

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name:	Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Meeting		
Date of Meeting:	January 16, 2019	Time:	1:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.
Minutes Prepared By:	Carol Bearden	Location:	MT Dept. of Agriculture, Rm #225 Conference Call / GoToMeeting
1. Meeting Objective			
Business Meeting			
2. Attendees			
<p>Council Members: Ben Thomas, Brian Ostwald*, Jack Eddie, Joel Farkell*, Kenny Keever*, Margie Edsall, Todd Wagner*</p> <p>Agency Representatives: Adam Sieges*, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP); Monica Pokorny*, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Dan Lucas*, Montana State University (MSU) – Extension; Tracy Sterling*, (MSU), Mike Miller and Bob Cloninger, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)</p> <p>Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Mark Nechodom, Beth Eiring, Jasmine Reimer, Carol Bearden, Rory Ruffner, Ingrid Mallo, Cindy Trimp</p> <p>Guests: Kirsten Haswell and Jon Putnam, Montana Board of Investments (MBOI); Trent Brusseau*, Corteva Agrisciences</p> <p>* Attended by conference call</p>			
3. Agenda and Notes, Decisions, Issues			
Topic	Discussion		
Welcome & Introductions	Director Ben Thomas welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.		
July 11, 2018 Minutes Review	Minutes from the July 11, 2018 business meeting were reviewed. Margie Edsall moved to approve the minutes as written. Jack Eddie seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.		
Board of Investments Update	<p>Jon Putnam, Director of Fixed Income and Kirsten Haswell, Fixed Income Analyst at the Montana Board of Investments (MBOI) provided an overview of investment activities related to the Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF). NWTF investments are included in the Trust Funds Investment Pool (TFIP), which is designed to allow simplified investing and accounting, broader diversification, less risk, and lower costs.</p> <p>Risk factors, investment philosophy, investment objectives and performance were discussed. Presentation summary information included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBOI takes a long-term view of investments with a focus on managing downside risk. • The NWTF investment in TFIP continues to perform well. • Based on current interest rates, TFIP distributions are expected to stabilize. <p>Following the meeting discussion, it was determined that the NWTF principal was moved to the long-term Trust Funds Investment Pool (TFIP) in FY 2007.</p>		

<p>Legislation Updates</p>	<p>Mark Nechodom discussed current MDA legislative activity to acquire spending authority and an FTE for the MDA State Weed Coordinator position that was approved during the last session. Ben Thomas reported that HB 63 legislation, removing the sunset date to extend financial liability for pesticide applicators, was progressing as MDA and industry representatives work to set appropriate levels of insurance requirements through rule making. The process has moved to the public comment period with insurance requirements for ground applicators at \$30,000 and aerial applicators at \$50,000.</p> <p>HB 142, introduced by Representative Joshua Kassmier, revising county weed laws and definitions was discussed along with LC1746 carried by Ray Shaw. LC1746 was initiated to provide additional funding for county weed districts with increased vehicle licensing fees, but it is not expected to move forward.</p> <p>Stephanie Hester, Invasive Species Program Manager at DNRC has been providing weekly Legislative Bill updates related to invasive species and can be contacted at shester@mt.gov for information. Mark Nechodom asked the council to contact MDA if there is any legislation that MDA should be aware of and tracking.</p>												
<p>Noxious Weed Program Budget</p>	<p>Carol Bearden provided a summary of the noxious weed program budget and an estimate of funding available for FY 19 Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF) grant awards. State Special Revenue funding (including the \$100,000 MDT pass-through) available for the FY19 MDA noxious weed program was estimated at \$2,107,000.</p> <p>Planned grant awards and expenditures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$465,000 - FY 19 Special \$7,500 County/Reservation grant awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grants will be distributed to six tribes and 56 counties in early spring. An application was not received from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe • \$100,000 - MDT pass through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$1,785.72 awarded to each county • \$229,582 - FY 19 non-grant expenses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Amount is based on 12% of the prior year fund 02068 grant awards, which totaled \$1,913,180. Non-grant funds are utilized for noxious weed program operating and personal services costs, council expenses, and a portion of MDA's Central Services Division costs. <p>Remaining funds:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">State Special Revenue Fund (estimate)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$1,312,418</td> </tr> <tr> <td>General Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$90,397</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Forest Service Funding</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$126,364</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Forest Service Sage Grouse Funding</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$130,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Reverted Funds (estimate)</u></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>\$83,342</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Estimated funds for additional grant awards:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$1,742,521</td> </tr> </table> <p>Historical weed vehicle fee revenue, Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF) interest amounts, reverted funds and grant hearing funding requests were provided to the council. Funding requested for the 2019 grant hearings was reported as approximately \$2.26 million, which will leave a shortfall of approximately \$527,000. Available grant funds will continue to be assessed prior to the March hearings.</p>	State Special Revenue Fund (estimate)	\$1,312,418	General Fund	\$90,397	Forest Service Funding	\$126,364	Forest Service Sage Grouse Funding	\$130,000	<u>Reverted Funds (estimate)</u>	<u>\$83,342</u>	Estimated funds for additional grant awards:	\$1,742,521
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<p>Project Reviews / Application Updates</p>	<p>Jasmine Reimer provided photos and activity updates on the 43 grant field visits made in 2018. Traveling across the state, Jasmine toured and met with recipients of eight education, one research, and 34 local cooperative project grants.</p> <p>In addition, 18 EDDMapS trainings were offered to a variety of landowners and staff; a grant writing workshop was held in Lewistown; and meetings were held with the Clark Fork Watershed Workgroup. Jasmine reported increased access for county weed coordinators to the Montana Natural Heritage Program site and discussed planned data transfers and future habitat suitability map availability.</p> <p>A phragmites survey was conducted along the highline by MDA staff. Samples taken during the survey did not identify invasive phragmites in areas other than the known infestations in Blaine and Hill county.</p> <p>Jasmine participated in ventenata and medusahead tours in Bozeman and Wyoming and reported that new ventenata infestations were found from Sanders County to Rosebud County this summer on private and public lands. Mike Miller reported that MDT maintenance training, scheduled for approximately 50 MDT employees in early May, will include information on ventenata and other invasive grasses. Mike discussed concerns related to ventenata being included in roadside haying. Margie Edsall encouraged Rory Ruffner, MDA's Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage coordinator to share invasive grass information at the forage council's February meeting.</p> <p>Application updates were discussed and a map of the 92 applications submitted for the 2019 grant hearings was provided to the council. Applications were received for 12 research projects, 14 education projects, and 66 local cooperative projects (13 are new projects). Applications submitted for the grant hearings currently total \$2,269,875, which may be adjusted as applications are reviewed.</p> <p>Grant hearings will be held March 4th – 8th at the DoubleTree by Hilton in downtown Helena. There will be a short business meeting prior to the start of grant hearings, which will continue through the week with applicant presentations and conclude with funding deliberations and recommendations on March 8th.</p>
<p>Research Needs / Project Funding</p>	<p>Mark Nechodom followed up on the pesticide program action item from the July 2018 minutes. Mark reported productive collaboration with Dr. Cecil Tharp, MSU Extension/Statewide Pesticide Education Coordinator, regional coordinators, extension agents, and MDA staff involving training coordination, broadened curriculum, increased outreach, and the credit approval process. Online training and the potential for online testing was discussed.</p> <p>Mark Nechodom discussed leveraging maximum benefits from NWTF research funding by conducting periodic reviews of strategic goals and objectives. Tracy Sterling suggested increased communication with researchers prior to application submittal dates, and direction from the council on research needs. Tracy noted MSU's success with biological research and development grants but worries that fundamental research, that could change management practices for healthy plant communities, may not be being addressed. Dan Lucas encouraged utilizing the link between county weed coordinators and MSU Extension field staff to recognize issues that challenge land managers. Research for identified issues may expand to new research opportunities.</p>

	<p>Mike Miller discussed challenges in scoring research applications as a non-researcher, who may not recognize scientific benefits of a project. Margie Edsall advised that her scores are influenced by the tangible results she sees from projects. Margie suggested adding an application section where researchers can specify project goals and expected results.</p> <p>Mark suggested utilizing input from Extension and University staff to assist the council and grant applicants in formulation of research questions that are researchable and fundable. Mark noted his commitment to focusing on this evolving process.</p>
Sweet Grass County NWTF Project Report	<p>Sweet Grass County Weed Coordinator, Connie Weston updated the council on activities of the Mendenhall Fire grant project. Maps and photos provided insight into the severity of the August 2017 fire and the difficult terrain in the project area.</p> <p>Connie reported having six landowners in the project area, three of the landowners utilized grant funds. An increase in common mullein was seen following the fire but it is hoped that natives will increase from re-seeding efforts. Yellow toadflax is new to the project area and was found following the fire along with sulfur cinquefoil.</p> <p>Connie reported that successful grant work in 2018 included herbicide application on approximately 204 acres in both spring and fall and utilization of all grant funds.</p>
Other Business Public Comment Agenda Items Adjourn	<p>Ben Thomas reported that terms for the following council members end on June 30, 2019:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Linda Eklund – Livestock Production Representative Kellieann Morris – Western County Representative Todd Wagner – Agricultural Crop Production Representative Kenny Keever – Biological Research & Control Representative Jim Gordon – Herbicide Dealer/Applicator Representative</p> <p>Ben asked council members to notify MDA if they plan to seek re-appointment to the council. A council recruitment memo and application form will be sent out by Jasmine Reimer and posted to the MDA website.</p> <p>Director Ben Thomas opened the meeting for other business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Eddie asked if Dave Burch had set up a meeting with the railroad regarding weed control. Dave will be asked when he returns to work. • Jack Eddie reported that some grant applicants feel that applicants on the council have an advantage in responding to council questions during hearing deliberations. • Jasmine Reimer asked for council input on placing a limit, possibly the federal per diem rate, on reimbursement for meals included in grant projects. MDA will provide additional information for discussion at the March council meeting. • Jasmine Reimer discussed use of state bid prices for NWTF grant projects, noting that in support of local business, some counties do not allow the sale of herbicide at lower prices by the weed district. When the project herbicide cost differs from the state bid price, applicants should explain the reason, and submit acres and pricing accurately. <p>Ben asked that the topics above be included on the March meeting agenda.</p>

	<p>Mike Miller reported he will be retiring from MDT at the end of February. Mike said he plans to attend at least a portion of the hearings and to work with Bob Cloninger who will be filling Mike’s position on the council.</p> <p>Ben Thomas asked for public comment. None was heard.</p> <p>Jack Eddie moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:15 p.m. Margie Edsall seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.</p>			
4. Action Items				
Action		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Contact MDA regarding legislation that MDA should be aware of and tracking.	All		On-going
2	Share invasive grass information at the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage council meeting in February.	Rory Ruffner	2/20/19	
3	Notify MDA if planning to seek re-appointment to the council.	Linda Eklund, Kellieann Morris, Todd Wagner, Kenny Keever, Jim Gordon	4/12/19	
4	Provide additional agenda topics to MDA staff for the March 4 th business meeting.	Council	ASAP	
5	Review topics discussed in Other Business and prepare suggestions/information for discussion.	All	3/4/19	