

Flathead Basin Commission
Dec 2, 2009
Tamarack Lodge, Hungry Horse

FBC Members in Attendance: Cathy Barbouletos, Don Loranger, Jan Metzmaker, Bob Sandman, Jim Simpson, Tom Smith, Dan Bangeman, Ed Heger, George Mathieus, Ron Steg, Joe Lamson, Mark Reller, Kathy Eichenberger

Others in attendance: Allison Mouch (for Joe Brenneman) and Virginia Sloan

Ed Heger chairs the meeting. The roll call determines that a quorum is present. Members are also reminded to submit an accounting of their in-kind hours to Caryn Miske.

Move to approve minutes by Jan Metzmaker and seconded by Cathy Barbouletos. Passes unanimously.

Vice Chair Nomination: The Nominating Committee selected Chas Cartwright. The members can submit additional candidates prior to the vote at the February meeting. According to the by-laws, the Vice Chair automatically assumes the Chair position at the end of the sitting Chair's term.

Storm water letter of support for City of Polson: Jim Simpson moved for the FBC to provide such a letter, and Jan Metzmaker seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Budget: No vote on budget required as the current budget set until June 2010, with the understanding that more soft money may be obtained during this period.

Personnel: The Public Information Officer (PIO) position description (PD) is almost finalized and will be sent to DNRC for classification shortly. Once the position is classified we can advertise the position. Joe Lamson stated that classification should take about 30 days, but could take a bit longer with the holidays approaching. Kathy Eichenberger asked if the position can be funded with the transboundary appropriation, but Caryn Miske explains that this was one time funding and will be difficult to get again. Ed Heger notes that the PIO may be full time or part time depending on funding. Don Loranger raised the need for assistance with administrative functions, and Caryn confirmed that this was included in the PD. Caryn will re-send the current job description for membership review.

Caryn also reminded the members that funding for Erin Sexton will also run out, and if we want to keep her on, we need to resolve that funding issue. An option could be to turn Erin's position over to the FLBS entirely, but they are already short on monitoring money.

Office Space: The FBC has not moved into the new building yet as we are waiting for a green light from DNRC to supply assistance on covering the costs of the new space until the FBC lease is up.

Exec Director Report:

- Work on transboundary file continues at both the state and federal levels.
- Water Quality District still pending, and small workgroup will meet in December. Lake county appears interested in moving forward. It is unclear whether Flathead would join the District initially, and CSKT involvement would need to be addressed in order for the tribes to participate in such a District. Dan Bangeman provided a hand out from the Conservation District outlining their water quality activities for the gap analysis being undertaken by the workgroup.
- The Lake Book is going to publication and the Sourcebook is in progress.
- Work on the AIS basinwide planning effort continues. Training sessions to commence this winter/spring, with the goal of institutionalizing AIS best management practices. In the long term, in order to successfully prevent a mussel introduction, the AIS program will need to be self-supporting.

According to Eileen Ryce, FWP, it appears zebras (eggs) may have been found in the Snake River, but the lab work is not back yet so nothing is confirmed. (Results were negative). If mussels are present, unsure if control will be an option. Early detection MAY increase options for management, but eradication is typically very difficult if not impossible. Some AIS experts hypothesize that a draft may be an option if detection is very early and the mussels are still in the shallow area of the shore line. But we should not bank on such an option working in the Flathead.

Tom Smith asked what needs to be done, and if we are on track for check stations for 2010. Caryn indicated that the planning effort is complete, the work group reached consensus and check station locations were identified. Funding is the issue, not planning. Caryn met with the Power Planning Council, and there was a discussion of possible year end dollars, but no decision on funding has been made. The Snake situation may push the need for funding. Caryn also spoke with Dennis Philmon. Dennis explained prevention plans existed in places south of the Flathead, and we could seek BOR dollars for AIS efforts here.

Tom asked how much funding was needed to cover the Basinwide AIS plan and when such funding needed to be in place to be ready for the 2010 field season.

Caryn explained that one self contained unit could cost \$65,000, and but if regular power washers were used costs could be reduced. Currently, the estimates for a Basinwide AIS plan, including signage, check stations, etc. was about \$870K. If we coordinated with Missoula, Sanders, and Lincoln counties, and perhaps even Ravalli, the cost would not increase dramatically, we could cover a broader area and increase overall cost effectiveness.

Currently, we have a problem with funding in that the utilities want to see some significant investment from the State in order for them to be willing to contribute

to a State AIS effort, and the State is waiting for the utilities to come forward and take the lead on funding. Caryn explained that in most other states, the government kicks in the funding, then private entities contribute. There is federal AIS legislation pending, and if the bill is enacted, more funds will be available for AIS prevention. But current federal funding is extremely limited.

Caryn also explained that some work can be done using existing infrastructure and personnel, such as boat checks at weigh stations and at border stations. Thus far, Border Patrol has been very friendly and willing to hand out AIS literature, but DC has maintained that boat inspection is not within their statutory mandate. Given that there is federal AIS legislation, additional outreach is needed to determine whether Border Patrol could assist in boat checks/inspections.

Tom expressed urgency in getting something in place by spring, and that funds would be needed by late winter.

Dan Bangeman stated that the CD placed a monthly quarter page ad in paper, and could address the AIS topic. He also noted that the 319 grant on riparian area education/advertising might also be use for AIS education.

Jan Metzmaker noted that AIS information should be on the state tourism web site.

- Fiscal agent agreement: The Flathead Community Foundation was contacted, and the Board will discuss accepting the FBC at their next board meeting.
- Ground water monitoring: Fall samples were taken and went to lab in Denver. The Phase II study is on hold until we get results back from Denver.
- Web site: Caryn investigated Geoconsensus, but it was too expensive (\$20K). At this point we can try to upgrade the site on our own or use a consultant. Ed Heger expressed concern that the site was too out-of-date. He added that the FBC needed to keep the site current or have a static page with contact information only. Tom Smith recommended speaking with David Rockwell and Wes Hunt, a programmer in Polson. Cathy Barbouletos recommended getting a community college student to work on the site. Once the site is upgraded the new PIO would be responsible for site maintenance. This issue will be addressed in February.
- VMP: Volunteers collected water quality data during the 2009 field season. However, the FBC did not take one-time collections for total phosphorus, total persulfate nitrogen and chlorophyll *a*.
- Contracts: Up-to-date and moving forward.
- Legislative process: Caryn recommended developing a strategy early, and she will make some recommendations in this regard at the February meeting.

TMDL Update: Ron Steg and George Mathieus reported that EPA and DEQ are continuing to work the data. Thus far, the following reports have been drafted: stormwater, roads, agriculture, and fire and harvest.

East Side spill: Ron Steg reported that Keller transport has paid for the home and soil cleanup effort which is nearly complete. The water treatment plant will continue to treat water for some time. EPA is overseeing the discharge permit, and the EPA office in Denver will undertake an enforcement action.

Whitefish diesel fuel cleanup: Ron Steg reported that in September a coffer dam was set up in the river in order to remove contaminated sediments in a 500 foot stretch of the River. Once this is completed, the process will then move to other side of the River. Contaminated soils are being transported by rail to North Dakota.

DNRC-FBC MOU update - Don Loranger reported that the MOU is aging “like fine wine” and a final draft MOU would likely be available for review at the next meeting.

Transboundary update: Kathy Eichenberger reported that the UNESCO report would be released on December 3rd. In addition, the Ktunaxa were granted forest management tenure in the Flathead, and it is assumed that they will employ sustainable forestry practices. Max resources claims to have found a new gold deposit, but the viability of the operation is unclear at this time. Caryn reported that (1) the joint State of Conservation report to UNESCO was still pending and was due in early 2010; (2) Senator Tester was considering a visit to Ottawa in the early spring fo 2010; (3) retirement of oil and gas leases currently under discussion; (4) funding for transboundary research still pending and researchers would be assembled early in 2010 to discuss funding options; (5) the Crown Managers Partnership Ecological Health project was moving forward and it is anticipated that a list of parameters would be identified within the next 6-12 months; and (6) DEQ will participate in the Line Creek mine expansion EA. Line Creek in located in the Elk Valley near Sparwood, and water from the mine ultimately drains into Lake Koochanusa. The concern about the rising selenium trend in the Elk was discussed.

Climate change: Will schedule future presentations on climate change work being undertaken in B.C. and by Glacier NP.

Next meeting dates: February, 24 2010 (south) and Arpil 21 2010 (USFS conference room in Kalispell).