

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name:	Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Meeting		
Date of Meeting:	June 25, 2015	Time:	10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Minutes Prepared By:	Jasmine Reimer	Location:	Montana Wild, Helena

1. Meeting Objective

Business Meeting

2. Attendees

Council Members: Ron de Yong, Jim Gordon, Jennifer Vermillion, Jack Eddie, Todd Wagner, Doug Dupuis, Kellieann Morris (phone)

Agency Representatives: Mike Miller, Floyd Thompson, John Cook, Tracy Sterling (phone)

Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Donna Rise, Dave Burch, Carol Bearden, Jasmine Reimer

Meeting Guests: Shantell Frame-Martin, Todd Neel

3. Agenda and Notes, Decisions, Issues

Topic	Discussion
Welcome & Introductions	Ron de Yong called the meeting to order and introductions were made.
Review Minutes	The minutes from the March 2 – 6, 2015 meeting and grant hearings were reviewed. Jack Eddie moved to approve the minutes as written. Jim Gordon seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

<p>Legislation Update</p>	<p>Donna Rise discussed the outcome of the 2015 Legislative Session. HB108 which revised Montana Department of Agriculture's (MDA) noxious weed budget laws to calculate non-grant expenditures at 12% of the previous year's grant awards. The bill was passed and effective upon approval.</p> <p>HB109 allowed MDA to provide third party official plant sampling services. The bill passed and will be effective October 1, 2015.</p> <p>HB167 revised the rate of non-resident use permits for off-road vehicles from \$5 to \$27. It was amended to give Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) \$1.50 of the fees to be used for mitigation and eradication of noxious weeds along off-highway vehicle trails. The bill was passed and will be effective October 1, 2015.</p> <p>HB329 appropriated \$15,000 to Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) to start an interagency weed abatement project. The bill did not pass.</p> <p>HB525 established the framework for an aquatic invasive species trust fund with no appropriated funding but allowed DNRC to fundraise and accept donations. The bill passed and will be effective July 1, 2015.</p> <p>HB553 allowed other entities to operate aquatic invasive species (AIS) check stations with FWP retaining oversight authority. Department of Transportation (DOT) facilities and ports of entries would be used to the extent possible and peace officers would</p>
	<p>have authority to enforce AIS laws. The bill passed and will be effective October 1, 2015.</p> <p>HB2 appropriated a one-time-only fund of \$127,491 in FY16 and \$127,558 in FY17 through the Environmental Quality Protection Fund to MDA for statewide noxious weed coordination. The bill passed with the expectation that MDA will fund this position beginning in FY18 with a fee adjustment in the Pesticide Act. The bill will be effective July 1, 2015.</p> <p>Donna noted that MDA will be working on legislation regarding the Pesticide Act in the next several months in order to have a proposal ready in the spring of 2016. The department will be looking at revising the pesticide product registration and licensing fee structure. Jim Gordon agreed that a modest increase in product registration fees would benefit the department and keep important products in Montana's niche markets. John Cook suggested using a tiered fee structure to ensure small companies, or companies with products used for special local needs, will still have the ability to sell in Montana. Ron de Yong suggested that a pesticide fee adjustment discussion be planned and include Jim Gordon, Krista Lee Evans and a Dow Agroscience representative.</p> <p>Donna announced that Dave Burch has been hired as the new statewide noxious weed coordinator starting July 1, 2015. The department will be hiring a noxious weed grant coordinator to fill the vacant position, with a start date no later than September 1, 2015. The grant coordinator position announcement will be forwarded to the council.</p>

<p>Budget/ Noxious Weed Program Update</p>	<p>Donna Rise discussed the revision to Montana’s noxious weed list. The priorities of three currently listed weeds, Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush and hoary alyssum were changed. Eurasian watermilfoil and flowering rush were moved from priority 2B to 2A and hoary alyssum was moved from priority 2A to 2B.</p> <p>Common reed was added to the noxious weed list as a priority 1A, and two new regulated plants, Brazilian waterweed and parrot feather watermilfoil, were added to the listing. A public hearing was held June 23, 2015. The public comment period ends June 30, 2015.</p> <p>Donna discussed the Administrative Rule changes for the noxious weed seed free forage (NWSFF) program. Current twine and tag fees have been put into rule, label fees for in-state grain concentrates, pellets and cubes made with certified materials were reduced and the fees for bulk pellets and grain were established along with the use of security tags for the transportation of bulk loads.</p> <p>The public hearing is scheduled for July 16, 2015; public comment period ends July 23, 2015.</p> <p>Dave Burch commented that with the continued support from the U.S. Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) along with Kim Antonick’s hard work, the NWSFF program is growing and moving towards self-sufficiency.</p> <p>Dave briefly discussed the noxious weed program budget. He stated that revenue has been holding steady but may be slightly down in FY16. An estimate of \$1,489,607 is expected to be available for grants in FY16, as well as any unspent funds.</p>
	<p>Dave explained that the noxious weed trust fund (NWTF) revenue is down due to the money being invested in long-term bonds. He noted that there were no Spring 2015 emergency awards and all of the money available in March has been awarded. Dave asked the council to set aside \$150,000 (\$75,000 from the NWTF and \$75,000 from FS) for emergency awards. Todd Wagner moved to approve the motion, Doug Dupuis seconded. Motion passed unanimously.</p>

<p>Advisory Council Discussion</p>	<p>Ron de Yong discussed the dissolution of the Noxious Weed Summit Advisory Council in response to the creation of the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC). Ron suggested that during the January and June meetings, this council discuss topics or gaps they would like to bring to MISAC's attention.</p> <p>Ron suggested creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MDA and the Idaho Department of Agriculture for the research of biocontrol agents for rush skeletonweed in hopes of preventing the spread into Montana. Todd Neel suggested possibly involving Washington State due to their recent work with biocontrol agents. Doug Dupuis commented that not only is there work to be done with biocontrol, but it is also important to encourage companies to amend product labels to allow preventative applications. Dave Burch suggested creating a similar MOA between MDA and the Utah Department of Agriculture for dyer's woad after two new infestations were recently found in Montana.</p> <p>Other topics discussed included securing funding for the aquatic invasive species trust fund, determining which agency or department is going to fund and do the research for aquatic weeds and determining who is responsible for dealing with species that could be both terrestrial and aquatic. In addition, making sure that there are no gaps due to moved check stations that allow the transport of invasive species and creating a state invasive species list and determining how to prioritize the different species were discussed. Dave Burch asked the council members to email or call him with any gaps they foresee and noted that MISAC is conducting a gap analysis which will be reviewed and prioritized by an independent third party.</p> <p>Ron discussed U.S. HB1485, the Healthy Habitats bill, which aims to increase the amount of federal money that goes to states for "on-the-ground" weed control, and suggested that MISAC discuss the bill with the governor and encourage his support. Floyd Thompson and Todd Neel offered comments and concerns about the bill; they agreed that further information was needed before they could fully comment.</p> <p>John Cook asked for help getting his staff trained in writing environmental assessments (EA) so they can bring forth well written proposals in FY16.</p>
<p>Grant Application Changes and Updates</p>	<p>Ron de Yong discussed board member appointments. He has given the list to the Governor and is waiting to hear back. Member appointments are expected to be finalized in July, 2015.</p> <p>Dave Burch discussed the changes being made to the WebGrants system. The budget and herbicide sheets will be simplified; a line item for the percentage of landowner participation will be added and the automated pricing of herbicides will be adjusted.</p> <p>The deadline for submitting 2016 grant proposals is December 1, 2015. NWTF grant hearings will be held in Helena at the Wingate February 29 – March 4, 2016.</p>

<p>Noxious Weed Education Campaign Update</p>	<p>Shantell Frame-Martin discussed the progress of the Adopt a Trailhead campaign. An MOU has been completed between MDA and FS; an MOU with BLM is being reviewed. Shantell showed the council a sample of the prospective boot-brush station design with kiosk signage. The campaign will have two pilot projects, one with BLM possibly on the Continental Divide Trail and one with FS in the Lolo National Forest.</p> <p>Shantell gave an update on the five billboards that were placed across Montana June 1, 2015 and noted that since then, Facebook and website activity has increased substantially. Along with the billboards, Shantell mentioned she was working on a web-based training module for realtors so they will be educated on noxious weeds and be able to receive education credits. She is also in the process of creating a series of commercials to be aired next year.</p> <p>Ron de Yong discussed creating an MOU between Montana State University (MSU) and MDA for information exchange, to limit repetitiveness in creating educational materials, and to explore more ways to get information and publications to the public. Shantell suggested creating a statewide newsletter.</p>
<p>Noxious Weed Trust Fund Program Update</p>	<p>Carol Bearden discussed the upcoming changes in the noxious weed program including changing the budget and herbicide forms in WebGrants, providing resources for completing EAs, increasing site visits, adding more resources for using WebGrants on MDA's website and the WebGrants training for new weed coordinators through the Montana Weed Control Association on November 5, 2015.</p> <p>Carol reviewed trends in grant application submittals, awards by project type and grant funding for the last three years. She listed several goals that the noxious weed program hopes to attain in the next year including hiring a grant coordinator, increasing participation on task forces and updating county and agency two-year management plans. Carol noted that they will be creating a biennial weed report which details how much money is going towards weed control on land owned by State agencies. MDA staff will also address the Idaho/Montana border weed issue by looking at different modes of entry; trucks, rail and gas/electric companies.</p> <p>Other projects on the weed staff agenda include working on the sage grouse habitat concern, starting the revegetation included in the Conservation Innovative Grant (CIG), gathering support for the Healthy Habitats bill, attending the Western Weed Coordinator Committee meeting in December, 2015 and the North American Invasive Species Management Association meeting in October, 2015.</p>

Agricultural Experiment Station Overview	<p>Tracy Sterling, Department Head and Professor with MSU, provided a written report of the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station and Montana State University Extension Service activities. The report included highlights of MSU's 2012–2015 NWTF grant projects, 2012-2015 NWTF grant awards, funding amounts from other sources, research and education impacts and current publications.</p> <p>Ron de Yong asked for an update on Montana's progress with biocontrol agents. John Cook commented that agents introduced on the Blackfoot Reservation for Spotted knapweed are so far quite successful. Dave Burch noted that biocontrol for Dalmatian toadflax and Russian knapweed are moving along well, but the State could use more agents for Whitetop, Russian olive, Rush skeletonweed and Field bindweed.</p>
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4. Action Items				
Action		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Pesticide fee adjustment legislation discussion	Donna Rise/ Dave Burch	By end of 2015	
2	Tribal environmental assessment training	Dave Burch	By end of 2015	
3	Provide grant coordinator position announcement to council	MDA staff		
4	Poll council for January 2016 meeting date	MDA staff		