



**Gallatin County Weed Board  
Regular Monthly Meeting  
September 03, 2009**

**Board** members present were Bob Hofman (Chair), Jeff Littlefield, Keith Mainwaring and Commissioner Joe Skinner. Craig Morgan and Fred Bell were excused. **Others** present were John Ansley (Interim Coordinator), Rosemary Perry (Secretary), Jody Fagan (Big Sky Weed Committee/GYCC Gravel Pit Inspector) and Michael Jones (Big Sky Weed Coordinator).

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

**Budget/Claims.** Truck repairs were discussed. One truck needs some front end work and some need tires. A couple of the older trucks that are being taken out of the fleet have new tires on them so if possible the tires will be transferred to the newer trucks.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Bob Hofman asked Ansley how the disposal of the old trucks was progressing. Ansley is waiting to meet with Fowler (Road Dept) to assess whether any could be sold at auction or if they will all go to the junk vehicle program. The flatbed and sprayer will be retrieved off the 1990 Chevy that has engine problems.

Hofman also asked about the cleaning up of the shop. Ansley reported that we had started on it; one trailer load has been taken to the Logan Landfill and metal items have been sorted out to go to Pacific Steel and Recycling.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. Public Comment/Other.** Jody Fagan gave a report on the GYCC Gravel Pit Inspection program. She inspected 38 pits this summer, focusing on the larger pits where the operators were working towards certification status. Knife River and TMC pits in Belgrade had bad infestations of noxious weeds; however both companies were working with aggressive herbicide treatments towards a goal of getting the pits certified. The Knife River Belgrade pit was able to be certified at the lowest level. TMC had two (2) pits certified out of four (4), Knife River had one (1) pit certified out of two (2). Fagan passed out copies of a report she has done. The only other pit of the 15 inspected in Gallatin County to be certified was the Zuelke Pit. The Kenyon Noble Pit failed and Fagan was told they were not interested in the program. There are many pit operators working hard to get their gravel pits certified so the education program is working. As more agencies and private individuals request gravel from certified pits the program should keep expanding. Craig McClure (Yellowstone National Park – Retired) has been spearheading this project in cooperation with the GYCC. The project has been funded with Forest Service Funds through the GYCC. Commissioner Skinner asked if the program was going to continue to move forward. This will depend upon the GYCC now that McClure has retired. There was discussion regarding weed control on the Gallatin County Pits as from the report the county pits weren't getting good grades either. The Weed District is responsible for weed control on County owned property and some gravel pits have been treated but some are inactive. Commissioner Skinner felt that weed

control was important on these inactive pits as if they are not maintained there would be problems if they are reactivated. Ansley will request a list of County owned gravel pits and review weed treatments on them.

2. **Big Sky Weed Committee.** Jody Fagan passed around copies of the 2008 Annual Report on this project. The program has been running for 5 years and has expanded from just the Big Sky area to the entire 191 corridor from the Yellowstone National Park boundary to Four Corners. Fagan feels that there has been amazing progress in the education program with the direct mail post cards to landowners receiving the greatest response. Jones has met with 80+ landowners on a one on one basis doing weed id inspections and assisting with plans to get an individual weed control program in place. This year the coordinators set up a "super mapping week" in coordination with the Weed District, Gallatin County GIS Department, USFS, Gallatin Conservation District, private contractors and volunteers. Mapping was finished on the 191 corridor, Ousel Falls Road, Big Sky Spur Road and some trailheads. Fagan thanked the GIS Department for their support and work. The maps that are being generated can be overlaid on parcel maps and this will enable the group to assist both public and private landowners with weed control strategy. Fagan then introduced Mike Jones, the Big Sky Weed Coordinator. She told the Board that the Big Sky Weed Committee would not be able to have the Coordinator position without the partnership of the Weed District. Examples of some of the maps were passed around for the Board to see. Littlefield asked if some of the areas had been mapped before. Some USFS Trailheads were mapped four or five years ago. The mapping project also helped the group discover new invaders in the canyon and thus take care of the infestations before they become an issue. This year is Jones' second year with the program and he was able to look for problem sites then put pertinent educational packets of information together and mail to the property owner. The Trout Unlimited River Clean up day was a success, tomorrow Jones will have a Weed Booth at the Big Sky Owner's Assn meeting, and coming up is the Ophir School Weed Pull Day in cooperation with the Forest Service (John Councilman) and the MWCA Ed and Awareness program (Carla Hoopes). Last year the students pulled 40 bags of spotted knapweed. Jones has noticed improvement on the MDT right-of-way as the Department gets better equipment. He has seen a lot of activity in the Canyon with 4-wheelers, truck and backpack sprayers.
3. **Monthly Report Q & A.**
  - Mainwaring remarked that as a follow up on the complaints of Leafy Spurge on Frank Road East, the private landowners have been working on the infestations; however there is still some along the burrow pit. Ansley will check that out.
  - Hofman had a question regarding the MWCA Executive Director call regarding filling the Coordinator position. MWCA posts position vacancies on their web site and offered to post the Coordinator position when we are ready.
  - Hofman asked about follow up on the complaint regarding crew members playing football. Ansley informed him that he has not been able to find out who complained, so has not been able to get any details. He would like to follow up on it, but without the complainants name and contact information he cannot get details.
  - Hofman asked about the phone call from Rick Shelley (MRL). Perry informed him that we have been given contact information for complaints and details of their spray program. When Ansley would like to ride the rails with an MRL employee to check on weed infestations Shelley will set it up.
4. **Chairperson Report.** Comments were addressed in the Monthly Report Q&A.
5. **Commissioner Report.** Commissioner Skinner stated that budget meetings would be starting up again next week. He also passed around to the Board members, copies of the draft of the

new Coordinator Job Description for them to review. Perry will mail copies to those Board members not present. Discussion will be an agenda item at the October Board meeting. Commissioner Skinner will ask Hertzog (HR Director) if she can attend the next meeting.

#### **6. Interim Coordinator Report.**

- Ansley reported that we have a few requests for sprayers for fall spraying.
- He met with Barta (MDA NWTF Grant Coordinator) and toured the three (3) grant areas – Lower Madison WMA, Upper Madison WMA and the Frog Rock WMA.
- Ansley received a shipment of cyphocleonus weevils from the Western Ag Research Center. He released them in three (3) sites in Frog Rock, three (3) sites in the Lower Madison WMA and three (3) sites in the Upper Madison WMA. He gave four (4) containers to Ron Carlstrom (Gallatin County Extension Agent). Next year Ansley plans to get Leafy spurge insects for the Lower Madison WMA.
- Ansley has a sprayer in the back of the truck he uses for inspections and sprays out "hot spots" as he sees them or small complaint sites on county roads that have been called in by the public.
- A representative of the Big Sky Owners Association will be meeting with the Three Rivers utilities company and has invited Ansley to the meeting. The date has not been set at this time but Ansley will be sure to attend.
- Weed Summit – in an effort to cut costs, this could be held here at the Fairgrounds. The Board felt that this was a good idea.
- A complaint to the Commissioners had been forwarded to the Weed District. Ansley has followed up on the complaint and an inspection showed that neighbors to the north and east have infestations of oxeye daisy and Canada thistle. One of the properties belongs to the Spanish Peaks Development and this puts them in violation of their Weed Management Plan that is on file with the Weed District. Ousel Falls Road is also part of the complaint. Morrison Maierle will be doing some work on that road and Ansley is waiting for a call back from the engineer in charge of the project. We are currently trying to find ownership of Ousel Falls Road which is also part of the complaint. It is not a county road.
- Ansley brought up the topic of enforcement. There are many areas of the county roads that are not clean and he feels he cannot go after private property owners in violation when there are issues on county owned property. Ansley would like to assist property owners with courtesy sprays. Discussion followed as the Board was not comfortable with this. Questions raised were; where does one stop – time limit, acreage etc? Commissioner Skinner also raised a question regarding the liability of spraying on private property. In response to questions from Ansley, Barta (former Sweet Grass County Coordinator) informed him that the Sweet Grass County Weed Board removed enforcement and instead offered support for property owners in the form of a crew to spray with the property owner providing the herbicide.
- Ansley has put together a letter for the Commissioners regarding the vacancy savings. He stated the approximate savings and how he would like the Board to redirect them. One item would be the cost of putting a security fence around the Weed Shop. The Fairgrounds does not have the funds for this, however there is a possibility that the Weed District could pay for the fence with some of the vacancy savings and the Fairgrounds would exchange mechanic time in lieu of half the cost. The Board felt that this was a good idea. Ansley reviewed the personnel budget with the Board. The base salary for the new coordinator has not been decided; this is a Commission call and will be based on the new job description. The Board reviewed the letter. Keith

Mainwaring moved to approve the letter requesting the use of the vacancy savings, Jeff Littlefield seconded and the motion passed. Bob Hofman signed the letter as Chair of the Board.

- The MWCA Fall Coordinator training will be September 29<sup>th</sup> through October 1<sup>st</sup> in Lewistown. Ansley will attend September 30<sup>th</sup> and the morning of October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The staff has been cleaning out the Shop in preparation for the insulation project.
- He is planning to send out letters to the Lower Madison WMA property owners in order to get people interested. The project has been slow so far.
- There was a call to the office about purple loosestrife growing in the burrow pit on Cobb Hill Road. Ansley went out to investigate and dug up the plant and disposed of it. A portion of the plant was put into a Riker Mount.

#### **7. Round Table.**

- Mainwaring brought up the topic of Federal stimulus money. Littlefield stated that the funds were in part being routed to the Forest Service for weed control work.
- Ansley told the Board that the Weed District has a horse carried sprayer and would like to be able to give it to an entity that would use it. The Board members present agreed.
- A large supply of silica gel for drying plants was found during the shop clean up and Ansley will approach Olsen (Wheatland County Coordinator) to see if he can use it. Olsen has been building a set of Riker mounts for all the weed districts in the state.
- Ansley would like the Board to think about changing the prices on the rental sprayers. There are a lot of people with small areas to spray who could have the sprayers for a short time rather than the long weekend we currently offer. He is thinking that \$15/day would be reasonable with the \$50 fee for the weekend. Backpack sprayers could be loaned out.
- Commissioner Skinner asked Ansley if he felt time would be better spent actually doing a limited courtesy spray than paper work. Ansley felt that was so. Need to follow up on liability insurance information.
- Littlefield announced some changes in the State Noxious Weed List. There is a proposal to add Curly leaf pondweed, Hydrilla, Cheatgrass and Russian olive and remove common crupina. The new list is going to be divided into three (3) categories. Commissioner Skinner asked Littlefield if the Weed Board should comment on the proposed changes. Littlefield replied that when the draft of the proposal comes out will be the time for comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.55PM. The next meeting will be October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Perry, Secretary