



**RAVALLI COUNTY LOCAL WORKING GROUP
(RCLWG)**

Wednesday, August 12, 2020,
Teleconference (515) 604-9000 access code 565491

Minutes
1709 North First Street
Hamilton, Montana 59840
(406) 361-6181



Ravalli County Local Working Group (RCLWG) teleconference (515) 604-9000 access code 565491 meeting on Wednesday, August 12, 2020, was called to order at 1:35 p.m., by Kent Myers, Bitterroot Conservation District Supervisor.

Introductions and Attendance:

Kori Anderson Bitter Root Land Trust (BRLT); Heather Barber, Bitter Root Water Forum, (BRWF); Kyle Barber, BRLT; Allen Bjergo, Bitter Root Resource Conservation & Development, (RC&D); Pam Gouse, RC&D; Kent Myers, Bitterroot Conservation District, (BCD); Melissa Odell, Conservation Project Manager, BRLT; Andrea Price, BRWF; Julie Ralston, BCD Admin; Stacy Welling, District Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS); Sharon Schroeder, Landowner.

Minutes

Bjergo moved to approve the RCLWG minutes of 01/23/2020 as modified. Myers seconded, motion carried.

Review actions from last meeting:

Welling will meet individually with BRWF, BRLT, and TU to discuss potential 2021 TIP proposal(s). Partner updates on projects and funding activities will be covered under the NRCS report.

Partner Updates:

NRCS: Stacy Welling, NRCS District Conservationist: NRCS approved the RCLWG proposed Targeted Implementation Plan “Sapphire Front Forest Health Proposal” at a lesser amount than was proposed. The area is now smaller; people were ineligible because of income. Three applicants for the 2020 funding have also been approved. The total funded dollars for this fiscal year is \$600,000.00. The Ravalli County NRCS Field Office has partnered with the Steve Brown at US Forest Service and RC&D’s Byron Bonney in the development and submission of a forest health and habitat improvement Joint Chiefs proposal. The proposal is due in October and will expand on the Sapphire Front Forest Health project as well as the westside of Ravalli County. Stacy noted that the RC&D is quick and nimble. Discussed the need for partners if the Joint Chiefs proposal is approved.

BRLT: Kyle Barber, BRLT: The BRLT was awarded 3.8 million in funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The RCPP is offered to landowners with smaller parcels of acres that would not qualify under the normal conservation easement program. The BRLT currently has four landowners who have submitted applications for agricultural conservation easements located in the Burnt Fork area, Sunset Bench area, and the Eastside Highway near Corvallis. The four applications total 2700 acres and would require 2.4 million in funding. Negotiation for this funding is currently being conducted between NRCS and BRLT.

The BRLT is hoping the Ravalli County Open Lands Bonds Program will assist in the match portion of both the normal and RCPP proposed easements.

BRWF: Heather Barber, BRWF: The BRWF is busy driving a handful of projects besides updating the BRWF's watershed restoration plan. She asked Andrea Price to give a brief report on the projects she has been working on.
Andrea Price, BRWF Restoration Coordinator: Andrea reported that the Water Forum is keeping surprisingly busy. They have applied for funding through the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to assist in the development of a Burnt Fork Creek revegetation project, a Three Mile Creek fish passage project, and several irrigation projects. There was a brief discussion on dovetailing projects between the BCD and the BRWF.

USFS: Not Present

FWP: Not Present

BCD: Kent Myers, BCD: The BCD is also involved in several projects: 1) It has submitted a Renewable Resource Grant application in the amount of \$125,000.00 to conduct a study that would focus on the project status and functionality of the headgates and irrigation diversion located directly on the mainstem of the Bitterroot River, along with the ability to measure correct flows through those diversions. 2) The BCD is in the process of updating its Long Range Plan, which had stalled a bit. 3) The BCD provides a landowner cost-share program to address resource concerns and/or improvements. The BCD's 2021 cost-share program application period opened on the 1st of July and will close on the 1st of September. 4) Through the Area V CD Pollinator Initiative the BCD was able to provide seed mixes for several pollinator plots and one educational display plot in Victor. 5) The BCD partnered with concerned citizens and agencies to form the Woody Debris Task Force. The main goal of the task force is to develop educational outreach on the importance of woody debris for habitat and stream function. It also assists in finding solutions to address the unauthorized removal of woody debris, which has recently been handled by unknown persons, creating safety hazards.

TU: TU was unable to attend, but submitted a brief report of its current activities. TU installed a fish screen on the upper West Fork (above Painted Rocks) and is scheduled in October to install a second fish screen on a ditch in the upper East Fork of the Bitterroot River. Both were high priority areas as they are located near Bull Trout/Cutthroat spawning locations. TU is working on a conceptual design for stream restoration on Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge (North Burnt Fork Creek). This will include removing a passage barrier to fish and improving riparian cover while maintaining visitor access and trails.

RC&D: Pam Gouse, RC&D: RC&D is moving forward with its Fuel Reduction program. Also, they successfully completed a project at Cultivating Connections on getting youth involved in conservation projects. This program provides education and internship positions using NRCS Best Practices for high school students between the ages of 14-18 years old. As Covid19 changed the project plans, the young interns worked on the May Day Garden project providing garden starts to almost 200 families. They have learned about BMPs including the importance of water quantity and quality, healthy soil improvement practices, and much more.

Other Topics:

Identify resource concern(s) for potential future Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPs) involving, but not limited to:

1. Irrigation efficiency in the Burnt Fork drainage and on the mainstem of the Bitterroot River.
2. Continued forest health concerns.
3. Riparian drainage improvement concerns.
4. Targeted weed treatment areas.

- Discussed ways in which partners can work together to complement each other's projects.
- Continued meetings to assist in identifying landowners looking for assistance on addressing conservation concerns.
- Discussed updating the current program spreadsheet to make it more available and user friendly.

Actions

Stacy Welling will meet Heather Barber to work on the 2022 Riparian Improvement TIP proposal.

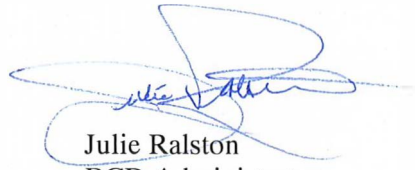
Next meeting

- Discussed holding zoom over teleconference meetings. Everyone was in favor of holding teleconference meetings.
- The next meeting will be scheduled for October or November. Myers will send out a doodle poll.

Meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.



Kent Myers
Chairman



Julie Ralston
BCD Administrator

Date: 04/29/2021