

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Name:	Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council Business Meeting		
Date of Meeting:	July 1, 2020	Time:	9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Minutes Prepared By:	Carol Bearden	Location:	GoToMeeting
1. Meeting Objective			
Business Meeting			
2. Attendees			
<p>Council Members: Ben Thomas, Trent Brusseau, Amber Burch, Joel Farkell, Kenny Kever, Ron McOwen, Kelliann Morris, Jeanette Nordahl, Brian Ostwald, Todd Wagner</p> <p>Agency Representatives: Adam Sieges - FWP; Dan Lucas, Tracy Sterling - MSU; Gary Adams, Joey e’Silva - USDA APHIS; Bob Cloninger - MDT; David Hopkins -BIA; Jacob Bradford - BOR</p> <p>Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Ian Foley, Beth Eiring, Jasmine Reimer, Carol Bearden, Greta Dige</p> <p>Guests: Karen Laitala, Powell County Weed District; Pam Schwend, Carbon County Weed District</p>			
3. Agenda and Notes, Decisions, Issues			
Topic	Discussion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome Review of Minutes Council Appointments Department Updates 	<p>Montana Department of Agriculture Director Ben Thomas called the meeting to order. Introductions were made.</p> <p>Minutes from the March 2020 business meeting and grant hearings were reviewed. Kenny Kever moved to approve the minutes as submitted and was seconded by Todd Wagner. The motion was approved unanimously.</p> <p>Ron McOwen and Amber Burch were welcomed as new council members, Ron as the At-Large member and Amber as the MWCA Representative. Ben reported that council members Brian Ostwald, Jeanette Nordahl, and Joel Farkell have been re-appointed for an additional two-year term on the council. Terms for these appointments will end June 30, 2022.</p> <p>Director Ben Thomas advised the council that a majority of department staff is working remotely due to Covid-19 impacts, however lab employees and some Helena staff continue working at the office. Ben reported that MDA staff is providing on-going assistance with the Cares Act, COVID-19 Relief Fund awards through the Montana Agriculture Adaptability Program, Montana Meat Processing Improvement Grants, and assisting the Department of Commerce with Business Innovation Grant awards.</p> <p>Administrator Ian Foley provided information on steps recently taken by the department through the Montana Seed Act in adopting emergency rules to list Palmer amaranth as a restricted weed species with zero tolerance. Emergency rules are now in place and USDA AMS has updated their noxious and restricted weed lists to include Palmer amaranth for Montana.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Updates 	<p>Program updates from State Weed Coordinator Jasmine Reimer included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NWTF grant funding opportunities for 2021 will be posted on WebGrants within the week. 		

- Covid-19 restrictions may impact the number of grant site visits. The council was asked to email Greta Dige if interested in a specific project visit.
- Andrew Lam has been hired as the Noxious Weed Specialist for the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage program. Andrew will also assist with new invaders and grant monitoring.

Jasmine asked for council input regarding atypical applications and consideration of changes to scoring criteria to better address development projects. Jasmine and Greta will provide draft updates for discussion at the January 2021 meeting.

The council was asked to consider removing ongoing new invader projects and established statewide education and biocontrol projects from the hearings process and establishing set funding amounts per project that could be allocated prior to deliberations on other applications. Jasmine identified current new invader projects as Dyer’s woad, blueweed, tansy ragwort, and three rush skeletonweed projects, which tend to have little fluctuation in the amount requested and project activities. Kenny Keever asked if applications would still be submitted for each project and if the council would have oversight, which Jasmine confirmed for both. Amber Burch noted that she has appreciated the opportunity to provide an annual update to the council on Dyer’s woad activities, either at the hearings or a council business meeting. **Discussion will be continued at the January meeting.**

Scoring criteria revisions suggested by David Hopkins following the 2020 hearings were discussed regarding increased scores for applications exceeding the required local cooperative 50% match amount. Jasmine noted that 2021 applications have been updated to offer applicants an opportunity to list additional match and/or in-kind match that is not included in the project budget, where receipt documentation is required. Discussion followed that applications meeting but not exceeding the 50% match requirement should not be penalized, however based on discussion, council scoring tended to increase for projects with higher match, including additional non-budgeted or in-kind match. **Scoring criteria related to matching funds will be discussed further at the January council meeting. Project scoring criteria will be added to the grant guidelines and the WebGrants funding opportunities.**

Grant monitoring standards and project weed management plans, which had been optional for 2020 local cooperative applications were discussed. The council was asked to consider if project weed management plans, individual landowner plans and/or signed commitment forms should be required for local cooperative project applications. Jasmine noted that the existing application form basically creates a project weed management plan without adding an additional form to the application. Kelliann Morris encouraged signed commitment forms from grant cooperators and suggested including planned activities/goals. Overcomplicating application requirements was a concern and it was noted that some weed districts already acquire this information from grant cooperators.

The importance of landowner commitment was discussed. **Jasmine will develop a landowner commitment form template, required to be signed and submitted for each local cooperative participant.** The template will include:

- Dollar amount committed by landowner
- Weeds treated
- Types of treatment
- Number of acres treated

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other planned activities • Landowner signature <p>Required use of EDDMapS was discussed with varied feedback. Jasmine asked that additional comments be sent to her for continued discussion at the January council meeting. Wording updates to the scoring criteria will be prepared for review at the January council meeting.</p> <p>Grant monitoring was reviewed. Jasmine suggested waiting to add standard grant monitoring plans until input was received from Jane Mangold based on the monitoring grant that was awarded to her in March 2020.</p> <p>The council was advised that a grant contract had eventually been signed with the University of Idaho for Mark Schwarzlaender’s rush skeletonweed biocontrol project. Additional discussion of out of state grant funding was tabled until January.</p> <p>Jasmine discussed task force coordinator/strike team leader needs, which although not funded at the 2020 hearings will be assisted in part by the MDA forage/specialist position. MDA currently does not have funding or an FTE position available to dedicate to this role. Jasmine welcomed suggestions related to this need.</p> <p>Expanding the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage program to include gravel pit and other construction material certifications was discussed. Jasmine advised that MDA has a legislative placeholder for this and expects to have more to report in January.</p>
<p>Agricultural Experiment Station / Extension Overview</p>	<p>Tracy Sterling, Department Head and Professor at MSU and Dan Lucas, Western Region Department Head for MSU Extension, provided a written report of Montana State University Extension Service and the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station activities to the council. The finalized report can be found on the MDA website and the MSU site.</p> <p>Tracy reviewed the MSU Agricultural Experiment Station portion of the report highlighting MSU’s NWTF grant awards, additional funding sources, and a review of MSU departments/staff involved in weed research and education. Publications, research, and resource stewardship were noted as well as a historical perspective on research and education across the state.</p> <p>Dan reviewed Extension training hours, attendees, and programs; Extension weed management consultations, education, and outreach in 2019. Ongoing efforts in 2020 to connect MSU, landowners and industry while complying with COVID-19 restrictions were discussed.</p>
<p>Project Updates</p>	<p>Pam Schwend provided the council with an overview of the Carbon County Weed District STEM education program for high school students. This well received program was developed with the Yellowstone County weed education coordinator and offered the opportunity for students to learn from addressing a variety of landowner scenarios and environmental impact challenges.</p> <p>Karen Laitala, Powell County Weed Coordinator, shared an update on the Blackfoot River Corridor CWMA project activities. Karen reported on weed control efforts with this long-term project and the many education opportunities.</p>
<p>Council Member Updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kellieann Morris discussed the continuing struggle with blueweed in Sanders County and the possible need for a group workday. Jasmine offered MDA workday assistance and a reminder of NWTF emergency grant funding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amber Burch advised the council that Dyer's woad in Sweet Grass was looking much better this year with 191 rosettes and 25 flowering plants found compared to the thousands found at the initial discovery in 2019. Bob Cloninger was asked for an update on phragmites control on MDT land in Lake County. Bob advised that a treatment plan had been in place but may have been delayed by weather. Bob will update Jasmine when he has more information. 			
Project Tour Information	Kellieann Morris invited the council to tour a variety of noxious weed projects including rush skeletonweed, common bugloss, and blueweed in Ravalli County. The tour was planned for July 22 and possibly extending into July 23 rd . The council was asked to contact Greta Dige if they planned to attend. Kellieann will provide a tour report for those unable to attend.			
Other Business/Public Comment	Beth Eiring asked if there was other business to discuss and for public comment. None was heard.			
Upcoming Meetings	<p>The January 2021 Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council meeting is scheduled for January 11th, at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls, prior to the Montana Weed Control Association (MWCA) annual meeting (January 14-16th). Agenda items are requested.</p> <p>2021 NWTF grant hearings are scheduled for March 15th through March 19th at the Great Northern Hotel in Helena.</p> <p>Kenny Kever moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m. and was seconded by Kellieann Morris. All were in favor.</p>			
Action Items		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Provide draft scoring criteria updates for atypical applications and address development project scoring.	Jasmine Reimer/Greta Dige	January 11	Complete
2	Consider for further discussion: removing ongoing new invader projects and established statewide education and biocontrol projects from standard hearings process and establishing set funding amounts per project.	Council	January 11	Complete
3	Consider for further discussion: scoring criteria related to matching funds.	Council	January 11	Complete
4	Add scoring criteria information to grant guidelines and WebGrants funding opportunities.	MDA	ASAP	Complete
5	Develop landowner commitment template, make minor wording updates to scoring criteria for council review.	Jasmine Reimer	ASAP	Complete
6	Report on MDA legislative placeholder for gravel certification.	Jasmine Reimer	January 11	Complete
7	Phragmites control update on MDT land in Lake County.	Bob Cloninger	As available	Complete