

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name: Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Business Meeting & Tour

Date of Meeting: July 09, 2025 **Time:** 12:20 p.m. – 1:51 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By: Greta Dige (Zoom AI Summaries)

Location: 4-H Building 308 6th Ave N, Billings, MT 59101

1. Meeting Objective

Business Meeting & Tour

2. Attendees

Council Members: Joel Farkell, Amber Burch (virtual), Jeff Brennan, Kellieann Fillingham (virtual), Dana Weatherford (virtual), Bill Curran, Brian Ostwald

Agency Representatives: Micheal Hamel – DNRC, Jason Allen- MDT, Robert Thompson -BOR, Monica Pokorny – NRCS (virtual)

Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Jasmine Chaffee (virtual), Greta Dige, Josh Wagoner, Lori Leaf, Megan Hoyer, Amanda Coyle, Brooke Mills, Halle Gardner, Kima Traynham (virtual)

Guests (in-person): Anthony Sammartano – Yellowstone County Extension, Joe Lockwood – Yellowstone County Weed District

3. Topics

Welcome:

Jasmine, welcomes everyone and completes introductions.

Minutes Review/Action Items:

Council meeting and grant hearing minutes from March 10-12, 2025, were reviewed. All action items were completed. **Jeff Brennan moved to approve the minutes as written; Brian Ostwald seconded the motion; minutes were unanimously approved.**

Program Updates:

Jasmine Chaffee provided a noxious weed program update by starting with the legislature updates. SB167 which aimed to add \$10 million to the noxious weed trust, was not signed by the governor due to budget constraints. The gravel and forage programs are performing well, with expanded certified gravel pits in several counties (new: Valley and Chouteau; Yellowstone, Stillwater, and Sweet Grass). Jasmine notes that federal funding for grants through the U.S. Forest Service may be uncertain in the future due to restructuring, though some existing grant funds are still available. It is unlikely to get funding from forest service in the future. As far as the Bureau of Land Management funding will still be good as there are three years left on it. A new interface for grants has been implemented on the cloud, and the upcoming MISC quarterly meeting will feature an EDRR tour in Sanders County.

Grant Monitoring and Site Visit Update:

Greta Dige gave a brief summary of site visits and monitoring and thanked those that provided tours for the day. She discussed monitoring using Survey123 and how reports are automated. The focus has been on training and with site visits being a little slow and picking up later in the month and

August. Discussed training crew staff for Prairie County and they are using it. She is looking forward to printing the EDDMapS Pro guide. Discussed Lake and Lincoln County visits. Greta mentioned the new WebGrants interface and that it maintains similar functionality and login information.

Program Updates:

- Lori Leaf gave a summary of summer activities starting with covering weeds pulls with Megan and Halle. Attended with Megan the Agriculture Extension conference in Billings which was great as attendees and their families asked lots of questions. She has created a kids activity book and EDDMapS guide, both are going to print. Next she will be working on tailgate wraps and providing the template to counties to take locally to have printed.
- Josh Wagoner provided an update about the EDRR program starting with tansy ragwort. Trying to move this species on the noxious weed list from a 2A to a 1B. Took Micheal Hamel to show him tansy and had difficulty finding any to show him. Flathead County and Glacier Park are two places of concern as not much is known about them in those areas. Looking to move scotch broom from a 1B to 1A listing. A few phragmites sites in northwestern Montana have been sent to be genetically tested. Rush skeletonweed existing sites are looking better while new sites are being found in Beaverhead, Three Forks (Broadwater County) and MPG Ranch (Ravalli and southern Missoula County). Lake and Lincoln counties are looking better. Micheal asked if the new sites are native or invasive phragmites. Josh responded that there is very little native on that side of the divide so he believes they are invasive.
- Megan Hoyer thanked the council for looking at Two Moon Park and gave accomplishments in invasive species education program, highlighting the realtor workshop, continuing partnerships with various organizations, and the success of Noxious Weed Awareness Week. She has connected with 5,421 people across the state for invasive species education and thanked everyone for the contacts and referrals. Continuing with Indian Education for All and plans to attend and teach at MEA conference. She worked with Fish, Wildlife and Parks to include information on HuntCleanGo and why hunters should care about invasive plants. She is still working on websites and other items. She has been focusing on vectors with landowners and how to protect their land and where to start, along with early detection and rapid response.
- Amanda Coyle provided an update on the AgCorps program. Funding was cut in April but they managed to transfer four members to the University of Montana program so they can continue in their positions. The program is expected to resume fully in 2026 with the grant currently going through Federal AmeriCorps channels. Despite uncertainties, they have educated over 450 plus individuals, generated 30 volunteers, and provided capacity-building services to 9 organizations. Megan thanked those still in the program as they are highly valuable. Jasmine reported that the member assigned to the Adopt-A-Trail left to go to another program so Megan, Lori, and Halle really stepped up to fill in.
- Brooke Mills reported on various site visits, EDDMapS training, and GIS projects, including cleaning up files and working on a state dashboard for the Noxious Weed Trust Fund. She has been working on the monitoring survey which loves to break. Brooke has been looking into purchasing a drone for the program and making sure all documents are in place.

- Halle Gardner shared that the Pull Your Share program has reached 433 kids in classrooms and taken 313 out for field activities this spring, with the program growing again after a slight decrease in 2024.
- Kima Traynham provided updates on staffing changes, including a new Billings agent and vacancies in Kalispell and Bozeman offices. The recycling and waste pesticide disposal programs are progressing well.

Member Updates:

- Jason Allen: Rush skeletonweed is popping up and thanked the county coordinators for their efforts to watch the rights of way. Out if a \$1.7 million budget left only \$50,000 on the table.
- Brian Ostwald: Running on a skeleton crew this summer and not spending as much time in the field as hoped. Brain's focus has been on inspecting subdivisions and is trying to develop a process that works as the country has seen a drastic increase in people. Sulphur cinquefoil is blowing up big time.
- Joel Farkell: Not much change in herbicide prices with tariffs. Thanked everyone for the tour to see projects in person. North of Great Falls is dry and hay is half of what it usually is with hay being brought in. Continuing utility work as they are being moved around so not sure what they are bringing in. Lori mentioned that the Shelby Pull Your Share event had dirt that was like cement.
- Bill Curran: Nothing to report but thanked everyone for the tour today.
- Jeff Brennan: Challenges with herbicide resistance in crops across the state, particularly in sugar beet crops where glyphosate is becoming ineffective against kochia. He expresses concern about farmers using bootleg crops due to financial constraints, which may introduce new weed seeds. Big concerns are weed resistance and cutting costs and the introduction of new seeds.
- Mike Hamel: June has been a blur. He mentioned the rollout of a new weed letter template for DNRC land use specialists and their involvement in various training and field evaluation activities. Working with Jason on new drone stuff such as remote sensing. For all of July he will be transitioning to doing field inspections. For FY25 they have spent all of the \$70,000 budget.
- Robert Thompson: Thanked Amber for Clark Canyon spray day especially in light of all contracts being canceled. He has been reworking contracts in hopes of getting them approved soon. They have approval to send personnel to the federal pesticide applicator training for the first time since Bureau of Reclamation has been excluded for years. He is sending 3-4 people to the training so they can have their own crews and not rely on contracts so much.
- Monica Pokorney: Not a lot of updates as not sure what funding and what the agency will

look like going forward. Finishing contracts that were obligated for this year and will wait see what is ahead for next year.

- Amber Burch: Thanks to Josh and Jason for the last couple of weeks dealing with new rush sites along the 1-15 corridor. Will be meeting again to do a road survey when things dry up and become easier to spot. Jason was able to stop the mowing crews before cutting these locations this year. So far this for woad things are looking good with no plant reported in the Flathead area. Great crew this year that are hard workers for being young (18–20-year-olds range). Subdivisions are on the increase with four on her desk. If reviewing the weed law this is a gap and would like both the weed and subdivision law reviewed to better help with prevention.
- Kellieann Sweeney: Rush in full swing and areas where they found it in the past are seeing a reduction. Ravalli county is in a serious drought. Blueweed is in full bloom and asked folks to reach out if they find it so it can be treated. Seeing issues with chemical not working as normal due to drought conditions so they are working with reps to problem solve. Kellieann reported that in some spots they are increasing water and still not getting the results they want. Josh noted they had failure with herbicide treatments and are retreating on the interstate in Mineral and Missoula counties.
- Dana Weatherford: Not too much and feel for those on the western part as they are hot. She got a report of possible blueweed which turned out to be lupine. She reminds those with crews about safety first as she had a crew member have a rollover.

Other Business/Public Comment:

The winter council business meeting will be held virtually on November 6th, 2025.

Greta mentioned she did a new training with Mesonet on prevention and received permissions from Australia to use a prevention brochure as a template to create one of our own.

Jasmine mentioned the save the dates for November's meeting and upcoming grant hearings.

Adjourn

Kellieann Fillingham motioned to adjourn, Brian Ostwald seconds; meeting was adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

4. Action Items

1. Secure 2026 July's field tour at Working Dogs for Conservation

Assigned: Greta

Due Date: March 2026

Status:

2. Provide Jasmine agenda items for next Business Meeting

Assigned: Council Members Due Date: November 6, 2025

Status: