



Gallatin County Weed Board

Regular Monthly Meeting

September 7, 2023 1:15 pm

ATTENDEES:

- **Board members:** Steve Saunders, Ed Brainard, Bernie Jones, Larry Holzworth, and Noelle Orloff (by phone).
- **Others:** John Ansley (Coordinator), Danielle Jones (Assistant Coordinator), and Zach Brown (Commissioner; arrived at 1:40). Remotely: Mike Jones (Assistant Coordinator).

PUBLIC COMMENT: There were no members of the public present.

MINUTES: Larry moved to approve the June 26, 2023 meeting minutes as written, Bernie seconded and the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

- There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Monthly Report Q&A, Discussion Included:**
 - Status update of Bill Smith WMA grant spraying. Because of changing circumstances in late summer (the explosion of sulfur cinquefoil led to many landowners changing to all helicopter spraying) it was decided it would be best to forgo spraying until next year.
 - Questions about calls and complaints received.
- **Commissioner Report:**
 - Zach answered questions from Board members. He gave a status update on the development of the property behind the Rest Home and what this might mean for spraying noxious weeds there in the future. The county will likely be reclaiming and revegetating the gravel pit on Baxter in the next couple of years because it is almost mined out. The Weed District has been managing weeds on that property and will continue to manage it after reclamation.
- **Coordinators Report:**
 - **Recognition Award.** Two nominations were received for the recognition award. There was a discussion about whether Board members should submit nominations or if they should only be received from the public. When the award was originally established and guidelines were being discussed, it had been decided that nominations should be received from the public. However, it was agreed today that if no nominations are received from the public, it is appropriate for Board members to submit nominations. The Board discussed the merits of each nomination that was received. All board members except Steve voted to give the award to Mel Chrichton, who was nominated by Jen Mohler of Grow Wild. Steve abstained from the vote to avoid a conflict of interest. The Commission will present the award at a public meeting.
 - **Spray Update.** John summarized the areas that had been sprayed by the Weed District over the past few weeks, including roads, parks, gravel pits and other county-maintained areas. The contractors have finished spraying county roads for the season. There was a discussion about weeds along railroad right-of-way. Bernie mentioned that he would try to find out who the new contact is with BNSF.
 - **Complaints Update.** Many complaints have been received and 43 friendly letters were sent out. John explained the process for sending out friendly letters.

- **Grants Update.** The North Bridgers WMA grant is in its' last year. Spraying has occurred for the season and the grant will be closed out by the end of October. There are two other ongoing grants including the Bill Smith WMA and Lyman Creek WMA. Steve already gave an update on the Bill Smith Creek WMA grant during the Monthly Report discussion. For the Lyman Creek WMA, much of the spraying has been done, but there were a few areas where fall spraying will occur this year. The Weed District will likely be writing a new grant application this fall for landowners in the Willow Creek/Milligan Canyon area. A meeting will be held with landowners in the next couple of weeks.
- **Roundtable:**
 - Mike went out and surveyed county roads adjacent to known ventenata infestations. No ventenata was detected, although much of the roadside had been mowed so identification would be difficult. These roads will continue to be monitored in the future.
 - There was a discussion about warm season grasses that have exploded in the county and across Montana in recent years. Witchgrass, a native annual grass, is especially pervasive along state and county roadsides this year. Witchgrass is a concern because of the potential negative impacts for adjacent agricultural lands (annual grasses are difficult to manage in grain fields). Steve suggested that the Weed District initiate an education campaign to encourage management before witchgrass spreads further. Potential partners included Extension, Beef Producers, the Conservation District, and any other agricultural groups. It was agreed to continue the discussion at the next board meeting to talk about ways to get the word out and how to manage the grass along roads.
 - Ed gave an update on weed management in the north part of the county, including hundreds of acres that were infested with knapweed. Toadflax was sprayed last year with great success; there was not much observed this year. Sulfur cinquefoil continues to be a problem. The BLM range specialist will hopefully do a weed assessment that will lead to spraying on BLM ground up there.
 - There was a discussion about leafy spurge along the Jefferson River, and current weed management activities.
- **Proposed Agenda Items for Next Meeting.**
 - Continue discussion about increasing awareness of witchgrass and other warm season grasses.

Meeting dismissed at 2:55 pm.

Next scheduled meeting: October 5, 2023, 1:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Danielle Jones