

EASTERN PLAINS RC&D AREA, INC.  
QUARTERLY COUNCIL MEETING  
July 16, 2008

The Eastern Plains RC&D Area, Inc. quarterly council meeting was held on July 16, 2008, at Fort Keogh in Miles City, MT. Those present were Dixie Berwick (Town of Culbertson), Dick Iversen (RC&D Coordinator), Sarah Herman (RC&D Administrative Assistant), Kevin Dukart (City of Baker), Ginny Archdale (Town of Wibaux), Jason Rittal (Eastern Plains EDD), Jim Atchison (SEMDC), Mike Coryell (MCAEDC), Stark Ickes (Treasure County), Mickey McCall (Plentywood CD, Commissioners), Jim Shanks (Roosevelt County), Gary Macdonald (Roosevelt County), Dick Scheetz (Terry NRCS), Steve Olson (Dawson County Economic Development, Dept of Labor), Richard Rice (City of Plentywood), Liz Chang (Senator Max Baucus) and Mona Cantalupo (SMART).

Chairman Dixie Berwick called the meeting to order and meeting participants introduced themselves. **The agenda was reviewed and approved by a motion from Gary McDonald seconded by Mickey McCall and carried.**

**MINUTES AND TREASURER'S REPORT: The minutes were reviewed and approved by a motion from Gary McDonald, seconded by Stark Ickes and carried.** The Treasurer's report was reviewed. **A motion to approve the Treasurer's report was made by Stark Ickes and seconded by Ginny Archdale and carried.**

**COORDINATOR'S REPORT:** Dick Iversen stated that most of his report is the New Business and he will discuss all of that later in the meeting.

**EASTERN PLAINS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT:** Jason Rittal told the council that he took a month off for personal reasons and is back now and ready to hit the ground running. Jason said right now he is working with the Terry and Ekalaka museums. Nicole Jones from Midrivers is working on a grant for the Ekalaka Museum. Jason also said he would like to talk to more city councils and the next one will be Baker.

**HOUSING EDUCATION ASSISTANT:** Khrystye Earle talked about how her classes are slowing down instead of having 10-12 people she is getting 5-6 people. She said the reason things are slowing down is the mortgage and credit crisis. Khrystye has been doing one-on-one credit counseling and working with the clients budgets. She is also working on a HUD Grant for self help with help from the other RC&D's in Montana. Khrystye would like input from some towns to see if a self help project is needed or wanted. She is trying to get the HUD grant with Beartooth RC&D and all of the money will go through Beartooth RC&D. If anyone is interested in the self help project let Khrystye or Dick know and they can get the ball rolling and set up another meeting to discuss it further.

**BIO-PRODUCTS INNOVATION CENTER:** Nicole Zimmerman has been working for 3 ½ months and has been very busy. She has met with a lot of the local commissioners, councils and other agencies. Nicole has been working with Carter County with Biomass Fuels that will use woodchips to heat there school, courthouse and the hospital. Nicole has also been working with Bruce Smith for Farm to Table; they are working on putting together a DVD and booklet together. Also right now they are selling shares. She is also working with Peggy Iba on the Western Trails Food, their sales are going up and with the price of wheat going up they have to raise their prices. Nicole has also been working with Ashley Preston who is the Program Director of the University of Montana of Technology. They are working on having energy classes in colleges in Miles City and Missoula. They would also have internships in Montana for energy. She has also been going to meeting for the 2009 GTO in Dickinson on January 29<sup>th</sup>. The next meeting for GTO will be July 31<sup>st</sup> in Medora. Nicole has started to sign up farmers for NCOC carbon credits. So far she has one signed up and is waiting to hear back on it. Nicole will be attending a North Dakota Rural Economic Development Conference in Bismarck later this summer.

**OLD BUSINESS: EDD-** The website will be up and running shortly with the help of Mickey McCall.

**NCOC-** The NCOC is made up of RC&D's in Montana and 1 Watershed group, it is located in Butte, MT. Awhile back Eastern Plains tried to find the NCOC policies and could never find a signed copy so they had to ask for a copy and have now received it. Nicole is an affiliate for NCOC and will sign up farmers and ranchers. RC&D might eventually see a stream of revenue once the credits are sold.

**NEW BUSINESS: Fort Kipp Irrigation Project-** The Fort Peck Tribes has the best water rights and blocks of land around. Dick has been helping the Tribes to get the land exchanged or purchased. The Tribes has now hired a firm to go and get contracts signed for the tracts. This is a long process but they are moving along. **Wind Energy Project-** We have the best wind energy in Montana, we are trying to get a grant to move the monitoring equipment to different areas. **Josh's Energy Saving Project-** Josh Kellar from Northern Rocky Mountain RC&D is talking about having the RC&D's partner together to get state/federal grants. We would be more likely to get these large grants if we have a bigger area that they would cover. To have a tower it costs the land owner roughly \$15-\$20,000 for each tower. The grants could cover up to \$20,000. Mike Carlson (retired RC&D Coordinator) has gone through proper training now so he is licensed to put these towers up. We will be working with Mike to see what we can do. **CRDC Discretionary Funding Use-** With the old Discretionary funds that we haven't used up yet and the recent funds we have received we have decided to update the Ethanol Feasibility Study that was done last year. Great Northern Development has offered to pitch in \$1000 to help with the update costs. **Ag Open-** Will be August 5-7<sup>th</sup> in Williston, ND. Everyone is welcome to be our guest, just go online to [www.ag-open.com](http://www.ag-open.com) and register.

#### **REPORTS, HAPPENINGS & ISSUES IN RC&D AREA-**

**Ginny Archdale-** Working on a \$1 million lagoon project, will be having Julie Jones come and talk to them about a housing project on August 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, Park bathroom update, Beaver Creek Brewery should be open by Labor Day.

**Kevin Dukart-** Also has Julie Jones working on a housing project they are currently in the middle of the process, the county has built a retirement housing to help free up some houses that the retirement age people are living in, Encore Operating is for sale, need rain.

**Stark Ickes-** In a housing crunch, Billings people are buying up houses for their retirement homes in Hysham, got a grant for the shooting association, Rosebud/Treasure County Fair going on right now.

**Gary McDonald/Jim Shenk-** Local Doctor is starting a pub, will sell beer wholesale to other bars, Fort Peck Tribes still working on green refinery, trying to work in bottling water and selling it.

**Richard Rice-** Dedication of Town Pavilion, also in a housing crunch, Westby elevator construction going strong, motel is busy.

**Mike Coryell-**City/County is doing a business plan, trying to develop business development area for future business development, working on old BN Depot to have parties in it, working on flooding zone- federal government final preliminary report and then in October they will know the final boundaries recommendations and then they will have 60-90 days for comments, the new armory that was planned to be build can't be, they can't use federal money to build in a flood plane, they have a new website- [www.4miles-city-business.com](http://www.4miles-city-business.com) , they have meetings the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday every month at 7:30am at the Stockman Center.

**Mona Cantalupo-**back after being gone for 1 ½ years, continuing to work on North Water/Sewer applied for TSEP grant, Baker hotel came down which spurred other people to get store fronts looking better.

**Mickey McCall-** Westby Elevator working on construction- 110 cars, former NRCD employee is selling landowner maps and CDs- they will be sold at some of the Conservation Districts.

**Dick Scheetz-** New Welcome to Terry sign paid for by the Conservation District Grant and a few other entities, Terry will have 5 vistas in town, 2 at the Montana Grass Conservation Commission, 1 at economic development office, 1 at Evelyn Cameron Museum and 1 at Buffalo Rapids.

**Steve Olson-** June was the ground breaking for the 18 unit housing complex,-spring 2009 occupancy date, and 25 people on interest list already.

**Jim Atchison-** Energy Open- 8/14-15, Biomass Task Force 7/23 Forsyth 1pm

**David Pratt-** from NRCS presented an update on the Farm Bill, including a component called the Ag Water Enhancement Act which talks about impounding surface water for new irrigation. The bill continues the conservation innovation grant program. Easement programs are mostly the same but with more emphasis on acreage rather than dollars. The bill puts an emphasis on maintaining rural landscape or rural life. Under the wetland preservation program, there may be flexibility to do long-term contracts with Indian tribes. The bill also includes a new component that may include developing a register for environmental measures such as carbon credits.

**Liz Chang-** from Senator Baucus's office said Congress is working on the mortgage mess facing the country, and leadership thinks they can stabilize the scare tactics going on now. It has affected bonds for the state, credit, and loans. Following that Congress will work on defense. We may not see an appropriations bill pass until the new administration comes in. Baucus's office also is working on affordable housing projects.

It was decided to hold the October meeting in Culbertson.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held on October 15 at 9:30 am in Culbertson. Place to be announced.

**The meeting was adjourned for by a motion from Mickey McCall, seconded by Jim Atchison and carried.**

After lunch there was a Tour of Tongue River Vineyard given by Bob & Marilyn Thaden.