

FIRESAFE MONTANA
Board of Directors Meeting
by conference call
June 2, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 p.m. by Jake Kreilick, president. Others in attendance were Carol Daly, Don Lorenzen, Pat McKelvey, Dick Rath, Paul Spengler, and Sonny Stiger, board members; Mike Dannenberg, Bruce Suenram, and Bob Fry, *ex officio* directors; and Crystal Hagerman, executive director.

Carol explained a correction that needed to be made in the minutes of the annual meeting. The Forest Service was inadvertently left out of the list of interests/organizations involved in the Ten Mile Watershed collaborative that Pat co-chairs. Dick made and Don seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting as corrected. The motion passed unanimously.

Crystal presented the financial report. Dick made and Don seconded a motion to accept the financial report. The motion passed unanimously.

Crystal discussed the results of the contractors' survey. There were 11 responses. About half of those who responded are members of FireSafe Montana (FSM). It is a good sign that non-members are aware of and paying attention to FSM and our website, and we should try to get them to become members. The responses to the survey will be discussed in more detail at the next board meeting, and we may want to have a special contractors meeting in the Fall.

Strategic planning for the organization should be the major topic of the next meeting, which will be Friday, July 10 in Missoula at the State Farm Building. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m.[since changed to 9:30 a.m.] and may run until 6 p.m. There will be a BBQ at Jake's home at 7 p.m. Sonny is not sure he will be able to attend the meeting. Paul will be in Ireland and unable to attend.

The changes board members suggested for the DVD are being made. Crystal would like to show the DVD to a group of landowners and see what their thoughts are on it. Then she will get it out to the board again for another review, and go through any additional suggestions or recommended changes with the DVD committee. There was some discussion of what was meant when the video talked about people having "unrealistic expectations". Carol said she understood that meant that many people thought that if there was a wildfire in their area, fire trucks would come and protect every house. Pat said that needs to be made more clear. Jake said we should be specific, acknowledging that the level of development occurring in the WUI in Montana has been so rapid that we haven't been able to get the needed mitigation information out to all the people who should have it. The WUI keeps getting bigger, and educational efforts need to be multiplied. It's not that poor information has been disseminated, but rather that there hasn't been enough information disseminated.

Mike and Bruce said they had not gotten a copy of the DVD. Crystal will send copies to them.

Sonny said Bob Mutch made some really good comments during his interview on the DVD. We need to stay with the story line that we originally developed. Crystal said she talked with Right Angle about that. The three main points that are being made are:

1. Wildfire is part of the environment in Montana. We have a history of wildfire, and the plants and animals have adapted to that environment.
2. The fire services don't have enough resources to be able to respond to every home.
3. Landowners/residents need to be responsible and create survivable space around their homes, so that homes can survive even if firefighters are not present

Mike asked if the DVD talks about how Montana is a fire ecosystem and is destined to burn? Pat said he didn't think that part of our message was strong enough. We've been emphasizing the idea of "Living with Fire" for quite a long time, but it's not emphasized enough in the DVD. Having wildfires in the West should not be a surprise to people.

Jake said that, from a physical standpoint, all the vegetation has evolved with fire. Fire is a part of our lives, and we shouldn't underestimate it. Is there perhaps too much of a fear factor projected in the video? Crystal said she has gone over all the comments she received with Right Angle, and now she does want to get some landowner feedback.

Information on the status of our current grants and outstanding grant applications was provided as follows:

Grants – awaiting award notice

- HMGP funds from Kent Atwood that the State of MT is applying for on our behalf from the 5% project category as statewide risk reduction through public educational material available funds - \$8,000 for additional *Living with Fire* printing.
- FEMA – Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program 2008 Fire Prevention and Safety Grants total funds requested \$91,520.00
- BLM Community Assistance 2009 Grant – requested \$250,000

Mike said BLM is interested in assisting an effort to create a Western Regional FireSafe Council, which might be a precursor to a National FireSafe Council. The exploratory committee now consists of Erica Bisch, Brenda Rightmyer, Bruce Turbeville from California, Mike's counterpart from California, and the Nevada FireSafe Council. Since the proposed regional council doesn't have non-profit status yet, it needs a fiscal agent to receive and administer funds on its behalf. If FSM is supportive of the idea of creating a Western regional council, would it be willing to act as the fiscal agent for the group, receiving funds for and paying the expenses of that new organization? It would be just like what the Tri-County group did for FSM when we got started.

Paul asked how big the western region would be. Mike said it would cover everything west of the Mississippi. The idea is to develop an organization that promotes the development of FireSafe councils in all of the western US, provides technical assistance to them, and can be an advocate or spokesperson regarding firesafe issues in the western US. Carol said she would be in favor of FSM serving as the fiscal agent for the new western council as long as FSM had a representative on the exploratory committee.

Jake said it seems like a number of the state FireSafe councils are just in a fledgling stage. Will the regional council be a coordinating body? How much autonomy will the state councils have? Mike said he saw the relationship as being similar to the one between FSM and the local councils in Montana. Each state council would be a voting member of the regional organization, but not all would have seats on the board.

Crystal asked about the timeframe for moving forward. Mike said there was no rush. He just wanted to know if FSM would consider being the regional council's fiscal agent during its start-up phase. Jake said that FSM would certainly consider it, but that the board probably needed to talk it over. Mike said he thought a regional council could provide a lot of support to a fledgling group like FSM. There's only so much hand-holding that BLM can do with state groups, and a regional council could fill that role.

Paul said he was sure that FSM is looking at the idea favorably; but there are a lot of details that would need to be clarified. Jake asked if FSM would be allowed to charge a fee for administration and bookkeeping. Mike said it would.

Regarding the planned 2010 Communities and Wildfire Conference, Bruce suggested that FSM submit a request to DNRC for some funding for the event.

Jake said the position of vice president of FSM is currently vacant, and Dick is the only director who has expressed an interest in filling it. Paul made and Don seconded a motion that Dick Rath be elected vice president. The motion passed unanimously.

Crystal noted the following upcoming activities in which FSM will be involved:

- Gallatin Fire Council meeting on June 10th. -- Crystal will attend
- East Glacier meeting on June 17th to work on the formation of a new local council for that area. Carol and Crystal will attend.
- Farmers Insurance and FSM press conference at 10 a.m. on June 18th at the Capitol to announce June 21-27 as Fire Awareness Week. Crystal will be there, and as many other board members as can make it would be welcome. (Don will try to attend.)
- Whitefish Area FireSafe Council community event on June 27th. Crystal will attend.
- West Yellowstone is doing something in July.

Crystal said that at the Keep Montana Green (KMG) and FSM annual awards luncheon on May 29th Pat was presented the KMG Fire Prevention Award "for dedication and service to fire prevention" and the Tri-County FireSafe Working Group won the KMG

FireWise Award for “leading fuel reduction and design and building efforts that improve a community’s ability to withstand wildland fire.”

Jake said the new Missoula FireSafe Council will be having a field trip on June 23rd, and hopefully will get to look at some work completed in the upper Rattlesnake as well as some new projects that are being planned. He will be sending in an op-ed to the *Missoulian* to announce the field tour and the formation of a local council

Crystal said she has been working with Big Sky re: formation of a local council there, and is also working with Seeley Lake and Alan Branine of DNRC on having a session in the Seeley/Condon area. Dick said we may get a council from Sweetgrass County. Doug Lowry is the contact there.

Crystal suggested that we defer until the July meeting our planned discussions on (1) FSM acting as a central funding source for local councils and (2) the problems that are caused because landowners have to report their fuels reduction cost share payments as income.

The FSM website needs to be refreshed in July and kept up to date after that. Crystal and Bob will be working with Jake Odom to accomplish that. Some local councils want to be able to connect with our site.

Crystal said the Whitefish Area council wondered if FSM would be interested in contributing financially to their group’s activities. Carol said that Whitefish probably had more financial capability than most groups at this stage, and that we probably need to develop a policy on how we deal with requests from local councils for financial assistance.

Jake said a formation of a hiring committee to oversee the search for a permanent executive director was in the works. We should finalize that process at the July meeting.

At 5:06 p.m. Sonny made and Paul seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.