

# Big Hole



Watershed Committee

## **Big Hole Watershed Committee** Monthly Meeting Minutes - UNAPPROVED October 17, 2012 ~ 7:00 - 9:00pm Divide Grange Hall

### **In Attendance**

Jen Titus, BHWC; Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher/Co-Chair; Randy Smith, Rancher/Co-Chair; Dean Peterson, Rancher; Harold Peterson, Rancher; Ray Weaver, Rancher; Rick Hartz, BVD County; Garth Haugland, BVD County; Bill Cain, Secretary; Erik Kalsta, Rancher; Doug Finnicum, BSB County; Mike Bias, BHRF; Doug Clark, ADLC; Joe Willauer, Guide; Jim Magee, USFWS; Scott Reynolds, GGTU; Steve Parker, BHRF;

### **Introduction**

Attendees introduced themselves. September meeting minutes approved.

### **Streamflow Report, Mike Roberts, DNRC via Jim Magee, USFWS**

Streamflows are improving. We ended the 2012 Drought Management Plan (DMP) season and avoided river closure. There were more participants in the DMP this year than ever and returned a record number of cfs to the river. Mike Roberts is tracking water returned. If you recorded water returned, please forward your records to Mike. The river also benefitted from good base flows due to previous moist years. The new water year starts October 1. There were river closures 9 years in a row during the last dry period. This year was as bad as any of those 9 years and yet we avoided river closure. There was great cooperation this year and it is worth it to keep a fish from being listed and keep the river fishable.

### **Volunteers this Month**

Thanks to Rick Hartz for his continued work on the county-foundation challenge! Thank you Joe Willauer for setting up our meeting tonight. Thank you Robin Inhelder for making photo copies. Thank you Erik Kalsta and Jim Magee for representing us at the Blackfoot Challenge workshop in September. Thank you Jim Hagenbarth for attending the RAC meeting and successfully requesting funding.

### **Discussion: Blackfoot Challenge Transferability Workshop, Erik Kalsta and Jim Magee**

The workshop was help by the Blackfoot Challenge over five days in September. Erik, Jim and Jen were in attendance. The goal of workshop was to take communities with watershed success and transfer that success to other groups and identify how to take success from watersheds up the ladder to attract funding for watershed groups and working landscapes. An example is the Partners for Conservation landowner group that includes members from 23 states, a group that provides a larger voice than individual watersheds. Landowners, agency professionals, and watershed groups attended. A summary of the workshop will be available from the Blackfoot Challenge.

### **Big Hole Watershed Committee - Position & Strategy**

This year we have discussed BHWC's change in capacity and strategy given our cash flow. We came up with an action plan in the spring and have followed that plan. This included a fundraising push, reduction of staff, and reduction of commitments (contracts).

Currently we continue to have one staff working part-time. We are completing our commitments. Completing commitments our best funding strategy right now since payment for this work is on a reimbursable basis. While there are several months remaining before we are at a reasonable workload, it is time to look toward our next challenge.

In spring 2013 we will begin to look inward to realign our strategy with our success. This effort pairs well with our ongoing watershed restoration planning. The BHWC was built by its interest groups. The BHWC as a whole is a leader, innovator, collaborative, researcher, funder, driver of policy, and doer of projects. These are many roles for one group. The playing field has changed in recent years.

We have the opportunity to adjust. Changes in funding environment, partners, competition, grants, staff, success & cumulative success forces us to look at change in our organization.

What is the most critical need? What should our role in the community be? Where should we focus our restoration efforts? Over the next few months Jen will be talking with board, partners, agencies, community members, etc. to gather feedback on the BHWC. This information will be used as we develop our new strategy that will lay the foundation for more success. You may start thinking now. You can send your thoughts in writing, talk to Jen, or help gather thoughts.

The question - Are we doing the best we could for the resource? Can we be better? Given limited resources, what is our priority?

#### *Comments;*

- We should look at what we are good at -- i.e. DMP, Projects. Then ask if those things still needed?
- We need to reenergize group and increase involvement that has been decreasing over the years.
- We should show our progress, i.e. a map that marks the projects that have been done over the years.
- We need goals or projects. It is hard to get excited without seeing a list of projects. Yet looking back, we have done a tremendous amount of work.
- We should revisit past projects and evaluate success, see if maintenance is needed.
- We need materials - handouts, visual posters, etc. Include stats like stream miles restored, etc.
- Look at historic data. When BHWC started there were almost no permanent diversions in the river and now nearly all are permanent.
- BSB: Organics are important for water quality and a big problem/cost for BSB.
- Important to choose projects that we can be successful with.
- Monitoring is very important - make this a priority.
- Make reports like watershed restoration plan available

#### **Reports & New Business**

##### *Directors Report:*

Financial: Donations are slowing after newsletter. Reimbursable grants are expected to pay this fall. Overall we are fiscally stable right now. The annual appeal will start shortly.

Projects: Projects continue to be completed. Wise River Monitoring data collection is complete. The Upper Big Hole River Watershed Restoration Plan is complete and awaiting approval from DEQ. Helen

Sladeck, USFS will be assisting BHWC with projects through 2012. Last week BWHC presented the Wise River Monitoring Project at the AWRA conference. Poster is here tonight.

BHWC will attend the Wetlands Council Meeting November 15, Helena to present the results of the Wetlands project.

The Missouri Headwaters Partnership Meeting will be held in Twin Bridges October 24, 5:30pm.

*Land Use Planning Report:* The Big Hole River Approximate Zone A Floodplain Maps are nearly complete. A meeting held November 2, Butte Courthouse, 1pm Room 312.

*Steering Committee:* None

*Wildlife Committee:* Jim Hagenbarth secured funding for the 2013 Range Rider from the RAC program. The Wildlife Committee will hold a meeting December 5 in Jackson, MT with Montana FWP to present the Brucellosis efforts and Moose Study.

*Weed Committee:* None

#### **New Business**

- None

#### **Future Agendas**

- November 28
- No December Meeting
- Possible topics include BLM Update on Watershed Restoration Plan?, Highlands Gold Mine, Watershed Restoration Planning, ATKINS Mapping Update

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm