

MWCC Board Meeting Minutes



June 17, 2021, 1:00pm – 4:00pm
Zoom

MWCC Leadership:

Chair: Zach Owen, zach@beaverheadwatershed.org

Co-Vice Chair: Michelle McGree, MMcGree@mt.gov

Treasurer: Wayne Gardella, wgardella2001@yahoo.com

Secretary: Tana Nulph, tnulph@bhwc.org

Attendees:

Board: Michelle McGree, Tana Nulph, Sarah Bates, Zach Owen, Mike Koopal, Amy Seaman, Dusty Olson, Charles Drimal, Wayne Gardella

Staff: Ethan Kunard, Terri Nichols

Welcome: Zach welcomed the Board and Staff to the meeting.

Member Updates

- Beaverhead CD (Zach Owen):
 - Algal bloom, bad for the fishing, not so much the fish
 - Red Rocks – it's so dry down there that the ground is sucking up all the water.
- MFWP (Michelle McGree):
 - State government is back to work (in the office).
 - Future Fisheries review panel met yesterday. Every application that came in got at least partial funding. Had a good found of funding and about \$420,000 in funding to distribute.
- Audubon Society (Amy Seaman):
 - Chasing birds around a lot this time of year. Been around the state a lot doing that.
- National Wildlife Federation (Sarah Bates):
 - Still working remotely.
 - Eastern Montana Highline Field Coordinator, Morgan Marks – just hired. Will work with on riparian restoration field work.
- Whitefish Lake Institute (Mike Koopal):
 - Billionaires buying out millionaires. County just determined that Whitefish Lake is not an airport, in response to an application to put in a hanger for float planes.
- Great Yellowstone Coalition (Charles Drimal):
 - Hired an indigenous person from the Eastern Shoshone Tribe. Charles just went to the Wind River Reservation and met him in-person for the first time. Looked at different areas for riparian restoration and buffalo/bison opportunities.
 - Robertson-Draw fire on the Montana/Wyoming line – high elevation – right below Line Creek Plateau. Fire isolated in upper basin but plume of smoke blowing right to Red Lodge. In a day, the fire grew substantially (1,000 to 20,000 acres) due to the extreme heat. Prairie

- fires started all along the Absaroka front. Report on NPR yesterday stated that most of the American West is the driest its been and the most prone its been for fire in over 2,000 years.
- Climate assessment – coming out June 23rd. Frightening to see this becoming the new norm.
 - Big Hole Watershed Committee (Tana Nulph)
 - Drought – expecting drought restrictions soon on the Big Hole River.
 - Brown trout decline – sending letter expressing concerns to MFWP
 - Conservation Fund – building a 1% for the River partnership program for local businesses to invest in the health of the river.
 - Watershed Planning – rewriting 2 existing WRPs into 1 updated, consolidated document organized around the Big Hole’s 13 HUC-10 sub-watersheds.
 - Several restoration and wildlife projects in the works.
 - MWCC (Ethan Kunard):
 - Finally able to get out and talk to people in person.
 - Emma will be working on communications and outreach – her term is done in November. We’re considering offering her a second term. If she’s not interested, we may look at hiring a part-time position to help us get by.

Meeting Minutes

- March Meeting Minutes:
 - Michelle: on page 3, should say Ethan and Michelle not Barbara and Michelle.
 - **with that edit, Sarah moved to approve minutes; Charles seconded; all in favor.**

Board Governance

- Barbara’s term has ended and Charles is ending soon. We need a minimum of 10 board members. If Charles doesn’t renew his term, we would be at 9. We do have the option to extend Charles’ term until the end of the calendar year, if he is willing.
 - Charles appreciates the opportunity be involved with MWCC, but his plate is very overfull right now. He wants to be sure that he can contribute what it takes to be a valuable and effective board member, and right now he just doesn’t have the time to do that. But he is happy to support the board by extending his term through the end of this calendar year (2021).
- Proposed New Board Members: Heather Barber and Jordan Tollefson
 - Jordan Tollefson, could retroactively start term Jan. 2021 if Charles doesn’t want to renew. (Or potentially Charles could stay on AND Jordan could start effective Jan. 2021.)
 - Mike mentioned that Eric did a great job putting together a table of attributes and skills of the board members we have and the gaps we need to fill. Jordan had many of the attributes we are looking for and would be a great replacement for Mike on the watershed fund grant review committee.
 - Michelle spoke highly of Jordan and recommended bringing him on to the board effective January 2021 so that Charles doesn’t have to fill out the calendar year (note: Charles stated that he WANTS to fill out the year).
 - **Motion (Zach): Extend Charles’ term through end of 2021 and bring Jordan onto board effective June 17, 2021 for 3-year term.**
 - **Michelle seconded, all in favor.**
 - Discussion:

- *At one point, we prioritized potential board members geographically. Is there still an interest in trying to find someone in the Park County/Gallatin County/Yellowstone watershed?*
 - *This is still a box we want checked, but our priorities have shifted a bit and we've been seeking board members based more on their skill sets. This is a valid consideration though.*
 - *Charles offered to help seek out a person in the area who may be interested in serving on MWCC's board.*

ED Updates (Ethan – MWCC)

- Financial Updates:
 - Total revenue is a little behind, but a lot of our revenue comes in later in the year so Ethan is not concerned.
 - Major sources of revenue brought in:
 - Total private foundation funding: \$30,500
 - Membership revenue is not where we would like it to be because Ethan/staff hasn't had a lot of time to dedicate to building the membership program lately.
 - Net operating revenue is -\$22,926, partially because we paid \$10,000 to Jon Catton for video production, which is an expense we weren't expecting.
 - Discussion:
 - *Budget vs. actual: is the budget where we should be at this time of year or for the whole year?*
 - *It's for the entire year because it's really hard to estimate where we should be at particular times of the year.*
 - *Are you worried about raising funds to cover the \$10,000 for the video or can we absorb that?*
 - *We have a large amount in our reserve fund, but ideally the video will pay for itself over time.*
 - *We also hope to get funds from the High Stakes Foundation and the Llewellyn foundation.*
 - *Have secured \$8,000 in sponsorships and our goal is to raise a total of \$24,000. If we secure that amount, we'll have more than enough to cover our expenses.*
 - *Also expecting funds from Cinnabar Foundation. This is a challenge grant.*
 - *What have our challenge grants been in the past? How do those work?*
 - *In the past, we've primarily matched them with other grants rather than using them as fundraising strategies.*
- Fall Watershed Tour:
 - Sept. 15-17 (Rocky Mountain Front)
 - Partners: Blackfeet Nation (Blackfeet ARMP, Piikani Lodge Health Institute, Blackfeet Environmental Office, Blackfeet Community College, TNC Heart Butte Preserve, Inni Initiative, Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife); Sun Rive Watershed Group; Lewis & Clark CD and Cascade CD; Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable; Greenfields Irrigation District, TNC
 - Logistics:
 - Starting near Choteau – staying in Choteau Sept. 15th
 - Ending in Blackfeet Nation – staying in Cut Bank Sept. 16th
 - Registration:

- Launching June 24th
- Limiting to 100 people. Does that seem like too many?
 - We had a little over 80 register for the last tour, but some only went for certain parts of the tour. Probably 60 people moving around at any one time.
 - How many people make it too busy to fully experience the tour/hear the speaker/know what's going on.
- Sponsorships:
 - Goal: \$24,000
 - Secured: \$8,000
 - Please send 1 suggestion for sponsor to Ethan if possible.
- Budget:
 - Estimated expenses: \$30,890
- Sponsors: If anyone has an idea(s) for potential sponsors, please reach out to Ethan and let him know who you have in mind. Alternatively, if you prefer to connect with someone directly, Ethan can send you a sponsorship announcement with more information. We've currently secured funding from DEQ, DNRC (water resources), and Western Collaborative Conservation Network.
- *Discussion:*
 - *Are we considering consolidating transportation?*
 - *Potentially, we could use DEQ vans or potentially rent vans. Not sure how people would feel about cramming into a van with 12 people they may or may not know.*
 - *Also need to consider the perception of the tribe if we have 100 vehicles show up.*
 - *If we want to limit participants, could be imply or incentivize carpooling (so maybe those people who don't want to carpool just won't go)?*
 - *Vehicles could be left in Choteau overnight.*
 - *It could be a real mess if we have too many vehicles spreading out across the reservation, but could also be problematic to cram people into vehicles if they are not all vaccinated.*
 - *Could we include questions about carpooling/vaccination/mask-wearing in the registration?*
 - *What if we open up the registration to 80 people and then add another 20 people if most of the 80 say they're carpool?*
 - *Does limiting attendance to 80 solve the lodging problem? What is the lodging problem?*
 - *All rooms are double rooms. If one person stays in each room, we won't be able to have everyone at the same hotel. So, we're making an assumption that at least some people will room share or will stay at a different lodging facility.*
 - *What if we broke it into 2 groups of 50?*
 - *Much more challenging to coordinate.*
 - *We may also need to have people double-up for lodging.*
 - *What kind of sponsors are you looking for?*
 - *Consultants/contractors, local businesses*
 - *What if we included, as part of the sponsorships, a donation to a Blackfeet Nation project or program?*

- *Note: MFWP recently hired a Diversity Coordinator to engage tribal nations.*
- New Website:
 - Will be announced next Thursday in Watershed News.
 - Ethan will send out link for board members to review the new site before it goes live on Monday.
 - New site will do a better job of explaining who MWCC is and what we do as well as link to valuable resources.
- Montana Collaborative Conservation Stories Film Project:
 - Ethan has been meeting with a group of Montana partners (Bill Milton - Bill is the brainchild and leader of the project, University of Montana, MFCN, Common Ground Project, and more) discussing opportunities to communicate the important role of local, grassroots, collaborative, voluntary conservation efforts in Montana.
 - Working with a filmmaker (Lara Tomov) who is going to put together a 4-part series (10 minutes each) focused on different watersheds and communities around the state - all who are watershed partners (Big Hole Watershed - Big Hole Watershed Committee, Musselshell Watershed - Musselshell Watershed Coalition and Winnett ACES, Seeley-Swan Valley - Swan Valley Connections and Clearwater Resource Council, and the Two Medicine Watershed - Blackfeet Nation).
 - To get a sense of what this will look like, I've attached a slide deck from Lara and included a link to a concept reel she put together (<https://vimeo.com/526650957> password: MontanaStories).
 - We're hoping to get buy-in and support from the broader conservation community around the state (NGOs, agencies, statewide networks, local groups, funders, etc.) who all share the same goals of supporting and promoting local approaches to conservation.
 - When these films are completed in spring 2022, we would hope to have the supporting groups help host events around the state with local partners - discussing how these 4 examples represent the types of efforts happening in communities all around Montana, and conveying opportunities to support these local efforts in all watershed communities (perhaps this ties into our conversations on co-fundraising).
- Montana Forest Action Plan – MFCN Forest Collaborative Funding
- MT Shares – have to sell raffle tickets. Ethan will send out the PDF form with tickets for people to print off and purchase/sell if desired.
 - Money collected from the raffle helps Montana Shares' program budget, which in turn, helps us support our members in the ongoing work to invest in Montana's human, animal, cultural and natural.
 - <https://montanashares.org/mt-shares-annual-raffle/>

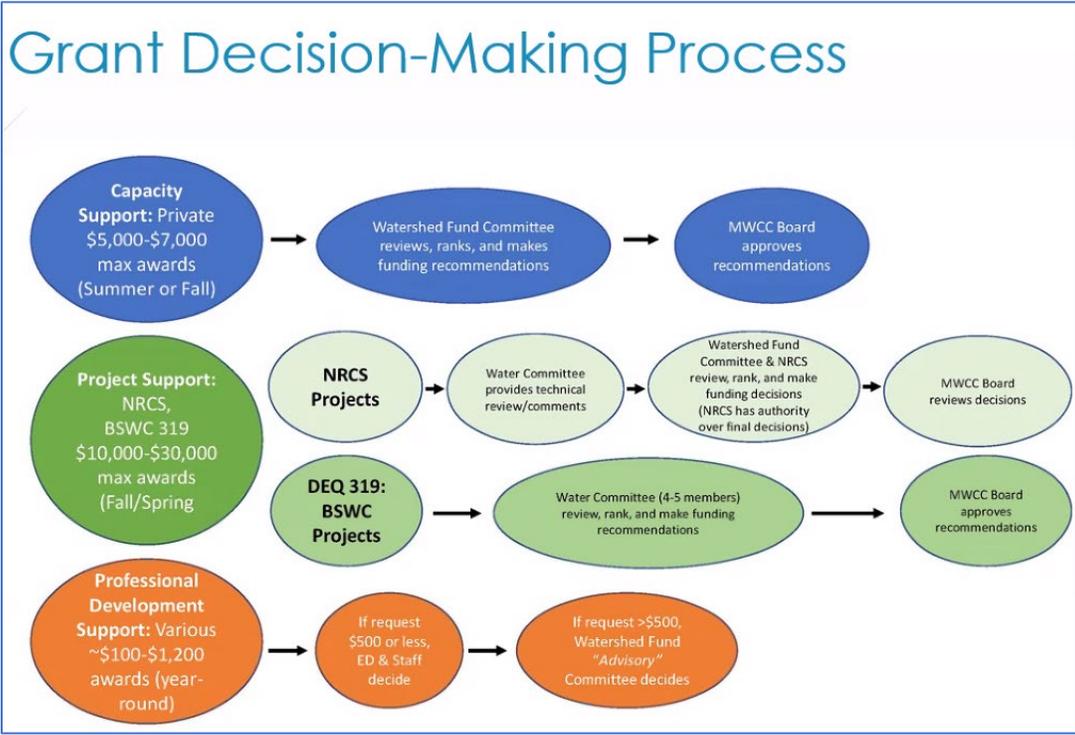
Break – 10 minutes

Committee and Work Group Updates

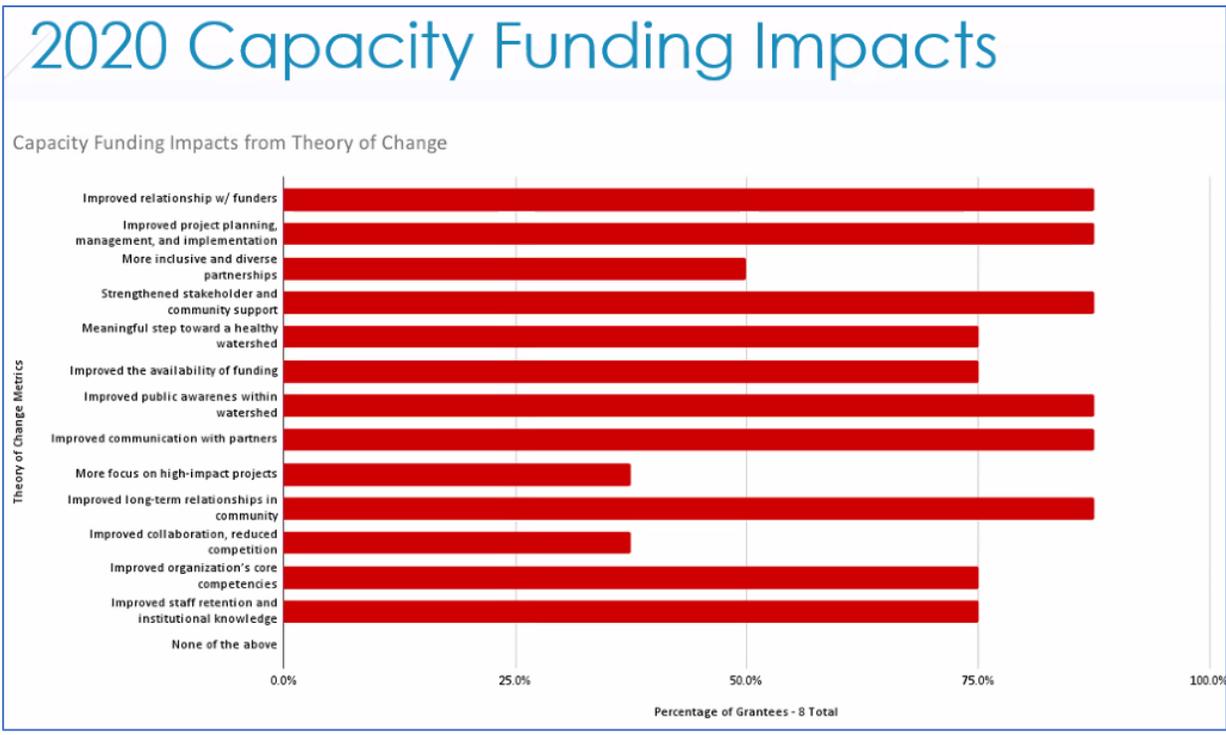
- Finance Committee:
 - Going well. Anyone who wants to participate on the committee is welcome.
 - Passed around a roles and responsibility document that called out need for additional members, esp. non-Executive Committee members.

- Governance Committee:
 - Eric did a great job of laying out demographics of existing board members.
 - Charles' point about where people are located geographically is important.
 - Effort to recruit private sector individuals onto board. Offer different perspective.
- Water Committee:
 - Met a few times recently, mostly in context of the Watershed Fund (providing technical assistance).
 - No other updates.
- Big Sky Watershed Corps:
 - More of an as-need/ad hoc working group.
 - Haven't met recently, no updates right now.
 - Host site applications coming out soon.
- Fundraising:
 - Met twice since March.
 - Looked at current fundraising strategies and ideas to improve them.
 - Ideas for new fundraising strategies.
 - Going to take some time off from this committee over the summer to focus on other things.
 - Reconvening in August to see what support is needed to put new ideas into action.
 - *Comment: Would be good for this committee to hone in on goals, not just planned activities.*
- Watershed Fund:
 - Project Support Updates:
 - 7 Proposals, all fully funded
 - \$88,371.13 total awarded
 - End of current NRCS contract
 - Contract expires September 2022
 - Projects awarded in 2021:
 - Upper Yellowstone Collaborative Riparian Noxious Weed Inventory and Management
 - Hazardous Fuels Reduction Collaboration in the Bridgers/Bangtails
 - Willow Creek TIP Proposal Support (Bitterroot Watershed)
 - Lower Big Hole Bank Stabilization and Riparian Enhancement Project
 - Evergreen Bank Restoration on Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone
 - Long-term Sustainable Grazing Management Regime on Sevenmile Creek (Lake Helena Watershed)
 - Missouri River – Riparian Corridor/Pasture Enhancement
 - Capacity Support Updates:
 - Capacity:
 - Summer or Fall 2021
 - \$30,000-\$40,000 available
 - Max award amount \$5,000
 - Providing additional capacity resources via:
 - Resource library
 - BLM Low=Tech Restoration Funding
 - Capacity Building Workshop with Future West, November 11-12
 - Capacity Building Survey and Capacity Funding Reporting
 - BSWC Host Site Cost Share:
 - Open July 1 – August 6

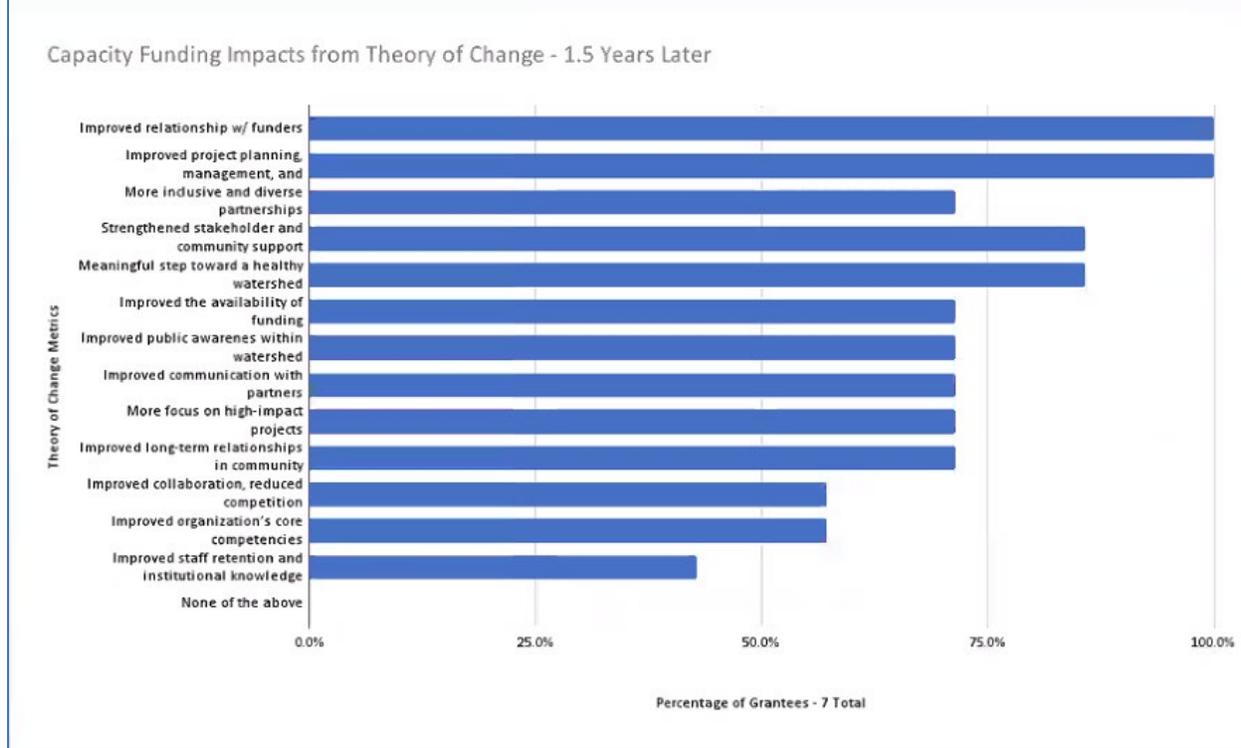
- Decisions late August
- Host site applications due mid-September
- \$30,000 available
- Max award amount \$6,000
- Total BSWC cost share (paid to MCC): \$12,250 for 2022



- Theory of Change Impacts



2019 Capacity Funding Impacts



Future of Meetings/Event Structure

- Want to be intentional about the way we start things back up.
 - This is a good opportunity to have conversations about what we never want to do again, what we want to do differently, what was good from last year, etc.
 - In-person vs. Virtual vs. recorded, etc.: Do we want to go back to in-person meetings? Stay on Zoom? Hybrid in-person/Zoom?
 - Maybe offer more virtual trainings?
 - Profitability: Has not been our intention in the past for events to be profitable – should we reconsider that?
 - A lot of value in this. Shouldn't be afraid to have profitability at events be part of our goals. There is a lot that goes into event organization and coordination.
 - How we profit matters. Are we talking raising registration rates or securing more partnerships or other?
 - Just because this is a core service doesn't mean we should lose money on it.
 - Next to the Watershed Fund, we (staff) spend most of our time on events. Would help to have a quarter or half time person to work on events to free up bandwidth for other staff members to work on other things.
 - Events don't necessarily need to be major fundraisers, but shouldn't put us in the red either.
 - We shouldn't be afraid to make a profit.
 - What do people get/need out of the events we put on? How can we provide that while also at least breaking even and also putting a spotlight our MWCC and our

work?

- Events:
 - Recordings offer flexibility, but people won't watch them if they're not high-quality recordings.
 - Will people really want to watch 2+ days of video (in the case of the Watershed Tour or longer events)?
 - Use short recordings to draw people into events, but not recordings of full 2-day events.
 - We should be aware of how wide our network is and provide opportunities for people to participate who can't or won't drive to an event.
 - Important to think about what we're trying to achieve and who we're serving with our events.
- Board meetings:
 - Could offer hybrid in-person/virtual options.
 - Could encourage people to attend in-person but have virtual option available upon request.

Upcoming Meetings

- Need to reschedule September 16th meeting because it's during the Watershed Tour.
 - Rescheduled to September 30th, 1-4 pm. In-person, location TBD.
- December 2nd board meeting – virtual.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.