

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name:	Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council - Business Meeting and Grant Hearings		
Date of Meeting:	March 10-12, 2025	Time:	12:38 p.m. (3/10) – 1:31 p.m. (3/12)
Minutes Prepared By:	Greta Dige	Location:	Delta Hotel, Helena
1. Meeting Objective			
Council Business Meeting / Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant Hearings			
2. Attendees			
<p>Voting Members: Amber Burch, Joel Farkell, Jeff Littlefield, Brian Ostwald, Dana Weatherford, Jeff Brennan, Bill Curran Virtual: Kellieann Fillingham</p> <p>Advisory Members: Robert Thompson – BOR; Jason Allen - MDT; Bob Demery - BIA; Dan Lucas - MSU Extension; Michael Hamel – DNRC; Adam Sieges – FWP; Brenda Witkowski - BLM</p> <p>Virtual: Natalie West- USDA-ARS; Kylee Macks- APHIS, Michelle Cox – USFS, Monica Pokorney - NRCS</p> <p>Montana Dept. of Agriculture (MDA) Staff: Jillien Streit, Kima Tranyham, Jasmine Chaffee, Greta Dige, Megan Hoyer, Lori Leaf</p>			
3. Agenda and Notes, Decisions, Issues			
Topic	Discussion		
Welcome Minutes Review Department Updates	<p>Jillien Streit, Department of Agriculture (MDA), Director, called the meeting to order. She expressed her enthusiasm as the newly appointed director for the work of the group and her belief in the effectiveness of their programs. She also mentioned her family's involvement in agriculture and her support for the legislation to increase funding for these programs. Introductions were made both in the room and on Zoom.</p> <p>Jillien reviewed the minutes from the November 6th council business meeting. Amber Burch moved to accept the minutes as written, Brian Ostwald seconded; minutes were approved.</p> <p>Kima gave a department update: There have been questions about the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant and things seem to be fine now though could change and operating as business as normal. Two vacancies in the Glasgow and Bozeman field offices with focus of filling Glasgow first since it is far away. Sustainable Agriculture started the container recycle program and was out last week. Have moved to a calendar system and will only be accepting containers at those locations on those days. Looking at putting stationary granulators in the state and first one will be at the Lake County transfer station funded through the Columbia River Basin Toxins Reduction Grant. Hope to have up and running in April. Hope to have another installed in Scoby. Will have two additional waste disposal collections in the west side of the state and in the far west part of the for the regular waste disposal collection.</p> <p>Ian Foley gave a summary of SB 167 to add an additional \$10 Million to the Trust Fund. It made it through the transmittal deadline and had very good support from Montana Weed Control Association (MWCA) and county coordinators. It wouldn't be legally protected and would need a higher level of approval to move out of trust. If approved, it would start in FY26.</p>		

Application/Hearing Updates	<p>Greta Dige thanked the council for reviewing and scoring applications. She gave updates to the schedule. Planning for summer tour for August/September for Billings area so stay tuned when it gets locked in, and the November meeting will most likely be virtual.</p> <p>Herbicide prices: If the correction amount was within 15% the request was not changed. Greta reminded council to ask the applicant questions when they are present. If there are some that come later send them to her and she will get in contact with the applicant.</p>
Education Program Updates	<p>Megan Hoyer, discussed updates on education programs, including work in Two Moon Park, community outreach efforts, and plans for realtor training on noxious weeds. With the increase in volunteers looking to standardize volunteer training. Invasive species and Indian Ed for All went well after being rescheduled for weather several times. Reaching out to Hunters Education and hope to include statewide. Working with Pull Your Share to locate funding since the program will be administered by MDA. Megan is a certified trainer and gave a 2-hour training for Weeds 101 Realtor Training and let them know the value of land and noxious weeds, how to report weeds, what noncompliance looks like, and the agencies who can help. Montana Agri-Trade Exposition (MATE) was very successful and had over 1,000 contacts. The groups that talked about invasive species were spread-out through the sections, so people were getting the message wherever they went. The goal is to reach out to a new company each year. It was asked how about the railroad. It is hard as their turnover is high. Reach out to her if you want more information.</p>
Noxious Weed Program Update	<p>Jasmine discussed Noxious Weed Free Materials (NWFM). Mostly focus on certifying pellet plants in Montana and out of state. Looking at how to certify compressed bails and how to market those. Training for certified materials will be up in April. AgCorps Adopt a Trailhead Montana (AATM) coordinator Evan will help with education and be putting an ad in magazines and billboards. Evan is tasked with going to ag stores to give them brochures and information on certified materials to give to consumers.</p> <p>Josh is at Western Society of Weed Science conference this week but provided Jasmine with a program update starting with a new location of invasive phragmites in Whitefish not fully confirmed yet but is highly likely based on photos and will confirm when snow melts. Will work with the county to treat and remove it. Woody invasives documents come along nicely and work closely with Invasive Species Action Network (ISAN). There are new brochures they created and so please take some back with you. He has presented 8 times in the last 4 months. The fall webinar and statewide Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) update was done this fall. Talked about a tour or joint meetings with Idaho and look to be this spring or fall.</p> <p>For state weed coordination looking to have a weed list meeting at the end of April early May. No new weeds petitioned but are looking to move a couple around. Council positions up livestock, ag/crop production, herbicide dealer/applicator, and then noxious weed research, western county representative, and still looking to fill the noxious weed free materials and the recreation/ wildlife positions. If you wish to continue service send an email to Jasmine. Joel asked if we ever heard from back country horseman. Jasmine confirmed no response at this time. Joel mention about fishing guide to get the rivers. Jillien asked about looking into golf courses as noxious weeds impact their bottom line. Joel will investigate for better contacts with back country horsemen. Send contacts to Jasmine whether golf courses, anything on rivers, or other groups so she can follow up.</p> <p>Lastly for AgCorps we were awarded 13 positions and secured 9 filled; 6 are at the Department of Agriculture. Bill asked if the funding for the program is solid. Yes, as far as she</p>

	<p>knows the funding is solid. Bill asked if all former members have gone on to other programs. Still have a couple of members in Helena; one looking to go to grad school at Montana State University, one skied all winter, one back from Gana, and one member is going to start their own sourdough crackers. Positions include Farmers Union in Great Falls, Montana State Library botany with Andrea Pipp, Farm Connect and Garden City Harvest in Missoula. Lastly, Pull Your Share program Dan is looking to retire, and MDA will be taking it over as it lines up very well for timing with school in spring and fall then AATM in the summer. Will need to investigate other funding options as Dan applied for NWTF grants which is not possible now.</p> <p>Federal funds: All US Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) grants have been frozen, and MDA is not allowed to spend them, so those funds are not included in this year’s award. The amount of the funds is \$405,000. During deliberations the council will be able to award projects on a contingent bases in case MDA is able to access those funds. BLM funds pay for Megan and Jasmine’s travel for the forage program and a lot of our supplies. Buying twine, tags, and advertising so just waiting to see before we can move forward.</p>																																								
Budget Review	<p>Meeting documents were reviewed by Jasmine, including an overview of the noxious weed program budget and estimate of funds available for FY 2025 Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant awards. Allowable non-grant expenditures, calculated at 12% of the prior year grants awarded from fund 02068, were reviewed.</p> <p>Previously allocated and pending 2025 grant awards and expenditures were reviewed:</p> <table><tr><td>State Special Revenue</td><td>\$2,056,376</td></tr><tr><td>MDT Pass Through Funds</td><td>\$100,000</td></tr><tr><td>FY23 EDRR Grants Y3 Funding & FY24 EDRR Grants Y2 Funding</td><td>(\$295,483)</td></tr><tr><td>Council Expenses (estimate)</td><td>(\$14,000)</td></tr><tr><td>Non-Grant Expenses</td><td>(\$265,044)</td></tr><tr><td>Special County/Reservation Awards (estimate)</td><td>(\$465,000)</td></tr><tr><td>MDT Pass Through Distribution to Counties</td><td>(\$100,000)</td></tr><tr><td>General Fund</td><td>\$90,397</td></tr><tr><td>Forest Service- FWEED23, INFRA23</td><td>\$0</td></tr><tr><td>Reverted Funds</td><td>\$17,115</td></tr><tr><td>Balance Available for 2025 Hearing Awards</td><td>\$1,124,361</td></tr></table> <p>Historic information related to program revenue, grant hearing requests/funding history, and unspent awards were provided to the council.</p> <p>2025 Application Breakdown</p> <table><tr><th>Funding Type</th><th>Number of Applications</th><th>Funding Request Total</th></tr><tr><td>Research</td><td>1</td><td>\$57,043</td></tr><tr><td>Education</td><td>10</td><td>\$242,322</td></tr><tr><td>Development</td><td>7</td><td>\$288,295</td></tr><tr><td>Local Cooperative (New & Cont.)</td><td>23 (3/20)</td><td>\$1,027,010</td></tr><tr><td>EDRR & Statewide Education 3yr</td><td>11</td><td>\$493,382</td></tr></table> <p>Funds requested for the 52 submitted NWTF grant applications totaled \$2,133,538 resulting in the need to cut \$713,694 in requests.</p>	State Special Revenue	\$2,056,376	MDT Pass Through Funds	\$100,000	FY23 EDRR Grants Y3 Funding & FY24 EDRR Grants Y2 Funding	(\$295,483)	Council Expenses (estimate)	(\$14,000)	Non-Grant Expenses	(\$265,044)	Special County/Reservation Awards (estimate)	(\$465,000)	MDT Pass Through Distribution to Counties	(\$100,000)	General Fund	\$90,397	Forest Service- FWEED23, INFRA23	\$0	Reverted Funds	\$17,115	Balance Available for 2025 Hearing Awards	\$1,124,361	Funding Type	Number of Applications	Funding Request Total	Research	1	\$57,043	Education	10	\$242,322	Development	7	\$288,295	Local Cooperative (New & Cont.)	23 (3/20)	\$1,027,010	EDRR & Statewide Education 3yr	11	\$493,382
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	<p>Reviewed county weed districts budget. Greta mentioned that all 56 counties applied and 6 out of 7 reservations applied. Currently the Crow Tribe does not have a contact person for the program</p> <p>Jasmine reviewed the conflict-of-interest statements and hearing protocol with the Council. She provided the council with a document that shows the percentage of grant reviewed the deliberation caps for the 2025 grant hearings. The council will deliberate on each funding opportunity type separately and award funds in each category up to the cap, once all grants have been recommended for funding the council will have an opportunity to award uncommitted funds to any funding opportunity type.</p> <p>Discussed excess that there are options with opportunities. Assigning dollars to high visibility areas for advertising. Could the funds go towards increasing the \$7500; possibly use as match for America the Beautiful grants. Jasmine will investigate other funding options.</p>
Member/Agency Updates	<p>Michael Hamel - DNRC: keeping eyes on some bills in the legislature. Holding a plant and weed training in June for land user specialists and foresters.</p> <p>Brian Ostwald - Eastern Montana Counties Representative: Got a new assistant and changed their name Carbon County Invasive Plant Department. Working with drone spraying saltcedar and can spray individual plants and broadcast spraying. Can be 30 feet up and hit the size of a pop can. Carries 15 gallons so very large drone. Jasmine asked what company is doing the work. Brian responded that it is a company in Red Lodge Adam Pedone and is very meticulous with recording data. Megan states he is really good at education and outreach. Jasmine mention connecting him to ISAN to add information about drones to the Woody Invasive Management Plan. Jillien mentioned sending media content to Logan Kruse to assist with getting the word out.</p> <p>Jeff Littlefield - Biological Research & Control Representative: Biocontrol updates will occur during the hearing.</p> <p>Joel Farkell – Herbicide/Dealer: At some growers meetings there is a push to talk about ventenata and palmer amaranth. Jane did a fantastic job and the relationship and cropland, and range and pasture are getting the word out that will lead to more inquiries.</p> <p>Jason Allen – MDT: Getting ready for season and have a contractor lined up for Gallatin Gateway after not being sprayed due to staffing issues. Working on ventenata and looking to try spring spraying this year to see how it does for I90 Bozeman, Belgrade, and Livingston area. Plan to get rush skeletonweed areas treated and working with Bryce of Missoula County on that. Jasmine asked if they plan on doing any work with Wyoming this year. Jason reports they hit it very hard last year that at this now they should be good for a few years.</p> <p>Dan Lucas – Extension: National Association of County Agriculture Agents is coming to Billings is around 1,500 and most are bringing their families. Cecil Tharp and Jamie Hahn are coordinating private pesticide training. An agronomist is being hired and will be looking at invasive species and a lot will be going on.</p> <p>Monica Pokorney – NRCS: Learning more about funding for noxious weeds activities and financial assistance later this week.</p>

	<p>Brenda Witkowski – BLM: All assistance agreements are frozen. Only funding approved is the emergency stabilization and rehab so working with Miles City Field office and working contracts. Her old position has not been filled so helping with that. Working on contracts for the two large fires that crossed into Montana from Wyoming. Billings office weed specialist retired and looking to fill that position. A position in Dillion field office so helping there as well. The few contracts that don't involve BIL or IRA funds hope to have completed next week. If contracts are over \$50,000, they have to go back to headquarters to be approved. It is a slow process and will take time to get through it.</p> <p>Michelle Cox – USFS: Jane Managold was kind enough to do a training for all staff on invasive annual grasses. UAS specialist looking at 3 weed mapping projects in 1 in Idaho and 2 in Montana. University of Montana they have a couple of agreements with. Doing EDNA sampling and have completed 165 sample analysis so far to enter the national database. UM will conduct an invasive annual grass identification field training course for staff in Helena. UM interns mapping grass and help enter data into the national database and share it. They will be installing monitoring plots to track post fire weed treatment responses. The university will use the data to refine the grasses map they developed to refine remote sensing. Working with the National parks service and other forests and other regions on an invasive annual grasses workshop for everyone in the Greater Yellowstone area. Have had significant loss of staff and converted seasonal staff to full-time and have lost of them. Will do their best this summer. She introduced Danielle Molesky as the regional youth Pesticide Coordinator is on the call.</p> <p>Natilie West – ARS: Short on staff as well and don't expect to extra staff for the summer. The new agent for flowering rush was approved in January 2025 and can begin field releases, and in the spring, insects will be sent to field nurseries. There is a call to get samples of pathogens for rush skeletonweed. Will send information to Jasmine and Greta to forward to you. If you collect them, the ARS will send a label to you. The focus group meeting was rescheduled to April 2nd. Critical time is at 11 – 12 PM so please join in on the discussion.</p> <p>Robert Thompson – BOR: Have lost a lot of staff like everyone else. One step further is they canceled all terrestrial weed contracts and is unlikely any spraying will be done. Aquatics are up in the air right now.</p> <p>Bob Demery – BIA: Like others federal agencies are waiting to see what the next cuts do. For BIA has congressional noxious weed funding in the amount of \$2.5 million annually. Every reservation and BIA agency submits proposals funding. Those who applied are Fort Belknap, Rocky Boy, Blackfeet, Crow and Northern Cheyenne then in Wyoming Wind River. They score applications like the trust fund then are sent to Albuquerque. He would like to increase participation from tribes in Montana applying to the trust fund. Difficult to plan at this time when with the next federal cuts may include his position therefore leaving no one at BIA for the Montana region in noxious weeds.</p> <p>Kellieann Fillingham - Western Montana Counties Representative: New invader education and treatment is a top priority from Lincoln, Lake, Sanders, Missoula, and Ravalli and bordering Idaho. We have all been closely together and with Josh. Western crew training will be in Ronan in April.</p> <p>Jeff Brennan - Ag Crop Production Representative: Interesting year with no moisture and good crop. Spring is a little slow with frost still about a foot.</p>
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	<p>Amber Burch – Montana Weed Control Association Representative: Spring weed managers trainings coming up with board meeting on April 15th and on the 16-17th in Butte. The training was to be in Libby but talking with Mike a fall timing would be better to see the EDRR species they have so it would be in 2026. Eastern Training is April 22-23 in Miles City, and the agendas are in the works. Looking for photography for the calendars. Then looking for speakers for the annual conference.</p> <p>On dyer's woad side, scheduling a podcast to talk about Working Dogs for Conservation (WD4) sometime in April. Two Fridays ago met with the new person at the University of Montana as Marlyn Mauler moved on. WD4 Conservation would be a good site for a tour. Discussed using the dogs to smell mower clippings so it would be an interesting thing to see if it works. At one time looking at using dogs to find seeds.</p>
Protocol Review Wednesday, March 12th	<p>The meeting was opened at 1:31 p.m.</p> <p>Jasmine reviewed the conflict-of-interest statements and hearing protocol with the Council. She provided the council with a document that shows the percentage of grant reviewed the deliberation caps for the 2025 grant hearings.</p> <p>Jasmine reviewed the deliberation protocol once again noting how each funding opportunity will be deliberated on separately with a funding cap.</p>
Grant Award Deliberations	<p>Application deliberation order was determined by the combined application review scores submitted by voting members and advisory members, separated by funding opportunity type. Deliberation order and cap: EDRR & Statewide Education at 15.31% or \$97,334, Research at 5.22% or \$33,183, Local Cooperatives at 56.55% or \$635,783, Development at 12.57% or \$141,323, and Education at 10.36% or \$116,441.</p> <p>The deliberation process began. Voting proxy for Director Streit was given to Kima Traynham in the event of a tie vote.</p>
Director Review of Funding Recommendations	NWTF grant funding recommendations from the Noxious Weed Management Advisory Council totaled \$ 1,612,509 for 52 grant proposals. Recommendations will be provided to Director Streit for review and approval. 2025 Funding Recommendations are attached.
Other Business/ Public Comment	<p>Kima asked for any other business. Jasmine reminded council members to complete and send her travel forms. She mentioned they are staying with WebGrants just moving new different platform so it will look different. Jasmine asked if the project summaries useful; council members stated they do not use summaries, so they no longer need them. Motion to adjourn made by Bill Curan and seconded by Brian Ostwald. Meeting ended at 6:11 p.m.</p>

4. Action Items				
Action		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Notify Jasmine if you are interested in serving another term/ Send Jasmine potential candidates for positions	Council- All	May 30, 2025	Complete
2	Send rush skeletonweed collection information to Jasmine and Greta	Natalie West	April/May	