**Beartooth RC&D**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**July 20, 2023 – 12:30 pm**

**Beartooth RC&D**

**Members Present:**

Joel Bertolino, BRCD

Nan Knight, BRCD

Jacy Head, BRCD

Myrna Lastusky, BRCD

Brent Moore, City of Red Lodge

Dan Lowe, Big Horn Conservation District

Commissioner Don Jones, Yellowstone County

Commissioner Scott Miller, Carbon County

Tina Toyne, Big Horn County / City of Hardin

Bob Van Oosten, Stillwater Conservation District

Ryan VanBallegooyen, Billings Job Service

Commissioner Melanie Roe, Sweet Grass County

Stephanie Ray, Stillwater County

Bonnie Gray, City of Joliet

Lorene Hintz, BSED

Kayla Vokral, SBA

Danny Choriki, Billings City Council

Tory Kolkhorst, Sen. Daines’ Office

Emily Schneller, Rep. Rosendale’s Office

Jeff McDowell, Two Rivers Authority

Kaylyn Roberts, Sen. Tester’s Office

**Guests:**

Representative Kerri Seekins-Crowe, State of Montana

12:30 Board Appreciation Luncheon

**Meeting Called to Order:** Chair VanBallegooyen called the meeting to order.

**Pledge of Allegiance, Introduction of Members and Guests**

* MT Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe represents District 21.

**Review March Board Minutes (Action):** Scott Miller motioned to approve the minutes, Danny Choriki seconded. Motion carried.

**Congressional Updates:**

* **Kaylyn Roberts (Sen. Tester) – Kaylyn’s emailed updates**
  + Senator Tester recently had a bill signed into law to Approve Veterans Construction Projects at Fort Harrison VA. This was a part of the Fiscal Year 2023 Major Medical Facility Authorization Act.
  + Senator Tester secured $780,000 to support Montana’s wildland fire management and operational response. The funding will be coming from Tester’s bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). This will include funding for special pay supplements, training for wildland firefights, collaborative fuels management, and burned area rehabilitation activities.
  + During the train derailment, Region Field Director Josiah Porcel went and toured the train derailment.
  + Senator Tester secured $7 million for Carbon County Flood Recovery, to replace three bridges, listed below, which were all washed out due to the flood.
    - $2,567,760.89 to replace the Meeteetse Trail Bridge
    - $2,276,429.77 to replace the East Side Bridge South
    - $2,091,977.33 to replace the East Side Bridge North
  + Senator Tester recently announced to offer a bipartisan amendment to the must-pass defense bill to assess the Chinese spy balloon threat and use of American technology.
* **Tory Kolkhorst (Sen. Daines)**
  + Sen. Daines is calling for passage of the largest reform bill in decades to streamline the permitting process and increase tribal engagement. Crow Tribe is a supporter.
  + Bi-partisan bill to settle final Indian Water Rights settlement (Fort Belknap Indian Water Rights Act).
    - Don asked if the Fort Belknap Act included Salish and Kootenai. Tory said that one has already been dealt with.
  + Amendments to NDAA to bolster national security/support MT service members.
  + Working to make the pay raise for wildland firefighters permanent.
  + Support Governor Gianforte’s efforts to address low water levels in Flathead Lake.
  + Montana Sportsmen Conservation Act: Better forest management, public access, improve conservation of public land.
  + Sanction Chinese companies and those responsible for spy balloon.
  + Approves recent SCOTUS decisions – ended student loan bailout and removing racial discrimination from college admissions.
  + Different rules from EPA that would shut down baseload fuel-powered plants in U.S. – Senator is fighting against that.
* **Emily Schneller (Rep. Rosendale)**
  + Rep. Rosendale released Farm Bill priorities survey. You can access it on his website.
  + EPA rule – Congressman released comments on that as well as BLM conservation rule.
  + Visited train derailment site 2 weeks ago – still pulling asphalt out of river.
  + Grizzly legislation – not much movement. Passed committee a couple months ago. More and more clear how necessary it is with all the griz movement in new areas.
    - Lorene asked what they think is causing it? Growing in number and moving to new locations. They were endangered for so long that their comeback has far surpassed goal numbers.
  + Next month – Congress in recess, so Rep. Rosendale will be in the state quite a bit.

**Treasurer/Financial Reports: Nan Knight (RC&D Financials / RLF Financials / RMAP) (Action)**

* Working with Carbon County Meats on a grant and a loan.
* Potentially seeking new IRP loan fund. The next round to submit is September 30th. It will involve requesting that the board raise the maximum loan amount from $250K to $400K.
* Submitted another SSBCI from a start-up in Yellowstone.
* Closed on 1 loan in Yellowstone and will be closing one in Big Horn County next month.
* Also working with potential new owners of the Y-Stop in Roberts – a mercantile/restaurant/ possible gas station/campground.
* Ryan reminded everyone that the -$32,344 at the bottom of p. 17 is simply due to the pass-through funds.
* Brent asked if the fiscal year is Jan-Dec – yes. What is savings account for? For things that come up like car repair, etc. to have some money on hand for Beartooth incidentals.
* **Melanie Roe moved to accept RC&D and RLF financials as presented. Scott Miller seconded. Motion carried.**

RMAP (Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program):

* Working out great. Up to $50K microloans to loan in rural communities.
* Closed on first one last month in Worden.
* On top of the loan money, there is a technical assistance grant that we can utilize to provide assistance, training, etc. to small businesses.
  + We were awarded $12,500 in TA money this year that BRCD can provide or contract out to provide the needed training.

**Staff Reports – Program/Project Updates**

**Joel Bertolino, Food & Ag Director**

* 2-year cycle for FADC funding. Participated in a RFP process in the State, went to Great Falls for a review of those proposals. Nan went with Joel. Were awarded $120K for 2 years.
* Collaborating with MMEC and SBDC. Send clients back and forth with them.
* VAPG
  + S-Ranch Meats – helped apply for $250K grant to expand their business.
  + Oswald Meats – reapplied for $250K this year; narrowly missed it last year.
* GTA
  + Speedy & Flo’s Sweet Corn – Tina and Myrna were part of that application.
  + J&D Meats – also interested in a RMAP loan.
  + Yellowstone Pasta – former chef at Jake’s who is developing a fresh pasta business; he is interested in applying. Pretty unique business.
    - Kayla said you can find his pasta at Town and Country in Billings.
  + Undammed Distilling – will help with a grant this fall.
* Fertilizer grant - $2 million grant was turned down. They will still proceed with expansion.
* Greycliff Mill: Last fall had finished cheese-making area. Also have pizza making, flour mill, sewing, Air BnB (silo rental), apple orchard . . .
* Recently visited Wild Bison Ranch outside Belfry; brought along Lane Gobbs on that visit.
* CTAP Lead Service Line program – trying to get the ball rolling. Last week they said they’ll be sending info out in the next couple weeks.
  + Mel asked if the DOC is competing with us for the money? Joel said we are the only EDD that applied for the funds; mostly engineering firms applied. He said they are likely to make some revisions on it.
  + Brent said Interstate was selected. They have a website up, and a community can apply for assistance. Interstate will provide the TA to those who need it.
    - Nan said yes, Beartooth can’t provide some of the actual lead service line work, but we can help with public outreach and other technical assistance.

**Jacy Head, Economic Development Director**

* Working to complete BSTF feasibility study for Stillwater County Industrial Park – needs to be completed by September.
* RCDI grants are moving forward with Tina Toyne and Angela Getchell.
  + Working on housing entity with Angela and Carbon County.
* Submitting many reports this month
  + Both RCDI quarterly reports
  + CRDC quarterly report
  + EDA PPG – questionnaire to evaluate what we are doing
  + BSTF Q2 report
* Helping Hands Food Bank is moving forward – Draft Phase 2 report should be done by Aug. 2. Petroleum release/contamination was identified and are deciding next steps.
* Rocky Fork Inn – another Brownfields site in Red Lodge that took a beating from the flood. Working with City Planner Courtney Long to do some assessments there – structural assessment, and if it is deemed structurally-unsound, will assess while demo happens. Hope to turn into a greenspace.
* Beartooth received $460,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant. Award date doesn’t start until Oct. 1, but Jacy is working on all the paperwork. QEP, QAPPs, etc. to complete.
* Jacy will attend EPA Brownfields Conference in Detroit in Aug – expenditure covered by grant.
* EIG EDA Case Study on Poverty was finally approved and released – covers the poverty in Big Horn County and the impacts of it.
  + EIG asked Jacy to be a panelist to the IEDC conference in Dallas in September & are providing funding for her to attend.

**Myrna Lastusky, Operations Support:**

* Montana Community Foundation $15,000 grant – we have disbursed almost all of the funds to businesses and organizations throughout the region. Lot of great projects happening.
* Wrote grant request to Sibanye-Stillwater Mine to fund a Meeting Owl for meetings that have both Zoom and in-person. Sibanye granted us $1500, which is almost half of the needed funds. Wrote grant apps to Town Pump and Walmart Community Foundation, also, and we are awaiting word on those. Checked into First Interstate Bank’s grant program, but they have allocated all their funds for this year.
* Created a Success Board in the office to celebrate some of the great things happening at BRCD.
* Beki Brandborg of GL Development has asked for a LOS for Mitchell Court, their new project in Billings. It is right next to the south side Jackson Court affordable housing they just completed. If others are willing to write LOS, let Myrna know.

**Regional Roundup:**

**Commissioner Scott Miller, Carbon County:**

* Over July 4th, Red Lodge rodeo kicked off new bleachers. Record 7,000 people the first night, then 6,000, then 7,000. They are the 55th PRCA ranking of rodeos.
* Some drama with Airport Board and City of Red Lodge. Should be resolved very soon. Commissioners are working with the City Council.
* Bridger: Gas station/truck stop being built. Will have a restaurant. Broke ground a few days ago. Where the old Maverik used to be. More jobs coming to Bridger.
* Made it past June 13th without any disasters!

**Commissioner Don Jones, Yellowstone County:**

* Metra will be done with infrastructure work by time of fair.
  + Air Show is the same weekend as the fair – busy place!
  + New general manager shows up Aug. 7th.
* Still in budget – final numbers will come in September.
* Don commented on the 7,000 number of Red Lodge rodeo – very impressive
* Coke plant is coming along pretty well.
  + Kayla: More and more of the pop-up walls. Several other huge buildings coming up that will be storage.
  + Danny: On the other side of I-90 is another Atlanta firm. Coke will be a bottling plant; the other one will be a transfer station for trucks.
* Pacific Steel and Recycling: building a landfill out on 89 (Shepherd-Acton Road). They have a lot of “fluff” that comes out, and it’s cheaper for them to build their own landfill.

**Tina Toyne, Big Horn County/City of Hardin Economic Development Director:**

* Traveled a LOT in April, May, June.
* Little Big Horn Days at end of June. Had rodeo first night, but the 2nd night the road washed out, had some flooding.
* Hailstorm in Hardin that left a lot of damage.
* Native Days – part of grandstand collapsed.
* Good downtown celebration for July 4th.
* Working with J&D Meats and S-Ranch to provide different grant opportunities.
* Brenda Maas from Visit SE MT and Tina visited J&D Meats.
* Participated in talks with Crow tribal members for Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority. Good discussion. Hope to move forward in their collaboration to bring back BSPRA.
* City of Hardin & Tina applied for TA from HUD and were awarded participation in that.
* Lodge Grass IGA is up for sale. Looking at a co-op option and met with MCDC, but the next day one of the owners said there is a possible buyer. Hoping for that!
* Waiting to hear back on the GTA grant for Speedy and Flo’s Sweet Corn.

**Lorene Hintz, SBDC Director:**

* Work with BSTF-Job Creation. Got the last one funded, and it will be the last since the program is ending. ☹
* PTAC has secured $230 million in funding for different businesses. They are very busy helping businesses that work with government contracting.
  + K: The air show that is coming is part of Navy Week, which is a great opportunity for PTAC. Aug. 9th there are different trainings and then many agencies coming for people who want to contract with military/government. If you have anyone who could do this, they should sign up. Kinda like speed dating.
* The Rec Center is hopefully getting on the ballot. Many seniors in City of Billings who realize taxes are going to go up, but it’s important for bringing business to town, etc.
* Every year one SBDC counselor is voted in as State Star. Last year Lorene received it, and this year Kayla did. Hooray!

**Kayla Vokral, SBDC Business Advisor:**

* Big Sky EDA awarded a $1 million Brownfield grant.
* Lorene and Kayla are very busy. Their year is Jan-Dec, and so far this year 6 businesses have started and they have helped clients receive $4.6 million in funds.
* Rock31 – launched first barista in incubator space.
* Full capacity at office. 58 paying members, plus shared workspace members daily.
  + Tory asked what the waiting list is like for workspace?
    - Kayla: the shared ones turn over occasionally, but the private offices don’t turn over very often. No time limits on how long someone can rent it.
    - Can also do virtual mailbox option, book conference rooms, etc.
    - Lorene said a lot of businesses are using the conference spaces; full almost every day!
* Used RLF funds to purchase a salon in Laurel.
* Partnered with Beartooth on a food truck loan.
* New marketing manager with BSED.
* Rocky Vista Medical school opening was last week.

**Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crow, MT District 21:**

* For anyone interested in workforce development, our team is working on welding programs, re-entry with prisons, better hand-offs, and CDLs – trying to figure out how to do a better job in finding workforce.

**Commissioner Melanie Roe, Sweet Grass County:**

* If you haven’t commented yet on Sibanye-Stillwater– deadline is Aug. 9th. If the amendment to their Environmental Impact Statement is not approved, they won’t be able to continue operating past 2025.
  + Melanie will send Myrna the info for anyone who is willing to make public comment and/or send LOS. If they don’t get the permit, mining will cease in 2025, which would be a huge hit to the entire state’s economy.
* Sweet Grass Fest in June.
* Weekly PRCA rodeo won’t be held anymore. It was a struggle to get it all to work.
* Doing an airport expansion. Lot of jet air traffic and hope to make parking area bigger.
* Frosty Freeze/Coffees is doing very well. A few places to eat breakfast now, but finding help is still an issue.
* Most of the campgrounds are open now.
* Fair is next week.

**Stephanie Ray, Stillwater County Director of Community & Economic Development:**

* Train derailment – cleanup and rebuilding has gone pretty quickly.
* Fair week in Stillwater.
* New Civic Center. $8 million facility can be used for weddings and other events. Will host Brewfest, Montana Silver Smith anniversary, fairs, etc. Can compete on pulling business into Stillwater.
* Meadery coming to Stillwater County in a month – Honey Mead tasting room.
* Courthouse project for ADA compliance.
* Beaver Creek windfarm.
* Park City stormwater program.
* New gravel pit.
* Most public assistance projects from the flood are completed.
* Finish wastewater project in Absarokee.
* Law & Justice Center is shovel-ready.
* Road to Mine is now open.
* Site selected for Industrial Park – hope to see additional business recruitment.

**Bob VanOosten, Stillwater Conservation District:**

* Interesting year with the flooding.
* Received grant from NRCS for EWP money – about $7 million. Also running it in Carbon.
* 310 inspections.
* Many people building expensive cabins right on the edge of the Stillwater River, so when flooding happens, this is an issue. Federal flood insurance only covers a small portion.
* Repeated flooding has made the river very volatile. There will be a lot of changes in the next few years.
* Received $3 million through Forest Service for road repair, bridge repair, and work to keep a creek in.

**Jeff McDowell, Two Rivers Authority:** No report; Tina covered it well.

**Danny Choriki, Billings City Council:**

* Family Justice Alliance is doing a study on how to implement a Family Justice Center in Billings. For people dealing with domestic violence, this will be easier to navigate. Will hopefully free up resources for preventing the cycle of violence.
* City approved half-million dollars to study/implement a mobile city jail specifically for those awaiting arraignment in municipal court.
* The Parks Bond passed the next-to-last step. Approved staff to write the language for the bond; when that comes back, it’s the final step. $2 million pledged by Par Montana.
* Increase of bed tax to be used for maintenance of rec center.
* NADC bought the Shrine. In August they will announce plans for moving Indian Healthcare Clinic there. That will fill it to 50%.
* Downtown Housing group has decided to focus on property between Billings Gazette and up to 6th Avenue. One thing they want to add is housing. Adding residential between the medical corridor and downtown will connect the two and bring in professionals.
* City approved recycling cardboard starting this fall.
* If anyone wants to create a co-op to bring the Pickle Barrel back to Billings, let Danny know! He loves what the MCDC is doing – great way for Montanans to invest in MT and keep money in MT.

**Brent Moore, Interstate Engineering / City of Red Lodge:**

* We have 2-year term mayors. Some are advocating for a City Manager form of government (in regards to earlier discussion on Red Lodge).
* Large storm water project going now.
* The pool has been a great addition. Also offer swim lessons for kids.
* Pea cannery was bought by a NYC artist who is renovating it for his own studio. Thanks to Beartooth for funding some of the past studies on that.
* County has 3 bridges under construction right now. County had $6.8 million obligated toward those.
* East Rosebud – temporary bridge is being put in to regain access. County and Interstate were there because they applied for a grant to help with that. There were 40 grant apps, and one reviewer said they were ranked #1. Hoping to have that award for Carbon County to fix the road from Roscoe up to East Rosebud.

**Edie Vogel (Not present but sent her updates), Yellowstone Conservation District**

* Our new website is live and we invite you to check it out: yellowstoneconservationdistrict.org
* We recently applied for a dept. of Ag grant for eradicating woody species on Cove Ditch in Yellowstone and Stillwater Counties. We were unsuccessful in getting funded, as the dept. decided to focus on river corridors, but will look to another grant source in the near future to keep the project going. Lobbyist Ray Beck worked to get $250,000 in funding for woody invasives, successful applicants included Yellowstone Co. Weed District, Musselshell co. and City of Billings.
* My role at YCD is working on developing an expanded Education program with resources available to schools/organizations for conservation education. We are looking forward to applying for some grants and creating these new outreach opportunities for YCD.
* As always, we have had a very busy season with 310 permits/opportunities that the board is working on.
* A new Aquatic Invasive Species cleaning station has been implemented at Lake Elmo.

Exciting news at Lake Elmo!

A CD3 watercraft cleaning station is in place at the boat ramp. This waterless cleaning station provides users the tools they need to clean, drain, and dry their watercraft to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. And, it is FREE to use!

The cleaning station was graciously donated to FWP from

[Yellowstone Conservation District](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091835800499&__cft__%5b0%5d=AZXdVRGoPYR8zdJetsdMROMdci-EVZfMpbKv0E0NCyvgaZvXiEhZZO1-z1ETM7RUvSXaGVllEevNg2UKafEdldE8MAbfy38e0fVauU_sP5iI8ndWYEdir7ZS3S8t9Cio6npFJ-BupS5vaWonoFiInDHCAdL5ELP7Xf5bgm2Ezjz3ZjdjIYijWqGzTnER4DdqWq8Ay3JL7t5EWClaKp0-CI_6&__tn__=-%5dK-y-R).

Check it out next time you’re out paddling at Lake Elmo.

For more information on the cleaning station, visit:  
[https://www.cd3systems.com/](https://www.cd3systems.com/?fbclid=IwAR3k8Du_-0acbvqmhHyRa6uY3UQqshjsrku8cYU-O8-1Mi0UwOEb9ElaVQk)

**Next Beartooth RC&D Board Meeting: September 21, 2023 in Red Lodge**

Meeting adjourned at 2:33 pm.