

DRAFT MINUTES

Flathead Basin Commission Meeting Agenda February 12, 2014 U.S. Forest Service, Kalispell

FBC Members/Staff in Attendance: Jack Potter, Chas Cartwright, Ray Beck, Susan Brueggeman, Tom Smith, Jan Metzmaker, Gary Krueger, Jeff Mow, Jim Simpson and Caryn Miske.

FBC Administration -- Consensus items:

- Minutes from November 11, 2013 meeting unanimously approved.
- April meeting agenda to include presentations from: EPA regarding CFAC site assessment; John Weaver regarding recent transboundary wildlife research; and Burlington Northern, Flathead County and Glacier National Park regarding rail-related risk assessment/emergency management planning. In addition, an update on outstanding bull trout issues will be provided.
- Ray Beck was introduced as the new DNRC/FBC liaison.

Flathead County Update – B.J. Grieve, Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department

Director Grieve provided a summary of current planning and zoning issues in Flathead County, including but not limited to: (1) the recently passed zoning change in Evergreen to permit slightly more light industrial uses; and (2) and summary of planning and zoning activities currently being undertaken by the County.

FBC updates

- **BOAT PUMP OUT REGULATIONS:** DEQ to undertake the development of said regulations. C. Miske to keep members informed as process proceeds.
- **CITY OF WHITEFISH NUTRIENT TRADING PROGRAM:** The City received a grant from DNRC to develop a nutrient trading program for the City. The effort is just getting started, but C. Miske to keep members informed as work proceeds.
- **DNRC WATER SUPPLY INITIATIVE** continues to gain momentum as the Clark Fork Task Force members identify priority actions, and hone goals and objectives for each priority. Ultimately, the product developed by the Task Force will be submitted to DNRC for consideration as part of the broader State Initiative. For further information visit: http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water_mgmt/clarkforkbasin_taskforce/
- **WASTEWATER GROUP FACILITATION:** The group will be reconvened on 2/13/14 to discuss how to re-energize the group. Discussions will focus on the development of short and intermediate term goals.
- **TRANSBOUNDARY EFFORTS:**
 - Crown Managers Partnership (CMP) will hold its annual Forum in Missoula on March 17-19. The Forum is entitled Climate Change Adaptation in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.

- The CMP Ecological Health project continues to gain momentum. In particular, CMP has commenced work on a transboundary AIS Strategy to contain and prevent AIS across the Crown of the Continent ecosystem.
- North Fork Protection Act is still pending in Congress. Though the bill is currently stalled, there is still hope that it will get out of committee.
- **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH:** The FBC E&O Committee will meet prior to the next FBC meeting to discuss the possibility of a 2015 conference and other educational opportunities. The recently completed AIS Speakers Trunk, with narrated AIS powerpoint to be presented at the April meeting.
- **EXECUTIVE PLANNING PROCESS (EPP):** The FBC submitted 3 funding requests to DNRC as per the State's budgeting process: (1) \$5,000 annually to offset increases in operating expense; (2) \$20,000 annually to offset costs of volunteer monitoring program; and (3) \$50,000 annually to enable the FBC to provide greater programmatic services.
- **WHITEFISH WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT STUDY:** Jan Metzmaker summarized the District's recent study which found human coliform in Whitefish Lake. The District and City are now developing alternatives to reduce loading from septic systems.
- **WHITEFISH DIESEL PLUME:** Jan Metzmaker noted that the final plan for addressing plume contamination is almost complete, and results could be presented at a future meeting.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Updates

STATEWIDE AIS ISSUES PENDING:

- **QUARANTINE** – Draft regulations currently under review by FWP legal Department. It is uncertain as to when the draft regulations will clear legal. FBC working with local entities to consider adopting local quarantine regulations.
- **SEASON/HOURS OF OPERATION** – Based on Idaho's data, a request was made by a variety of stakeholders, including the FBC, to open stations earlier in the season to capture the greatest number of high risk boats and to open stations until at least 9:00 pm. Given current funding constraints, the majority of border stations (other than 2 stations on the southern border which will open in mid- to late April) will continue to operate Memorial Day through Labor Day. Hours of operation still to be determined.
- **MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MDT)** – Ports of Entry (POE) staff have expressed an interest in assisting with AIS prevention, but MDT is not inspecting all commercially hauled boats entering POEs. In addition, not all commercially hauled boats require MDT permits (can operate under general permits) which limits notification regarding high risk watercraft/equipment from MDT to FWP. This issue should be addressed in the 2015 legislative session.

HIGHWAY 2 STATION AT CORAM

- **MANDATORY AUTHORITY** – FBC currently working with FWP to confirm that FWP will operate the site as a mandatory watercraft inspection station. FBC still hopes to operate the station in Browning in 2015 if approval from Tribal Business Council is granted.
- **SIGNAGE** – FBC will work with MDT to use their variable alert message sign to increase compliance rates.

However, the sign will likely be pulled in mid-summer for construction projects, so the FBC will continue to raise funds to purchase a sign for use at Coram.

- **FUNDING** – Only a portion of the funding for the site is confirmed. FBC will continue to raise funds to cover the costs of operating the station 7-days per week.
- **MDT IMPROVEMENTS** – FBC will be meeting with MDT staff in April to discuss site improvements to improve visibility, safety and compliance rates.
- **SEASON/HOURS OF OPERATION** – FBC has requested a March 1 start date (Thursday – Sunday), shifting to 7 days per week in May. It would be optimal to close the station each day no earlier than 9:00 pm.
- **PASSPORTS PROPOSED** – A pilot program at the Coram Station has been proposed for a small handful of selected guide outfitters. The outfitters that would qualify boat only on a single water body in the Flathead. The FBC is awaiting approval from FWP.

CLEARWATER INSPECTION STATION

- **SEASON/DAYS OF OPERATION** – Due to a funding shortfall, the Clearwater Station will only operate 4 days per week during the 2014 season. To date, USFS funding has not been provided for 2014. C. Miske to confer with C. Weber to ascertain if additional USFS funding can still be provided.

OTHER

- **MITIGATION EFFORTS** – Mitigation efforts to control Eurasian Watermilfoil on Beaver Lake and Curlylead pondweed on flathead Lake and River will continue. Grants funds and donations are being sought to offset costs of removal operation.
- **LEGISLATION** – Statewide stakeholders group to convene to begin discussing legislative needs for the 2015 session.
- **TARGETED OUTREACH** – Outreach to marinas to be undertaken by the Flathead Lakers this field season. Outreach to pet Stores/nurseries/schools to be undertaken by the FBC.
- **VOLUNTEER INSPECTION PROGRAM** – Program to continue in Flathead, Swan and Whitefish Lakes, and will be expanded to include Lindberg Lake.
- **VOLUNTEER MONITORING PROGRAM** - Program currently slated to continue, though funding shortfall persists. FBC to work with funding partners to identify solutions.
- **EDNA** – Monitoring program and AIS consultants to continue to collect veliger samples for eDNA analysis. Follow up on Field protocols to be undertaken within the next couple of months.
- **AIS DETECTION DOGS** – PILOT program to test the efficacy of using AIS detection dogs, similar to the programs in California and Minnesota, is being undertaken via a partnership with the Province of Alberta.

AIS Detection Dog Demo, Working Dogs for Conservation (WDC), Pete Coppolillo, Megan Parker & Pepin

Pete Coppolillo, Executive Director, WDC, outlined how dogs are currently being used to detect species in Montana and throughout the world ranging from noxious invasive plants like Dyers woad in Montana; kit foxes

in California; and metal snares and gorillas in Africa. Coppolillo generally explained how dogs were selected and trained, and where and how dogs were deployed. The discussion then transitioned to how dogs could be used in Montana to assist with AIS prevention efforts. Megan Parker then introduced Pepin, an experienced detection dog. Members moved outside to view the demonstration of Pepin's detection skills. Pepin was put through his paces demonstrating his ability to detect scat hidden under bushes (see FBC website for media clips at www.flatheadbasincommission.org).

Nutrient Standards, Mike Suplee, DEQ: Presentation canceled due to weather.

Brian Sugden, from Plum Creek, commented that the timeliness of the nutrient standards discussion was critical given that the standard for nutrients in the Flathead could be adopted by the Board of Environmental Review prior to the next FBC meeting. Members recognized Sugden's concerns, and unanimously opted to convene the FBC monitoring committee and other interested parties (i.e. Brian Sugden, Charles Sutfin) to discuss the proposed regulation with DEQ staff, and if necessary, develop a recommendation for consideration by the FBC prior to the April 9, 2014 FBC meeting.

FBC Priorities/Funding Needs: discussion postponed until the June 2014 meeting.

Public Comments/New Business:

See comment raised by Brian Sugden above.

Meeting adjourned.