

## WRC UCF Minutes

March 1, 2022

Public Meeting

### **Those Present:**

Susie Johnson – DLVCD/WRC, John Hollenback – WRC/DLVCD, Karen Knudsen – WRC/CFC, Eric Hassler – BSB/WRC, Brandon Warner – BSB/WRC, Will McDowell – CFC/WRC, Pat Saffel – FWP, Glen Green – WRC, Heidi Brewer – CREP Coordinator, Nathan Cook - NRDP, Amanda Cooley – Powell County Planner, Doug Martin – NRDP, Andy Fisher – CFC, and Ted Dodge – WRC.

### **Agenda:**

- The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Hollenback.
- **Treasurer Report:**  
Invoices were reviewed and approved at the previous Board meeting.
- **Minutes:**  
It was moved by Susie Johnson, seconded by Eric Hassler and motion carried to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.
- **New Business: None.**

### **Project Updates:**

- **CREP Proposal:** NRDP sent the FSA training recordings to partners. Planning checklist also completed and sent to partners. CREP program and rental rates have been released by FSA. NRDP is working on the public release of information.
- **Upper Clark Fork Stream Flow Working Group:** Next meeting will be March 15<sup>th</sup> at the Pen Convention Center in Deer Lodge starting at 9:00 am.

### **Terrestrial Priority Areas:**

- **Garnet: Terrestrial**
- **Gough Creek:**

**Dutton Ranch:** Conversation with Dean concerning his draft landowner agreement. He has no changes to the project list. Glen initially suggested/recommended that we limit the number of acres of conifer encroachment removal to keep the costs down, he wanted Glen to not do that but to submit all identified acres. So that is what I will do. His project list will include conifer encroachment removal from grasslands (keying in on areas of Antelope bitterbrush), conifer encroachment removal from the Gough Creek riparian zone, and biological weed control for Spotted knapweed.

**Hollenback:** Implementation actives continue

**DNRC:** No activity

**Brock Creek:** Cynthia Montagne: Glen Continued work on the Brock Creek Ranch LLC (Cynthia Montagne) management plan. Property is located in sections 14, 23, & 24 T10N R10W in the Brock Creek drainage. This includes some map work, analyzing the inventory data and begin writing the plan narrative. Glen should be able to finish this up sometime in March, although he may need to go out to the property to answer some questions he has.

**Deer Lodge North & South: Task Order 16**

**Aspen Grove Ranch (Sherm Anderson):** Aspen Grove Ranch (Sherm Anderson): Communicated with TerriJo recently concerning them meeting with Sherm to review the proposed project list attached to the landowner agreement. They still have not been able to and are now busy calving so won't be able to for a while longer now so Glen suggested that he do it and she was agreeable with that. Glen will try and meet with Sherm sometime in March.

**Habitat Enhancement: Task Order 13**

**Graveley Bros.:** The confer encroachment project is now out for bids.

**DNRC:** (Brock Creek and Spring Creek sections): Stock Water System

The bid period has closed, and two bids were received for these projects. The lowest bid was significantly higher than the estimated costs of the projects. Ted and Glen have been having conversations with Greg Mullen concerning this and assisting him answering questions and providing our input on what they might consider doing. DNRC personnel have also expressed their concerns over the bid amounts. Possible options are to scale back the projects to lower the costs or to reject the bids and decide what, if anything, else to do with them. On the Brock Creek DNRC section, we discussed possibly not doing the spring developments and instead putting in water gaps/crossings in the planned fence along the west side of Brock Creek. We had questions about the exact location of the existing east boundary fence on that section, so Glen went out there to check the location in relation to the creek. That will help with making the decision on the spring developments vs water gaps. And there was concerns about whether or not Graveley cattle could access the creek along the reach where the planned fence will go in on the west side (DNRC side).

## Aquatic:

- **Blacktail/Basin Creek BAO restoration Planning Project:**  
A final task order was signed in February. The project will create the development of a document designed to provide info on Beaver mimicry work completed in Basin Creek. It is intended to be useful by lay persons. Ted began contact with NRDP & Amy Chadwick of Great West Eng. to begin development of the white document.
- **Blacktail Creek Riparian Restoration Planning Project:**  
A new task order was signed in February for this project. Ted has updated the landowner information for the reach of Blacktail Creek to its headwaters up Roosevelt Drive. Landowner contacts expected to begin in March or as soon as we can get on the ground.
- **Brown's Gulch:** Site visit by NRCS, FWP, & WRC contractor carried out in June. A follow up meeting is scheduled for Oct October 5. Final work underway on the Brothers Diversion after an August site visit by NRDP, Ted Confluence, & Mark as well as Randy Brothers. Meeting held with MHCD & Silver Bow County representatives to the NRDP advisory council. Future Fisheries grant request submitted with a\$5,000 match from George Grant Chapter of TU for the Balentine project. Partial Future Fisheries grant obtained. In February Will submitted to a US F&W grant source.
- **Cottonwood Creek – Aspen Grove:** Reviewed and commented on project engineering, which is finishing up with engineer responding to 11 pages of NRCS comments. Discussed engineering considerations with GWE, NRDP, and both landowners. Also discussed concerns of the irrigation equipment supplier regarding the final designs. No change since December.

Continued working with DNRC-Lewistown to provide our interpretations of the water rights, hydrology and water use as detailed in the DNRC “Correct and Complete” report. The DNRC Lewistown office is completed their Determination (decision) of the two Water Right changes for Aspen Grove/Anderson. The proposed water right changes were approved.

Aspen Grove project was moving towards a contract for construction by the landowner, starting in early September 2021. However, due to delays in the delivery of the fish screen from Farmers Conservation Alliance in Hood River Oregon, the landowner, after meeting with NRDP and WRC, has decided to delay construction of the project until summer of 2022. This is because installation of the fish screen was not available until November, pushing the other elements of construction back into winter, which is not advisable at high elevation. Conf call held with NRCS to review comments to final design.

**Cottonwood Creek, Applegate Diversion/Fish Screen #1:** Project completed on October 28.

**Cottonwood Creek, McQueary Fish Screen:** Met contractor on site in September to review the small modification on this screen (cutting an opening in back wall to flush sediments without using the 12-inch pipe under canal). Decided on a steel plate set horizontally over the 12” pipe well and inlet. This is so the pipe can still be used if a lot of fish need to be flushed to stream. This modification was completed. The screen will be cleaned and winterized in October, also as part of O&M contract. No change since January report.

**Cottonwood Creek, RCC-Vineyards Diversion:** An engineer (Confluence) is working with RCC on some initial conceptual designs of an improved diversion and screen for the senior water right on Cottonwood Creek. NRDP and WRC are in touch with the engineer. No change since January report.

- **O’Neill Creek** – No activity. No change since January report.
- **Gold Creek** – Meeting held with key landowners to discuss potential multiple landowner involvement. Meeting held with Ground Water program staff Bureau of Mines & Geology to begin discussion of how to design potential ground water storage projects with Gold Creek as Pilot. Program manager will attend the Jan WRC board meeting. No change since January report.
- **Racetrack Aquatics Project Development TO: 5.14:** No Activity.

**Flow:**

- **Racetrack/Dempsey:** Glen assisted Ted with a portion of the RCPP agreement final report to the NRCS. Had to contact Dan Kelley to get information from him on his irrigation project that was installed with funding from the RCPP funds. No change since January report

**Deer Lodge Landfill Compost Project:** Work on feasibility study completed and submitted to the Deer Lodge Landfill Committee. Conf call held with other organizations on the status of the project. Waiting for responses from same. Continued implementation of the NRCS Conservation Innovation grant. Carcass pickup still under way. Landfill board has submitted their expansion permit to DEQ. The Compost projects will be addressed after the expansion has been approved. Vital ground grant extended to allow for development of the compost site in 2022.

Partners/Board Members reports were given.

Next meeting: April 5, 2022

Submitted by Susie Johnson, March 14, 2022