

EASTERN PLAINS RC&D AREA, INC.

QUARTERLY MEETING

JULY 21, 2010

The Eastern Plains RC&D Area, Inc. quarterly council meeting was held July 21, 2010 at the Yellowstone River Inn, Glendive. Those present were:

Clarence Vallard, Glendive City Council; Jerry Jimison, Mayor of Glendive; Jason Rittal, Eastern Plains EDC; Adam Gartner, Dawson County Commissioner; Tony Barone, Richland County Conservation District; Bruce Smith, Community Gate - FADC; Katie Hebel, Dawson County Extension intern; Garth Clingingsmith, FADC; Steve Olson, Dept of Labor and Industry; Elizabeth Smith, Eastern Plains EDC; David Pratt, NRCS; Roddy V Rost, Little Beaver Conservation District; Charlie Denison, Glendive Ranger Review; Amy Deines, Dawson County EDC; Ginny Archdale, Town of Wibaux and Wibaux County; Jim Shanks, Roosevelt County; Gary McDonald, Roosevelt County; Tim Quелlette, USDA, NRCS; and Bob Nansel, Coordinator-Eastern Plains RC&D.

CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS

Secretary Ginny Archdale called the meeting to order and meeting participants introduced themselves.

AGENDA

Adam Gartner moved to approve the agenda as distributed. Tony Barone seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

MINUTES AND TREASURERS REPORT

Ginny Archdale asked for corrections to the minutes, none were needed. Roddy Rost made a motion to approve the minutes. Gary McDonald seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

The 2nd and 3rd quarter of the Treasurers Report was Roddy Rost made a motion to approve the Treasurers Report. Gary McDonald seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Since my last report, I attended Montana's Conservation Planning Course in Helena for a week in May. I now have the Montana NRCS perspective on the 9-Step Planning Process.

The joint 25X25 and Montana RC&D association meeting was attended by me and Dixie in Havre. Andy Gordon from the National RC&D association and other local resources taught on legal matters and coordinator and council roles.

I attended the NRCS Concepts Course in Raleigh, NC last month. Had a good overview of RC&D Program from both the NRCS and Council perspectives; delineating the roles and responsibilities of each in the partnership. Although RC&D is "not-for-profit," profit is good and can be invested to advance RC&D mission. We also covered non-profit management and accountability, ethics and funding, especially funding other than grants.

A few other meetings and events attended lately: MonDak Energy Alliance, Corps of Engineers' Authorized Purposes Scoping, LYIP Board on AWEP contracting, FW&P Bison Meeting, Richland Irrigation Tour, Range Days Fort Keogh tour and Rosebud Co Livestock Water Planning,

While I have been primarily working on the Area Plan, there has been some activity on other projects. The Fairview Bridge/Cartwright Tunnel erosion restoration has begun in cooperation with Friends of the Bridge, McKenzie County (ND) and Williston Basin RC&D. The weedy area has been chem-fallowed for a fall dormant seeding. A barrier fence has been installed with dirt work pending before re-seeding.

MSU masters student, Elliott Barnhart's pre-application to DOE for coal-bed methane biogenesis research has resulted in an invitation to make a full application.

We assisted in a \$100,000 Renewable Resource application with DNRC for the third phase of Sidney Water Users' conversion from open canal to buried mainline. This will be considered during the next MT legislative session.

An organizational meeting was held for a CM Russell Wildlife Refuge stakeholders group. I assisted Vicki Marquis in organizing this meeting. We also applied for \$5000 in financial assistance from NRCS to support this effort through meeting expenses and facilitation of the discussions. The objective is to offer US Fish and Wildlife Service management alternatives for the Refuge from a wide range of interested parties.

Other potential projects on the horizon are Western SARE grant application for soil health and regionally adapted cover crops; Livestock composting via eco-drum; LYIP AWEP irrigation enhancement; and CLA enhanced beef trial through safflower supplementation.

MonDak Ag-Open Report

This year's Ag-Open is August 3-5. Two tours come to Montana on Wednesday. EPRC&D will be leading the eastern MT contingent sponsoring Hole #15 at Thursday's golf scramble. Finger steaks and locally brewed beer will be served to golfers. Set-up is at 7:30 CST (6:30 AM MST for Montanans) but come anytime between 8 AM to 4 PM if you are not already committed. Registration is at www.Ag-Open.com for conference and tours, but is not necessary to help with Hole #15 only.

David Pratt-NRCS

EQIP-Financial assistance for Ag producers for Dry land farmers, irrigation work-conservation practices.

Conservation Stewardship-Producers that are doing a good job-Eastern MT has lots of interest- ranking process is just about done. There were 220 applications-1 million acres.

AWEP-Agricultural Water Enhancement Program LYIP- covering Dawson, Richland County, McKenzie, ND. This is flood to sprinkler conversion; end of August is obligation deadline. The focus: (1) Practices currently prioritized, planned and designed, (2) flood to sprinkler. Funding is \$998,600 of which 2/3 will go to MT and 1/3 to ND. The time line is tight.

Local Work Groups will identify what resource concerns are priorities, locally. This will allocate funds at the local level- non-profits, interested producers are all welcome. RC&D has assisted with their Area Planning process.

Sage Grouse Initiative- tries to sustain and keep it voluntary so the sage grouse stays off threatened and endangered species status. There are 14 core areas in the state. This year the focus is on Roundup and next year it will be Rosebud County.

It is the hope that NRCS staff can be in the field more and less on paperwork. Focus- back to planning.

EDD-Jason Rittal

Jason Rittal of the Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation gave an update on recent events and projects related to the CRDC & EDD. The EDA grant that funds the EDC was due in June and has been submitted. It has been through preliminary approval with EDA's representative, but still has to go through some additional review for final approval. Some revisions in scope and budget related to the SBDC and N. Baker project were necessary, but it appears that everything is going to work as revised.

The N. Baker Project is scheduled to begin construction as early as next Monday. A tour of the project will be scheduled following the EDC meeting on August 17. Materials and equipment are arriving on site at this time. Depending upon weather and other factors related to construction the project may be completed this fall, but that is a best case scenario. The contract time allows for work to be completed next summer.

The EDC is helping to prepare two Tourism grants which are due the first week of August, continues to work on wind energy development, is looking into uses for CTEP funds in a couple of the counties, has a few interested parties in the RLF funding, as well as several other projects.

The EDC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Food & Ag Center for technical assistance and reporting assistance. That project will be discussed further by Bruce Smith later on the agenda.

Everyone is invited to attend the next EDC meeting on August 17th at 9:30 in the Fallon County Courthouse.

First Time Home Buyer – Aileen Swinney

Aileen attended training in Phoenix in May and passed the Training the Trainer Course. The first class in Glendive had 19 attendees and was very successful. The other two classes have been smaller but lots of discussion. A good thing was that ¾ of the attendees were new to the loan process so it was interesting for them.

Aileen also attended a Neighborworks meeting in Helena in June and it was very interesting to meet everyone that I have previously talked with on the phone. Lots of good ideas flowing from this meeting.

Old Business

Area Plan-Bob Nansel presented the draft area plan and we passed out hard copies for everyone to follow. This is the 5 year plan for RC&D Council. There was a Public Participation Survey done and got 22 individual responses with significant input and was also used as an outline for input from various groups. This Area Plan is referenced when seeking funding for projects. It is a formal agreement with NRCS in return for its technical and financial assistance to the RC&D Council. Tony Barone made the motion to approve the Area Plan as written. Roddy Rost seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

Budget

The amended budget was reviewed and found that there was still more work to be done. A motion was made by Gary McDonald to refer the budget to the Executive Board for final approval. Roddy Rost seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

Mon-Dak Ag Open

Tuesday, Aug 3rd is the Seminar, Wed Aug. 4th is AWEP (Trenton, Buford) and MT tour is Apiary in Fairview, Sidney Water Users, and Thurs Aug 5th is the Golf Tournament. We are again helping sponsor the 15th hole along with Montana businesses and organizations.

New Business

Meeting Minutes- Upon review of the by-laws, a change is not necessary to email the minutes out shortly after the meeting instead of including them within the newsletter.

Glendive Food and Ag Development Center (FADC)-Bruce Smith reported that Community GATE received a letter from the Department of Agriculture terminating the FADC contract; but indicating that they would continue as a Satellite of the Beartooth RC&D FADC in Joliet. The Department seems to be comparing Glendive to existing centers that have been up and running for 3 to 4 years. It was asked if a letter of support or concern would help and Bruce said yes.

A motion was made by Adam Gartner to lend support to the program in the form of a letter of support; Gary McDonald seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

REPORTS, HAPPENINGS AND ISSUES IN RC&D AREA

Adam Gartner-Dawson County Commissioner- TransCanada is interested in Dawson County but there is some opposition from residents. It would bring 11 million to the county, schools and state.

Flood Plain-open up bigger passageway to by-pass the shoot. If opened up bigger may reduce extra free board having to be used on the dike.

Preliminary budget waiting for the Mill Levies.

Garth Clingingsmith-Glendive FADC- Garth is the go to person for any questions regarding this program.

Katie Hebel-Dawson County Extension-On Sept 9th there is a meeting to learn more on High Tunnel, EQIP. Moveable and stationary tunnels have almost a year in Glendive. Spinach planted in October did well through the winter. It extends the growing season by 2-4 months. Anyone interested should look at Elliott Coleman's book. Chinese vegetable, asparagus, berries and spinach are among a few items that do well in Hoop Houses.

Jason Rittal-EDD-Elizabeth attended the State Housing Conference in Helena in June; they also attended the State Economic Development in Miles City. In August is the EDC-Heartland Institute Leadership Group, and Energy Open, and in Sept. is the Brownfield meeting in Missoula.

Steve Olson-Dept of Labor and Industry- Unemployment is high in Western MT; Richland County has good employment but lacks adequate housing. Sept 14 & 15 Glendive is offering services to Homeless Vets. There will be volunteers from all over the area to help with this.

Amy Deines-Dawson County EDC- Eastern MT is the place to be.

Elizabeth Smith-EDD-Mt Board of Housing- lots of visibility, talked about handicapped, aging, and about digging in the community to find about housing issues.

Gary McDonald-Roosevelt County Commissioner-East has lots of oil activity, roads are taking a beating, and new windows are being put in the courthouse. DEQ grant to put central air conditioning in an old building. Water project is coming along; airport is closed, and have an additional grant for taxi and runway. Culbertson office is up and running. Less than 1 million spent so far on the courthouse.

Tim Ouellette-USDA, NRCS-RC&D Rapid Assessment may prompt program changes. What is the role of RC&D and NRCS? Area Plan is NRCS's contract with the RC&D. Local work groups- broaden scope of people to the group. Viable RC&D Council has 1:1 or better match ratio, reporting on what is being done in the areas.

Roddy V Rost-Little Beaver Conservation District- Baker is looking for an administrative assistant. The Conservation district grant covered crop cocktail and no till drill. They also have a grant for a shed for the drill. What process was followed when RC&D sent a letter of support to TransCanada? The city of Baker is allowing use of their land to make housing for 600 people. Landowners are worried about Keystone XL protection of the land resource.

Dave Pratt- NRCS-NRCS' technical and financial help is allocated on acreage, so 1/3 plus comes to Eastern Montana. NRCS programs are available to help producers converting from CRP to permanent coverage.

Mike Carlson-Wind Energy-New Harvest Energy-have 15 towers in 5 states. Carter County is continuing to do wind monitoring studies. MDU- has a couple of wind farm projects- phase 2 added 8 more towers near Baker and 13 towers at Rhame ND. Williston Basin RC&D and a Canadian company also have MET

towers. Wind Energy -can provide some energy needs to oil industry. Solar Energy power experiment has been going for 1 year.

Tony Barone-Richland County Conservation-Break ground on July 28 for USDA ARCS building outside of Sidney.

Ginny Archdale-City and Town of Wibaux-Sewer project design plans are being reviewed and we are hoping bids will be let in August. Drain existing lagoon before winter, new one in spring. Raise sewer rates, stimulus \$ for handicapped bathrooms in parks. A video called "Underage and Over the Limit"-upset everyone in Wibaux as it is about the town and the football team.

Oil field is active again-lots of oil field workers. CDBG grant was denied. Only 2 grants were given out. Rehabbing housing is not as popular anymore. Wibaux is still interested in housing issues.

Meeting was adjourned.

A no host lunch was served at Yellowstone River Inn and following this, Bob Nansel provided training on RC&D Members and Coordinator Role and Responsibilities.

The next meeting is set for October 20, 2010 tentatively in Culbertson.