

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name:	Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Business Meeting and Grant Hearings																				
Date of Meeting:	March 5-9, 2018	Start Time:	1:00 p.m. - March 5, 2018																		
Minutes Prepared By:	Carol Bearden	Location:	Wingate Hotel, Helena																		
1. Meeting Objective																					
Business Meeting / Grant Hearings																					
2. Attendees																					
<p>Council Members: Jack Eddie, Margie Edsall, Linda Eklund, Joel Farkell (Monday*, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday), Jim Gordon, Kenny Keever, Kellieann Morris, Jeanette Nordahl, Brian Ostwald, Todd Wagner</p> <p>Agency Representatives: Dan Dobler, DNRC; John Gaskin, USDA-ARS (Monday*, Tuesday*, Thursday, Friday); Dan Lucas, MSU Extension; Joe Merenz, APHIS; Mike Miller, MDT; Carmela Romerio, BLM; Adam Sieges, FWP; Tony Smith, USFS; Tracy Sterling, MSU-Ag Experiment Station (Monday*, Thursday, Friday)</p> <p>Montana Dept. of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Ben Thomas, Mark Nechodom, Dave Burch, Jasmine Reimer, Carol Bearden, Emily Wong</p> <p>Guests: Stephanie Hester, DNRC; Rick Northrup, FWP; Shantell Frame-Martin, MSU; Amber Burch, Beaverhead County Weed District; Pam Converse, Pondera County Weed District; Bryce Christiaens, Mathew Deaton, Missoula County Weed District</p> <p>*Attended by conference call</p>																					
3. Meeting																					
Topic	Discussion																				
Welcome / Minutes Review	Director Ben Thomas welcomed the council to the meeting. Minutes from the January 9, 2018 council business meeting were reviewed. Kenny Keever moved to approve the minutes as written and was seconded by Jim Gordon.																				
Budget Report	<p>Administrator Mark Nechodom provided an overview of the noxious weed program budget and estimated funds available for FY 2018 Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWF) grant awards. Previously allocated and pending 2018 grant awards and expenditures were reviewed.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>State Special Revenue & MDT Pass Through Funds</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$2,146,000 (estimate)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-Grant Expenditures</td> <td style="text-align: right;">- \$ 232,820</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pending Special County/Reservation Awards</td> <td style="text-align: right;">- \$ 465,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MDT Pass Through Distribution to Counties</td> <td style="text-align: right;">- \$ 100,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>General Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 90,410</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Forest Service-Cooperative Weed Management</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 133,930</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Forest Service-Sage Grouse Habitat</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 130,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reverted Funds</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 44,332</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Balance Available for 2018 Hearing Awards</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$1,746,852</td> </tr> </table> <p>Non-grant program expenditures, (noxious weed program operating/personal services, MDA Central Services, and council expenses) for FY 2018 were estimated at \$232,820. Allowable</p>			State Special Revenue & MDT Pass Through Funds	\$2,146,000 (estimate)	Non-Grant Expenditures	- \$ 232,820	Pending Special County/Reservation Awards	- \$ 465,000	MDT Pass Through Distribution to Counties	- \$ 100,000	General Fund	\$ 90,410	Forest Service-Cooperative Weed Management	\$ 133,930	Forest Service-Sage Grouse Habitat	\$ 130,000	Reverted Funds	\$ 44,332	Balance Available for 2018 Hearing Awards	\$1,746,852
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	<p>non-grant expenditures are calculated at 12% of the prior year grants awarded from fund 02068. Fiscal year 2017 NWTF grant awards from fund 02068 totaled \$1,940,166.</p> <p>Historical information related to weed vehicle fee revenue and interest earned from the NWTF, reverted funds, and grant hearing funding requests were provided to the council. Applications were submitted for 89 NWTF projects, however project T18-059 was withdrawn. Funding requested for the remaining 88 applications totals \$2,350,902, resulting in a funding shortfall of \$604,050 for the 2018 hearings.</p>
Application Updates and Hearing Review	<p>Mapped locations of applications submitted for the 2018 grant hearings were reviewed along with county weed district budget/mill information. Comments from the Research Review Work Group, and summarized council review comments were provided to the council. Updates to the hearing agenda and the additional information sheet were reviewed.</p> <p>Ben Thomas thanked Jasmine Reimer for her willingness to serve as interim State Weed Coordinator while Dave Burch continues to fill the interim Bureau Chief position.</p>
NWTF Marketing Discussion	<p>Dave Burch asked the council for suggestions in promoting NWTF grant opportunities to an expanded group of applicants. Dr. Alex Metcalf’s January council meeting presentation was discussed regarding indications from his survey results of low landowner willingness to apply for government grants.</p> <p>Jack Eddie suggested contacting non-participant county weed coordinators to learn why they aren’t applying for grants, and Margie Edsall encouraged outreach to conservation districts, particularly in counties with less active weed districts. Benefits of social media and public service announcements (PSA’s) were noted by Kellieann Morris, including the option of paying a small fee to “boost” distribution of social media posts. Outreach through MDA applicant trainings was discussed, with Jasmine Reimer reporting 24 attendees at trainings in 2016 and 28 attendees at three different locations in 2017. Brian Ostwald commented that NWTF grant applications have become more streamlined, especially the environmental assessment section that is required for new local cooperative projects. Director Thomas suggested compiling a list of underactive areas so that MDA staff can focus on one-on-one contact in these locations.</p>
Maximum Award Discussion	<p>Consideration of increasing the \$75,000 per application cap was discussed and a spreadsheet of average grant award amounts was reviewed. Prior year award information showed the average grant award at less than \$20,000 per grant during 2012-2017 and the average 2018 application request at \$26,511. Following discussion, it was agreed to maintain the \$75,000 cap.</p> <p>Dave Burch asked for council input on raising the emergency application funding cap from the current amount of \$25,000 to \$35,000 or \$40,000 to facilitate increased restoration efforts. Discussion on adjusting the emergency application cap will be continued at the next council meeting.</p>
Agency Updates	<p>Agency representatives provided brief updates to the council, which included the following information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adam Sieges reported that the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) was underway at the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), with the first application period closing February 28th.

- Carmela Romerio reported that a final budget was still pending for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
- Mike Miller reported that his Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) program budget has remained consistent.
- Joe Merenz described regulatory activities at USDA-APHIS and discussed biocontrol activities between Montana and other states.
- Dan Dobler reported that three new land use specialist staff will be coming on board for the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) by May. Staff will be located in Havre, Lewistown, and Helena.
- Dan Lucas, Montana State University (MSU) Extension, encouraged involving MSU Extension in promoting and marketing NWTF opportunities. A detailed Extension report will be provided at the next council meeting.
- John Gaskin reported a focus at USDA-ARS on studying whitetop biocontrol invasion dynamics, working on biocontrol for leafy spurge in sandy and riparian areas, and continued genetic research in support of biocontrol. Dave Burch offered assistance in promoting John’s efforts to expand biocontrol resources for knapweed and especially leafy spurge in the areas John had specified.
- Tracy Sterling provided updates about MSU Agriculture Experiment Station activities, including the 125th anniversary celebration of MSU, associated events, and staff awards that had recently been received. Tracy reported a record enrollment at MSU of 15,496 students. A detailed Experiment Station report will be provided at the next council meeting.

**Other Business
Public Comment**

Dave Burch reported that since Mark Nechodom joined MDA, efforts have been underway to develop a more inclusive and functional pesticide program with MDA, MSU Extension, weed districts, and others who provide over 600 pesticide trainings each year. Positive outcomes from recent meetings, one with Cody Stone, Interim MSU Extension Director, and a second with Dr. Cecil Tharp, MSU Extension/Statewide Pesticide Education Coordinator were discussed. Dave noted the willingness on all sides to work together and improve the process of applying for and receiving training credits. Dave advised the council that assistance may be asked for from some of them as this improvement process goes forward. Mark Nechodom identified Tracy Sterling and Dan Lucas as key contacts from the Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council in the joint mission to improve communications with all involved. **As a plan is put together over the next few months, information will be provided to the council.**

Ben Thomas reported that MDA has filled the Central Services Division administrator position, recently vacated by Libbi Lovshin. Cindy Trimp, previously a bureau chief at the Department of Revenue, will join MDA on March 19th.

Ben thanked the council for their dedication in reviewing the 88 grant applications received for consideration this year.

Ben advised the council that the two-year term date for the following council positions will come up June 30th.

Recreationist/Wildlife Group	Jeanette Nordahl
Consumer Group	Joel Farkell
Montana Weed Control Association	Jack Eddie
At-Large Member	Margie Edsall
Eastern County Representative	Brian Ostwald

	<p>Council members were encouraged to notify MDA staff of their interest in re-appointment to the council. Application forms to remain on the council will be sent to the council members, as well as other groups and individuals that may have an interest in serving on the council or nominating others. Application forms will also be available on the MDA website and are due to the Department by April 16th.</p> <p>Other business was requested.</p> <p>Todd Wagner suggested inviting a Montana Board of Investments representative to attend an upcoming council meeting to discuss NWTF investment activity.</p> <p>Mark Nechodom reviewed the Conflict of Interest definition and Hearing Protocol with the council.</p> <p>Public comment was asked for by Ben Thomas. None was heard.</p> <p>Todd Wagner moved to recess the meeting and was seconded by Margie Edsall. All in favor.</p>
<p>Hearings / Wrap Up Discussions</p>	<p>Grant applicant presentations began at 3:15 p.m. March 5th and concluded March 8th. Applicant presentations concluded each day with a council review and discussion of presentations heard that day.</p>
<p>March 5th Business Meeting</p>	<p>The council reconvened at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, March 9th. Grant deliberation protocol and conflict of interest instructions were reviewed. Mark Nechodom explained the voting process and Robert’s Rules of Order were reviewed.</p> <p>Retention of emergency grant funds or contingency awards was not required as explained by Dave Burch due to an estimated reserve balance of \$225,000 retained in the weed program account.</p>
<p>Grant Award Deliberations</p>	<p>Application deliberation order was determined by the combined application review scores submitted by council members and agency representatives. Following deliberations, Mark Nechodom advised the council that their funding recommendations would be given to Director Thomas for final approval.</p> <p>2018 Funding Recommendations are attached.</p>
<p>Other Business</p>	<p>Dave Burch advised the council that Jim Ghekiere, Weed Coordinator for Liberty and Toole Counties, will be hosting a Marias River Float/Weed Control Tour on July 12th. Discussion followed with a motion from Todd Wagner to schedule the next council meeting for Wednesday, July 11th in Shelby, followed by the Marias Tour on July 12th. Kenny Keever seconded the motion, which was approved.</p> <p>The meeting was opened for public comment. Amber Burch thanked the council for their time and effort.</p> <p>The meeting was opened for other business. Jasmine Reimer asked for council feedback about any updates being needed to the applications or evaluation forms. No updates were suggested. Jasmine advised the council that a separate funding opportunity will be developed for next years’ Sage Grouse Habitat funding, with increased emphasis on habitat and revegetation.</p>

	<p>The percentage of NWTF dollars awarded for research projects was discussed by Tracy Sterling. Kenny Keever encouraged future applicant trainings to stress the importance of integrated weed management (IWM) for well-rounded grant projects. An updated percentage breakdown by project type will be sent to the council with inclusion of the FY 18 awards.</p> <p>Discussion followed regarding concerns about noxious weeds coming from hay that has come into Montana recently due to drought and fire. The council was encouraged to consider legislation and/or assistance that may be needed from the Montana Invasive Species Council (MISC) to address impacts resulting from out of state hay. Issues related to imported and donated hay will be added to the July meeting agenda.</p> <p>Kelliann Morris reported that Ravalli County will have a “RC Mudder’s for Conservation Mud Run” in Hamilton on June 16th and offered flyers to promote the event.</p> <p>Agenda topics for the July 11th meeting include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency grant funding award cap discussion • Issues related to imported and donated hay <p>On behalf of Director Thomas and himself, Mark Nechodom thanked the council for their service to Montana through the Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council.</p> <p>The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.</p>
<p>Director Review of Funding Recommendations</p>	<p>The Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council funding recommendations from deliberations at the March 5-9, 2018 NWTF grant hearings were provided to Director Thomas for review and approval. The Advisory Council recommended funding 78 of the 88 grant proposals that were received for \$1,746,852 from the initial requested amount of \$2,350,902.</p> <p>Fifty-seven local cooperative projects were recommended for funding at a total of \$1,218,935 or 70% of all dollars awarded including Trust Fund, General Fund, FS Sage Grouse, and Cooperative Forestry. Ten research projects were recommended for funding at \$248,236 or 14% and 11 educational projects were recommended for \$279,681 or 16%. Combined research and educational projects recommended for funding total \$527,917 or 30% of all funding available.</p> <p>To reduce the number of negotiations and revisions to applications, and to use an additional \$16,198 of the FS Sage Grouse funding for revegetation on projects in core sage grouse habitat areas, the following revisions were proposed and approved by Director Thomas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T18-034 Upper Ruby Revisited - increased to \$41,617, • T18-019 Rock Creek CWM Project - increased to \$40,998, • T18-057 Government Lincoln County Cooperative Tansy Ragwort Management Project - increased to \$15,000, • T18-052 2018 Blacktail Sweetwater Project - increased to \$31,435, • T18-051 2018 Grasshopper Project - increased to \$18,770, • T18-075 Hound Creek WMA - increased to \$38,329, and • T18-062 St. Olaf’s CWMA - increased to \$43,869. <p>With the revisions, total funding for 78 grant proposals is \$1,763,050. The remaining \$243,802 of FS Sage Grouse funding will be granted in 2018-2019.</p>

4. Action Items				
Action		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Provide council membership application forms to council members with terms ending June 30 th , and to the public.	MDA Staff		completed
2	Submit council membership application forms by April 16.	Brian Ostwald, Jack Eddie, Margie Edsall, Jeanette Nordahl, and Joel Farkell	April 16	completed
3	Provide pesticide program updates to the council.	MDA Staff		Planned for July council meeting
4	Provide a funding percentage breakdown by project type to the council, with inclusion of FY 18 awards.	MDA Staff		Planned for July council meeting
5	Contact Board of Investments for future council presentation.	MDA Staff	Next Helena council meeting	pending

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