beaverhead County. This request is for the third year for this project. The first year Wise River applied for project and last year the county put in for funding for the project. The project covers the Pioneer Scenic Byway from Highway 278 to Highway 43 and ties together many projects. The request for funding is to hire a County Weed Crew so needs to be fully funded if it's funded. This is the county's priority project. It was emphasized that Beaverhead County did not put in for road projects because priority of the county is weed treatment.

CDNST Trail Maintenance in Big Hole Area presented by Shannon Freix, Montana Wilderness Association. Overview of the Montana Wilderness Association Trails Program. MWA maintains the northern third of the CDNST trail that runs from Canada to Mexico. Asking for funding for staff time, travel expense and tools. MWA has a great partnership on Wisdom Wise River District. MWA also does advocacy work with congressmen and senators in Washington D.C. every winter. RACs have funded these projects in the past years and is appreciated.

Big Swamp Creek Bridges presented by Russ Riebe, Forest Service. Late last Fall a bridge inventory was done and it was found that the district would have to condemn the bridge on the road going into outlet to Lena Lake and another bridge that crosses Big Swamp Creek that accesses an old cutting unit. Funds requested are to hire contractor for the bridge work. The materials would be hauled in and the bridge would be assembled on site. The priority is the bridge leading to the Lena Lake outlet which would cost \$10,000-\$12,000. Big Swamp Creek Bridge is 25-30 foot span. There is mining exploration interest in the area but no suitable timber base so bridge does not have to be log truck capable. Work would be started in June 2017 and completed in Aug 2017.

Sellway diversions Phase Two presented by Jim Brammer, Forest Service. Sellway Meadows is in the Bloody Dick Area. The Forest Service acquired the property which had been flood irrigated and heavily grazed. The irrigation infrastructure has seven primary diversion points and only two are partially functional. They received \$5,000 from RAC in 2015 for east side work. This year's funding request is primarily for materials and supplies to control the four diversions the west side of the valley. Sellway has incredible diversity of resource opportunities such as Elk management through timber management, sensitive aquatic species recovery, grazing and recreational opportunities as well as others. If partially funded the Forest Service will do the work with what is granted and continue to look for additional partners. They want to be able to manage their legal obligation to permittee.

Moulton to CDT Trail Connection Survey presented by Butte Silverbow Parks and Recreation. Moulton Reservoir Area is North of Butte and is currently not accessible to the public. State of MT has given funds for Remediation of Moulton. The request for funds is to conduct survey of feasibility to construct a trail from the reservoir through county and National Forest System lands to essentially connect to CDT trail. This was once a mining site but could be a recreation site. They have a lot of community involvement if they can get the funding to do so. There are currently no matching funds but BSB PR

believes they could leverage funds if only partially funded. Water and Environmental Technologies would likely do the survey and design work.

Madison District Noxious Weeds - Ground presented by Jake Stewart, Forest Service. Jake explained the geographic areas mostly of forest ground and small portion on state in Bear Creek. Asking for funding for contracting and weeds crews.

Madison District Noxious Weeds – Aerial presented by Jake Stewart, Forest Service. Jake explained the geographic areas. Priority is areas of larger infestations away from water. Focus will be on Yellow toadflax in the wilderness. Next year is the last year they can spray above wilderness under current Regional Forester variance. Priority is Aerial treatment over ground treatment.

ATV Trail Cattle Guards submitted by Megan Dawson, Forest Service. No one in attendance to present.

BDNF AmeriCorps Partnership Project presented by Gordon Ash, Forest Service. Last year AmeriCorps finished almost 4,000 hours of volunteer work across Silverbow, Beaverhead and Maddison Counties. Over 200 miles of trail and infrastructure work such as cabin maintenance, fence replacement and hazardous trees removal were done. This funding request is for the fall. Funding requested goes directly to AmeriCorps for their salaries and staff crew leaders and travel. Projects will be in Beaverhead County, Madison County and Silver Bow County proportionately. Forest Service contribution is over \$50,000 and they are asking for \$59,000. Request by board member to classify funding requested by county not lump sum.

West Pioneers Drainage Structures presented by Russ Riebe and Diane Hutton via phone, Forest Service. The request is for water bar maintenance and construction on the linear road system located in the northwest corner of the West Pioneer Range. The roads are used heavily in the fall by hunters. If Forest Service cannot maintain the water bars the roads wash out and people drive around the washout and causes sediment problems downstream. Cost sharing is only \$4,000 but they understand they could have done a better job of working with the state. Not much of this work could be done with hand tools will probably have to hire a mini excavator to blade and then rehab tracks that were created around. A clarification of the proposal that the breakout should be \$20,000 to contract not salaries.

I-15 Corridor Aerial Spray Contract presented by Jessica Dhaemers via phone, Forest Service. Jessica explained the project area. The primary species targeted is knapweed. This area is identified as sage grouse habitat as well as winter range for ungulates. It is a safety issue to get equipment up to the area so they are looking at other options for treatments. 600 acres to could be treated if fully funded. The district has engaged with county in the past for spray days but they are not contributing funding.

Madison Ranger District Motorized presented by Gordon Ash, Forest Service. This project was presented last year but partial funding did not allow for enough work to be done so district pulled the project. The project includes reestablishing water bars, water drips and taking care of unraveled tread on ATV and motorbike trail that is heavily used spring, summer and fall. Commercial outfitter uses the trail heavily in fall as well as cattle permittees. Survey work will be done by FS personnel prior to contractor work and funds requested would be used to hire a trail contractor.

Blacktail Bridge Replacement presented by Dale Olson, Forest Service. This 40 foot bridge is southeast of Dillon and it accesses FWP Wildlife Refuge, DNRC and BLM campground. This is the main road to the Blacktail area. The bridge is on FWP ground. The bridge inspection this year found the stringers under

the bridge are good for 5 years but the decking on top is compromised. This is a very popular for horn hunting in spring and hunting in fall. A lot of stock crosses the bridge. A temporary fix was done this spring with decking from FWP and will be good for 2 years. The bridge and road are under Forest Service easement but accesses BLM, DNRC and FWP land. FWP is contributing funding. The board suggested that they attempt to get coop funding increased.

Upper Ruby Noxious Weed Cooperative Continuation & Expansion Project presented by Rebecca Ramsey, Ruby Valley Conservation District. This is the 4TH year of upper Ruby Noxious Weed Cooperative. The project was started by a grazing permittee to do cooperative weed spray days. Last year's funding just got contract and applicators are out. This year in addition to weed pulling they'll do an insect release. Margie has gotten trust fund money to work on adjacent private lands. Map of priority areas was presented. Rebecca is working with the grazing associations to educate them to be able to map weeds. This year's project expands work along Warm Springs Creek, Short creek and Cottonwood creek. By treating weeds and improving habitat they're helping wildlife, livestock producers and waterways.

V. RAC Recommendations

General Discussion:

Discussion by the committee of whether to prioritize funding to weeds or infrastructure. A few members gave their opinion on priority. Dave Schulz suggested on behalf of Beaverhead County to consider fully funding SWM-16-5 through SWM-16-10, Don Darling moved and Liz Jones seconded. All members were in favor of fully funding SWM-16-11. Liz Jones moved to fund half of SWM-16-01 Steve Primm seconded. All members were in favor of funding 1 bridge at 10K for project SWM-16-12. Brent Mabbott suggested \$15,000 to SWM-16-13 all in favor. Brent Mabbott moved to allocate \$10,000 Beaverhead, \$10,000 Madison and \$17,000 BSB counties for AmeriCorps for SWM-16-18. Dave Schulz moved \$10,000 to Madison Ranger District Motorized SWM-16-21, \$20,000 to Madison Aerial SWM-16-15 and \$27,000 to Upper Ruby SWM-16-24, all in favor.

Project	Recommended
SWM-16-01 - Blacktail Ridge and Dyce Creek Weed Management	\$6,400
SWM-16-03 - Jefferson Road Stream Crossing Enhancement Projects	The committee decided not to fund the project since it's in Jefferson County
SWM-16-04 - Potosi Camp Ground Culvert Replacement and Road Improvement Project	\$4,671
SWM-16-05 - Argenta Noxious Weed Project	\$10,000
SWM-16-06 - Quartz Hill and Triangle Gulch Noxious Weed Project	\$10,000
SWM-16-07 - Lemhi to Bloody Dick Noxious Weed Project	\$15,000
SWM-16-08 - North Bighole Valley Noxious Weed Project	\$15,000

SWM-16-09 - Birch Creek to Canyon Creek Noxious Weed Project	\$20,000
SWM-16-10 - Pioneer Scenic Byway Noxious Weed Project	\$18,000
SWM-16-11 - CDNST Trail Maintenance in Big Hole Area	\$5,000
SWM-16-12 - Big Swamp Creek Bridges	\$10,000
SWM-16-13 - Selway diversions Phase Two	The committee decided not to fund the project
SWM-16-14 - Moulton to CDT Trail Connection Survey	The committee decided not to fund the project
SWM-16-15 - Madison District Noxious Weeds – Aerial	\$20,000
SWM-16-16 - Madison District Noxious Weeds - Ground	The committee decided not to fund the project
SWM-16-17 - ATV Trail Cattle Guards	The committee decided not to fund the project since there was no presentation
SWM-16-18 - BDNF AmeriCorps Partnership Project	\$17,417 in Butte Silverbow Co. \$10,000 in Beaverhead Co. \$10,000 in Maddison Co.
SWM-16-19 - West Pioneers Drainage Structures	\$10,000
SWM-16-20 - I-15 Corridor Aerial Spray Contract	\$18,577
SWM-16-21 - Madison Ranger District Motorized	\$10,000
SWM-16-22 - Blacktail Bridge Replacement	The committee decided not to fund the project
SWM-16-24 - Upper Ruby Noxious Weed Cooperative Continuation & Expansion Project	\$27,591

Dave Schulz made a motion to recommend. The vote in favor was unanimous. Remaining funds (\$300) were set aside to cover RAC travel expenses.

Next meeting will be in September there will be brief on where projects are for this year. The committee will vote on funding 2017 projects with as estimate of expected funds. If there's savings from 2016 projects that will be discussed as well.