

## W2ASACT MEETING NOTES

Meeting on September 10, 2019, 9:30 am to 12 pm

Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, 1539 11<sup>th</sup> Ave, 1<sup>st</sup> floor Montana Room

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### Members and participants present:

Alex Huffield	KLJ Eng	Lindsay Volpe	DNRC - CARDD
Anna Miller	DNRC - CARDD	Louise Welsh	DOC-BOI Intericap
Becky Bey	KLJ Eng	Mark Smith	DEQ - ENG - DW
Bryant Higgs	Adv Pump & Equip	Mike Abrahamson	DEQ - ENG - WW
David C Larson	DNRC - RDB	Rika Lashley	Morrison Maierle
Denise Cook	DNRC - CARDD	Savannah Morgan	DOC-BOI Intericap
Erin Zindt	MAP	Sonja Hoeglund	DNRC - CARDD
Kari Smith	DEQ - Water Quality		

### Via Conf. Phone:

Karen Bucklin Sanchez, USDA-RD  
 Lisa Moisey, Bear Paw Development  
 Sarah Robbins, RATES

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### Call to Order, Sign-in Sheet, Agenda Changes

Anna Miller, Chair, called the scheduled meeting of the Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team (W2ASACT) to order at 9:35am, on Tuesday, September 10, 2019. The sign-in sheet was routed and the meeting agenda and draft minutes from the May 14 meeting were distributed. Those present briefly introduced themselves. Anna asked if there were any revisions to the May 14 minutes. Mike Abrahamson made a motion to accept the minutes and David Larson a second and the minutes were approved and adopted.

### **Guest Speaker: None**

### HB 652 Project Status Update – Anna Miller

Anna House Bill 652 is a bonding bill. HB 11 funds TSEP and Regional Water projects and HB 8 funds RRG projects and loans. Anna handed out a spreadsheet showing RRG projects and which ones are contracted, the amount, type of project, etc. HB 7 funds Reclamation projects in ranking order. HB 652 funds when projects are ready to proceed. HB 6 will fund around 6 projects currently, when revenue comes in. Anna will let us know when we have more funding available as revenue is received.

Anna pointed to the Allocation of Funds chart and noted that HB 652 has \$80 million in authorized funds. At fiscal year end, the General Fund had a balance of \$400 million. In December/January approximately \$30 million in bonds will be issued. This will go

towards projects like Romney Hall and the Heritage Center, and other projects ready to proceed in HB 652. Anna added that once the bonds are issued, the clock starts ticking. There are IRS spend-down rules for Bond Proceeds. The state's bond counsel wanted us to add language to contracts starting where bond proceeds are used. Anna noted that interest rates have decreased, and interest earnings are a small amount of the revenue earned.

Lindsay Volpe said that there is \$1.1 million in the RRGL budget that will fund Planning Grants for PERs, groundwater analysis or capital improvement plan. There is, per request, available \$5,000 to \$15,000. This is a great time for all these projects. We could see an extra workload. If you have questions on planning grants, let Lindsay know. TSEP has an open planning grant cycle and there is money left. Kari Smith asked how we notify people and Lindsay replied that one way is via the website. She said we also send letters to applicants and we have lists of communities who have expressed interest.

Anna said that TSEP has \$9.6 million to fund projects in HB 652. There was \$14.3 million of projects listed in the bill itself. She noted that not all projects are funded. Commerce staff is very busy as they have TSEP and two more new programs to help communities and schools. Applicants have a September 30 deadline. If denied, maybe those projects can be in the next group of funded projects in the January 2021 Legislative Session. But that would need to be approved by the Legislature.

Rika added that TSEP applicants who have not heard back, TSEP staff may be busy or there is not enough money. Anna suggested talking to other funding sources to coordinate with agencies. Mark noted that this puts folks in a bind. With infrastructure funding you want to facilitate funding to help those with projects.

Becky Bey added that she is working on 13 projects. Lindsay noted that some agencies have staff shortages. Kari Smith and Mike Abrahamson added that DEQ also has a staff shortage. They have more projects and commitments and he added that environmental assessments take more time to complete. Karen asked about collaborating on 652 project applications and whether or not they include Rural Development. Lindsay responded by offering to send DNRC's "Hope List" as it shows what is being applied for the May 2018 funding request from DNRC.

Karen noted that RD is not able to obligate all their funds. They have \$13 million in loans and \$7 million in grants. Only \$12 million is obligated. She added that they have funded 4 planning grants and that Belgrade needs National funding. Anna noted that RD interest rates are down. October 1, the rate for poverty level is 1.75% and the market rate is at 3%.

Anna said Medicine Lake may wait to close their SRF loan once the RD interest rates are down. RD is the final long-term funding source. Denton may be another one to wait. That lower interest rate will reduce loan costs. Anna suggested to let us know if you have problems. Anna made mention of the Montana Department of Transportation's Road Information plan for communities is out, and the report has been published and is on their website.

## Program Updates

Mike Abrahamson with DEQ – On wastewater SRF Reporting, they have a lot of projects on their workload. Some projects were delayed as they are down an FTE.

Bryant Higgs with Advanced Pump & Equipment reported that his office is busy. He mentioned training in Wolf Point on water and wastewater treatment.

Alex Huffield with KLJ Engineering said his office is busy trying to staff the many projects coming in.

Kari Smith DEQ said she is working on community outreach. She is seeing how DEQ can implement relations with communities. The funding is good, but communities need to know how to access it.

Erin Zindt with MAP started by thanking Kari for looking for and connecting people and for planning for trainings. Erin noted that since Barb retired, Rory Schmidt is in Barb Kaufman's position at METC.

Becky Bey with KLJ expressed a "Thank you" to KLJ staff who were present and those who couldn't be here. She found the DOA grant fascinating. There will be time after the 30<sup>th</sup> to look again.

Rika Lashley with Morrison Maierle said they have been looking to hire staff members for a couple of years.

Sonja Hoeglund with DNRC said there is \$65,000 left in the private grant program to fix/replace septic systems, add or put in water meters or for dam inspection. The maximum allowed per grant is \$5,000.

David Larson with DNRC reported that there are \$100,000 in emergency funds allocated. He cited the Greenfields ID project that involves fixing or replacing gates. There is \$90,000 left and Delfia Melstone irrigators are asking for \$10,000. Bridger Pines Water & Sewer District patched a line, which broke so they are getting more information. Sonja added that they were with Intercap for two months and worked with BOI for 6 years. Sonja also said that Louise Welsh is acting Deputy Director at BOI.

Mark Smith with DEQ reported that in addition to projects, they have filled two positions. Sandie Koenig and John McDunn are in the Drinking Water program. John came over from the Permitting side. Mark added that the Drinking Water program is issuing content for Technical Assessment and there is a meeting tomorrow to evaluate proposals. It is an open meeting. They will discuss providing technical assistance to communities.

Lindsay Volpe with DNRC noted that applications are due May 15, 2020 for new projects for the 2021 Legislative Session. It has been a quick two years. She is getting the word out about applications. It will be fairly competitive and there **may** be more bonding.

Sarah Robbin with RATES reported that tribal and Wyoming contracts are currently the main focus in her office.

Karen Sanchez with USDA – RD said that the funding cycle is open. She hopes to get more applications, but they are ready to fund projects. She added that the AWWA workshops will be talked about.

Anna Miller with DNRC noted that Bill Herbolich will start on the next update to the DNRC Rate Study. Sonja updates the maps for the study. Anna said the federal fiscal year end is coming up and we will see how this plays out. Karen added that she is not sure what Steven Troendle is hearing on the federal FYE. There is a continuing resolution in place until November 21.

Anna reported that there has been no response from our congressional contracts since the passing of the omnibus bill continuing resolution until November 21.

### **Break 10:25 to 10:40**

#### Anna Miller - Regional Water Update

Rocky Boys Reservation/North Central – Anna began by pointing out on the map, the pipeline and Shelby wellfield. She noted that they will have a water treatment plant built by 2021.

Central Montana RWA will start moving water south and east. Anna directed to a map of that project. They are working on a new well.

Dry Redwater – They have several fixes in place using Sidney water. They are hoping to get congressional authorization.

Fort Peck Tribes/Dry Prairie – Dry Prairie will need to build another building on the west side of the system.

### **Committee Updates**

#### Workshop Updates

Anna said MACD is in September. The League of Cities and Towns is the first week in October and before that there will be an Optimization workshop in Billings. The MRW office has moved to Central Ave in Great Falls. They are in the lower level on the righthand side of Time Square. March of 2020 is the next MRW conference. Erin will start an email to the workshop committee. Anna added that there is a fall water school

in October. Mike noted that in early June, there will be an optimization workshop. Anna added that that will be helpful for system operators.

### Uniform Application and Standard Documents

David will have an update at the next meeting on the Uniform Application.

Karen is on the Standard Document Committee but had no update. Mark said it has been on the back burner, but there will be someone from DEQ drinking water. We need to have someone from Commerce.

### Website

Lindsay said nothing has come up on the website. She added that she does not have the resources. Anna suggested we get together with Rory. Erin suggested putting meeting dates on the sidebar. Bryant asked if there was a mobile version of the website. Lindsay said we look into it with DNRC website.

Anna said Steve Grossman sent out a survey to all 50 states. He wants to see if there are any groups like WASACT providing small community informational workshops.

### **Congressional Update – None**

Legislative Session: Anna added that we need a report to show where funding has gone with the authorization of HB 652. She said that we are proud of our water and wastewater programs and the help that we provide in communities and of what we are able to accomplish. Kari suggested having data put into a story board.

End of Updates

Next meeting was set for Tuesday, December 10, from 9:30 to noon at DNRC, to which all agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 11:07.

Minutes taken by Denise Cook.