



## RAVALLI COUNTY LOCAL WORKING GROUP

(RCLWG)

1709 North First Street  
Hamilton, Montana 59840

(406) 363-5010

February 18, 2015

Minutes



*Ravalli County Local Working Group (RCLWG) meeting Wednesday, February 18, 2015, called to order at 10:00 a.m., by Matt Whithed.*

### ATTENDANCE:

*Heather Barber -Mullee (Bitter Root Water Forum, BRWF), Kyle Barber (Bitter Root Land Trust, BRLT), Pam Gouse (RC&D), Lea Guthrie (BLT), Coral Maxwell (Farm Service Agency, FSA), Katrina Mendrey (Ravalli County Extension), Kent Myers Bitterroot Conservation District (BCD), Stacy Pease (Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS), Julie Ralston (BCD), Neil Simpson Department of Natural Resource and Conservation (DNRC), Ed Snook (US Forest Service), Steve Vogt (BCD), Matt Whithed (NRCS).*

### INTRODUCTIONS

### APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

*Amendments to the minutes:*

1. *Changing minute header to RCLWG.*
2. *Changing Mullee's last name to Barber.*
3. *Changing a statement by Whithed concerning a suggestion from Karl Christians, Department of Natural Resource, (LWGs may want to consider a facilitator for their meetings.)*

### OPEN ISSUES:

#### **A) *Assessment of Conservation Priorities:***

*Reviewed and clarified RCLWG's previously identified top resource concerns:*

- a) *Forest Health: Fuels reduction, insect & disease management.*
- b) *Pasture / Range Health: Soil health.*
- c) *Water Quantity: Irrigation efficiency, in stream flow, flood capacity*
- d) *Water Quality: Stream bank erosion, livestock grazing, wildfire*
- e) *Weeds*

*RCLWG determined most resource priorities identified are interrelated and pursuing a single top resource concern could prove too limiting. Mullee suggested members watch for larger conservation project opportunities they could then share with the RCLWG as possible collaborative efforts. RCLWG determined not to set any geographic areas or top resource*

*concerns until the group becomes more familiar with what each member has to offer for assistance in natural resource issues.*

**B) RCLWG Gaps in representation:**

*Whithed recapped the RCLWG's last meeting discussion on the representation present at group meeting and a desire for broader inclusion.*

- *Ralston reviewed those that have been invited to recent RCLWG meetings but have so far not attended.*
- *Pease suggested individuals be personally contacted and asked to participate rather than only a group email invitation as we've been doing.*
- *Maxwell pointed out the work day timing of meetings as a challenge for many producers to attend.*
- *Alternating or switching to an afternoon meeting time was agreed to as a way to attract other participation.*
- *Whithed stated that those unable to attend day time meetings of the RCLWG could be directed to the twice monthly evening meetings of the Conservation District to be heard. RCLWG Chair, Vogt could then relay information to RCLWG.*
- *Myers stated that the Conservation District Board of Supervisors are a potential avenue for conservation outreach, particularly in areas of lesser known contacts at the north and south ends of the county.*
- *Agreed to reach out to known natural resource interests not represented in RCLWG meeting to this point.*

**Suggestions include:**

- *Ag Producers Types: Dan Huls (Dairy), Al Pernichele (orchard), Michael Billingsley (orchard), and Laura Garber (diverse vegetable farm)*
- *Wildlife Professionals: Chris Clancy (FWP), Rebecca Mowry (FWP)*
- *Agricultural Technologies: Zach Miller (Western Ag Research Center)*

**C) Identifying Tools for Natural Resource Conservation:**

- A) *Mullee-Barber distributed an example spread sheet for compiling conservation technical and financial assistance sources on one shared document.*
- B) *FCLWG determined they would collaborate on a shared version of this document by adding and editing assistance resources over the next month. The additional of a column addressing the timeline for funding opportunities was agreed to for this document.*
- C) *Myers suggested, once complete, the RCLWG's list of resource assistance sources be posted online. Bitterroot Conservation District website may be a possibility for this as well as posting of FCLWG meeting agendas and minutes.*
- D) *Extended discussion on member conservation efforts and sources of technical and financial assistance for natural resource issues.*

- *Bitterroot Land Trust (conservation easement management, assistance with the noxious weed management program, stewardship outreach)*

- *Bitter Root Water Forum (grants for on the ground restoration projects and watershed improvement, volunteer restoration work, education outreach)*
- *NRCS Cost-Share Programs (EQIP, RCPP, CSP).*
- *USFS (fish habitat improvements, forest stewardship, education outreach)*
- *Ravalli County Extension (agricultural needs and education outreach)*
- *FSA (Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) continues sign up period for riparian areas with a 10-15 year no grazing requirement. includes: fencing, planting, water gaps, ect...)*
- *BCD (70-30 cost-share program for landowners interested in irrigation improvements, stream bank restoration, riparian fencing, water gaps, weed management ect...)*
- *Pease talked of the Clark Fork Coalition's assistance program associated with PBA grants.*

*Next Meeting: RCLWG agreed to schedule their next meeting in approximately one month between the hours of 1:00-2:00. Whithed will distribute a poll to set the March meeting date.*

*Meeting adjourned at 11: 35 a.m.*

*Steve Vogt  
Chairman*

*Julie Ralston  
BCD Administrator*

*Date: 03/18/2015*