



**MINUTES**  
 Beartooth RC&D Area, Inc. Board of Director's Meeting  
 Thursday, May 19, 2011

**Reminder: Meetings scheduled for third Thursday of odd numbered months.**

<p><b>Board Members Present</b>          Chuck Egan, Chairman, Town of Columbus          Marvin Carter, Vice-Chairman, City of Laurel          Penny Landon, Treasurer, Carbon Conservation District          Ada Iron, Crow Nation          Dan Lowe, Big Horn Conservation District          Jeffrey McDowell, City of Hardin          Page Dringman, City of Big Timber          Steve Arveschoug, Big Sky EDA          Susie Mosness, Sweet Grass County</p> <p><b>Members at Large Present</b>          Kendall Hartman, Billings Job Service</p>	<p><b>Sponsors Not Represented</b>          John Pretty On Top, Big Horn County          John Pulasky, Yellowstone Conservation District          Bob Van Oosten, Stillwater Conservation District          Brian Roat, City of Red Lodge          Doug Tucker, Carbon County          Ed Ulledalen, City of Billings          Gerald Dell, Stillwater County          Jim Reno, Yellowstone County          Katie Callahan, Town of Joliet          Ken Gomer, Town of Bridger</p> <p><b>Members at Large Not Present</b>          Melissa Kramer, Stillwater Economic Development          Lisa Skriner, MSU-Billings, College of Technology</p>
<p><b>Guests</b>          Sidney (Chip) Fitzpatrick, Big Horn County Commissioners          Carla Lawrence, Guest of Honor          Gloria Menke, Big Horn Conservation District          Roy Neill, Big Horn Conservation District          Dan Kern, Commercial realtor          Joe Kibby, Big Horn Conservation District</p> <p><b>Congressional Staff</b></p>	<p><b>Staff</b>          Chris Mehus          Jillann Knutson          Joel Bertolino          Diana Spint          Dick Rath</p> <p><b>Staff Not Present</b></p>

Meeting Called to Order at 6:10 p.m. by Chairman Egan in Hardin, MT at Bud's Catering.

**Welcome - Egan**

Chairman Egan welcomed all present. Following the pledge of allegiance, everyone in attendance introduce themselves. Jeffrey McDowell, Two Rivers Authority provided an overview of several projects of local interest including: county courthouse upgrades; expansion of the museum; improvements to the fairgrounds; airport enhancements; and others.

**Approval of March 17, 2011 - Minutes**

**Motion:** To approve minutes, as written

**By:** Van Oosten

**Second:** McDowell

**Action:** Carried

**Approval of Treasurer's Report - Financial Report**

Knutson provided copies of the latest financial statements. Discussion and comments followed briefly regarding our current financial health and the projection through year's end.

**Motion:** To file for Audit the treasurer's - financial report as presented.

**By:** McDowell

**Second:** Lowe

**Action:** Carried

### **Revolving Loan Fund Manager/Bookkeeper – Jillann Knutson**

#### **Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)**

Knutson reported on the new software program that will make our record-keeping and document processing much more efficient and complete. The Board requested concise loan ratio reports for loans that are current, delinquent and in default.

### **Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation Project**

Knutson provided an update on this project and requested that the Board approve project closure, as the organization now has their own non-profit status and no longer needs our administrative services.

**Motion:** To close the ABWF Project

**By:** Lowe

**Second:** Van Oosten

**Action:** Carried

### **Economic Development Director – Mehus**

Mehus discussed the upcoming CEDS planning process for the region. Meetings will need to be held in each county gathering interested parties in economic development, community planning, and conservation. The initial meeting was held for Big Horn County prior to the Board meeting and was very well-attended. Staff will hold meetings across the region beginning this fall continuing through the end of 2011 in partnership with our local organizations and agencies.

Due to recent discussions with Park County and their official request to be included in our CEDS planning process, the Board considered collaborating with Phillip Fletcher, Community Development Director, to complete the CEDS planning process.

**Motion:** To include Park County in CEDS planning process

**By:** Lowe

**Second:** Van Oosten

**Action:** Carried

Mehus also updated the Board regarding Little Big Horn College, Wild West, Bridging Cultures, and NADC Conference.

### **Housing Program - Spint**

Spint updated the Board on Housing program funding nation-wide, which did not fare well during the last Congressional session. As of now, however, it looks like the program will be solvent at least through the end of 2011. We have been asked by Neighborworks Montana to expand our Homebuyer Education classes to Miles City to cover the void left by Eastern Plains RC&D. The Board questioned whether we could afford to the travel and staff expense; Spint replied that for the reimbursement rates should more than cover the expenses and that this is actually a great capacity-building opportunity.

**Motion:** To expand our Homebuyer Education program to cover Eastern Montana south of the Yellowstone River for three classes through the month of October, 2011.

**By:** McDowell

**Second:** Lowe

**Action:** Carried

### **AG Program Technician – Bertolino**

Bertolino discussed a new project, Granite Peak Sports Complex, brought to us by Melissa Kramer. This is a local fund-raising effort for which we would serve as fiscal agent.

**Motion:** To approve Granite Peak Sports Complex as a project.

**By:** McDowell

**Second:** Lowe

**Action:** Carried

Bertolino also updated the Board with regard to the future of the state funding for Food and Ag Centers, and discussed several projects included on his written updates.

### **Forester – Rath**

Rath provided an update for the future of DNRC and BLM funding of the fuels program. The immediate outlook is very good with new grant moneys coming in for Stillwater and Carbon Counties. There are also many new projects in varying degrees of development across the Beartooth front. Dick requested that he be allowed to pursue Forest Stewardship education in partnership with Conservation Districts for all five counties.

**Motion:** To approve Rath's work with the Forest Stewardship Program.

**By:** McDowell

**Second:** Van Oosten

**Action:** Carried

### **Distinguished Guest of Honor – Lawrence**

Chairman Egan recognized Carla for her service to the RC&D over the last three plus years. Congress chose not to fund the RC&D program nationally, which resulted in the loss of Coordinators nation-wide as well as NRCS funding and office space. Carla updated the Board regarding the logistics of this separation and thanked them for their hard work and dedication. Carla will be greatly missed!

### **Announcements – Miscellaneous**

By-Laws review – with the elimination of the NRCS partnership, the Board will have to again review our Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws as there are numerous references to this historic partnership.

Secretary Position – due to the resignation of Paige Weber and loss of Carla Lawrence, the Board discussed creating a secretary position to assist staff with some of the clerical duties related to Board operations. Until the Board can review and adjust the By-Laws, the committee approved an interim arrangement if a volunteer can be found to fill this position.

New Office Location – the staff and executive committee have decided on a downtown Joliet location that is much more reasonable and larger than the existing space. Given our financial situation, we could not afford to remain in our existing building.

NRCS Separation – numerous logistical issues related to the separation with NRCS were discussed. Carla has been a great help in dealing with these issues; but overall, they will not affect our ability to carry out our mission as an organization.

Funding Committee update – since the last Board meeting a funding strategy committee has met several times to discuss our financial challenges and develop measures to address these. Notes from these meetings were provided and discussed.

**Next Scheduled Board Meeting**- July 21, 2011 in Joliet, Montana. Carbon County board members hosting.

**Adjournment:** 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Chris Mehus*

Economic Development Director