



**Gallatin County Weed Board  
Regular Monthly Meeting  
March 11, 2010**

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

**Minutes.** The Minutes of the February meeting had been mailed to the Board and were approved as presented.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- 1. Utility Agreement.** Ansley reported that he has been working with a Deputy County Attorney on this document. There was a lot of discussion regarding the set up and terminology in the document. Liability issues were discussed regarding the utility companies versus sub-contractors. The Board felt that the agreement should be between the Weed District and the primary utility company. This should be a weed management plan and seems to be written as if the county is contracting the work. The Board will take the document home for review and bring comments to the April Board meeting.
- 2. Russian Olive Listing.** Chairman Mainwaring stated that Commissioner Skinner had brought up questions regarding the status of the listing for Russian olive with the Department of Agriculture. At the February Board meeting the Board made a decision that the State be informed that Gallatin County would like to see the plant given a Regulated status. The Board felt that the plant was not a problem in Gallatin County. The Board will wait for the Department of Agriculture ruling before taking any further steps.
- 3. Energy Stimulus Project Update.** Ansley reported that the shop was insulated last week and today the insulation company is back to finish applying the fire retardant paint. He passed around before and after pictures for the Board. We have come in under budget for all three of the projects that we were awarded. We may possibly be able to do lighting retrofits as another energy stimulus project. The replacement of the hot water heaters was not approved.
- 4. Assistant Coordinator/Foreman Job Description.** The Board had reviewed the description and approved it. Budget questions came up for funding the position. Littlefield stated that he thought the salary budget reduction was temporary and that when the Board rehired the fund level would return to normal. The rest of the Board agreed that this was what they had been led to believe. The Board also brought up newspaper articles quoting the county to have stated that the outlook for FY'11 was not as bleak as first anticipated. The Board is concerned that the level of service to the county taxpayers will drop. They would like to see the Personnel budget stabilized. Funding the position for FY'10 can be achieved by moving some funds from salaries & wages – temp into salaries and wages. The vacancy savings from FY'10 can be rolled over into FY'11 but the Finance Officer is recommending that these do not get used for Personnel. Bell asked if the Utility Companies and gravel pits pay a fee for inspections and processing of weed management plans. They do not. Bell asked Ansley to research the process for getting this done. Bell also remarked that while attending the weed booth at the Wild West WinterFest he had been asked about the Cost Share program. By generating more revenue from inspection fees we could maybe get the cost share reinstated. Ansley stated that if we cannot get the cost share program

reinstated at this time maybe the Board could think about reducing the rental rates on the sprayers and help the taxpayers that way. Ansley stated that with an assistant/foreman a lot of spring boom spraying could be done cutting down the number of roads that the seasonal crews would need to spray. After further lengthy discussion Jeff Littlefield moved to approve Ansley's personnel request memo requesting 7 weed spray techs at \$12.50/hr, 1 weed spray tech at \$14.00/hr, 1 Big Sky Weed Coordinator and 3 FTE's changing Perry's job title and description to Admin Clerk/Weed Technician. Bob Hofman seconded and the motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Public Comment/Other.** None

### **2. Monthly Report Q&A.**

- Littlefield questioned that there were no charges for Story Distributing for the first 2 weeks of February. Ansley informed him that he had not had to buy fuel during those 2 weeks.
- Mainwaring noted the NW Energy charges and stated that it will be interesting to see how they change with the upgrade to the shop.
- Bell asked about the Pland Use Consulting call regarding the WMP for the Figgins Gravel Pit. Ansley inspected the pit with them and they are writing a new WMP. They are working towards getting the pit certified for govt. contracts. Bell would like to keep track of the certified pits in the county.
- Bell asked about the call from Carlstrom (Gallatin County Extension Agent) regarding the small acreage specialist position with the Conservation District. There is concern that this position will not be filled full time and this will impact the Weed District and Extension.
- Bell asked about the call from Povah regarding the abandoned road between his property in West Yellowstone and a neighboring development. The Board felt that spraying this would be a good outreach. The road in question is also in the Hebgen Basin WMA and the Weed District has applied for a new grant in the area.
- The call from Treasure State Helicopters was questioned. The company was asking if there was a need for helicopter spraying in the county. Discussion came up about the Frog Rock area, however Ansley has already researched that and discussion with MDT was that for safety reasons I-90 would have to be shut down while the spraying was being done and this is not feasible.
- Littlefield asked Ansley about his NWTF Hearings presentations. Ansley felt comfortable with them.

### **3. Chair Report.** None.

### **4. Coordinator Report.**

- Ansley felt that the WinterFest Booth was slow. Bell and Mainwaring had good response when they were manning the booth. A suggestion was made to try and relocate the booth next year to an area with more traffic.
- The flatbed is now on the new truck. We have a 300 gallon tank and just need to get the pump, hose reel etc and that will be another operational truck. Ansley discussed with the Board the danger of the unstable loads that the 500gallon tanks create. He would like to order surge busters for these tanks for safety reasons and to minimize wear and tear on the trucks. The cost would be approximately \$1000. The Board approved the purchase.
- Ansley has sent out 24 letters to landowners who have been participating in the Landowner Maintenance program and also to new owners of property that was formerly

in the program, requesting that they fill out a weed management plan and use metal signs provided by the Weed District. This would create uniformity and assist the crews in identifying the areas. Some of the names date back to 1993 and data has not been updated. So far we have only had 8 responses and Ansley asked the Board for guidance regarding the other properties when the crews are out this summer. Should we honor the home made signs or not. The Board felt that the crews should give Ansley's business card to the property owner and have them contact the office. Ansley also asked the Board about a property owner on Axtell-Anceny Road who would like to have her entire stretch of road as a "no spray" zone. She would contact the other property owners and ask if they would participate. We would have one contact person and one set of signs on each side of the road. The Board thought that would be a good idea. The county GIS Department has created new trace maps for the Weed Department and Ansley is marking the Landowner Maintenance areas in red so the crews can be alerted before they get to an area. Bell stated that each landowner needs to be alerted to the fact that they are responsible for their area by state law.

- The Weed Summit was on February 9<sup>th</sup> and was well attended. There were about 30 people in attendance.
  - Ansley asked the Board what they wanted to do regarding herbicide purchases this year. He would like to try some generics from Alligare as the price difference on some herbicides such as Escort is substantial. He would also like to keep business in the valley. He passed out price lists for comparison. He will try to spread the purchases between local companies and Alligare. Littlefield brought up previous discussions regarding coordinating with other counties. Ansley will discuss possibilities with coordinators at the Spring training at the end of the month.
  - Ansley announced some upcoming events: March 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> he will have a booth at the Back Country Horse State Convention; March 24<sup>th</sup> is the SW Area Commercial Applicator Training in Sheridan; March 30, 31<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup> is the MWCA Spring Training in Helena.
5. **Strategic Planning.** Goals and Implementation, 2010 spray projects and updated Strategy and Work Issues had been mailed to the Board for review and comment. Ansley listed his priorities to the Board.
- i. Manage County Properties for Noxious Weeds.**
    - a) Crews to spray county roadside right-of-ways
    - b) 8 County maintained gravel pits
    - c) Fairgrounds, Law & Justice Center, 17 Parks (174.77 acres), Road Dept., Landfill, etc.)
    - d) Respond to noxious weed complaints on county roads
  - ii. Provide technical assistance to County Residents.**
    - a) Provide on-site inspections for small acreage landowners
    - b) Provide technical assistance to walk-in customers as well as over the phone
    - c) Develop weed management plans for private properties
    - d) Provide Sprayer rentals
  - iii. Provide education.**
    - a) Participation at trade shows and other booth events (Wild West Winterfest, County Fair, Rocky Mountain Supply Customer Appreciation Days, etc...)
    - b) Attend Homeowners association meetings and other group meetings
    - c) Participation in small acreage clinics/seminars
    - d) Participation in Weed Pull Events

- e) Farm Fair
- iv. **Cooperative management and alliances with Federal and State agencies and municipalities.**
  - a) Formation and management of Grant WMAs
  - b) Cooperative projects with Federal, State, and other agencies
  - c) Contract work for FW&P and BLM
  - d) Partnership with cities within the county for weed control
  - e) Partner and build relationships with other county weed districts
- v. **Effective subdivision/open cut mine reviews.**
  - a) Review subdivision proposal requests in a timely fashion within 10 days
  - b) Monitor subdivisions under development
  - c) Review gravel pit proposal requests in a timely fashion within 10 days
  - d) Conduct follow up of gravel pit operations
  - e) Work with Gravel Pits that want certification
- vi. **Enforcement of Noxious Weed Law.**
  - a) Conduct investigation of reports/complaints in a timely fashion
  - b) Follow up on reports/complaints from previous year
  - c) Provide assistance (possibly courtesy sprays) and several options to encourage cooperation between the Weed District and landowners – if unable to gain cooperation, conduct enforcement

There were differing opinions regarding where cuts should be made if we don't get to hire the Assistant Coordinator position. Some of the projects that came under the hammer were rentals, HOA meetings, trade shows, courtesy sprays, etc.

Bell felt that courtesy spray and the rental program were good outreach programs to assist county residents in hard times. Bell also liked a different order of priority for items. There followed discussion regarding the 2010 spray projects. Some are non negotiable as agencies were promised cooperation last field season and the projects were cancelled. There are also some areas (e.g. Cherry River FAS, City of Bozeman Softball Complex) where the Weed District receives a lot of complaints regarding the weeds growing. Trails are also a huge problem for the Weed District. People develop trails and don't maintain them. Bell suggested that we get contact names for trails and refer complaints to them. Ansley brought up the signs that we had purchased last fall and would like to get them out at trailheads around the valley and also get some placed in grant areas.

Ansley showed the Board a map that was developed for him by Frank Dougher of the County GIS Department. Ansley will get it laminated and hung at the Shop so that the crews can fill in traces sprayed when they come in.

Bell asked if the security fence had been built around the Shop yet. Ansley has written an agreement for Shockley (Fairgrounds Manager) and is waiting to hear from her. She will also need to walk the area with him to show where the fence can be installed.

Bell complimented Ansley on the job that he is doing. The Board told Ansley that they had confidence in him to prioritize and get as much done as he could.

The next Board meeting will be moved to April 8<sup>th</sup> as Ansley and Perry will be attending the MWCA Spring Training in Helena on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 4.30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Perry, Secretary