

SUMMARY MONTANA WETLANDS COUNCIL MEETING

May 23, 2000

9:30 - 3:30

Metcalf Building - 1520 E 6th Ave, Helena MT 59620

Note: The next Wetland Council Meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2000 in Helena. Meeting will include the Montana Wetland Stewardship Awards ceremony.

Council meeting summaries, Council agendas and other wetland announcements are now distributed electronically. If you would prefer to receive this information via e-mail or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please contact Lynda Saul 444-6652 or lsaul@state.mt.us.

- I** **Welcome** – Lynda Saul, DEQ Wetlands Coordinator, welcomed attendees to the Montana Wetland Council meeting and asked all in attendance to introduce themselves (see attached sign in sheet).
Follow up from 1/27/00 Council meeting:
- 1) DNRC held a day-long water rights and wetlands training April 25 at MDT in Helena.
 - 2) National Wetland Inventory mapping for Bitterroot/Clark Fork corridor and greater Gallatin Valley area is being planned.
 - 3) HGM training is available this summer. Intermontane Pothole Course June 20-22. Riparian Floodplain Course August 29-31. State, local, tribal, non-profit staff and citizen volunteers contact Lynda Saul for training scholarships.

- II** **County Floodplain Management & Tools for Floodplain Protection.**
Karl Christians, DNRC Floodplain Manager, gave an overview of the DNRC floodplain program that is administered at the county government level. Karl explained the terms floodplain, flood fringe and floodway. Discussed the National Flood Insurance Plan (NFIP) administered by FEMA and the Montana Floodplain and Floodway Management Act. Presented highlights of the 1st Annual Association of Montana Floodplain Managers Conference May 16-18, 2000 held in Butte. Council members identified possibilities to partner with the DNRC floodplain program and county floodplain managers for coordinated riparian/wetland protection.

Brian Maiorano, Missoula County Floodplain Manager, reported on recent floodplain amendments that the County Commission adopted on March 8, 2000. Amendments address maintenance of existing and new levees, rip-rap, bank armoring and other bank stabilization techniques, bridge construction standards and preventive actions against bank erosion. He spoke about the broad-based public support for the proposed amendments. Mentioned that floodplain development can be a county liability issue. Project was funded by EPA/DEQ wetland contract. For a summary of recent Amendments to Missoula County Floodplain Regulations or for more information, contact Brian Maiorano at 523-4841.

III Enhancement of Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) 404 Permit Database and Development of Stream Permit Information Clearinghouse.

Duane Anderson, Montana NRIS Water Information System Coordinator, reported on the project to enhance the Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit database and make it available to land and resource managers and the public over the Internet. The 404 enhanced permit records go back to 1990, however, older files are often incomplete. Most files now contain impact information and accurate location information. The COE has worked cooperatively with NRIS on this project and intends to maintain the same consistency in data entry as was established for the EPA/DEQ wetland contract.

Duane demonstrated a prototype of a new NRIS spatial query GIS formatted database that incorporates the enhanced COE 404 permit database. This powerful tool allows users web based access to unlimited queries for all types of water information including stream name level or watershed based searches. NRIS is looking for opportunities to demonstrate this product to potential users. The interactive mapping program is scheduled to be completed and ready for public use by mid- summer 2000.

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon, reported on progress on an EPA/DEQ wetland contract titled “An Evaluation of Wetland 404 permits in the State of Montana and Initiation of an Assessment of Cumulative Impacts in the Yellowstone River Basin”. The first project will be working off the NRIS enhanced COE 404 permit database and creating a user friendly guide book to the 404 process in Montana. The second project is a demonstration project to examine all stream permits issued by government agencies in a designated portion of the Yellowstone River Basin during the last 10 years. Janet discussed stream permitting in Montana and the effects permitted activities have on floodplains in the state. She mentioned that the flood along the Yellowstone River in 1997 was greater than the FEMA designated 100-year floodplain. A request was made to redo the FEMA map but the request was denied due to a lack of funding and staffing.

IV Montana Wetland Legacy Meeting Outcome.

Tom Hinz, Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, reported on a recent meeting to coordinate efforts to protect biologically significant wetlands and incorporate all the various groups interested in wetlands from around the state. This project would rely on voluntary and incentive-based means to further on-the-ground wetland protection in Montana. At the May 1 meeting, the Colorado Wetlands Program Coordinator described the successful Colorado Wetlands Initiative. For more information about the Montana Wetland Legacy contact Lynda Saul 444-6652 or Tom Hinz 444-3248.

V Montana Riparian Wetland Association Incorporation in the WCC or MWC.

MRWA co-chairs Sandy Wyman and Gene Surber couldn't attend the Council meeting, so Lynda Saul led a short discussion based on a 3/30/00 issue paper the co-chairs developed about incorporating the MRWA into the Watershed Coordination Council or Wetland Council. The issue was previously raised at the Watershed Coordination Council meeting. Attendees stressed need for ways to look at increased coordination and minimize duplication of effort since the same people are on many of the same councils. This issue will be discussed again at the next WCC and Wetland Council meetings.

VI Wetland Education Activities Across Montana.

Drew Overholser, Montana Watercourse, reported on wetland education activities.

Wetland Workshops

The first workshop was held April 14-15 in the Bitterroot. Over 50 people attended to hear about, discuss and tour wetlands. The Roundup workshop was held April 18. The Helena workshop attracted about 70 people on May 22. The other workshops are scheduled for Bozeman on May 24 and Kalispell on May 31. The Upper Yellowstone workshop will be held in the fall and include flood plain management topics.

Wetland Brochures

Montana Watercourse is taking several chapters from the Landowners' Guide to Montana Wetlands and creating individual brochures to make specific topics more available. This includes a brochure on wetland regulations that will describe Federal and State laws and how to navigate the maze of regulations. A new brochure on wetlands and backcountry users is in the works.

Wetlands Steward Award

Public and private sector nominations have been accepted, and the Wetland Steward awards will be given out at the next Wetland Council meeting.

Public Service Announcement

The new PSA for television will be an explanation of wetlands as a water filter using elementary students. It will be aired this summer.

VII Wetlands Updates and Coordination Reports

DEQ, Lynda Saul announced that Montana DEQ Wetland program received \$303,000 in grant money this year from EPA. DEQ is contracting with 6 entities for projects:

1) Montana Natural Heritage Program – Inventory and Prioritization of Ecologically Significant Wetland and Riparian Areas in Montana for Conservation, Mitigation and Restoration. 2) Montana Watercourse – Facilitating Landowner and Local Government Stewardship of Montana's Wetlands. 3) Montana Wetland Trust – A Key to Wetland Plant Genera in Montana. 4) Flathead Basin Commission Volunteer Wetland Monitoring. 5) Lewis and Clark Water Quality Protection District – A Wetlands Community Partnership Phase II. 6) Dr. Ric Hauer; River and Wetland Assessment – Training of HGM Functional Assessment of Wetlands to State, Tribal and Local Governments, Non-profits and Volunteer Wetland Monitors, Scientists and Managers. The new grant cycle will start again, with proposals due in the fall. Look for information by mid-summer. Lynda also announced that State Revolving Fund (SRF) low interest loans available to local and state governments are also able to provide loans for wetlands protection.

DEQ, Randy Apfelbeck is developing biocriteria for use in wetlands.

NRIS, Duane Anderson Internet site lists DEQ TMDL 303(d) list. NRIS is also exploring funding to make USGS aerial photos as well as topographic sheets available on the net. Duane reported that there are a lot of staff changes and positions open at NRIS.

Montana Natural Heritage Program received funding from DEQ and EPA for evaluations of ecologically significant wetlands. The Flathead drainage is done and the North Fork of the Flathead River is being worked on. The upper Yellowstone River is the next focus.

DFWP, Tom Hinz MT Wetlands Legacy, North American Bird Conservation and the Migratory Bird Stamp program are all being worked on. DFWP is also working on getting a Native Species Protection Act into the legislature to protect plants, animals and fish. Looking for volunteers to serve on the Department's Wetland Protection Advisory Council.

EPA, Steve Potts reported that 7 of 9 individual projects submitted for grants were funded. This is a very good percentage for Montana. There will also be non-point source grant funding available.

EPA, Dick Blodnick reported that EPA intends to have an enhanced enforcement presence to enforce the Clean Water Act. They will rely on regional office staff with assistance from the Montana office staff.

US Fish & Wildlife Service, Rob Hazlewood announced work on the proposal to delist the bald eagle from the endangered species list. Also projects with PPL Montana on Madison-Missouri River riparian and wetland mitigation associated with FERC relicensing.

NRCS, Dave Heilig announced there will be a wetland delineation training course June 12-16 in Bozeman. This course is offered every three years in Montana. Announced floodplain easement program for landowners. Regarding the wetland reserve program, Montana added 6,000 more acres and 7 new easements. Montana NRCS received \$4.8 million in requests. Congress will consider a bill to add more acres yearly to the program.

U S Forest Service, Mary Manning announced upcoming PFC riparian workshops. They are designed for interagency training and will be conducted on July 18-19 in Missoula, Sept 13-14 in the Highwoods and Sept 27-28 in Big Timber.

Army Corps of Engineers, Jean Ramer announced June 1, 2000 will be the COE 401 certification deadline. Soon all 404 public notices will be posted on the COE web site and the public will be responsible to search for projects that interest them. She'll look into the possibility of creating a listserve to automatically notice those interested.

Confederated and Salish Kootenai Tribe, Mary Price announce that the CSKT was awarded \$18 million for a bull trout restoration program on the reservation. The Jocko watershed will be the target area for the restoration of Bull Trout. The FERC protection, mitigation and enhancement for Kerr Dam has been signed and includes riparian and wetland restoration.

Flathead Biostation, Ric Hauer announced training for Intermontane Prairie Pothole Wetlands June 20-22 and Riverine Floodplain Wetlands August 29-31. Both courses will be taught in Helena. A 3-hour executive short course will be held June 19 and Aug 28.

VIII The Next Wetland Council Meeting will be October 12, 2000 in Helena at the DEQ Directors Conference Room. Agendas will be sent mid-September.

Council members suggested the following agenda items for the next meeting:

Update/discussion on Montana Riparian and Wetland Association structure and potential incorporation into an ongoing Council.

Federal Memorandum of Agreement on wetland mapping.

Show how the EIS process works on aquatic impacts etc.

A presentation of the District Court decision on the Yellowstone 404 permitting.

Mike Mergliano's work on riparian wetlands.

Marc Jones summary of ecologically significant wetlands in the Flathead research.

A positive story on wetlands restoration, for example 6,000 acres on the Fisher River.

Mitigation banking - where do we stand in Montana?

After the Wetland Council meeting adjourned, a scheduled technical presentation was held.

The effects of natural variability on the use of macroinvertebrates as bioindicators of disturbance in intermontane pothole wetlands.

Vicki Ludden
Flathead Lake Biological Station
The University of Montana

Citing the objective of the Clean Water Act to “maintain and restore the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of our Nation’s water,” the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has mandated that states develop and apply biocriteria in the assessment of all surface waters, including wetlands. One group of organisms proposed for use as bioindicators of disturbance in wetlands are macroinvertebrates. They have been used extensively and successfully in streams, but their use in wetlands is more recent and not so well established. Because of the high natural variability that exists in wetlands, it is important that all proposed metrics (i.e. total taxa richness, percent trichopterans) be tested before they are integrated into a biotic index. If a metric that is unable to distinguish between disturbed and undisturbed sites is used, the bioassessment will result in a false conclusion about the actual integrity of the wetland being studied. In order to avoid this problem, I tested the effectiveness of 53 potential metrics. Thirty-five were able to effectively discriminate between disturbed and undisturbed potholes. I will discuss these results and make recommendations based on rapid bioassessment considerations. I will also comment on the effects of spatial and temporal variability on metric effectiveness.

MONTANA WETLANDS COUNCIL
SIGN IN SHEET
MAY 23, 2000

<u>NAME</u>	<u>REPRESENTING</u>
MARY PRICE	CSKT
CHAD ANDERSON	MT DEPT AG
ROB HAZELWOOD	US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
KATRINA SCHEWERMANN	NRIS
JEAN RAMER	COE
KELLY SHIELDS	DEPT OF COMMERCE
RYAN ALTER	UNIVERSITY OF MT
STEVE POTTS	EPA
MARC JONES	MT HERITAGE PROGRAM
LOU MOORE	DEQ
DICK BLODNICK	EPA
JEANNE-MARIE SOUVIGNEY	GREATER YELLOWSTONE COALITION
JIM HADLOCK	LAND & WATER CONSULTING
JANET ELLIS	MT AUDOBON
MARY VANDENBUSCH	EQC
DREW OVERHOLSZER	MT WATERCOURSE
SHONA CAMBELL	MT WATERCOURSE
JOLENE JACOBSON	CSKT
DAN TIEGEN	NPRC
JEFF RYAN	DEQ
RUDOLPH OLD CROW	CROW TRIBAL WETLANDS
DAVE HEILIG	NRCS
KARL CHRISTIANS	DNRC
MARY MANNING	USFS
DARRIN GOENFELL	FHWA
LAWRENCE VERBAN	MDT
DUANE ANDERSON	NRIS
VICKI LUDDEN	FLBS
RICHARD HAUER	FLBS/UM
RANDY APFELBECK	DEQ
FRED OFFENKRANTZ	DEQ
ROXANN LINCOLN	CITIZEN