

## **Montana Watershed Coordination Council**

May 26, 2005

### Morning Award Ceremony:

Governor Schweitzer gave introductory speech.

Jim Posowitz gave the keynote speech

Watershed Award Winner: Kootenai River Network

Special Agency Individual Award: Mike McLane

### Afternoon meeting—Business Meeting

Karen Filipovich introduced the afternoon's agenda and speakers

Steve Merritt, MACD's contract manager for the LEP, handed out a draft survey for the LEP program. Once he gets feedback on the survey, it will be posted on the web for LEP grants holders, both CDs and sub-contracters, and LEP committee members to respond to. Steve updated the group on a LEP program evaluation meeting to be held on July 22 with location yet to be determined.

Steve updated the group on the LEP program status of current and new contracts. He handed out a summary of all projects. He requested everyone's assistance in documenting fieldwork through pictures to provide visual description of work being accomplished. He is also looking for quantitative information of projects including stream miles, acres, numbers of people involved, leveraging, and anything else that would help explain the benefits of the program. Steve thanked the LEP committee for their assistance in reviewing and ranking of all LEP proposals.

Sarah thanked all groups/individuals for their input on the program. It is heartwarming to see all the great work being accomplished. She also thanked Steve for his hard work on the program.

### **LEP special presentations:**

Nick Hoyrup with Beaverhead Watershed Committee provided an overview of their watershed effort, current projects, and how LEP has been used. Key benefits of the program, he said, include responsiveness, flexibility and no requirement for match. He recommended more time for projects

Gayla Wortman gave a history of the Missouri River Conservation District Council and handed out a brochure that described the watershed effort. She explained the watershed layout, membership, agency support, meeting locations and issues. Gayla said the MRCDC would probably have ceased to exist without LEP funding.

Nicole McClain with Upper Yellowstone Watershed Basin watershed gave a history of their watershed effort. She explained watershed facts, group involvement and how LEP helped them. She briefed the group on LEP projects and their benefit.

General LEP questions: none

Karen explained that the definition of local groups varies across the state but all are working collaborative.

Liz Ching, Baucus' staff member gave her watershed experience of the Yellowstone, Governor Drought Task Force and agriculture issues. Flexibility and being proactive are key aspects to good efforts.

Liz requested a prioritized, clear and consistent list of water issues from the state. She also requested input on other various funding sources including USBR 2025 and EPA sources.

### **Other LEP Projects:**

Alan Rollo, Sun and Teton Watersheds explained how critical the funds were to help leverage additional resources.

Jeff, Big Hole Foundation explained the issue of leverage more funds and the need to expand and effectively use farm bill programs.

Susan Key with Bitterroot Water Users Forum explained how the funds helped their group function better and enhanced teamwork with agencies.

Bill Milton with Mussel shell briefed the group on their history, how LEP was needed to get things rolling, and about their weed projects. He stated that LEP was very flexible and helped bring in more resources.

Lane with Madison explained how the LEP was crucial in helping local involvement work on local issues. Instead of having to write a work plan to fit a grant, the LEP allows grantees to craft a grant to fit their local work plan.

Jim Wilbur with Tenmile explained how they started with a 319 grant and then used the LEP funds to help accomplish projects and show effectiveness of their effort. Outreach is also very important.

Amy Miller with Park CD has 3 watersheds she is working with and the LEP funds have helped keep their doors open to work on bigger issues.

Jennifer is on the board of the Gallatin Watershed and finds LEP flexible. They are struggling with growth issues so finding more funds for ground water/surface water interaction is important. Also, finding non-federal match is difficult these days.

Roger with Marias Watershed explained how the “Local Empowerment Program” is the key with the funds going to on-the-ground locally led efforts.

Rich Moy, DNRC-Water Resources, said “The LEP is probably the most effective funding the state has ever had in terms of getting things done on the ground.”

### **General discussion of programs and LEP**

- The flexibility and usefulness of the LEP funds has been extremely useful. Many groups would have folded or scaled back their efforts without LEP funds.
- We need to better demonstrate the benefits of the LEP funds with a clear, short message
- All programs would benefit by a more stable pot of dollars but still need to be strategic and prioritize what will be accomplished.
- There are so many water issues that required attention so it would be helpful for the Montana delegation to have the state to list and prioritize the needs.

Karen summarized the LEP discussion, stating:

- LEP help many local efforts continue to exist
- The funds help leverage more funds and resources
- Gave a broader picture to execute variety of programs

### **Other program updates:**

#### Agency Update:

- Robert Ray, DEQ updated the group on DEQ changes including personnel and programs changes. He explained how the Nonpoint Source Program requires review and he is looking for input. He updated the group on status of TMDLs, 319 contracts and the next WAWG meeting will be June 6.

The changes are:

**Dean Yashan now Section Manager for Watershed Management Section – TMDL Planning**

**New Section - Watershed Protection –** now responsible for the State’s Nonpoint Source Program, excluding TMDL Planning activities. The current staff is at 2.5 FTE (myself, Carole Mackin, and permanent ½-time Mark Kelley). My Section is also responsible for watershed outreach and assistance, TMDL implementation support, and five-year reviews of TMDL implementation effectiveness.

**Additional staffing for Water Quality Planning Bureau –** The legislature agreed to increase the staffing for the Bureau, starting in July. The Watershed Protection Section will be adding two additional staff. Monitoring and Assessment will be getting 4 additional “one-time only” staff, and Watershed Management, Data Management, and Standards will each get an addition staff person.

**Completed Watershed-based TMDLs in 2005/early 2005** – Blackfoot sediment, Swan Lake, Sun River, Dearborn, Flathead Headwaters, Ninemile, Grave, Bobtail, Big Spring, and Bitterroot (soon).

**319 contracts for projects** – funded six restoration and I&E projects for a total of \$375,000. Additionally we are funding 13 TMDL planning efforts with 319 funds for approximately \$1,000,000.

**Update of the Nonpoint Source Management Plan** – The Clean Water Act requires the governor of each State to submit a Nonpoint Source Management Plan for EPA approval. The State's current management Plan was approved in 2001, and we are planning on an update for EPA approval in 2006.

We'd like to work with MWCC in developing the update and would like to request time on the next MWCC general meeting agenda to discuss update topics, timing and how MWCC would like to participate in the update. In order to submit the Plan to EPA in 2006 and provide for significant public participation, we're hoping to have a public review draft out by June 15, 2006.

Other updates:

- Carole Mackin, DEQ updated the group on O&E Workgroup with next meeting scheduled for July 27. Will look at top priorities for education programs, structure of the committee and give input to NPS I&E portion
- Dave Martin, DNRC gave update on DNRC Watershed Planning assistance funds stating new guidelines will be out soon.
- Dave, NRCS explained how traditional NRCS farm bill funds can help fund watershed efforts. He also said MWCC can get involved with the State Technical Committee. Also explained that NRCS would like comments on the new CSP and any suggestions for the new farm bill program.
- Alan Rollo brought up that EPA is looking for input on how they can better assist watershed efforts across the nation and that MWCC is looking for input on what coordinators need for training.
- Glenn, FWP thanked the awards committee for their hard work.
- Mike McLane, DNRC stated their priority at this time is implementing HB22 and the new hiring's this bill allows.
- The fall MWCC meeting will be either October 6 in Bozeman
- The MWCC Monitoring Workgroup will meet on September 22 in Helena with a panel discussion on sharing and comparing water quality data
- The coordinators fall training will be September 12-14. Need to register if have not already.