

2014 Joint Meeting



MONTANA WETLAND COUNCIL

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MONTANA WATERSHED
COORDINATION COUNCIL

Did you miss our 2014 Joint Meeting?

Thursday January 23, 2014

Montana WILD in Helena

The [2014](#) Joint Meeting between the Montana Watershed Coordination Council and the Montana Wetlands Council was a unique opportunity to discuss how collaboration is possible among watershed and conservation organizations across Montana. Access our agenda and links to presentations are provided [here!](#)



MWCC Joint Meeting: **MWCC Work Plans and Organizational Updates**

- Laura Andersen, Montana Watershed Coordination Council

2013 was a year of growth at MWCC. The Board of Directors will provide updates on major milestones since the last Annual General Meeting as well as the vision for 2014 and beyond.

Landscape Conservation Planning: Helping local groups engage and deliver conservation and restoration

Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan – using it to advance wetland and watershed

- Deb O'Neill, MFWP, Fish and Wildlife Plan Coordinator

The focus of the Montana SWAP is Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need (unlike most fish and wildlife agency plans which are species driven). Several community types immediately rose to the top – all rivers and streams, floodplain and riparian, wetlands, and open water. Current impacts and future threats were assessed for these communities, and actions to minimize or mitigate these threats were identified. Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan is in a 30-day public review period which ends February 9, 2014. Access the plan at <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/>.

Bringing Large Landscape Conservation into Local Focus

- Gary Tabor, Center for Large Landscape Conservation, Executive Director

The CLLC connects private, public and tribal land managers to address large scale conservation challenges such as habitat fragmentation and climate change. The Center provides technical assistance to communities that seek collaborative strategies to address science and policy needs, resourcing, capacity building and cooperative governance design. CLLC also co-directs the Roundtable of the Crown of the Continent with the University of Montana. The Roundtable brings many of the major land management stakeholders in Montana, Alberta and British Columbia together to address aquatic and terrestrial invasive species, watershed management, restoration forestry, wildlife corridor conservation, and climate adaptation.

Watershed Restoration Plans – restoring water quality and integrating wetland restoration to support multiple watershed goals

- Mark Ockey for Robert Ray, DEQ Water Quality Planning Bureau, Section Supervisor
- Steve Carpenedo, DEQ Wetland Program, Wetland Environmental Science Specialist

Although Watershed Restoration Plans, under the Clean Water Act, have an emphasis on improving water quality, the activities that bring about those changes happen on the landscape. The planning process itself can be supported by several state initiatives including the Big Sky Watershed Corps and DNRC planning grants and has the potential to address natural resource protection and restoration at varying scales and with additional priorities.

Joint Venture's Landscape Conservation Planning

- Ali Duvall, Intermountain West Joint Venture, Assistant Coordinator

Joint Ventures (JVs) work to conserve priority bird habitats through partnership-driven, science-based projects and programs. What is the purpose of JVs? How do JVs set conservation priorities? What types of information and resources might be available from JVs to help local groups deliver conservation and restoration?

Wetland and Riparian Conservation Planning and Coordination – building upon the Summit

*Lynda Saul introduced the presentations as the next step in moving forward from the **October 2013 Wetland and Riparian Summit**. The Summit was held in response to the retirement of Tom Hinz, Wetlands Legacy Partnership Coordinator, FWP's decision not to rehire that position, and the need to address Strategic Direction 1A (identify option to provide the service of the Montana Wetlands Legacy Partnership) of the **state's Wetland Strategy**. The Summit explored wetland and riparian prioritization and coordination and formed two working groups: 1) Conservation Planning, and 2) Coordination. The working groups were charged with developing bodies of work to advance on-the-ground conservation and restoration.*

***Greg Neudecker's (USFWS) presentation** summarized the **Partners Coordination and Wetland Prioritization Meeting**. Wetland bird conservation planning had been on going and the group expanded their discussion to consider an approach to meet the needs for increasing the effectiveness of delivering multi-function and multi-scale conservation and restoration.*

Catherine Wightman (FWP) explained that the Coordination working group, which included funding and policy, had a more ambiguous charge and a less enthusiastic volunteer turnout, due in part to the constraints of no new capacity or resources and losing an FTE. Nevertheless, all agreed coordination was important component for advancing on-the-ground wetland and riparian conservation and protection. She summarized the Coordination working group's proposal as forming a conservation team as a hub to coordinate and leverage on-going activities and look for opportunities that address priorities of multiple partners.

Outcomes from the discussion included agreements that:

- *Wetland Council and other meeting participants were on board and supportive of advancing the prioritized conservation planning approach that Greg Neudecker explained, including a multi-function and multi-scale approach as data are available.*
- *DEQ will move forward with including a spatial analysis project for prioritized conservation planning in their upcoming EPA Wetland Program Development Grant proposal.*
- *Watershed groups and local conservation districts will play an important role in helping to inform local conservation priorities and deliver prioritized conservation on-the-ground.*
- *Steve Carpenedo and Catherine Wightman would serve as hub leaders in coordinating conservation as part of their existing work duties involving water quality and wildlife habitat.*
- *Since the joint meeting, Lynda initiated the development of the Wetland Council Steering Committee and Strategic Direction working group leads as described in Strategic Direction 7 of the State Wetland Strategy. The coordination hub role that Steve and Catherine will lead will encompass Strategic Direction 1, Restoration, Protection and Management, and be part of the Council's Steering Committee.*