

MONTANA WETLAND COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday October 29, 2015, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

DEQ Director's Conference Room 111

1520 East 6th Ave., Helena

8:45 a.m. Gather for Coffee and Conversation with Colleagues

9:00 a.m. Welcome and Round-Robin Introductions

Lynda Saul, DEQ Wetland Program Coordinator/Wetland Council Chair

New Frontiers in Wetland and Riparian Conservation and Restoration

9:30 am Landscape level perspectives on restoration planning.

Linda Vance, Senior Ecologist and Spatial Analysis Lab Director Ecologist Projects Manager, Montana Natural Heritage Program.

Wetland functions and values exist at multiple scales, from the individual wetland to the wetland complex to the larger landscape in which wetlands occur. We will discuss some of the findings from our recent work on headwater wetlands in Southwest Montana to underscore the importance of taking a landscape level perspective when planning for wetland restoration.

9:50 am Restorable Aquatics Database – helping identify potential wetland mitigation and restoration sites.

Steve Carpenedo, Senior Wetland Scientist, DEQ Wetland Program.

The Wetland Program at MDEQ is piloting a project to proactively identify areas where there is the greatest opportunity and need for wetland restoration or mitigation. The “potentially restorable wetlands” is both a GIS based interactive map and static PDF maps that gives natural resource managers more effective means to identify restoration sites that will achieve the no-net-loss objectives of wetland acreage and functions. With the limited resources available it is necessary to develop proactive approaches for quick, cost effective ways to focus restoration to areas with the most opportunity and need to protect, restore or maintain the water quality and quantity within a watershed

10:05 am Joint Resolution 2: A legislative interim study of assuming federal Section 404 permitting program.

Jason Mohr, Research Analyst, Montana Legislative Environmental Policy Office.

The Montana Legislature's Water Policy Interim Committee is conducting a study of how the state might – or might not – assume the federal Section 404 permitting program. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers now issues section 404 permits, also known as “dredge and fill” permits. This study will review relevant laws, policies, and legal decision concerning state jurisdiction of section 404 permitting and examine other states' experiences in assuming the 404 permitting process. The study may include site tours, additional analyses, and a work group of interested parties, as necessary.

10:30 am Networking Break

10:50 am Potential for restoring water storage and wetlands in the Upper Clark Fork River watershed using low-impact restoration techniques.

Amy Chadwick, Senior Ecologist, Great West Engineering, Inc.

This presentation provides an overview of beaver habitat suitability index (HSI) model results for the Clark Fork River (CFR) watershed upstream of Garrison, MT and how we used the HSI model as a framework to estimate the potential for restoration of natural water storage and beaver pond complex wetlands in that area, with a brief discussion of recommended restoration techniques and costs.

11:30 am Soaking the Sponge – An Update on Policy Considerations of Passive Restoration and Shallow Aquifer Recharge.

Michael Downey, Water Planning Section Supervisor, Dept Natural Resources and Conservation

Beaver mimicry, beaver analogue structures, and passive restoration are all similar concepts applied to the common theme of floodplain connectivity and shallow aquifer recharge. Michael Downey will discuss efforts to expand the discussion and common understanding among policy makers and practitioners engaged in these efforts. Michael will also offer some insight into draft guidelines DNRC is currently developing for water rights associated with stream and wetland restoration activities.

Noon – Lunch Break (On-your-own or bring your lunch and join colleagues in the meeting room)

1:00 p.m. Implementing Montana’s Wetland and Riparian Strategic Framework.

Lynda Saul, Wetland Program Coordinator, Montana DEQ Wetland Program.

Presentation will summarize activities implementing the state wetland and riparian strategy including: wetland and riparian projects, new funding source, and Council steering committee. Saul will also set the stage for the following Wisconsin and Oregon non-profit wetland program presentations.

1:15 p.m. Building Capacity for Local Wetland Conservation.

Erin O’Brien, Policy Director, Wisconsin Wetland Association, Madison WI

Wisconsin has lost 50% of its original wetlands, but more than 5 million acres remain. Despite this abundance, wetlands remain poorly understood and vulnerable to many pressures. Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) Policy Director Erin O’Brien will talk about strategies WWA employs to increase wetland understanding and engagement in Wisconsin, and present ideas for how WWA’s approaches in a water-rich state could be adapted to help meet the wetland and water conservation needs of arid Montana.

2:15 p.m. Break (wetland cupcakes!)

2:30 p.m. Oregon’s Greatest Wetlands - A framework for conserving and restoring wetlands.

Esther Lev, Executive Director, The Wetland Conservancy, Portland OR

Fourteen years ago, to assist in setting conservation and restoration goals and coordinating statewide conservation efforts to preserve and enhance the biologically most significant wetlands in Oregon, TWC launched Oregon’s Greatest Wetlands. The program identified and mapped the significant wetlands, collected ecological information, identified potential threats and worked closely with local communities, land trusts, watershed councils and state resource managers to build local stewardship to acquire and restore these wetlands. Fourteen years later, more than 25,600 acres of wetland in 57 separate sites have permanent conservation status.

3:30 p.m. Elevating Wetland and Riparian conservation, protection, and management to New Frontiers.

Lynda Saul, discussion leader

Another RFP for EPA Wetland Program Development Grants will be released in January, What have we heard from the progressive non-regulatory Wetland programs in Wisconsin and Oregon that we want to incorporate into our State Strategy? What new frontiers are calling?

4:00 p.m. Adjourn

Optional - reconvene at the Blackfoot Brewery to celebrate clean water and wetlands!

The Montana Wetland Council meets three times a year and is an active network of diverse interests who work cooperatively to conserve and restore Montana’s wetland and riparian ecosystems by implementing Montana’s Wetland Strategy. Everyone is welcome to attend. For additional information contact Lynda Saul, Montana DEQ (406) 444-6652 or lsaul@mt.gov. Website: [Montana Wetland Clearinghouse](http://MontanaWetlandClearinghouse)
