

Southern Montana RAC Meeting Minutes  
June 4, 2020

This meeting was a virtual meeting conducted on Adobe Connect. An incorrect URL had been sent out to RAC members, so a new email with a correct URL was sent out about 20 minutes prior to the meeting start time. There were a few members who had trouble connecting to the conference call line, so the meeting started just a few minutes late.

RAC members that were present were Becky Grey (by phone only), Craig Hash, JV Moody, Bill Brownlee, Susie Mosness, Randy Weimer, John Lowell, Phil Chiaviello, Chuck Rein (by phone only initially, then was also able to join through Adobe Connect), Shantell Martin, and Stan Floyd.

Karen determined that there is a quorum of RAC members for the meeting.

Forest Service personnel present included:

Mary Erickson, CGNF Forest Supervisor and RAC Designated Federal Official

Karen Tuscano, CGNF Budget Analyst and RAC Coordinator

Lin Goettlich, CGNF Budget Officer – helping with spreadsheet

Mariah Leuschen-Lonergan, CGNF Public Affairs – running Adobe Connect for this meeting

Marna Daley, CGNF Public Affairs Officer – helping with Adobe Connect and breakout sessions

Fauzia Massey, CGNF Incident Business Specialist - helping with Adobe Connect and breakout sessions

Ron Hecker – District Ranger on Ashland Ranger District

Mike Thom – District Ranger on Gardiner Ranger District

Ron Hecker spoke to the group for a few minutes. He had learned over the weekend that RAC member Ella Mae Howard from Powder River County had passed away on Saturday. He conveyed to the group how much he appreciated working with Ella Mae on the Ashland District. She was always willing to work with the Forest Service on many different issues, especially weeds and roads.

Mary gave her welcome to the group. Randy also welcomed the group and gave some thanks.

Randy asked if there were any changes need for the meeting minutes from the November 13<sup>th</sup> Orientation meeting. No changes needed. Chuck Rein made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the November 13<sup>th</sup> Orientation meeting. John Lowell seconded the motion. No one opposed the motion. Motion passed.

Lin informed everyone that the current funds available need to be approved for projects by September 30, 2022, and the funds need to be obligated and spent by September 30, 2023. He also went over the amounts available for today's meeting for each county. Craig asked if the money from each county needs to be approved for projects that take place in that county. Mary answered that the RAC members have the discretion to approve funds and projects as they would like. However, it is best to try to use the money in the county since the counties are the ones who choose to have Title 2 (RAC) funds. The RAC can also choose to not assign all funds available to projects. Those funds would then be available the next year or next meeting to approve for projects.

Randy then went over the agenda with everyone.

Karen talked about the process the members will go through today to approve funds for projects. The project submitters will have time to present and then there will be breakout groups for each category to go over how they would like to fund projects. Each Category will need a quorum of members supporting a project. Everyone will then meet back up and work through funding. All categories will have to agree to the funding for each project in order for it to move forward. Randy asked if the RAC needs to approve all funds available. Mary answered that you don't need to approve all funds because they can roll forward to the next approval meeting.

The group decided to not do the breakout session to review projects before presentations due to the meeting being behind schedule.

Karen facilitated the presentations. The five minutes per presentation was held to and presentations finished very close to on-time. Zac Hiedeman was the only presentation that did not occur during presentation time. He was dealing with an emergency, so the Chairman allowed Zac to join breakout sessions after lunch and give his five-minute presentation to each category.

Breakout sessions began after lunch. Karen helped facilitate Category A breakout. Fauzia helped facilitate Category B breakout. Marna helped facilitate Category C breakout.

After the breakout sessions, all members came back to the main meeting. The group started populating the spreadsheet with Category C funding for Stillwater County since there were only 3 projects in Stillwater County and the least amount of funds. Category A gave their funding for those projects, and then Category B did the same. After some discussion, the three categories all came to agreement of funding for those projects. The group then moved on to Sweet Grass County projects, the Park County projects, and then Powder River County projects.

Phil Chiaviello made a motion to fund the projects as reflected in the master spreadsheet. Susie seconded the motion. No one opposed the motion. The motion passed.

The RAC prioritized 1 project in each county to receive more funds if any funds became available due to a project not needed all funds approved at today's meeting. Since all of the Powder River County funds weren't assigned to projects, there was no need for priority ranking. The Jardine Road project was the priority in Park County, the Sheriff's Office project was the priority in Sweet Grass County, and the SVWC weeds project was the priority in Stillwater County.

#### Dakota Prairie Grasslands (DPG) Fee Proposal

Rob Schilling is the recreation program manager on the DPG and has the local knowledge of the fee sites. Jeff Ward is the Regional Recreation Specialist and is helping all units in the region with their fee proposals.

The proposed fee sites on the DPG are all campgrounds. The units where the fees are collected keep 95% of the fees collected and are used on those units. Concessionaire sites are not a part of this proposal.

During the public comment period, there was one person who commented on the proposed fee increases. That person was concerned with the big jump in cost. Jeff talked about the amenities that site has available that the others don't and that is why it will be more expensive.

Phil Chiaviello asked if fee revenue reduces the appropriated funds the unit receives. Jeff answered that it does not affect the appropriated funds received. The fee revenue is used to supplement the unit's program and accomplish any maintenance needed for the sites.

John Lowell asked if having the appropriated dollars received each year plus the fee revenue received cover the cost of the recreation program. Jeff answered no. The new fees would help get units closer to being able to cover all costs. Rob also pointed out that if something expensive happens, like a pump breaking, then they struggle to cover those costs. And that is where the deferred maintenance really piles up.

A RAC member asked for clarification that there has not been a fee increase in 30 years. Jeff answered that there are many places where that is the case, close to that many years.

Phil also noted that he felt the fees are very reasonable.

Phil Chiaviello made a motion to recommend all fee proposals on the DPG as proposed. Shantell Frame-Martin seconded the motion. No one opposed the motion. Motion passes.

Mary thanked the group for the thoughtfulness on taking on this process. She also asked if the members are okay with the Chairman signing the letter for the Regional Forester on behalf of the group. No one was opposed to that.

Mary wanted to set a date for a RAC meeting to go over the Custer Gallatin National Forest fee proposals. She thought that the end of September or early October would be a good time. Karen noted that RAC member Liz Muhs Stone does not have Thursdays nor Fridays available due to work. JV asked if there would be a virtual option to attend if the meeting is in-person. October 6<sup>th</sup> is the date that most people can make.

Craig asked if there are other approvals needed before the projects can be implemented. Karen explained that the RAC made the decisions needed, and her and Lin will start the work to get funds available to project implementers.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45p.m.