



**MINUTES**

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

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

<p><b>Board Members Present</b>          Chuck Egan, Chairman, Town of Columbus          Ada Iron, Crow Nation          Dennis Hoyem, Stillwater County          Doug Tucker, Carbon County          Ed Ulledalen, City of Billings          Jeffrey McDowell, City of Hardin/Two Rivers Authority          Jim Reno, Yellowstone County          Steve Arveschoug, Big Sky EDA, Billings</p> <p><b>Members at Large Present</b>          Lisa Skriner, MSU-Billings, College of Technology</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          John Pretty On Top, Big Horn County          Katie Callahan, Town of Joliet          Ken Gomer, Town of Bridger          Marvin Carter, Vice-Chairman, City of Laurel          Page Dringman, City of Big Timber          Penny Landon, Treasurer, Carbon Conservation District          Susie Mosness, Sweet Grass County          Vacant, Yellowstone Conservation District</p> <p><b>Members at Large Present</b>          Kendall Hartman, Billings Job Service          Melissa Kramer, Stillwater Economic Development</p>
<p><b>Guests</b>          Matt Holben, Area Specialist, USDA Rural Development</p>	<p><b>Staff</b>          Carla Lawrence, NRCS Coordinator          Chris Mehus, Economic Development Director          Diana Spint, Housing Coordinator          Dick Rath, Forester          Jillann Knutson, RLF Manager/Bookkeeper          Joel Bertolino, Program Technician          Paige Weber, Office Administrator</p>

The meeting was called to order at 6:27 p.m. by Chairman Egan in Billings at the Briarwood Country Club.

**Welcome - Egan**

Chairman Egan welcomed all present. The host county was Yellowstone and board members Reno, Ulledalen and Arveschoug provided outstanding presentations and insight into future plans for the METRA Park, City of Billings and the economic development of the Billings area. They provided some insightful thoughts and information about how decisions are made and rationalizing that process with the declining economical ability to meet everyone's needs, wants and desires within the community.

**Office Administrator – Paige Weber**

Approval of September 16, 2010 - Minutes

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

**By:** Jeff McDowell

**Second:** Jim Reno

**Action:** Carried

### **Treasurer's Report - Financial Report – Jillann Knutson**

Knutson reported on the financials and they show the net income. We did have more income than expected this year.

**Motion:** To file for Audit the treasurer's financial report as presented.

**By:** Jeff McDowell

**Second:** Doug Tucker

**Action:** Carried

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

**2011 Preliminary Budget** – Knutson and Mehus presented the preliminary budget for 2011 based on the expense figures from last year and the projected income and sources of funding for the coming year. Knutson stated that contractual was difficult to figure and that there would be changes made to this budget at the January board meeting. One change will be the administrative monies for the Beartooth Hospital, once this is known, we will make the required draw.

Knutson attended a required EDA Regional Conference for training in St. Louis, Missouri. Visiting with the other attendees at the training, Knutson reported that our RLF program is in a better position than many other organizations that have been affected by the economy. EDA may also have additional grant funding available that Beartooth RC&D may apply for in the coming year.

### **Economic Development Director – Chris Mehus**

**Sweet Grass Natural Lamb** - Mehus submitted a Request for Assistance to continue work on the Sweet Grass Natural Lamb project. Beartooth RC&D has been working with this group for 7-8 years and they were one of our original loans from the RLF. They have been working towards marketing their own product and in the last few years have been extremely successful in reaching out to the local restaurants, retail markets and farmer markets selling directly to consumers. They were able to obtain a couple grants, one through the USDA Rural Development and the other through the Montana Department of Agriculture, Growth Through Agriculture, for development of marketing materials and establishing a website to sell their product. Ulledalen questioned whether this group was involved in the Western Sustainability Exchange. Mehus stated that they were a partner participating in this rural farmer's market which links producers with customers/markets and provides trainings for producers to make their business sustainable.

**Motion:** To accept Sweet Grass Natural Lamb as a project and continue to assist them.

**By:** Jeff McDowell

**Second:** Jim Reno

**Action:** Carried

### **Update**

Mehus gave an update on the Wild West promotional region. This project was brought to us by the Regional EDA to develop a promotional region for historical and cultural attractions between Medora, North Dakota, Rapid City, South Dakota, Cody, Wyoming and Billings, Montana. The project involves individuals from tourism, economic development, chambers of commerce, tribes and local governments to organize promote and develop tourism. They have applied for EDA funding to do a feasibility study and look at the opportunities available.

### **Housing Program – Diana Spint**

#### **Update**

Spint has been working with Lawrence to update the Bylaws so that Beartooth RC&D can submit applications to become a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Instrumentality.

Spint does not feel we are reaching the target audiences for homebuyer education in our area as most of the participants are nearing the completion of the home buying process, not the beginning. She has been working on an application to the Billings Association of Realtors for funding to be used for marketing and outreach.

Spint has been holding office days in some of our rural communities as has had some referral clients from local lending institutions as a result.

The City of Laurel has approached Beartooth RC&D to discuss submitting a CDBG grant application for a rehabilitation program on an older motel to be converted into affordable housing units. The request did not allow for enough time to submit an application this year, but we will work with them to get all the items needed to hopefully submit an application next year.

### **AG Program Technician – Joel Bertolino**

#### **Update**

Bertolino gave an update on the Food and Ag Development Sub-Center Beartooth RC&D administrators. We are finishing up the final reports and convert to the new data base system.

Bertolino, Mehus and Knutson have recently met with 3 new start up businesses to give them information on creating business plans, discuss financial planning and giving assistance on developing their business ideas.

Ensave is a company that received a CIG grant with NRCS to perform On Farm energy audits. Lawrence and Bertolino are working with NRCS and Ensava to determine the potential to assist with this grant and the training of five data collectors. Lawrence has been working to get the other RC&D's across the state and the State Association of RC&D's engaged with this project.

Das Kuchenhaus Bakery sent a link to their new website at [www.daskuchenhausbakery.com](http://www.daskuchenhausbakery.com). The design and logo are is impressive, professional and they are pleased with the work that has been completed.

Bertolino has been working with the Town of Joliet on a Community Facilities grant to upgrade the police force equipment, primarily their patrol vehicles. They are still using outdated VHS equipment and need to upgrade body armor and other safety items.

#### **Roberts Fire Hall Project**

Bertolino presented a request for assistance for the Roberts Fire Hall which is a continuance of the Roberts Community Council Project. They have put together some resources with the county, the fire hall board and community water and sewer district for partial funding and need the Beartooth RC&D's non-profit status to apply for a \$15,000 Steel Reese Foundation grant and administer the grant funds if received. The funding will be used to upgrade the building, replace the windows to more energy efficient and redeveloping the entrance of the building to be ADA accessible. This building serves a location to host community events for the Roberts area.

**Motion:** To approve the Roberts Fire Hall as a project.

**By:** Dennis Hoyem

**Second:** Doug Tucker

**Action:** Carried

### **Forester – Dick Rath**

#### **Update**

Rath gave an update on the fuels mitigation program. The past couple years we have worked closely with BLM and DNRC for our funding sources. We have secured enough funding to carry us through at least another 3 years of our fuels reduction projects. Currently, we have a series of projects lined up in Red Lodge with the Yellowstone Bighorn Research Association, Sheep Mountain and continued work in Grizzly Peaks. In Stillwater County, we will begin another phase of work for the Beartooth Christian Ranch, and on the Countryman Creek Estates and Hearts and Diamonds Subdivision road right away clearing for ingress/egress work. Mehus and Rath are working with BLM on a possible equipment acquisition for right away clearing in Big Horn County.

Rath and Mehus have been working with a new contractor, Brett Clouse, owner of Front Range Logging in Absarokee, on a fuels project in Grizzly Peaks. He has done outstanding work on his first project working with the Beartooth RC&D.

## **NRCS – Carla Lawrence**

### **Update**

The Beartooth RC&D staff is wrapping up the last of the annual visits to our sponsors, towns/cities, conservation districts and county commissioners.

**Annual Plan of Work** – Lawrence presented a draft copy of the 2011 Annual Plan of Work for review outlining Beartooth RC&D's plan of work for the coming year. We would like to have any changes to the Plan of Work be presented prior to the January board meeting for approval so the Chairman can sign off on it.

**Amendments to Bylaws** – The Bylaws have not been reviewed or updated in several years. The proposed additions and changes to the Bylaws were highlighted and presented to the board. There were also points of discussion regarding sponsors from the incorporated towns that do not have representation on the board. Reno suggested the Executive Committee review the amendments to the bylaws and make a recommendation to the board on these changes at the January meeting

### **Special Guests-**

Matt Holben, USDA Rural Development, provided a summary of all the grants they have assisted Beartooth RC&D's clients with this past year. Bertolino and Mehus are working with Holben on several more projects and the turn around time on grants has been good. He thought there would be an emphasis on community facility and energy projects in the coming years with lots of opportunities available. The Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) has a significant amount of funding available through the RLF and most of these are getting funded.

### **Announcements – Miscellaneous**

The RC&D needs to update the constitution and bylaws and is looking for a committee to review the changes. McDowell volunteered to be on the standing committee to review the Bylaws annually.

**Next Scheduled Board Meeting-** January 20, 2010 to be held in Laurel. Location to be announced.

**Adjournment:** 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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