



Gallatin County Weed Board

Regular Monthly Meeting

May 5th, 2016 1:15 pm

ATTENDEES:

- **Board members:** Keith Mainwaring, Bob Hofman, Fred Bell, and Jeff Littlefield
- **Others:** John Ansley (Coordinator), Mike Jones (Assistant Coordinator), Danielle Jones (Program Assistant), Don Seifert (Commissioner), Emily Lockard (Gallatin County Extension), Troy Carter (Bozeman Daily Chronicle)

MINUTES: Fred moved to accept the minutes as written, Keith 2nd – minutes and all approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **2016 Plan of Work** – John made some changes to the Work Plan based on comments previously provided by Steve. John added bullet points with specific information about what is being done at each of the county maintained properties listed in the Work Plan. Steve is not present today; can it be approved as it is anyway? Future discussion about the Work Plan would then only include what has been accomplished to date from the Plan. Fred moved to approve the plan as written, Jeff 2nd that motion; the Work Plan was approved as written until next year.
- **2016 County Weed Management Plan** - John emailed the Management Plan to Steve after the last board meeting, and did not receive any comments from him. If all of the board members that are present approve of it, John can send it on to the County Attorney's office to get a Resolution to send to the Commissioners for signatures. Bob moved to approve the Weed Management Plan. Keith had a comment about page 5, paragraph 2, the sentence: "The minutes are published on the Weed District webpage". Would it be possible to add the webpage address to this paragraph? John mentioned how the address for the Weed District webpage is not very straight-forward. When you type in www.gallatin.mt.gov, it actually forwards you to another webpage with a really long, complicated address for the Weed District. If people can go to the county webpage and then browse to the Weed District webpage from there, that would be the easiest way to find the minutes. Emily Lockard mentioned that they created their own website at Extension, and so have other departments. They purchased an easier website address 'msuextension.com' that forwards people to their county website; however, creating another website is a lot of work. Fred agreed with Keith, saying that having the website information available so people don't have to go searching for it would be useful. Keith said that adding the website seemed like too much work for now and withdrew his comment, and suggested making the changes next year instead. Keith 2nd the original motion to approve the Plan as written, and the motion was passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Troy Carter asked if the Weed Department was going to do any spraying up on Peet's Hill. John said that they didn't do it last year or the year before, they usually coordinate with GVLТ and the City of Bozeman. Troy mentioned that he had been talking with GVLТ people and they said the weeds are getting bad up there, and the city might want to have it sprayed again this year since the Weed Department had done it in the past. John said they would have to get in touch with GVLТ and the City and talk about it.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Monthly Report Q&A**

- Fred asked where the cell tower is going in at Bridger Bowl? John said he didn't know. Planning had called and said they were putting a cell tower up at Bridger Bowl and wanted to know if they had submitted a Weed Management Plan, but John hasn't seen anything yet. Fred asked if they had to submit a WMP, and John said that they do because it is considered to be a minor, 1-lot subdivision.
- Keith asked about the status of the approval of the West Winds subdivision Weed Management Plan. Mike had looked at the site that morning.
- Regarding Complaints/Reports, Fred asked who was Gotschall? John explained that Bob Gotschall is a commercial applicator with his own business out of West Yellowstone.
- Bob asked about the height ordinance for weeds in the City of Bozeman Code Compliance. John and Mike thought it was around 10-12", but they weren't sure.

- **Commissioner Report**

- Don mentioned he shared an email with John from MACo regarding their suggestion that the county put on their website the chemicals used for spraying weeds, and where the spraying was occurring. Don and John both agreed that they thought it wasn't necessary because all of that information is available from John or Mike at the Weed District office; anyone can call anytime and get that specific information. Also, Gallatin County is not insured by MACo.
- Don asked about the status of the remodel. John had talked to Lori, and she said bids had gone out for plumbing, fiber, etc. for the Midway Building. Don said the county had signed with Bozeman Fiber to tie into an existing line of fiber. Emily had talked to Nick, who had suggested Extension should be able to move in by September. The current rental lease for Extension expires at the end of June, and becomes month-to-month. At that point, their landlords can give them 30 days to move out if they rent the space to someone else, meaning that it is possible that Extension could have to move from their current office space anytime after July 1st. Emily expressed concern about the uncertainty regarding where Extension would go if their current office space was rented out to someone else before the remodel was finished. Don said he would try to find out what the timeline is for the remodel of the Ag Center building.

- **Coordinators Reports**

- Mike and Danielle attended the SW Area meeting in Whitehall; Danielle was introduced to weed managers from other counties. At the meeting, it was discussed that the MWCA is going to attempt to get an increase in light vehicle registration fees passed through the legislature that would increase the money in the Noxious Weed Trust Fund and increase the special county grants. A \$1 increase in fees could possibly generate 1.8 million dollars annually, which would trickle down to local economies through the Trust Fund. Also, the education trailer now belongs to the SW Area rather than Beaverhead County. They are talking about possibly re-wrapping the trailer with new images that depict terrestrial noxious weeds, and at some point possibly trading

the trailer in for a bigger one. Finally, the SW Area will be hosting Crew Training from May 31st-June 2nd. They provide training for spray crews for several counties, and the Department of Agriculture will administer the test for those who aren't yet certified. Mike, John and their spray crew will attend.

- 2016 Annual Weed Managers meeting was held April 27th, with about 18 people attending. GVL, NRCS, DNRC, MDT, City of Bozeman, and City of Belgrade were not there, so quite a few agencies were missing. Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Forest Service, Big Sky Weed Committee, Conservation District, and Extension were present. Susan LaMont will be retiring from the Forest Service at the end of the year. Jane Mangold was also present; John and Mike will be working with her on a hoary alyssum project doing treatment plots. Fred suggested sending out emails a couple of days before the meeting to remind people to attend.
- John discussed the staff meeting regarding budget startups. The Weed Department got cut approximately \$21,000 from operations, which is hard on a department with a small budget. Don said the cuts were related to standards set by the GFOA about the amount of cash that should be carried over in the budget and not assigned to a particular account. The cuts came about due to sweeping the cash from department budgets to re-align the startup budget. The budget is not finalized, and the department can try to justify that they need that extra money. John expressed concern that the department is being penalized for saving money. He doesn't want to see those savings disappear due to reduced budgets, and then not have the money when it is needed in the future. Don mentioned that the goal is to get a better grasp on where the budgets work, and the county will use some of the cash for large purchases of software, such as upgrading Eden the accounting software. John asked if the cuts to the budget will carry over to next year's budget as well. Don said that the county is working on developing multi-year budgets that will better reflect actual spending, but that will not happen for a while. John asked Don if he could clarify the approximate \$23,000 increase in Capital Reserves. They agreed that it could be that the extra cash taken from other accounts was swept into this account for future savings, but they weren't sure. John mentioned that he will be meeting with Justine to discuss his requested adjustments to the Weed operations budget, which included increases in office supplies, advertising, utilities, and professional services that totaled a few thousand dollars. John expressed concern about the cuts to professional services, which is the account from which they pay contract sprayers. In the future, they may have to spend more money to pay private contractors, especially since they have had trouble finding sprayers to hire during the summer. Don suggested that John make an appointment to meet with the Commissioners to present these budget requests; John did that.
- John and Mike gave a talk for a Small Acreage Workshop put on by Emily and Brad at Extension. They talked about what the Weed Department does, gave a presentation on the identification of about 12 noxious weeds, and demonstrated how to calibrate sprayers. They dug up some plants to bring along, and found that many species were already flowering (hoary alyssum, whitetop), and cheatgrass was already producing seeds. It seems like things are about 3 weeks early this year. Emily said that everyone really appreciated their presentations. She had a question for Fred regarding the noxious weed clause in buy/sell agreements which requires landowners to disclose the presence of noxious weeds on the property. She was wondering if he had ideas for how to get realtors more aware of and educated about this clause. Fred said that most realtors do not deal with property where weeds are an issue, which is why many do not know about it. This clause is included in three different documents for the real estate transaction,

with the goal that the people involved with the transaction of each of those documents will become informed that this weed law exists, and over time more and more people will become informed. He stated that he is open to any suggestions about how the language might be improved or changed.

- Upcoming events: The Big Sky Weed Committee meeting is on May 9th. John and Mike will attend the Farm Fair with Jane Mangold on May 10th-12th at Brainard Farm. John will attend an HOA meeting for Bear Creek Properties on Saturday, May 14th. Crews start May 16th. Mike will attend the Big Sky Weed Summit on the 17th. The Beartrap Spray Day is May 19th.

- **Round table**

- John said that all Landowner Maintenance agreements had been turned in for the year.
- John said the mechanic for the Fairgrounds had quit. He had serviced all the Weed vehicles before he left. The Fairgrounds is not planning on getting another mechanic any time soon, so any future servicing of vehicles may just be at the Firestone, and future breakdowns possibly at Farr Automotive. Fred mentioned Twisted Wrench out at Four Corners as another option.
- Fred suggested looking into getting a roof and/or windshield for the new UTV.
- John inquired about Board Evaluations. Bob clarified the procedure for the evaluation.
- Keith shared a formula for spraying weeds in his yard that seemed effective for dandelions, plantain, etc. It was: 1 gallon of water, 1 gallon of vinegar, 2 cups of Epsom salts, and 1 cup of Dawn.
- Keith also sprayed one ounce/gallon of roundup on cheatgrass, which seemed to help the brome come in better.
- Emily shared information about upcoming events, including informational walks hosted by GVLTA that she is participating in. She will be doing a Rangeland Walk on June 15th at Highland Glen from 6-7 pm. Brad will be doing a Riparian walk at Cherry River FA site on July 13th. She thanked Mike and John for attending the Small Acreage Workshop.
- Jeff reported on last month's Governor's Invasive Species Management Summit. There was good turnout, with about 150 people attending (Steve attended also). Speaker topics included the history of weed management in Montana. Panel discussions included Weed Management Areas and how they were organized. A series of state legislators talked about their views on invasive species and potential for funding. Breakout sessions included different groups discussing questions regarding gaps in funding, management and regulatory issues, and suggestions for outreach. He's not sure what is going to develop from these meetings, but the comments from the breakout sessions could possibly be synthesized and put into an action or management plan.
- Jeff mentioned that the 2nd annual Dalmation Toadflax biocontrol work day will be held at the National Bison Range toward the end of the month. They will go out and collect biocontrol agents to move around the Bison range. Melissa the biocontrol coordinator has several other collecting days if people are interested in getting some toadflax biocontrol agents to take home.

Meeting dismissed 2:20 pm

Next scheduled meeting: June 2, 2016 1:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Danielle Jones

Program Assistant