



*Strategic control, education, and communication
fighting saltcedar on Montana waterways.*

Minutes of the Montana Saltcedar Team Meeting February 28, 2018 Fort Peck Interpretive Center

Attendees: Patricia Gilbert, Dylan Brown, Brady Canon, Colin McClure, Andrew Horvath, Paula Gouse, Laura Nowlin, Rachel Frost, Carie Hess, Stone Tihista, Alex Gaffke, Kenny Keever, Randy Dirkson, Clay Petersen, Scott Darring, Andrew Kretschmer, Jack Medicott, Seth Urick, Ryan Allen, Ken M. Nelson, Aaron Kneeland, Jasmine Reimer, Emily Wong, Brenda Witkowskie, Natalie West

By Phone: Gary Adams, Stephanie Hester, Steve Tyrell, Jody Jones, Jane Mangold, Jessica Larsen, Joe Myla, John Grassy

Welcome and Introductions:

Rachel welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending, then asked for introductions by everyone in the room and on the phone.

Rachel gave background and history on how the team came to be and her role in on-the-ground projects. The MST has no money of its own to devote to projects. Ideally, partners bring a defined project to Rachel and she uses her resources to coordinate the parties that should be involved, seek financial resources through grants, programs, and in-kind contributions, and coordinates the education and outreach involved with the project.

Review of Past Projects:

Seven Blackfoot Drainage – Garfield County, 2015-2017

Patricia Gilbert: Back in 2013 there was a proposal for a large scale weed project on Fort Peck. The Seven Blackfoot and Billy Drainages were identified as major infestations and seed sources of Saltcedar for the lake. Multiple partners were invested in the project with either funds or time.

Dylan Brown: Monture Creek Land Management held the contract for the Seven Blackfoot Drainage project. Dylan provided the specifics on herbicides used and method of application. He also discussed the location of the worst of the infestations and how cooperative efforts by all made the treatment a success. A total of 389 acres were treated in the project area despite the challenges rough terrain and limited access. The one problem was the amount of water used per acre and the fact that the helicopter could not carry enough water and safely move through the terrain at the amount that was wanted.

Rachel Frost: Presented on the Lower Missouri River Project that treated approximately 114 miles of river bank, from Wolf Point to the North Dakota border. Phase One in August 2017 only treated the first 50 miles and 344 individual plants. The Second Phase in October 2017 treated 64 miles and 844 individual plants. A total of 458.5 volunteer hours went into the project through 4 MCC Crew members, 11 volunteers and 1 contractor. Total treatment covered 15% of the MT Missouri River and 5% of US Missouri River.

Planning for 2018:

It was asked if there would be follow-up to the Lower Missouri River Project and what is next for that project.

Brady Canon and Kenny Keever reported on saltcedar work in Fergus County and the BLM areas from Fort Benton to Fred Robinson Bridge. Patricia Gilbert discussed planned projects on Fort Peck for 2018. No single project was selected for primary focus by the Team in 2018, but it was left open for the Team to support projects on a request basis.

Partner Updates:

Diorhabda Beetle Research Update - Alex Gaffke – (Graduate student at Montana State University) was able rear 3,000 *Diorhabda carinulata* beetles for release in 2016. A total of 10 releases, of around 300 beetles each, were conducted in 2016, but only one release successfully overwintered. In 2017, 4,000 beetles were released on 8 sites, and evidence of

reproduction was documented at these sites. Currently, the Yellowstone River is the only area where the beetles are known to over winter. In 2018, Alex would like to rear 6,000 adults for field release and an additional 1,600 for caged releases.

It was noted that the releases do better with the addition of the pheromone.

Alex could use 300-400, 3 foot tall saltcedar plants to put in the greenhouse to use as a food supply to help rear the beetles.

Alex is also seeking appropriate release sites for 2018 field season. Requirements for potential *Diorhabda* release sites:

- Saltcedar patches bigger than 1/3 acre, and with other saltcedar patches less than 200 yards away.
- Saltcedar patches located above the "typical" high water mark of any waterway. There are always chances for freak flood events, but if we target areas that typically don't flood that will give the beetles a better shot at establishing
- Saltcedar patches with little chance of getting sprayed.
- Saltcedar patches on public or private ground that meet the above requirements are equally desirable as long as the landowners are informed
- Easy access is always a plus, but suitable patches within 2 miles of a road are acceptable

ARS Update –Natalie West –ARS has been looking at tamarisk as a second invader. Currently they are not doing much with Saltcedar and the beetle due to the lawsuits that have come in to play. The ARS will start looking at Saltcedar and the beetle once the lawsuits are settled.

Musselshell River Activity Update - Laura Nowlin – **The Musselshell Watershed Coalition recently received** funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for a creation of a Coordinated Weed Management area. First year will focus on weed surveys and prioritization of areas needing treatment. The second year will be conducting on the ground treatments. Meriel Beck, Lower Musselshell County weed coordinator, has 30 landowners working on the river on all weeds, including saltcedar. The first year has been very successful and they have applied for additional funding. Wheatland County reported that they are using trust fund funding to purchase herbicide and then using local ranchers to spray as most areas are remote and difficult to access.

Healthy Riparian Forest Committee within MISC – Subcommittee under MISC – Stephanie Hester – will keep the momentum going in regards to woody tree species which reports back to the MISC. Looking for a chairman / lead for the group so that they can start meeting and be able to report to the full MISC at their meeting in May.

Montana Saltcedar Management Plan - Jasmine Reimer & Emily Wong – Montana is updating the State Saltcedar Management Plan. They would like the MST to be involved in reviewing and contributing to the new draft plan.