

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name:	Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Business Meeting		
Date of Meeting:	January 13, 2021	Time:	9:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
Minutes Prepared By:	Carol Bearden	Location:	Zoom Meeting
1. Meeting Objective			
Business Meeting			
2. Attendees			
<p>Council Members: Amber Burch, Jeanette Nordahl, Joel Farkell, Kellieann Morris, Kenny Kever, Linda Eklund, Todd Wagner</p> <p>Agency Representatives: Gary Adams, Joey e’Silva - APHIS; David Hopkins - BIA; Wendy Velman - BLM; Jacob Bradford - BOR; Aaron Kneeland - DNRC; Adam Sieges - FWP; Bob Cloninger - MDT; Tracy Sterling - MSU AES; Dan Lucas - MSU EXT; Monica Pokorny - NRCS; Michelle Cox - USFS</p> <p>Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Beth Eiring, Jasmine Reimer, Carol Bearden, Greta Dige, Andrew Lam</p> <p>Guests: Bob and Rita Dige</p>			
Topic	Discussion		
Welcome	Jasmine Reimer thanked everyone for attending and reviewed Zoom meeting protocol.		
	Bureau Chief Beth Eiring called the meeting to order and rollcall was taken. Beth advised that due to legislative commitments, newly appointed Director Mike Foster and Agricultural Sciences Division Administrator Ian Foley were not present but may join the meeting later.		
Minutes Review/Action Items	Action items from the July 1, 2020 council meeting minutes were reviewed. Jasmine Reimer noted Bob Cloninger’s report that MDT had controlled and continued to monitor the phragmites site on MDT owned land in Lake County.		
	Kenny Kever moved to approve the minutes as written. Kellieann Morris seconded the motion.		
Department Updates	Beth Eiring reported approximately 75% of MDA staff is working remotely and services have continued largely without interruptions. Department staff has assisted with COVID grant funding operations for the Agriculture Adaptability Program and Montana Meat Processing Infrastructure grant awards.		
	Reported MDA legislative activities included funding requests for MDA’s organic certification program and for equipment expenses at MDA’s Analytical Lab in Bozeman. MDA Legislative Bills include the following:		
	HB 93 – Expand materials certified under the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program		
	HB 82 – Clarify administrative expense cap on pulse crop research marketing program		
	HB 94 – Expand loan types in the Montana Farmer Loan Repayment Assistance Program		
	HB 142 – Generally revise hemp laws		

	<p>Beth reported the Herbicide Dealer/Applicator Representative position on the council is currently vacant as former representative Trent Brusseau no longer works or lives in Montana. The position will remain vacant until filled by Director Foster.</p> <p>Jasmine Reimer reported monitoring of several fields where millet seed, containing Palmer amaranth had been planted. To date no live Palmer amaranth plants have been found on the sites. Under Director Thomas, emergency rules listing Palmer amaranth as a restricted weed seed species with zero tolerance for seed coming to Montana were adopted.</p> <p>Jasmine added that waterhemp had been found in one location, originating from a railway into wheat and sugar beet fields in Roosevelt County. The area is being monitored by Dr. Tim Seipel (MSU). Jasmine advised that waterhemp is not currently being considered for addition to the state noxious weed list.</p> <p>Jasmine discussed additional legislation of interest: HB 34 – Revise statutes to reflect federal recognition of Little Shell Tribe; as no land is owned by this tribe, no impact is expected to the Special County/Reservation Grant awards. HB 42 - Clarify AIS management authority laws; giving FWP authority to create an AIS list, including submerged aquatic plants, which could then be removed from the State Noxious Weed List.</p>
<p>Project Reviews</p> <p>Application Updates</p> <p>Evaluation Updates</p>	<p>Greta Dige provided a field visit summary, highlighting several of the 37 past season project reviews of education, research, and local cooperative projects. The council was also updated on the following program activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Writing Workshop-provided virtually and available on YouTube • Weed ID Trainings-provided virtually for MDA's training/certification program • EDDMapS and biocontrol training-provided for the Youth Forestry Program <p>Greta advised the council that 75 applications were received for consideration at the March grant hearings and provided a map of project locations. The 2021 applications consist of 9 education, 11 research, 16 new local cooperatives, and 39 continuing local cooperative projects. Application requests currently total \$2,501,504. Applications will be sent for council review through WebGrants at https://funding.mt.gov on February 8th.</p> <p>Additional updates</p> <p><u>Application Form Changes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project type designation added to education/development applications • Landowner signature required on grant interest form (or comparable) for local cooperative project applications • Progressive weed mapping for new and continuing local cooperative projects <p><u>Evaluation Criteria Changes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Cooperative Evaluation Form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changed matching funds question to collaborative resources ○ Active mapping/sharing to EDDMapS ○ Added question regarding additional and/or in-kind match • Education/Development Evaluation Form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Separate scoring criteria for education and development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Added “Project has specific goals to improve weed management within the applicant’s community and/or state” ○ Added “Project develops a new or enhances existing tools(s), or technology for weed management” ● Research Evaluation Form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Section for additional in-kind match scoring <p>Input on evaluation criteria was requested related to the change in separate and expanded scoring criteria for education/development projects; and if a similar change could benefit research scoring criteria between biocontrol projects and noxious weed research. Monica Pokorny said the new education/development scoring criteria should provide more accurate scoring for projects such as “Supporting Weed Management with Biological Information” from the Natural Heritage Program.</p> <p>Tracy Sterling discussed differences between research projects and biocontrol development projects. Michelle Cox suggested biocontrol remaining part of research but including development, to make a research/development funding opportunity. Tracy Sterling and Kenny Keever showed support for a research/development funding opportunity. Jasmine Reimer asked for council input of potential issues related to this change and none were heard. It was agreed to go forward with a Research/Development funding opportunity for 2022 applications. Jasmine asked the council to keep notes of additional criteria questions that would be beneficial with the funding category change while they complete their 2021 application review and deliberation process. Jasmine noted that a separate development category could be added if found to be beneficial. Continued council input was requested.</p> <p>Kenny Keever inquired about saltcedar control in areas up and downstream from the Yellowstone County project area and the amount of landowner contribution in the project area. Jasmine advised that Carbon County maintains a close eye in their area and the project contractor monitors areas he has treated previously. Greta added that some project area landowners are able to take over follow up herbicide applications and/or assist with monitoring and mapping efforts.</p>
Noxious Weed Program Updates	<p>Noxious Weed Program updates were provided by Jasmine Reimer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Andrew Lam joined MDA in August 2020 as the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage (NWSFF) specialist. ● There are currently no active Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Advisory Council representatives. Direction of the council is pending input from Director Foster. ● Terms for five council representatives on the Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council will be open as of June 30, 2021. Council members wanting to be reappointed were asked to contact Jasmine for information on re-applying. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Livestock Production Representative (Linda Eklund) ○ Agricultural Crop Production Representative (Todd Wagner) ○ Biological Research & Control Representative (Kenny Keever) ○ Western County Representative (Kellieann Morris) ○ Herbicide Dealer/Applicator Representative (Vacant) ● Weed list petitions were received by MDA to add puncture vine and Scotch thistle to the state noxious weed list. Petitions will be reviewed at the January

22nd work group meeting (9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) **Contact Jasmine if interested in joining the work group.**

- With the removal of requirement that applicants adhere to state herbicide bid prices, MDA will review application herbicide pricing and provide an information sheet of overages for the council.

Discussion from the July 1st council meeting was re-opened related to removing ongoing new invader and established statewide education and biocontrol projects from the hearing and deliberation process. Jasmine advised that if the council approved of this change, applicants would continue to submit project applications and a budget each year, which would be reviewed and adjusted if warranted by MDA. Applicants would provide an annual project presentation for the council during the March business meeting, prior to the start of grant hearings.

Projects considered for this pre-award change are listed below with 2021 application request amounts.

2021 New Invaders, State Education, State Bio Grants

Type	Organization	Request
MT Noxious Weed Education Campaign	Montana State University	\$75,000
MT Biocontrol Coordination Project	Missoula Co. Weed District	\$26,900
Dyer's Woad	Beaverhead Co. Weed District	\$35,696
Blueweed	Ravalli Co. Weed District	\$32,989
Tansy Ragwort	Lincoln Co. Weed District	\$42,000
Skeletonweed	Lincoln Co. Weed District	\$45,080
Skeletonweed	Ravalli Co. Weed District	\$65,000
Skeletonweed	Sanders Co. Weed District	\$23,000
		\$345,665

Jasmine noted that the listed projects are important and typically rank high for deliberations. Jasmine was hopeful that removing these applications from deliberations would provide a clearer picture of other project rankings.

Discussion followed, with a decision to try the pre-award process this March. The listed applicants will provide presentations at the business meeting, prior to grant hearings. MDA will have worked with the applicants on any necessary budget revisions and advise the council of updates. The council will be asked to vote on funding the projects but may opt to move pre-award project funding to deliberations.

The council business meeting and grant hearings will be held virtually through Zoom March 8th – 12th. Hearings conclude on Friday, March 12th with deliberations and the council funding recommendations for Director Foster.

Jasmine noted possible challenges of a Zoom meeting and trying to watch applicant presentations, view application details, and score applications. **Council members were asked to contact weed program staff if they would like to have printed evaluation forms for each project mailed to them to help with this process. MDA will print and mail meeting documents to council members and asked for notification if a different mailing address is currently preferred.**

The council was asked for agenda suggestions for the March business meeting and encouraged to contact Jasmine or Carol if any come to mind.

	<p>Tracy Sterling discussed submitted MSU applications that may have balances left from prior awards. Tracy asked that MDA staff contact her for accurate prior funding balances if an invoice has not been submitted for the last quarter of the year.</p>																		
Noxious Weed Program Budget	<p>A summary of the noxious weed program budget and funding estimate for the FY21 Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF) grant awards was provided by Jasmine Reimer. State Special Revenue funding, including the \$100,000 MDT pass-through, for the FY21 MDA noxious weed program was estimated at \$2,068,000.</p> <p><u>State Special Revenue pre-allocated grant awards and expenditures</u></p> <table> <tr> <td>\$472,500</td><td>FY21 Special \$7,500 County/Reservation grant awards Grants will be distributed to seven tribes and 56 counties in early spring</td></tr> <tr> <td>\$100,000</td><td>MDT pass through of \$1,785.72 to each county</td></tr> <tr> <td>\$ 6,500</td><td>Estimated council expenses</td></tr> <tr> <td>\$227,545</td><td>Estimated FY21 non-grant expenses (Amount is based on 12% of the prior year fund 02068 grant awards, which totaled \$1,896,210. Non-grant funds are utilized for noxious weed program operating and personal services costs, and a portion of MDA's Central Services Division costs)</td></tr> </table> <p><u>Funds available for additional grant awards</u></p> <table> <tr> <td>State Special Revenue Fund (estimate)</td><td>\$1,261,455</td></tr> <tr> <td>General Fund</td><td>\$90,397</td></tr> <tr> <td>Forest Service Funding</td><td>\$105,000</td></tr> <tr> <td><u>Reverted Funds (YTD estimate)</u></td><td><u>\$13,265</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>Estimated funds for March grant awards:</td><td>\$1,470,117</td></tr> </table> <p>Historical weed vehicle fee revenue, Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF) interest revenue, reverted fund totals, and hearing request totals were provided to the council. Funding requested for the 2021 grant hearings currently totals approximately \$2.5 million, leaving a shortfall of approximately \$1 million. Available grant funds will continue to be assessed prior to the March hearings.</p>	\$472,500	FY21 Special \$7,500 County/Reservation grant awards Grants will be distributed to seven tribes and 56 counties in early spring	\$100,000	MDT pass through of \$1,785.72 to each county	\$ 6,500	Estimated council expenses	\$227,545	Estimated FY21 non-grant expenses (Amount is based on 12% of the prior year fund 02068 grant awards, which totaled \$1,896,210. Non-grant funds are utilized for noxious weed program operating and personal services costs, and a portion of MDA's Central Services Division costs)	State Special Revenue Fund (estimate)	\$1,261,455	General Fund	\$90,397	Forest Service Funding	\$105,000	<u>Reverted Funds (YTD estimate)</u>	<u>\$13,265</u>	Estimated funds for March grant awards:	\$1,470,117
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NWSFF Program Update	<p>Andrew Lam introduced himself and presented the 2020 season report for the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage (NWSFF) program. A decline in certified forage in 2020 was discussed and attributed partly to a large drop in Big Horn County straw certifications, which had previously been an important resource. Other factors affecting program numbers included travel and outreach limitations as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. An overall total of 10,075 tons of certified hay and straw was reported for 2020, which ranked as the programs lowest number in thirty years.</p> <p>Andrew reported 40 active NWSFF inspectors in 2020, consisting of MSU Extension agents, county weed district staff, and MDA staff. Montana currently has six certified pellet processing plants and two certified straw wattle plants, however certification site visits to out of state plants are on hold until travel restrictions are lifted. Andrew plans to increase program advertising, outreach to rodeo participants, outfitters and packers, and has a program newsletter that will go out soon.</p> <p>Kellieann Morris stated that certified acres were down in Ravalli County, citing a low need for certified forage due to limited back county enforcement. Kellieann</p>																		

	<p>encouraged increased education and outreach to back country packers and was eager to assist and see the program grow.</p> <p>Michelle Cox reported a request from Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest law enforcement had led to an update of the Forest Service weed order. The update was completed in the fall of 2020 and published in multiple papers. Michelle was hopeful it will spur an increase in certified forage compliance. Michelle said the updated order is in effect for two years and can be updated to include gravel restrictions and other changes if needed in the future. Enforcement issues related to COVID limitations, budget cuts for supplies and travel, and a lack of staff were discussed. Michelle noted the impact of ventenata limiting certification of hay fields, however Jasmine said field areas containing ventenata can be excluded from certification of clean areas and encouraged educating forage inspectors of this.</p> <p>Andrew and Jasmine briefed the council on HB 93 – Materials Bill, which will allow MDA to inspect and certify gravel, mulch, and other materials. The Bill is sponsored by Rep. Kenneth Walsh, HD71 and will be heard January 14th at 3:00 p.m. If passed, program operations will be similar to the NWSFF program. Government employees will serve as inspectors and a minimum of two inspections will be required per year. Certified producers/pits will benefit from the increased demand for a weed free product.</p>			
<p>Other Business/ Public Comment</p> <p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Beth Eiring opened the meeting for discussion of other business and public comment. None was heard.</p> <p>Joel Farkell moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:45 a.m. Tracy Sterling seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.</p>			
4. Action Items				
Action		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Keep track of criteria questions/changes that would be beneficial with project category changes.	Council members	Following hearings	
2	Contact Jasmine if interested in re-applying for council position.	Term ending council members	May 1	
3	Contact program staff if interested in a printed evaluation form for scoring each application.	Council members	ASAP	
4	Send business meeting agenda items to Jasmine or Carol.	Council members	ASAP	
5	Advise Carol if a new mailing address is currently preferred.	Council members	ASAP	
6	Contact Tracy Sterling for unspent MSU project balance clarifications.	MDA	Prior to hearings	