

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name:	Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Business Meeting & Tour		
Date of Meeting:	July 5-6, 2022	Time:	1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Minutes Prepared By:	Jasmine Chaffee	Location:	Ravalli Co. Weed District Office
1. Meeting Objective			
Business Meeting			
2. Attendees			
<p>Council Members: Amber Burch (virtual), Jeanette Nordahl (virtual), Joel Farkell, Kellieann Morris, Kenny Keever (virtual), Dana Weatherford, Jeff Brennan</p> <p>Agency Representatives: Gary Adams- APHIS; Wendy Velman – BLM (virtual); Adam Sieges – FWP; Bob Cloninger & Jason Allen- MDT; Monica Pokorny – NRCS; Jacob Bradford – BOR (virtual); Parker Osterloh – DNRC (virtual)</p> <p>Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Christy Clark (virtual), Jasmine Chaffee, Greta Dige, Andrew Lam, Josh Wagoner, Ian Foley (virtual)</p> <p>Guests: Jane Mangold (virtual)</p>			
Topic	Discussion		
Welcome	Christy Clark, Director-Chair, called the meeting to order and rollcall was taken. Christy gave Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) updates to the group and thanked the council for their time and commitment. She highlighted a few actions the department is taking to meet the Governor’s initiative of increasing value-added services. They include administering grant programs, spotlighting businesses across the state, and offering free mental health services. She also mentioned that the state is doing a remote and workspace study for all state employees and agencies.		
Minutes Review/Action Items	Minutes from the March 7-10, 2022 council meeting and grant hearing minutes were reviewed. All action items were completed. Jeanette Nordahl moved to approve the minutes as written; Kenny Keever seconded the motion; minutes were unanimously approved.		
Department Updates	<p>Council appointments were reviewed noting that four members were returning for another two terms, and one member, Levi Tatafu, is new and coming from the oil and gas industry in Northeastern Montana.</p> <p>Jasmine Chaffee noted that Palmer Amaranth was found in millet seed and part of the contaminated lot was planted in Daniels Co. Montana State University will be following up along with the seed license team for MDA.</p>		
Grant Updates and Project Reviews	<p>Greta Dige provided a field visit summary, highlighting a few of the projects she was able to get to earlier in the summer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweet Grass Hills/Buckley Pit/Marias River projects in Liberty/Toole Co. – they request funds about ever three years to do helicopter work and the landowners maintain and manage infestations on their own annually. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park County – Jasmine, Josh and Greta presented at an Integrated Weed Management field day hosted by the Park Co. CWMA and weed district for landowners in the grant area. • Greta handed out a document with all the scheduled visits so anyone can join if they are in the area and encouraged council members to let her know if they would like to join or attend a specific grant visit. <p>The council was also updated on other activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weed Monitoring – five grant areas were set up with permanent monitoring transects using MSU’s draft monitoring protocol system: Cascade, Sweet Grass, Fallon, Park, Wheatland, and Avon, and three additional projects are scheduled. • Greta noted that MDA will be developing a Survey 123 for collecting grant monitoring data in the next couple of years, and how important the timing is for catching pre-treatment data in weeds like ventenata. • She also mentioned that 2023 Funding Opportunities will be posted in Amplifund within the next couple of months.
<p>NWSFF Program Update</p>	<p>Andrew Lam reported on the Noxious Weed Free Materials (NWFM) program. He noted that he was working on getting more inspectors trained this year due to a high turnover in extension agents and was now only missing a few counties.</p> <p>He talked about completing the first gravel pit inspection for Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) which was a 50-year-old sand pit. Andrew is also working on creating new forms and promotional information for the gravel program. There has been some interest in certification including at least six more pits for MDT. He is also looking at creating a Survey 123 for collecting inspection data and digitizing forms.</p> <p>Wendy noted that Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is working on standardizing requirements for using certified materials in their contracts, and Jason Allen said MDT is looking at moving in the same direction, but they want to get their pits cleaned and certified first.</p>
<p>EDRR Program Update</p>	<p>Josh Wagoner gave an update on how the Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR) program is progressing. He talked about all the weeds that are on his radar and that some have task forces and others are being evaluated as to whether they should be on the EDRR list. He noted that he had worked to create a new webpage dedicated to the EDRR weed species and logo. He also noted that he wants to create outreach materials.</p> <p>Josh talked about the several visits he did earlier in the summer including ventenata, rush skeletonweed, Dyer’s woad, and a few monitoring installations and grant visits with Greta.</p>
<p>2023 Hearing Review and Changes</p>	<p>The group discussed several options and noted necessary changes to the hearing protocols and grant review process. Jasmine offered several options to reduce the time it takes members to review grants including having MDA staff create a one-page summary for each grant and distribute those to the council to review instead of the full grant in WebGrants. Council members said they liked reading through the entire grant, but also liked the idea of having a summary page to review during the hearings.</p>

The group also noted that **MDA should provide a template for presentations**, so the same information is presented by each person.

The group reviewed Scoring Criteria and Jasmine offered the idea to make ½ to ¾ of the evaluation questions the same across all funding opportunities to better compare scores. Some liked the consistence of it and Jasmine said **MDA staff would look into this further**. Monica noted that it would be helpful for reviewers to be more consistent if they had **an explanation for each score**; what details would give a project a score of 3 vs 6 in a specific question. MDA will provide that for the next review cycle.

The group also noted that the **hearing presentations should be separated by funding opportunity** so that the council can compare projects within each funding opportunity better. MDA will work to provide this during the next grant hearings.

Jasmine presented the idea of moving the EDRR and statewide education grants to a 3-year program. She noted that these specific grants are very difficult to compare to other education and local cooperative projects because they are long-term, they do not include herbicides, they serve the whole state, and they are programs, not projects. The council discussed the pros and cons. They noted that the sponsors should still give a program update each year, awards should still be capped at \$75,000/year, and the council should still have the ability to adjust the award every three years. **Kellieann Morris moved to allow only EDRR and statewide education grants to apply for three years of funding, Dana Weatherford seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.**

There was also discussion about adding questions for local cooperative projects:

- Integrated Weed Management: How are you changing management or integrating different management techniques
- Are you seeing positive changes from year to year?
- What are you doing to get other landowners onboard or included into the CWMA?

****These questions could be included into the presentation template**

Jasmine presented the idea of **separating the funding opportunities (FO) on the final score sheet and to deliberate on FOs individually**. Joel Farkel had introduced the idea of looking through several years of grant awards and coming up with an average for each FO. During deliberations, those averages would be taken out of the total award available, and each FO would be “capped” at the average award ceiling. The council would deliberate on each project in an individual FO until the cap was reached and each project was funded, even if it is \$0. Then, at the end of deliberations, the council can go back and adjust project awards as they had done in years past, even above the FO award cap. Jasmine provided a document containing this information going back to 2014. She noted that it was surprisingly very consistent over the years. The council agreed to try this method in 2023.

Jasmine mentioned that in years past the council had awarded more continuing grants fully than new projects and she suggested they do the opposite. There is a lot of planning that goes into starting a new CWMA and if they are cut funding from year one, it may discourage groups from applying again or being successful in meeting their goals. Many council members agreed. She also suggested that the council hold

	<p>continuing projects more accountable for the mapping requirement. It is in the contracts that all local cooperative projects will at minimum share their mapping data with EDDMapS. There are still several projects not adhering to this requirement yet continue to be funded each year.</p> <p>Jasmine also reminded the council that MDA must provide virtual options for all meetings and driving a long distance in the winter to come to Helena for 15 minutes is not always possible. Whether they present virtually or in-person, should not be taken into consideration during deliberations.</p> <p>Jasmine let the council know that remaining funds for continuing grants will not be provided any longer. It has become too much of a focus and there are several reasons why some projects have not spent the funds prior to the next funding cycle. She noted that MDA staff is responsible for working with grantees and making sure they are in good standing with previous grants. Award recommendations should be based on information provided in their application including previous status reports, monitoring and mapping data, efficient use of funds, and the ability of the applicant to carry out the goals and objectives.</p>
<p>Other Business/ Public Comment</p> <p>Adjourn</p>	<p>The council business meeting will be held at the Delta Hotel in Helena on February 6th prior to the Montana Weed Control Association annual conference.</p> <p>The council was asked for agenda suggestions for the next business meeting and encouraged to contact Jasmine if any come to mind.</p> <p>The meeting was opened for discussion of other business and public comment. None was heard.</p> <p>Jasmine thanked Kellieann and the Ravalli County Weed District for hosting the meeting and coordinating the project tours. The Council presented Bob Cloninger with a plaque and gift and thanked him for his time supporting weed efforts across the state.</p> <p>Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.</p>
<p>Grant Tours July 6th</p>	<p>Council members attended project visits in Ravalli County which included touring the Blueweed, Bugloss, and Rush Skeletonweed projects.</p>

4. Action Items				
Action		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Contact Greta to join site visits	Council Members	End of Season	
2	Create a one-page summary for each grant	MDA Staff	3/6/2023	
3	Provide applicants a template for presentations	MDA Staff	2023 Funding Cycle	
4	Look into making evaluation criteria more consistent across FOs	MDA Staff	February Meeting	

5	Include an explanation for each score on the criteria	MDA Staff	2023 Funding Cycle	
6	Schedule presentations by funding opportunity	MDA Staff	2023 Funding Cycle	
7	Identify award caps for each FO and deliberate on FOs individually	MDA Staff/Council Members	2023 Funding Cycle	
8	Provide Jasmine agenda items for next Business Meeting	Council Members		