

MEETING MINUTES

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| Meeting/ Project Name: | Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Business Meeting | | |
| Date of Meeting: | July 28, 2021 | Time: | 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. |
| Minutes Prepared By: | Jasmine Reimer | Location: | Phillipsburg, MT |
| 1. Meeting Objective | | | |
| Business Meeting and Site Tour | | | |
| 2. Attendees | | | |
| <p>Council Members: Amber Burch, Brian Ostwald, Dana Weatherford, Ron McOwen, Jeff Brennan, Jeanette Nordahl (phone)</p> <p>Agency Representatives: Chris Howard - DNRC; Adam Sieges - FWP; Bob Cloninger - MDT; Dan Lucas - MSU EXT; David Hopkins – BIA (phone); Monica Pokorny – NRCS (phone)</p> <p>Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Ian Foley, Jasmine Reimer, Greta Dige, Andrew Lam (phone)</p> <p>Guests: Ben Hauptman, Jane Mangold, Jason Allen, Mark Schwarzlaender (phone), Kimberly Richardson (phone)</p> | | | |
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| Topic | Discussion | | |
| Welcome Minutes Review/Action Items Department Updates | <p>At 10:00 a.m. Ian Foley, MT Department of Agriculture (MDA) administrator called the meeting to order. Introductions were made and Ian F. thanked everyone for attending and welcomed the new and returning council members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dana Weatherford, Stillwater County Weed District- Livestock Representative • Jeff Brennan, Crop Consultant- Agriculture Crop Production Representative • Karissa Floerchinger, Helena Agri-Enterprises- Herbicide Dealer/Applicator • Kenny Keever, MT Biological Control Project chair- Biological Research & Control Interests Representative • Kellieann Morris, Ravalli County Weed District- Western County Weed District Representative <p>Amber Burch moved to approve the minutes as written. Brian Ostwald seconded the motion.</p> <p>Ian Foley gave a brief department update and noted that Christy Clark is serving as the interim director, as Mike Foster was asked to head up the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) program for the state. Other updates included:</p> <p>HB 93 – Expand materials certified by the department including gravel, mulch, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules have been drafted and are open for public comment until August 6th. A public hearing is being held July 29th. • Questions were brought up about the Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) communication with county weed districts when approving gravel pits. Jasmine Reimer, MDA State Weed Coordinator, explained that HB93 is for a | | |

voluntary certification program and does not involve DEQ, and that she will continue to have conversations with the county weed coordinators and DEQ to assist in a solution. Ian F. encouraged council members to submit any comments regarding gravel pits, including communication with DEQ, to the department.

HJ17 – MT Noxious Weed Awareness Week

- The first official MT Noxious Weed Awareness Week, June 6-12, was a success. The department held an Adopt-A-Trailhead weed pull event in Helena, in which the Lt. Governor Kristen Juras attended and thanked the group for their commitment to fighting noxious weeds.

Drought and Grasshoppers

- Ian reported that Montana’s farmers and ranchers are having difficulty this year with crop quality and available resources for livestock. He reminded the group of the Hay Hotline, a marketplace for hay/straw housed by MDA. He also noted that the director was attending a meeting with MT Stockgrowers, MT Farm Bureau, TN Department of Agriculture, and a hay broker in TN to discuss the issues and potential threats of shipping several hundred thousand tons of hay from Tennessee to Montana. While producers may need to purchase hay outside the state, the department wants to reduce the risk of importing noxious and invasive pests into the state as much as possible.

FRSAN Grant Opportunity (Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network)

- Ian reported that the department has secured a \$500,000 grant from USDA’s FRSAN program to connect individuals engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs. He encouraged any local government or MSU extension office to contact the department if they plan to host an event that includes mental health programing and/or speakers.

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| <p>Site Visits/Grant Monitoring</p> | <p>Greta Dige, Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF) grant coordinator, reported that MDA staff has installed monitoring transects for several new grant projects this summer to beta test Dr. Jane Mangold’s monitoring protocol project in the field. Dr. Mangold and Dr. Lisa Rew, both researchers at MSU, provided two training opportunities early in the season, and with their guidance, permanent monitoring sites have been set up in three Carbon County grants, two Cascade County grants, two Sweetgrass County grants, and four Wheatland County grants.</p> |
| <p>AmpliFund Preview</p> | <p>Greta noted that so far, participation from landowners and grantees has been excellent, and despite a few glitches here and there, the first year of monitoring has been successful.</p> <p>Greta reported that MDA is switching grant software from WebGrants to AmpliFund. All 2022 NWTF applications will be submitted and reviewed in AmpliFund this year, and council members will be taught how to use the new system at the January council meeting in Billings. Greta reviewed some of the changes users will see, and reminded council members to keep notes of any edits they would like to see while reviewing applications in February. She gave a brief demo of what the grant applications will look like in the new system.</p> |
| <p>Noxious Weed Free Materials Program Updates</p> | <p>Andrew Lam, Noxious Weed Free Materials (NWFM) coordinator, reported on changes coming to the program once rules for HB93 are published. He noted the intent of the program is to certify more materials due to the increasing demand and to diversify the market in MT. Andrew L. mentioned that all feedback about the program has been positive, and producers and owners are already requesting certification. Missoula County Weed District has certified one gravel pit using the regional certification guidelines. This pit will be the site for the North American Invasive Species Management Association’s (NAISMA) annual conference field trip in September.</p> <p>Andrew noted that severe drought and grasshoppers has led to staggering hay/straw prices and low reserve across the state. MDA, along with MSU Extension, Montana Weed Control Association, Montana Noxious Weed Education Campaign, Montana Invasive Species Council, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, US Forest Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service agency is teaming up to launch an education campaign addressing farmers and ranchers that may be purchasing hay/straw from outside their county or the state. Educational materials will be distributed in the following weeks. Andrew L. noted that there is a regional certification program for forage, and the identification markers are purple and yellow.</p> <p>Questions were asked about Montana Department of Transportation’s (MDT) plan to require certified materials, and Bob Cloninger said it was an option for the agency,</p> |

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| | <p>but further discussions are needed before any requirements are put into place. Discussion continued, and the group encouraged MDT to pursue this issue further and noted that when more agencies or groups require the use of certified materials, the cost of maintenance is reduced and there is a monetary incentive for producers and owners to have clean yards and pits.</p> |
| <p>Agricultural Experiment Station / Extension Overview</p> | <p>Dan Lucas, Western Region department head for MSU Extension, provided a written report of Montana State University Extension Service and the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station activities to the council. The finalized report can be found on the MDA website and the MSU site.</p> <p>Dan acknowledged the continued collaboration between MSU Extension and MDA, like the FR SAN grant, and noted how essential the partnership is to local offices and for researchers to continue working on Montana specific issues. He thanked the council for supporting MSU grant projects, because even at 13% of the available funding, it allows researchers to leverage the funds for other grant opportunities.</p> <p>Dan noted how important monitoring was to invasive plant management and is glad to see it being used for grant projects. He talked about a partnership between MSU and MDA back in 2020 to install monitoring plots for the Blackfoot Challenge. Returning many years later, they can see a significant decrease in the spotted knapweed infestation size, but it now opens new questions to be researched and management decisions to be analyzed.</p> <p>A question was asked to why there is not more monitoring and revegetation done in Montana. Dan L. noted that it takes a mind shift and philosophy change, and even sometimes a generational change. He mentioned that there has been more and more research and work done regarding this issue recently, and that revegetation success relies on many factors including soils, type of seeds, moisture, fertilization and nutrients, time, labor, cost, and priorities.</p> |
| <p>Rush Skeletonweed Biocontrol Project Update</p> | <p>Mark Schwarzlaender, University of Idaho researcher, presented his work with <i>Sphenoptera foveola</i>, a root boring biocontrol agent for rush skeletonweed. The goal of the project was to travel abroad to collect several mating pairs of the beetle from Kazakhstan, bring them to the quarantine lab at the University of Idaho, build rearing capabilities, and test them on three genotypes of skeletonweed. Due to Covid-19 restrictions worldwide, unfortunately most of the work is delayed until May of 2022. Mark noted that they were able to complete one objective and sent three genotypes to Russia so they can be tested there instead of in Idaho. No funding from the grant has been spent on this project to date, and he is expecting to apply for an extension.</p> |
| <p>Monitoring Protocol Project Update</p> | <p>Dr. Jane Mangold presented on the progress of the grant she co-wrote with Dr. Lisa Rew on producing monitoring protocols for the state. The first six to nine months of this project entailed researching all the existing protocols, collecting needs and requirements of several state groups that monitor for invasive plants, and producing draft protocols that consist of four skill/outcome levels. Dr. Mangold and Dr. Rew presented the draft protocols to a small group of agency and community members in June, and during the beta testing received lots of useful feedback. Currently the protocols are being tested on several NWTF grants, and a “final” version is being drafted. The goal of this project is to create a standard set of protocols that everyone who is monitoring can use no matter what their skill level or desired level of</p> |

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| | complexity is. Dr. Mangold noted that monitoring pre-treatment, post-treatment and/or a reference site will give managers quantitative data that they can use to adapt management strategies to achieve short-, mid- and long-term goals. | | | |
| Project Tour Schedule | <p>Ben Hauptman, Granite County Weed District/MSU Extension, gave an overview of the project the council would be touring in the afternoon. He showed a map of the three grant projects and briefly discussed the issues and actions taken by each of the project areas.</p> <p>After the meeting adjourned, most council members attended the tour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site #1: Rock Creek Grant where the council learned more about how to implement Dr. Mangold’s monitoring protocols in the field. The council set up there transects and spent some time reading frames and collecting data from the site. • Site #2: Upper Valley Grant and Site #3: Middle Fork Grant where the council viewed expansive spotted knapweed infestations and locations where both aerial and ground spraying has and will continue to take place. • Site #4: Houndstongue biocontrol monitoring plots; Melissa Maggio, MT Biocontrol Coordination Project coordinator, discussed what she had been witnessing in her monitoring plots and movement of the agent through the state, and how to identify suspect plants for <i>Mogulones crucifer</i> damage. She noted the issues with regulating the species in the U.S., and what the next steps are in the monitoring project. | | | |
| Other Business/ Public Comment | Ian F. asked for other business and public comment, none was heard. | | | |
| Adjourn | Jeff Brennan moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:15 p.m. Brian Ostwald seconded the motion. | | | |
| 4. Action Items | | | | |
| | Action | Assigned | Due Date | Status |
| 1 | Send business meeting agenda items to Jasmine or Greta | Council members | Jan 15th, 2022 | |
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