



**MINUTES**

Beartooth RC&D Area, Inc. Board of Director's Meeting  
 Thursday, March 18, 2010

**Reminder: Meetings scheduled for third Thursday of odd numbered months.**

<p><b>Board Members Present</b>          Chuck Egan, Chairman, Town of Columbus          Marvin Carter, Vice-Chairman, City of Laurel          Penny Landon, Treasurer, Carbon Conservation District</p> <p>Ada Iron, Crow Nation          Doug Tucker, Carbon County          Ed Ulledalen, City of Billings          Jeffrey McDowell, City of Hardin          Steve Arveschoug, Big Sky EDA, Billings          Susie Mosness, Sweet Grass County</p> <p><b>Members at Large Present</b>          Kendall Hartman, Billings Job Service</p>	<p><b>Sponsors Not Represented</b>          Bob Van Oosten, Stillwater Conservation District          Brian Roat, City of Red Lodge          Dan Lowe, Big Horn Conservation District          Dennis Hoyem, Stillwater County          Emelie Eaton, Yellowstone Conservation District          Jim Reno, Yellowstone County          John Pretty On Top, Big Horn County          Katie Callahan, Town of Joliet          Ken Gomer, Town of Bridger          Page Dringman, City of Big Timber</p> <p><b>Members at Large Not Present</b>          Lisa Skriner, MSU-Billings, College of Technology          Melissa Kramer, Stillwater Economic Development</p>
<p><b>Guests</b>          Brian Wolf – Hardin Area Chamber of Commerce, Pres.          Gloria Menke - Big Horn Conservation District          Laura Lowe - Representing board member, Dan Lowe          Mary Slattery – Big Horn Co. Historic Preservation Officer          Seanna Sparks – DC, Hardin Field Office, NRCS          Sharon Stewart-Peregoy - Senator District 21          Shirley Margheim – Hardin Area Chamber of Commerce, Sec.</p> <p><b>Congressional Staff</b>          Not present</p>	<p><b>Staff</b>          Chris Mehus          Jillann Knutson          Diana Spint          Paige Weber</p> <p><b>Staff Not Present</b>          Dick Rath          Joel Bertolino          Carla Lawrence, NRCS Coordinator</p>

Meeting Called to Order at 6:10 p.m. by Chairman Egan in Hardin, MT at The Hardin Depot.

**Welcome - Egan**

Chairman Egan welcomed all present. Brian Wolf led the Pledge of Allegiance and everyone in attendance introduced themselves and shared information about a project in their area.

**Office Administrator – Paige Weber**

Approval of January 20, 2010 - Minutes

**Motion:** To approve minutes, as written.

**By:** Marvin Carter

**Second:** Kendall Hartman

**Action:** Carried

#### Approval of Treasurer's Report - Financial Report

**Motion:** To approve the treasurer's - financial report, as presented.

**By:** Steve Arveschoug

**Second:** Ed Ulledalen

**Action:** Carried

Knutson presented the Beartooth financials. The RC&D is using the carry over from our savings accounts at the beginning of the year until we start receiving reimbursements for several of our yearly funding sources. After the first quarter, we can do a draw and begin drawing from a CRDC grant. The Fuels Program shows negative until we file reimbursements. The RC&D is receiving extra funds from the EDA this year. We will also be receiving additional interest this year by moving our bank accounts locally and closing our accounts with Wells Fargo. In the past, the RC&D did not receive interest on the checking account.

#### Revolving Loan Fund Manager/Bookkeeper – Jillann Knutson

##### Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

In February, we received 96% of our payments. We wrote off some long term bad debt and will be refinancing some loans. We also received some payoffs and are working on getting some good, new loans in the door to finance with the additional funds available to lend out. We have had a few new loan proposals the loan committee is reviewing. We cannot compete with banks on our loan rates but we match our loan rates with the local banks on the interest rates they offer. We charge a 2% origination fee. Knutson is working on promoting the RLF program to reach other lenders and lending institutions.

Update - The Beartooth RC&D's annual audit will begin the last week in April.

#### Economic Development Director – Mehus

##### Little Big Horn College

Mehus submitted a request for assistance for Little Big Horn College (LBHC) to help with grant writing and administration, financial planning and meeting facilitation. LBHC is looking to develop a technical skills training center, offering welding, electrical, construction, heavy equipment operation and business management training curriculums. This was a referral from the Montana Department of Commerce. LBHC, Many Stars and Westmoreland Industries have all committed matching funds and in-kind contributions toward this project to train and recruit more local employees. A \$10,000.00 Big Sky Trust Fund Planning grant has been secured for preliminary work on architectural and engineering design on the facility. It is proposed to build one large, new facility to house more than just this training center. MSU College of Technology is willing to assist with the development of this facility and setting up curriculums for students to receive certification. Senator Sharon Peregoy commented on the long term planning and vision of the college to prepare individuals with vocational training to enter the work force. Building the facility on the reservation would allow easier access and could assist more individuals by eliminating the difficulty of commuting to Billings or securing housing to get training. We will be looking to request additional funds from the Big Sky Trust Fund to cover the additional cost if a larger facility is needed.

**Motion:** To accept Little Big Horn College as a project assisting with an EDA planning grant.

**By:** Marvin Carter

**Second:** Penny Landon

**Action:** Carried

#### Rural Business Education class

The 12 classes are being held every Wednesday night in Columbus and began in February and will run through the middle of April. Melissa Kramer, Stillwater Economic Development and Kendall Hartman, Billings Job Service were instrumental in setting up and promoting the program. Assistance was obtained through a Rural Business Education Grant (RBEG) grant and continuing education funds to offer this pilot business education course at a lower cost for the rural communities. These courses have a high level of instruction and follow the Small Business Development Center FastTrac curriculum. Hartman commented that the class attendance has been high, there has been three new business start ups with three businesses on a level to start hiring employees. Approximately 70% of the participants are Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) clients.

### Small Business Enhancement Class

Bertolino has been working with John Rife, Billings Job Service to offer a Small Business Enhancement Class with QuickBooks training in April at the Hardin High School. The class instructor is a Certified QuickBooks trainer and CPA. Funding for this training will come from a Regional Business Education Grant (RBEG). McDowell has been working with Bertolino to go door to door to businesses to promote the classes and seek interested participants.

### Bridging Cultures

Senator Perego gave an update on the Bridging Cultures effort to learn, discuss issues, share ideas and develop a better understanding of the differences in our cultures. Significant inroads have been made to building trust and getting individuals committed to following through on projects.

The Crow Tribe has been working on cross-cultural exchange activities and has submitted a proposal to the Montana Fair board to have Crow Days during the fair. There would be cross cultural activities and exhibits in an attempt to help fuse the culture gap.

Crow Economic Development Planner, Ada Iron, reported the efforts to re-establish a Chamber of Commerce for the Crow Tribe has been revived and much progress has been made with the election of new members. They hope to compile the steps along the way into a book they will publish and make available in Bismarck's University of Mary library to help educate other tribes on the process to develop their own Chamber of Commerce within their tribal communities. The idea is to model and develop the Crow Chamber of Commerce after the Billings Area's Chamber.

Iron also commented on the discussion from the Bridging Cultures meeting of developing a transportation system to assist tribal members with travel to obtain educational training opportunities. They are looking at starting up a Bed and Breakfast facility in Fort Smith

### Goddard Manure and Compost

Mehus helped in the grant preparation and attended the Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) hearing with the business owner on this compost project. This project will be presented in more detail as a Request for Assistance at the next board meeting.

### Housing Program – Diana Spint

Mehus introduced Diana Spint who has been hired as the Beartooth RC&D's Housing Coordinator. Spint comes to the organization with certifications to offer homeownership counseling programs and is looking to expand the services we offer beyond just Homebuyer Education. She is currently offering Pre-Purchase Counseling, Credit Counseling and Foreclosure Prevention Counseling programs. Spint will be visiting the rural communities to set up scheduled office days, meeting locations and sponsorship to offer these programs. Spint will also begin working on helping the RC&D to become a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) certified counseling agency.

### AG Program Technician – Bertolino

#### Roberts Community Council Grants

Roberts is a non-incorporated town and asked the Beartooth RC&D to use our 501(c)(3) status to facilitate a pass through account for a \$1,000.00 grant from NorthWestern Energy to set up a community website to coordinate community activities.

**Motion:** To work with the Roberts Community Council to facilitate their grant funding.

**By:** Steve Arveschoug

**Second:** Ed Ulledalen

**Action:** Carried

### Montana Cattle Company

Bertolino has began work with the business on a Rural Development grant to do a feasibility study on opening the larger processing facility near East Laurel. The company needs a few more pieces of equipment before receiving final USDA approval on its facilities.

### Renewable Resource Grant

Bertolino has been working with Lawrence and the Carbon Conservation District on the planning grant process for a Renewable Resource Grant and Loan (RRGL) Program through the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). Landon stated they are working on obtaining a construction grant to help fund the replacement of a siphon irrigation system that has deteriorated. Most of these systems are 70-80 years old and are starting to break down. It is estimated to cost over a billion dollars to replace just the systems in the state of Montana with the increased costs of materials. There cost share is estimated to be approximately 50/50 with the landowner.

### NRCS Coordinator – Lawrence

Lawrence assisted Carbon County Commissioner, John Prinkki, in applying for an Energy Efficiency Block Grant to help replace the Carbon County Maintenance Shop that burned in December of 2009. Weber also assisted with assembly of the grant and provided photo's which were included in the application packet.

### Announcements – Miscellaneous

Egan will facilitate a staff team building workshop in Big Timber on March 22<sup>nd</sup> to work up a plan of action and direction for the future of the Beartooth RC&D. The results of this workshop will be reported at the next board meeting.

McDowell stated there are two new businesses in Hardin, the Dew Drop In café and the Sweettreats -N-More bakery.

Mehus read a notice from Rachel Court to advise the board that the state Land Board accepted a bid from Arch Coal to lease the Otter Creek coal tracts for nearly \$86 million with an estimated \$5 billion more in revenues to the state over the next 25 years. Governor Schweitzer stated this should create more than “1,000 good paying jobs for the next generation” in the state of Montana.

### RC&D Funding

Mehus read a statement from Liz Ching that Senator Baucus is taking the lead with Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) to push for full funding of RC&D's for FY2011. Egan delivered letters the RC&D prepared to our congressmen to restore and support long-term funding for the RC&D Program in the 2011 budget.

### Project List -

We have scaled down the areas on our project list summary to three areas – Business, Community and Natural Resources. The projects with numbers assigned to them represent those that required more than ten hours of staff time. The numbered projects have been brought before the board for review and approval as a Request for Assistance to work on them. This ensures that the projects the staff works on meet the RC&D's mission and objectives.

**Next Scheduled Board Meeting-** May 20, 2010 in Big Timber. Location to be announced.

**Adjournment:** 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paige Weber  
Office Administrator  
Beartooth RC&D Area, Inc.