



**Gallatin County Weed District
Regular Monthly Meeting
July 02, 2009**

Board members present were; Bob Hofman (Chair), Jeff Littlefield, Keith Mainwaring, Fred Bell and Craig Morgan. Commissioner Skinner was excused. **Others** present were Dennis Hengel (Coordinator), John Ansley (Education/Enforcement Coordinator) and Rosemary Perry (Secretary).

Minutes. The Minutes had been sent to the Board and were approved as submitted.

Budget/Claims. There was a question regarding the \$538.20 copier charges. The charges go up in the summer as we copy weed control guidelines for educational events. There was also discussion regarding the Google Earth license fee. The Weed District has 2 licenses as each user has to have their own license. The licenses are paid for through the Special County Grant. Google Earth is used for enforcement, locating weed problem "hot spots" (Report a Noxious Weed on the ROW program) and the GYCC gravel pit program.

OLD BUSINESS

Fred Bell asked if Hengel had heard back from NW Energy yet regarding setting up a working agreement. Hengel said due to the high summer field season workload this will need to be a winter project. Bell felt that it would be good to set up utility agreements before a project starts. Bob Hofman asked Hengel if an agreement had been reached regarding the availability of the Fairgrounds mechanic. This topic will be addressed in the Coordinator report.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Public Comment/Other.** Bob Hofman asked about the subdivision reviews. Hengel reported that the number of subdivision reviews has slowed down. With the current recession and stagnation of the housing market the issue with subdivisions for the foreseeable future will be a lack of weed control within the subdivisions. Developers are not selling lots and in some cases the developments are facing foreclosure. Consequently, developers are not completing weed control within the subdivisions. It is predicted that the Weed District will receive more and more complaints about the weeds within undeveloped subdivisions as the recession continues. Developers will claim that they are unable to afford to control the noxious weeds due to lack of revenue.
- 2. Monthly Report Q&A.**
 - Bell asked about the report that a sprayer was out for the summer and had a question regarding fees. Ansley informed him that the sprayer was on loan in order to assist with a huge weed problem on two (2) subdivisions just out of Manhattan. The Weed District has received a lot of complaints regarding weed problems in the area and the Weed District is helping the landowner clean up the area.
 - A representative from Kenyon Noble contacted the Weed District regarding getting a gravel pit certified in order to bid on a project for Yellowstone National Park. After inspection the pit failed certification. However, the operators were open to dialogue and will be working to get the property up to speed. Bell asked if gravel pits need a weed management plan in order to be certified. Hengel said that when gravel pits are originally developed the DEQ requires them to

have an approved WMP in place. During the certification process the operators develop an effective weed management program to control the noxious weeds. Requirements for management (essentially a weed management plan) are outlined in the certification form. This year Jody Fagan is the GYCC gravel pit inspector. Last year (2008) there were 55 pits inspected for the program, 15 of the gravel pits were in Gallatin County.

- Mainwaring reported that he had participated in the Gallatin River Clean up day. The event was a cooperative effort with representatives from Big Sky Weed Committee, Trout Unlimited, Gallatin County Weed District, Conservation District, NRCS, Fish, Wildlife & Parks and MT Department of Transportation in attendance. Coffee and rolls and a place to meet were supplied by the Gourmet Gas Station, and the sponsors paid for lunch. Approximately 55 people worked at cleaning up trash and pulling weeds. The program was a great success.
- Hengel reported on an organic farm project in the Reese Creek area. The Weed District received a complaint about the noxious weeds on Bear Creek Road. Bear Creek Road is a county road. Portions of this road border an organic ranch/farm. As a result of the complaint the weed crews treated the noxious weeds on Bear Creek Road that were located those portions of the road that were not adjacent to the organic ranch/farm. Hengel is working with the ranch/farm manager to develop a Landowner Maintenance program for those portions of the county ROW that are adjacent to the ranch/farm.

3. Commissioner Report. Commissioner Skinner had been excused.

4. Education/Enforcement Report. Ansley reported that as the weeds start to flower the complaints start to come in.

- ✓ He has been involved with three (3) weed pulls. The Trout Unlimited Gallatin River clean-up was a great success. Thanks to the Gourmet Gas Station and all the sponsors and cooperative agency work. There were about 55 participants. A weed pull at the East Gallatin Recreation area on June 24th was also held. This weed pull was held in conjunction with the MSU Analytical Lab group and drew about 10 participants. This group pulled approximately 20 bags of spotted knapweed. This is the second year of participation by the MSU Analytical Lab group conducting a weed pull. As in 2008, Hengel arranged and participated in the weed pull with the MSU Lab group. The same day there was another weed pull at the East Gallatin Recreation Area. This weed pull was sponsored by the Conservation District. Despite a considerable amount of advertising the turnout of participants was low.
- ✓ The Frog Rock WMA is generating quite a bit of interest this year and the funds will be finished out. Ansley will reapply for the grant this fall and expand the area of coverage.
- ✓ The Upper Madison WMA will also close out this year. The response to this grant has been very good and we plan to reapply for this grant in the fall.
- ✓ The Lower Madison WMA is starting out slow this year, but he anticipates more activity as the summer progresses.
- ✓ Mainwaring had called in a complaint in the Zoot area. Ansley went to check on the problem and found the site had been mown and taken care of.
- ✓ Each year presenters at the Farm Fair are graded by participants (teachers etc). This year the Weed District booth received a really good grade. Ansley also appreciated having Mike Jones (Big Sky Weed Coordinator) to assist him.
- ✓ Ansley noted that a big success to his enforcement program was a respondee who has become an advocate for our program. Last year she was antagonistic regarding her weed problem, this year Ansley offered the use of a sprayer without charge and she accepted with thanks.

- ✓ Baxter Meadows is a huge problem with a very serious infestation of musk thistle. The property owners have not contacted the office in response to letters; however they have brought a mower on site and have an employee mowing the thistle down.
- ✓ The Weed District is still receiving complaints about the weed problem on the Huffine property. With help from the Weed District there is a property caretaker working on spraying and mowing. There are legal issues being resolved and once this has been cleared up it will be easier to get work done.
- ✓ Ansley will be working with Mangold on her hoary alyssum research plots in West Yellowstone. Mangold will be bringing sprayers to the Shop for calibration. The research will be with Escort, Telar, 2,4-D and one with the turf herbicide Trimec.
- ✓ Ansley will have an educational booth at the Back Country Horsemen Poker Ride on July 11th.
- ✓ The Weed Booth will be set up at the County Fair.
- ✓ There will be another weed pull on July 22nd at the East Gallatin Rec Area with a church group that has been looking for community service projects.
- ✓ Osterman has rented a sprayer and is spraying the leafy spurge on Frank Road.

5. Coordinator Report.

- ✓ Hengel reported that the spray crew has been working hard this summer. The above normal precipitation rates has not slowed down spraying in June. The crew has been able to work around the scattered showers that have moved through the area.
- ✓ As a follow up on the process of working with the Fairgrounds mechanic, Hengel has talked to Shockley (Fairgrounds Manager). An agreement was reached between the Fairgrounds and the Weed District in that each department will document their respective assistance (Weed District to track spraying of Fairgrounds property and water usage by the Fairgrounds and the Fairgrounds will track labor hours of the mechanic). Cost comparisons will be made at the end of the year and the appropriate budget transfer made at that time.
- ✓ One of the trucks (1990 Chevy) has severe transmission and engine problems. The mechanic states that the transmission and engine require replacement. The estimated replacement cost would be around \$6000. Hengel's recommendation is that due to the age of the vehicle and the cost of repairs that the vehicle should be taken out of service. The truck has a flatbed and sprayer that Hengel feels could be salvaged and installed on the recently purchased 2002 Silverado. The \$7500 Special County Grant funds that have been allocated for a flatbed and sprayer could then be used for other equipment.
- ✓ Hengel passed around a status report for the Board. Topics addressed were WMAs, County properties treated, cooperative interagency projects, completed contract work and cooperative projects, and vehicle repair. Currently, the Weed District has four WMA's (Frog Rock, Upper Madison, Lower Madison, Upper Gallatin), three cooperative programs (Big Sky Education Program, GYCC gravel pit certification program and Conservation District small acreage landowner assistance program), contract work with the FW&P and the BLM and "critical need" treatment program with all the municipalities.
- ✓ Discussion was brought up regarding the GYCC Gravel Pit inspection program. The Weed District contributes to the work completed in Gallatin County and the GYCC pays for the rest of the program.
- ✓ Another WMA program that Hengel is developing is expansion of the Upper Gallatin WMA. The current WMA is from Yellowstone National Park to the mouth of Gallatin Canyon. Once fully developed this WMA would extend from Yellowstone National Park to the Four Corners area.

- ✓ The County energy savings committee has approved installation of Cor-Bon insulation and replacement of the 20+ year old furnace in the Weed Shop. Funds for the improvements will be provided through a grants program.
- ✓ There was discussion regarding access to the BLM property located in the Maudlow area. The BLM property is accessed through private property and behind a locked gate. New owners have recently purchased the private property. Morgan provided Hengel with a contact for access through the locked gate.
- ✓ Hengel reported to the Board that, per his letter of resignation, his last day of work for the Weed District will be Friday, July 24th, 2009. Hengel thanked the Board for his 15 years (two years as a seasonal and 13 years as Weed Coordinator) at the Weed District. He told the Board he thoroughly enjoyed his tenure with the Weed District.

Hengel said that as the District Coordinator he managed the Weed District under the following strategy:

An organization is a function of ideas, people and infrastructure. Ideas define the organization and determine the mission. People and infrastructure fulfill the mission as defined by the ideas. The mission of the Weed District is to conduct an integrated program of noxious weed management throughout the county for the protection of the open space, natural resources and agricultural bases of Gallatin County. Two of the largest economic engines within Gallatin County are agriculture and natural resource based activities (outdoor recreation, backpacking, hiking, camping, hunting, outfitting, tourism, etc). Millions of dollars in revenue and thousands of jobs are involved in these two economic engines. One of the gravest threats to agriculture and natural resource activities is noxious weeds. Noxious weeds can devastate the financial returns from these two economic engines and this is one of the reasons why noxious weeds need to be controlled.

Hengel said that he worked to develop the following four components for an effective Weed District noxious weed management program:

1. An active on-the-ground treatment program to control noxious weeds on city and county properties.
2. An education program to provide technical assistance and information to county residents.
3. An enforcement program to contract county landowners (both public and private) regarding uncontrolled noxious weed infestations growing on their property.
4. An interagency cooperative management program between Federal, State, city entities and the Weed District.

The success of each component reinforces, strengthens and contributes to the success of the other components. Any weakness within a component contributes to the weakness of the other components. A successful Weed District Management Program is a balanced organized program that is able to complete all four components of the overall management program as required by state law and as requested by the public.

6. Budget. Hengel informed the Board that depending upon what the Commission decided to do regarding his position, there might be extra funds in the personnel budget. Bell asked if there was any progress with the fence project around the shop. Hengel informed him that we will be putting livestock panels around the shop during the summer fair to control access to the weed shop.

7. Round Table.

- ✓ **Littlefield** said that there have been some amendments to the State Noxious Weed List. Russian olive has been added and some weeds have been recategorized.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.35PM.

The next meeting will be August 6th, 2009.

The Board then went into executive session.

Respectively submitted,

Rosemary Perry, Administrative Assistant
Dennis Hengel, District Coordinator