**Resource Conservation Advisory Council (RCAC)**

**February 12, 2020**

**Conference Call**

**Minutes**

**RCAC Council Present:** Doug Bonsell, Bob Breipohl, Judi Knapp, Ramsey Offerdahl, & Gayla Wortman.

**Staff Present**: Linda Brander, Mary Hendrix, & Laurie Zeller.

**Callers:** Jeff Janke, Deer Lodge Valley Conservation District (CD), Nita Bronec, Fergus CD, Leon Hammond, Supply Canal Irrigation District, Joe Lockwood, Yellowstone County Weed District, Cheryl Miller Upper Musselshell CD, Anna Morris, Fergus CD, Will McDowell, Clark Fork Coalition, Clint Peck, Yellowstone CD, & Bryan Vogt, Missoula CD

**Introductions**

**August 29, 2020 Minutes**

The August 29, 2020 minutes were approved.

**223 Awards & Ranking**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CD** | **Project** | **Amount Requested** | **Amount Awarded** | **Comments** |
| Deer Lodge | Beaver Conflict Resolution Pilot Project | $17,600.00 | $8,800.00 | The Council asked why FWP was not a contributing partner. District representatives indicated that FWP can't provide any funding because they do not have a wildlife category for beaver. Since this is a research project, the conservation district should start with the amount received. The RCAC will make an onsite visit in August 2020 to view the project, data and results. At that time there may be an opportunity for the district to apply for more 223 funds. |
| Fergus | No-Till Drill | $20,000.00 | $20,000.00 | No comments. |
| Missoula | Seeley Lake Clearwater River Watershed E & O Program. | $9,900.00 |   | This project was not funded because the Council considered it to be the responsibility of the Health Department to conduct an education and outreach program. Linda will follow up with CD to clarify. |
| Upper Musselshell | Supply Canal Rehab Roma Ranch | $12,801.00 | $12,801.00 | No comments. |
| Yellowstone | Salt Cedar Management | $25,000.00 | $25,000.00 | No comments. |
|   |  **Total** |  **$85,301.00** |  **$66,601.00** |  |

**Leadership Summit Summary—Laurie Zeller/Gayla Wortman**

Laurie Zeller, Gayla Wortman, and Judi Knapp attended the leadership training on January 22 & 23, 2020 in Billings, MT. MACD directors and conservation district employee leadership were present and felt that the leadership training should be provided to a wider range of supervisor and employees. The education committee and others will be engaged to meet this need, which was identified by conservation districts at the 2019 area meetings. Potentially, a session would be planned at each area meeting with a follow up at the conservation districts annual meeting.

**Montana Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) Compliance for Grant Programs – Laurie Zeller**

In its simplest terms, MEPA institutes a “look before you leap” policy by requiring state agencies to consider the environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts of proposals like mines, power plants, subdivisions, and timber sales, before the project is approved. Laurie Zeller indicated certain 223 proposals that are ground-work related may need to do a MEPA assessment. Starting FY 2021. MEPA questions will be added to the 223 application.

**2020 Training Opportunities for Conservation Districts—Laurie Zeller**

Laurie Zeller provided an overview of the 2020 training schedule for conservation districts. As of February 2020, five special topic webinars (CD Operation overview, 310, records management, completing accurate timesheets, and effective meeting management), 23 face-to-face meetings (new supervisor orientation, welcome wagon, etc.), and three 310 day-long seminars fill out the 2020 year training schedule. More training options like property rights and reclamation plan development are under consideration.

**2021 Administrative Grants---Karl Christians**

Since Karl Christians was not able to attend the February 12, 2020 meeting, the 2021 administrative grant proposal will be rescheduled for the May 2020 meeting.

**Pollinator Grants; Celebrating Envirothon’s 25th Anniversary—Mary Hendrix**

Mary developed an idea to create a documentary featuring that will celebrate Envirothon’s 25th Anniversary. Two OPI cinematographers will work with Mary to produce the documentary.

Mary Hendrix state that two pollinator grants have been funded to date.  What was the year the first K-12 published?

1. Lake County CD—provide a statewide training to conservation districts to help them learn how to get citizens and the ag community involved in pollinator habitat enhancement.  Two seminars (Area 5 & Area 6) have already been completed.
2. Gallatin Conservation District—update the K-12 pollinator brochure that was published 2012.  The Office of Public Instruction indicated this brochure is the number one most requested brochure within the school system.

**Field Notes—Updates on Conservation Districts—Karl Christians & Lance Clark,**

Laurie reported on behalf of Karl Christians and Lance Clark who were unable to attend the meeting.

Karl has been working with the Missouri River Conservation District Council and the Milk River Watershed Alliance to recruit new coordinators. He is also coordinating the supervisor’s summit and assisting with the feral hog workshop and working with the Valley CD to plan the living without water seminar (to emphasize what it would mean if the St. Mary Diversion system fails).

Laurie also stated that Lance Clark had been doing extensive outreach to all of the conservation districts in his area.

**Old Business**

**Reorganizing Resources to Meet Conservation District Needs—Laurie Zeller.** This discussion has been on the table for the last few meetings, but time to fully flesh out the idea is not available due to other agenda items. The RCAC requested Zeller draft a proposal for the RCAC to review at an upcoming meeting.

**Weather Station Grants Follow-Up—Linda Brander**

Linda Brander stated she had not obtained all information on the effectiveness of weather stations. She was waiting on a report from the Dawson County CD and still needed to talk with the Teton CD.

**223 Forms (application questions & ranking form)—do changes still need to be made—Linda Brander**

A decision was made to keep the existing 223 application and ranking form. Changes will be made at the start of FY2021 when questions relating to MEPA will be added.

**Other**

**Public Comment**

No public comment was received.

**Next Meeting Date & Location—April 22, 2020 is the final 223 dead line**

The next meeting will be held in Helena, MT preferably during the week of May 5, 2020.