

AQAC MINUTES
February 3, 2015

Members/alternates present: Kathy Tonnessen, Bert Chessin, Ryan Leach, John Garberson, Beth Berlin, Bill Flanery, Phil Perszyk, Sue Spanke, Ronni Flannery, Garon Smith, Tom Roberts

Members/alternates absent: Guy Hanson, Jan Hoem

Staff: Sarah Coefield

Public: John Ottman, Jordan Hess, Dave Atkins, Jon Chance, Mariah Williamson, Gary Matson

1. **Beth Berlin called the meeting to order**
2. **Excused absences recognized** – Jan Hoem and Guy Hanson were excused
3. **Agenda approved after switching the order of items 7&8.**
4. **January minutes approved with typo corrections.**
5. **Public comment on non-agenda items**
None.

6. Article Presentation

Kathy Tonnessen presented the article “Bark beetles have devastated western forests, but that may not mean more severe fires” by Cally Carswell from the October 2014 issue of *Science*. Kathy also provided the group with the scientific journal article that was the basis for story. That article, “Recent mountain pine beetle outbreaks, wildfire severity, and postfire tree regeneration in the US Northern Rockies” by Brian Harvey et al, was published in the October 21, 2014 issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Kathy said the *Science* article provided a really nice summary of the information that came out in PNAS about bark beetles, wildfires, etc. She said a lot of land managers are concerned about smoke and wildfires and there has been concern that the beetle outbreak would make wildfires worse. In his study, Brian Harvey looked at forests in Idaho and Montana and examined the effects of 2011 and 2012 wildfires. He looked at green, red and gray trees and tried to answer the question of to what magnitude do standing dead trees affect wildfire severity? The answer was, perhaps surprisingly, that the beetle-killed trees did not have a significant effect on fire severity.

Kathy said she found it encouraging that the researcher didn’t find any direct correlation between the severity of fire and the presence of beetles. She said the real severity is linked to climate and topography. Harvey also looked at forest regeneration, especially in regard to lodgepole pines. Lodgepole pines benefit from fires because their cones open after a fire.

Kathy said that one of the takeaways after reading the article is that a lot of people initially wanted to cut all the dead trees down in an attempt to forestall potentially catastrophic fires, but it turns out that’s probably not a good policy, especially in the middle of nowhere. It is better to let things take their course.

Phil Persyzk asked if we are seeing a reduction in beetle populations. Kathy said yes, there are millions of hectares of land that show the bark beetle population decreasing. Drought, climate and wind are all factors that allow beetles to get a foothold.

John Garberson said that it was his sense that the burning of dead, denuded trees would be cleaner than a green forest. Garon Smith agreed and said that standing snags are a much cleaner burn, and have more complete combustion. Ryan Leach said that when you kill a whole stand of trees and it reaches the gray phase, it's harder for the fire to spread.

Tom Roberts asked if bark beetles were killing the white bark pine. Kathy said that the western bark beetle is responsible for the white bark pine's decline, and she said it may be more of an egregious issue. She said white bark pine used to be high enough and in cold enough regions that the beetles didn't get to them. But now the trees are getting stressed by drought and blister rust and they are more vulnerable to the beetles.

Ryan said that from an air quality perspective, should we worry about smoke from bark beetle forests?

Kathy said that you don't want to get hysterical about beetles and drought. You're going to get wildfires, anyway.

7. Interview membership candidates

The Council interviewed Dave Atkins and John Ottman for the remaining two alternate positions. Dave Atkins is retired from the US Forest Service. While with the Forest Service, Dave worked on land management activities including prescribed fire, wildfire management and use of wood as a renewable energy source. Dave answered the Council's questions about his interest in, perception of, and vision for Missoula's air quality. He also spoke to the Council about the toxicity of different particulate sources and benefits of using cleaner wood burning technologies for heat and energy.

John Ottman is a local forester who runs his own forestry consultant business. John answered the Council's questions about his interest in, perception of, and vision for Missoula's air quality. He said that, in addition to outdoor burning, he has interest in buses and dust issues.

Following the interviews, the group discussed the candidates. The Council appreciated the views both candidates would provide to the council regarding biofuels and forest management. John Garberson said he didn't think having two candidates with backgrounds in forestry is an issue – it encompasses ecology and everything the Council is interested in.

Kathy Tonnesson made a motion to request the Air Pollution Control Board Chair appoint Dave Atkins and John Ottman to the Air Quality Advisory Council. Ryan Leach seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous voice vote.

8. University of Montana Transportation Study update – Jordan Hess, ASUM Office of Transportation director

Jordan Hess, the Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) Office of Transportation director, gave the Council an update on the University of Montana Transportation Study. The transportation study was initiated to provide an in-depth analysis of the transit situation around the university, identify redundancies between the ASUM and Mountain Line services, and identify transit strategies for the new Missoula College location. Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc. is conducting the study. Jordan passed out a summary of the study's nine tasks and their current statuses. The tasks include initiating the project, bus service planning, capital planning, and an existing conditions review, among others. Two of the tasks (bus service planning and bus service coordination/integration) have had preliminary findings delivered to the university.

Jordan said there are a significant number of buses in the university area, and there's overlap between the ASUM services and Mountain Line routes. Mountain Line Route 1, in particular, has significant duplication with the ASUM Red Line and Blue Line. He said the primary recommendation right now is to eliminate the ASUM Blue Line to Missoula College. There are a few very specific times of day that would overwhelm the transit capacity if the duplication was reduced. On trips where overloading could occur, a second bus should be used to shadow the Red Line to provide extra capacity.

Jordan said ASUM is looking at providing residential service on 6th and 7th streets to complement Mountain Line Route 8.

One of the strategies for streamlining transit when there are multiple providers is to integrate the services. Jordan said the study is looking at case studies of coordinate/integrated transit models. He said that if there is integration of Mountain Line and ASUM, they would have to look at governance and financial impacts. He said it would cost the university several million dollars to divest itself of its transit fleet.

Kathy Tonnessen asked if the study is looking at the effects on air quality of pursuing the various transit options.

Jordan said they went around on that a lot, but found that to add an air quality model to the study would have cost an additional \$20,000 to \$30,000 dollars to the project. He said the board decided to set a benchmark of never going backward on air quality and use the money toward cleaning up the fleet.

John Garberson pointed out that a more efficient transit system that reduces the number of buses on the road will automatically have an air quality benefit.

Phil Perszyk said he was very upset when the university had five very old, high emitting buses. However, three of those buses have now been destroyed, leaving just two old buses. He said getting rid of those buses entirely will improve air quality.

Jordan said the university has replaced two buses, and the third will be replaced this summer. At that point, he said, the older buses are only backups and won't be used for

daily service.

John mentioned that he notices a lot of people seem to choose to ride the ASUM buses. Jordan said that ASUM brings most of the people to campus, and there's more of a split between ASUM and Mountain Line when people go home. He said that if both buses show up simultaneously, 90 percent of the riders will get on the ASUM bus. John said that if that's the case, then there's a chance that even ASUM's older buses are cleaner on a per passenger basis than Mountain Line buses that aren't as busy.

Sue Spanke asked Jordan what his preferred scenario is for the future of ASUM and Mountain Line.

Jordan said he cherishes ASUM's student board and he said we need to figure out a way to keep its culture and benefits.

The group continued to discuss the transit system, and the conversation included the benefits and challenges of electric or natural gas fleets and problems with congestion along bus routes.

9. Staff report

Sarah Coefield gave the staff report. She said she is starting the work on the second 10-year maintenance plan for carbon monoxide. One aspect of this second 10-year plan may be an effort to remove oxyfuels from the CO control strategies. Missoula is one of only 8 areas left in the country that still uses oxyfuels. The natural turnover of the fleet has resulted in considerably lower emissions of CO throughout the country.

The PM10 Redesignation Request and Limited Maintenance Plan is in its final stages and is nearly ready to be sent off to the DEQ for its final 30 day public comment period before being submitted to the EPA.

Sarah taught the public health section for RX410 again this year. RX410 is a smoke management class for major burners, and the public health section hones in on why smoke management is important. In other burning news, the annual minor burner postcards will be mailed this month. The postcards provide burners with their permit numbers and walk them through the renewal process. Also, the number of burn permits went down in 2014. This may be a natural reduction in the number of people burning, or it may be an enforcement issue, and folks are deciding to burn without a permit because they rarely get caught.

Ben Schmidt is continuing to work on industry-related tasks and the Seeley Lake air quality sign.

Finally, the Northside/Westside odor came back briefly in January. There is still no new information about its source.

10. Public comment

Gary Matson spoke to the group about the upcoming public comment period for the

Tongue River Railroad. He said he'd like to see the county take a longer view on coal transportation's impacts – look beyond just the impacts at rail crossings and consider its impacts on climate change.

Phil Perszyk asked Gary if he'd come to the next Council meeting and give a more formal presentation on the issue. Gary agreed to do so, and Sarah said she'd put him on the March agenda.

11. Select AQAC representative for next Air Board meeting update

Bert Chessin will attend the Board meeting.

12. Announcements, other business

Garon Smith said he has a lead on graduate students who may be good candidates for the Council's Student Associate position.

13. Adjourn