



MISSOULA COUNTY LOCAL WORK GROUP 2021 FOLLOW UP REPORT

On December 7th, 2021 the Local Working Group (LWG) met to discuss natural resource conservation concerns in Missoula County. There were 26 individuals (see Appendix A for details) that were able to attend and other partners/citizens that were unavailable. The LWG identified Priority Resource Concerns (PRC – see Appendix B for details) which will help the Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCS) decide what natural resource areas to focus on in upcoming Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPs). Those concerns will also be a starting place for the Missoula Conservation District as the District develops our new strategic management plan.

Here are the PRCs identified.

1. Wildlife Habitat/Fragmentation
2. Increased Development/Land Use Pressure
3. Water Quality/Quantity
4. Invasive Species
5. Forest Health
6. Soil Health

These Priority Resource Concerns are great for getting more conservation projects implemented on the ground. We desire to have the LWG to be more than just a tool for the Missoula Conservation District and NRCS. This year was a starting point, and we want the work of the group to be valuable to all attendees.

Next year's meeting will start where this year's meeting left off. That means beginning with the six Priority Resource Concerns established this year and quickly making sure they are still applicable. Once we satisfy that responsibility, the group will use our time to move shared projects forward.

We will identify who is doing projects in what areas and which partners they are working with. From here we will see what other resources and partnerships are needed and focus on building connections to serve those needs. We have a goal for those attending to have time to meet with one another and discover potential partnerships or deepen existing ones.

For example, let us use the NRCS's Miller Creek TIP to enhance riparian areas and aquatic habitats. This example is an NRCS-driven project, but the LWG doesn't need to be focused only on District or NRCS driven projects. We will spend time on other groups too. Some questions to ask are: Who are the current partners? Who else might be a potential partner? What are the remaining needs? What other opportunities are out there? It is important to consider that opportunities might be identified from partners not yet involved.

Miller Creek TIP Example:

Current Partners

NRCS (technical & monetary cost-share assistance)

Oxbow Cattle Company (access to land, technical assistance, monetary contributions, voluntary labor)

Local Property Owners (access to land, monetary contributions, potential voluntary labor)

FWP (technical assistance, labor/baseline assessments)

Clark Fork Coalition (technical & potential monetary cost-share assistance, outreach support)

Missoula Conservation District (technical & potential monetary cost-share assistance, outreach support)

Missoula Weed District (technical assistance, outreach support)

Remaining Needs

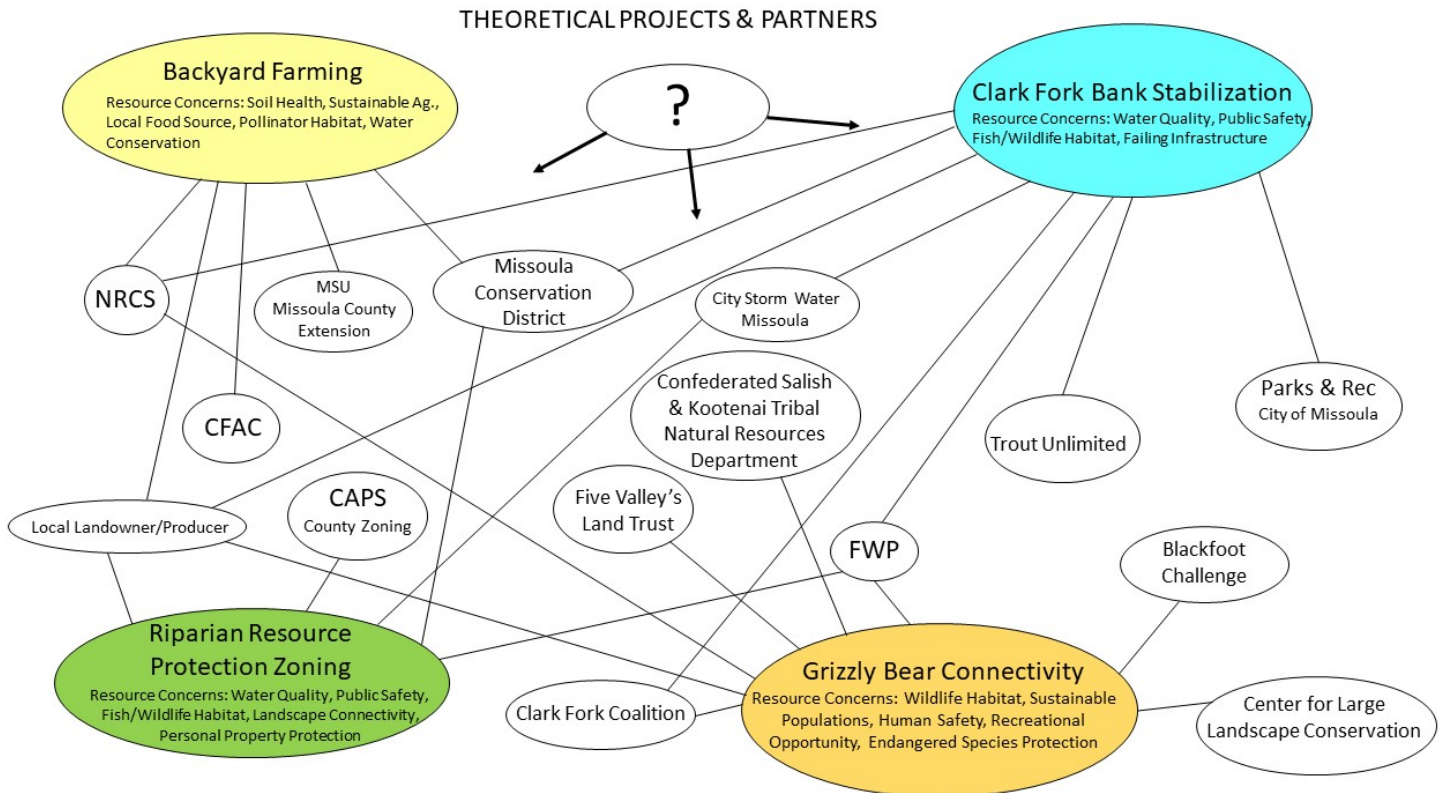
More volunteer labor
More public outreach

Other Opportunities

To be determined (including by possible potential partners)

This is just one project that we are familiar with, but rest assured there are many other partnership potentials in the LWG that we can flush out.

We will have LWG participants list some projects they are doing to address different PRC areas and throw those up on the white board. The LWG will conduct a conservation project food web exercise (example below), where we connect partners to project areas. From there we will see who could connect with who and make sure we are maximizing resources without duplicating efforts. We don't know who some potential partners may be, and we need participants in the LWG to identify yourselves and let us know



what you are working on. Expect a thought-provoking worksheet prior to next year's meeting from which we can create a clearing house document of conservation work in Missoula County. Such a document could be provided to local governments and be an asset to obtain future funding for projects.

As LWG facilitators, we would like to hear from you. Do you want to meet again sooner rather than later? Would you like to submit information prior to meeting as a group? What ideas do you have for the LWG? Please feel free to email or call Radley Watkins or Travis Lemke with any thoughts.

The bottom line is that the Missoula County Local Working Group is an amazing assembly of concerned citizens, natural resource experts, and representatives dealing with a broad array of conservation issues. We at the Missoula Conservation District and NRCS really appreciate you and the time you shared. We look forward to keeping up our momentum and furthering partnerships. Thank you.

Appendix A, 2021 MISSOULA COUNTY LOCAL WORK GROUP Attendees

In Attendance:

Brad Weltzien, Land Steward, Blackfoot Challenge

Ryan Stutzman, Conservation Easement Manager, Five Valley Land Trust

Morgan Valliant, Ecosystems Services Superintendent, Missoula City

Jed Whitely, Project Manager, Clark Fork Coalition

Mary Ellis, Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program Manager, Community Food & Agriculture Coalition (CFAC)

Steffany Rogge, Weed Education Coordinator, Missoula County Weed District

Bill Burdick, Service Forester, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

Libby Maclay, Vice-Chair Board of Supervisors, Missoula Conservation District

Jerry Marks, Department Head, MSU Missoula County Extension

Kylie Paul, Road Ecologist, Center for Large Landscape Conservation

Tim Hall, Chairman Board of Supervisors, Missoula Conservation District

John Bowe, District Conservationist, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Travis Ross, Operations Administrator - Parks, Trails and Open Lands, Community and Planning Services (CAPS) Missoula County

Travis Lemke, Supervisory District Conservationist, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Bryan Vogt, Program Specialist, Missoula Conservation District

Andrew Hagemeyer, Senior Planner - Current Planning & Permitting, Community and Planning Services (CAPS) Missoula County

Bryce Andrews, Owner/Operator/Producer, Thunder Road Farm

Evan Smith, NPDES Regulatory Specialist, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal (CSKT) Natural Resources Department

Rob Roberts, Little Bigfoot Project Manager, Trout Unlimited

Radley Watkins, Resource Conservationist, Missoula Conservation District

Cory Miller, Owner/Operator/Producer, Grass Valley Farms

Kevin Lackey, Ranch Employee/Citizen, Grass Valley Farms

Jamie Ryan Lockman, Executive Director, Montana Organic Association

Pam Gouse, Administrator, Bitter Root Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)

Additional Comments Submitted from:

Ladd Knotek, Fisheries Biologist, MT Fish & Wildlife Parks (FWP)

Bart Morris, Owner/Operator/Producer, Oxbow Cattle Company

Appendix B, 2021 MISSOULA COUNTY LOCAL WORKING GROUP DETAILS

PRIORITY RESOURCE CONCERNS IDENTIFIED

1. Wildlife Habitat/Fragmentation
2. Increased Development/Land Use Pressure
3. Water Quality/Quantity
4. Invasive Species
5. Forest Health
6. Soil Health

PRIORITY RESOURCE CONCERNS with THREATS/OPPORTUNITIES

Wildlife Habitat/Fragmentation

- Stream restoration
- Riparian health
- Fisheries impact
- Wildlife confrontation/attractants
- Pollinator health & habitat loss
- Grazing management

Increased Development/Land Use Pressure

- Loss of agricultural land/fracturing/development
- Change in agricultural production
- Focus on small scale/local/urban agriculture/*local foods**
- Recreation pressure/impacts
- Zoning and land use reclassification
- More capacity/need for easements
- Channel migration zone importance
- *Recreation pressure**

Water Quality/Quantity

- Irrigation diversion impacts/improvements
- Irrigation efficiency
- Pesticide/pollutant impacts/agricultural run off
- Drought impacts

Invasive Species

- Noxious Weeds
- Aquatic Invasive Species both plants and animals
- Grazing management

Forest Health

- Grazing management

Soil Health

- Grazing management

*Climate Change**

**those items in italics were mentioned several times but did not make it into any resource concern silo*

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

Wildlife Habitat/Fragmentation

- Predator exclosure fencing

Water Quality/Quantity

- Irrigation efficiency improvements
- Lining of irrigation ditches
- Forest fuels reduction
- Holistic upgrades – In-stream water reservations, and fish friendly diversions w/ measuring devices

Forest Health

- Fuels reduction
- Pre-commercial

Land Development/Fragmentation

- Easements
- Update zoning codes

OTHER IDEAS

Knowledge based education on lower Grant Creek

Riparian fencing/grazing management

Grazing integration into overall farm systems to support regenerative agriculture

The Conservation District has no tractor to rent with drill

Tree planting assistance and where to get small orders of trees

Outreach

Targeting small/medium landowners

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ABOVE POINTS ARE ALL TAKEN FROM WHITEBOARD NOTES AND DO NOT REFLECT THE EXTENT OF DISCUSSION HELD IN GROUPS. MANY OF THE THREATS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND POTENTIAL PROJECTS HAD MUCH MORE DETAIL IN GROUP DISCUSSION, AND WHITEBOARD POINTS WERE LIMITED BY TIME AND NOT ALL INCLUSIVE.