

Draft Minutes -- MRF Board Meeting December 8, 2014

Attendance: Joe Dilschneider, Jeff Montag, Sherri Shows, Nancy DiMeola
By Phone: Jim Goetz, Brian Barker, Ray Clark
Staff: Richard Lessner

Bruce Richards? Mark Petroni?

Guests: Sunni Knapton and Ethan _____ from the Madison Conservation District (MCD)

MCD Update Sunni introduced Ethan, the new water program manager who will be overseeing restoration projects, data collection and working with the Stream Team. They began by reviewing the Northwestern Energy Grants, such as the Jack Creek program of bank stabilization, approved at \$9,800. Sunni asks about an MRF contribution of \$1,000, which can be in-kind or in cash. Five to seven volunteers for a few days would be satisfactory, similar to our work on Odell. The Moore's Creek/Goggins project involves riparian fence to limit cattle access, but would need an alternate water supply. Janet (last name?) seems to be happy with initial results; South Meadow involves channel relocation into the historic channel, vegetation, and fencing.

Jeff Montag expresses concern that MRF will be seen as doing work on private lands. We certainly have received complaints of this type in the past. Jeff says people want MRF to focus on the Main Stem (MS), not the tributaries. Sunni responds by saying these landowners have come to the MCD, and nobody with land on the Main Stem has. She is hoping these projects will improve visibility and inspire similar conservation efforts elsewhere. The health of the MS is dependent on the health of the tributaries. Jeff asks, what is the benefit to the river and if we participate, would the landowners join MRF? Richard states that siltation impairments are currently on the tributaries not on the MS, which is pretty healthy. Joe says many of these tributaries flow into the Lake, but Richard says de-silting the Lake is good for everyone too. Sunni repeats her request for \$1,000 in cash or volunteers, stating this could bring us positive publicity and promote the idea of a comprehensive approach to the health of the watershed. ***[Results? Request approved?]***

We then turned to the USGS Streamflow Gauge. Board members said this is a questionable cost-benefit to MRF. We are raising funds through print sales, but revenues for this specific purpose are not sufficient to cover costs. It was suggested MRF put out a press release saying "MRF does not have the funds to keep it going" and hope someone else steps in with additional money. Sunni stated that MCD wants to remove its name from the contract and substitute MRF. Jeff worries that we would stand out here, rather than being part of a group of supporters.

James – watershed map?

Ethan turned to a summary of the Salish Compact. There is a bill before the Montana Legislature to endorse the proposed Compact and settle this dispute. Jim Goetz explained that in the 1855 Hellgate "Stevens Treaty" tribal lands were established and given certain water rights, but these rights were never quantified. Among them is the water right associated with "going to buffalo," where the tribes are guaranteed the ability to hunt and fish off the reservation, inclusive of the Smith, Yellowstone, Madison, Jefferson, and Gallatin rivers. This means that minimum in-stream flows for these rivers must be preserved. Jim believes that if the Compact passes, there would be no negative impacts on MRF; in fact, it would be compatible with our mission. But if it

doesn't pass it will open up a huge number of disputes, perhaps as many as 10-15,000 water rights claims involving the tribes and private landowners that must be adjudicated.

Richard reviews the progress of reconstruction of the Hebgen Dam. He believes the appropriate water intake valves will be in operation in 2015.

Financial Report Treasurer Jeff Montag reviewed our current financial picture by saying MRF has \$173,000 in cash, of which \$90,320 is "obligated" (e.g. the Odell Fund), leaving \$82,680 in unrestricted funds. We are slightly behind last year, but Jeff thinks with the possibility of end of year gifts, we should end up in a satisfactory position.

Looking at the budget for next year, Jeff projects MRF will break even after starting out in the red, but closing this gap with the Gala and Festival. He detailed funds allocated for projects in 2015, totaling \$18,200. Also of note in this year's budget is a line item for an Administrative Assistant to help with back office work. The budget (attached) will be approved at the February Board meeting. **Jeff: Do you have corrections or wish to add further detail?**

Executive Director's Report Richard says Membership Renewal letters went out mid-October, and as of this date 223 renewals totaling \$22,390 have come back in. MRF now has 33 Stewards and 93 Life Members. A second Renewal letter will go out mid-January to those Members from the past several years who have not yet signed up. He recommends more prospecting next year. Liz says face to face contacts work better.

Richard summarized the volunteer efforts from 2014: 198 volunteers for 820 hours. This is down slightly from 2013 when we had 226 volunteers for 997 hours. It was agreed we could be better organized for next year. Richard reviewed the continuation of MRF projects for next year, citing in particular the Indian Creek opportunity. Yellowstone Coalition has requested a Letter of Support for their grant request to survey roads in the Gravellies. Richard also said the FWP had found in favor of the Granger Ranch position that the slough from Odell to the MS is not a channel and therefore does not entitle the public to access the creek. He mentioned a lawsuit that will be filed on "grayling listing," which could have profound impacts on the management of trout populations in the Madison.

Miscellaneous Old and New Business

1) *Gala* Sherri reports it has been difficult finding a caterer for this popular June date, but she is still waiting to hear back from two possibilities. She throws out the idea of "heavy hors-d'oeuvres" vs. a sit down dinner. There is a school of thought that the heavy hors-d'oeuvres approach brings in more money with more auction bidding, and could lower the costs of the dinner. She said all equipment and rentals for the evening have been reserved.

2) *Festival* No changes are planned at this time.

3) *Wines* Richard reported the Withers Winery, a high-end vintner who has approached MRF about a partnership is still interested, but he has received nothing in writing from them.

4) *Totten* There is sentiment that this is not practical for us, but Richard has not spoken with him for a while.

5) *Argentina Fishing Lodge* Someone wants to donate a trip for the auction?

6) *MRF Fly Swap* Joe proposes a Fly Swap at Banditos in early June. This would help get the season off to a good start and provide visibility for MRF.