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MACo News  
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MONTH

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## MACo's COMMITTEE MEMBERS ATTEND NACo CONFERENCE

100% of Montana's NACo Steering Committee members attended the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington D.C.. In addition to their individual committee and subcommittee meetings, they attended general sessions featuring a variety of speakers and visited with Montana's Congressmen.

### MACo attendees

Carol Brooker, Sanders County  
NACo Board of Directors  
Labor and Employment Committee

Connie Eissinger, McCone County  
WIR Board of Directors  
Public Lands Committee

Kathy Bessette, Hill County  
Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

Anita Varone, Lewis & Clark County  
Community and Economic Development

John Prinkki, Carbon County  
Environment, Energy, and Land Use

Bill Kennedy, Yellowstone County  
Chair, Health Steering Committee

Gary Fjelstad, Rosebud County  
Justice and Public Safety Committee

Allan Underdal, Toole County  
Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs

Vernon Petersen, Fergus County  
Transportation Committee

Alan Thompson, Ravalli County  
Representing Montana Forest Counties  
Public Lands Committee

### GENERAL SESSION



(L-R) Connie Eissinger, Kathy Bessette, Carol Brooker, Vern Petersen, Allan Underdal

### VISITING MONTANA CONGRESSMEN Representative Dennis Rehberg



Senator Max Baucus



Senator Conrad Burns





## President Carol Writes

Our Montana news media is filled with reports and predictions of State budget revenue shortfall and the dire consequences to legislatively mandated programs. Great attention and coverage is given to State problems but we rarely hear anything as to the difficulties counties in Montana are experiencing.

I grew curious as to whether counties in other states are feeling the same pinch and problems. A study by the Carl Vance Institute of Government, in association with the National Association of Counties (NACo), reported that:

- » Nearly 72% of counties are facing revenue shortfalls.
- » 25% of counties plan to decrease public health services.
- » 56% of counties are facing reductions in state funding for state mandated programs.
- » 37% of counties facing state reductions will reduce services and 17% of counties will increase taxes.

(Eleven Montana counties responded to the survey requests).

Nationally, the demand for county-provided services rises while revenue to provide these services falls. These issues are nothing new to Montana counties. It is my opinion, that we are lacking media coverage of the dilemma and, consequently, the public's awareness of the impact the State is having on essential services to Montanans.

Is this lack of coverage a result of our unwillingness to complain or even whine a little when it hurts? Do we need a concerted information campaign on a statewide level or do we need to complain so that the local media understands our problem? I would like to hear any proposals that you might have to let our constituents know what is happening and how it will impact them.

I need your help and direction.

*Carol A. Brooke*

(related article on page 10, "NACo Information")

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

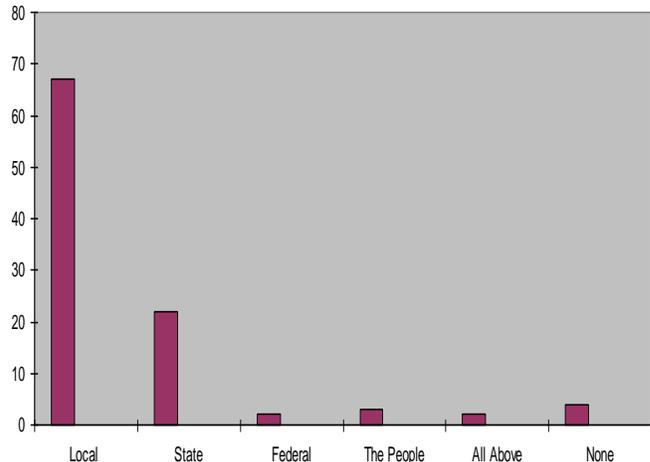
<b>April 6-12</b>	<b>County Government Week</b>
April 7-10	County Road Supervisors; Fairmont
<b>April 14</b>	<b>MACo Conference Committee</b> -Conf. Call 1:00
<b>April 16</b>	<b>MACo Executive Committee</b> ; Conf. Call 11:00
April 18-20	Legislative Break
April	GASB Training-Mgmt. Discussion & Analysis
April 15	Glasgow; Cotton wood Inn; 9:00 am
April 16	Glendive; Medical Center Conf. Rm.; 9:00 am
April 17	Billings; Holiday Inn Grand; 9:00 am
April 22	Missoula; Ruby's Inn; 9:00 am
April 23	Butte; Holiday Inn Express; 9:00 am
April 24	Great Falls; Ponderosa Inn; 9:00 am
April 29	90th Legislative Day
April 28-May 2	Magistrates Association; Lewistown

### UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>May 5</b>	<b>JPIA Trustee Renewal Meeting</b>
<b>May 7</b>	<b>MACo Districts 8, 9, 12; Townsend</b>
<b>May 13</b>	<b>MACo Districts 10 and 11; Polson</b>
May 12-21	Meetings with JPIA Agents
May 14-15	BOS Joint Workforce Council; Great Falls
<b>May 16</b>	<b>Urban Counties quarterly meeting;</b>
<b>May 19</b>	<b>MACo Districts 4 and 5; Havre</b>
<b>May 21</b>	<b>MACo Districts 1, 2 and 3; Miles City</b>
<b>May 22</b>	<b>MACo Districts 6 and 7; Roundup</b>
May 28-31	Western Interstate Region (WIR); Reno
June	GASB Training--Reports; Supplementary Info.
June 6	JPA / JPIA Defense Counsel Retreat
June 17-19	Governors' Forest Health Summit, Missoula
July 10-16	NACo Annual Conference; Milwaukee
July 16-18	County Attorneys Association; Fairmont
August 10-14	Clerks of District Courts Association; Forsyth
September 14-19	Clerks and Records Association; Forsyth
<b>September 21-24</b>	<b>MACo Annual Conference; Lewistown</b>

## ***For land use issues, which level of government should make decisions?***

(Question asked of Montana voters for "Voter Opinions on Growth and Open Space in Montana" by Gene Ulm and Rob Autry, March 2001)



**C.E.P Commissioners**  
**Elect Officers**



**L-R Back:** Mike Kahoe, Granite County  
Tim Clark, Butte-Silver Bow County  
Frank Nelson, Madison County  
Mike Murray, Lewis & Clark County  
Tom Hatch, Powell County  
**Front:** Mike McGinley, Beaverhead County  
Tom Lythgoe, Jefferson County  
**No Picture:** Jim Hohn, Broadwater County  
Bernie Lucas, Meagher County  
Dave Beatty, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County

The Concentrated Employment Program (CEP) Council of Commissioners elected Mike Kahoe, Administrative Assistant to the Granite County Commission, as Chair. Kahoe has served as Chair of the Council since its inception under the Workforce Investment Act and with the Job Training Partnership Act before that. Tim Clark, Butte-Silver Bow County, was re-elected as Vice-Chair.

The CEP Council represents Anaconda-Deer Lodge, Beaverhead, Broadwater, Butte-Silver Bow, Granite, Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Madison, Meagher, and Powell Counties. The Council appoints members to the CEP Workforce Investment Board (WIB). The CEP WIB establishes policy and allocates funding for workforce development programs in the CEP Area.

M.M.H.A  
HONORS  
MARKUSON



The Montana Mental Health Association (MMHA) named Carter County Commissioner Milton Markuson as the 2002 Outstanding Board Member. At the Legislative Banquet and Awards Dinner, Markuson was cited for his service on the Eastern Montana Community Mental Health Center since 1988. He is a past Chair and was instrumental in the construction of the building on Holy Rosary Campus. "Milt is a prime example of what a volunteer not-for-profit board member should be: he cares and works hard," said Frank Lane, Executive Director of the Center.

**COST-OF-LIVING  
ADJUSTMENT  
FOR  
COUNTY OFFICIALS  
SALARIES  
FY 2003-2004**

**1.6%**

**IN MEMORIAM**

**McCONE COUNTY  
CLERK & RECORDER  
LEANNE SWITZER**

Leanne Switzer, 38, was elected as McCone County Clerk & Recorder in 1990 and served three terms, having just been re-elected this last November for her fourth term. Leanne was a true professional and loved her co-workers and public career.

She married her best friend and neighbor, Jerry Switzer, in 1984. They have two children, Shayna Kay, 10 years old, and Ryan Andrew, 7 years old.

Funeral services were held on Monday, March 3.

**FORMER  
DAWSON COUNTY  
COMMISSIONER  
ALVIN MATHISON**

Alvin Mathison, 83, served in the European theater during World War II and returned to Glendive where he operated Al's Barber Shop until he retired. Following his retirement, Alvin served as Dawson County Commissioner from 1973-1984.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Bertha on October 12, 2002, and three brothers. His surviving family includes two sons, a daughter, two brothers, a sister and six grandchildren.

Funeral services were held March 8.

## FIRE PROTECTION MONEY AVAILABLE

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) announced that applications for the 2003 VFA/RFA Grant Program are now being accepted.

Applications for matching funds are due April 25, 2003. Single applications representing countywide fire organizations are required. Eligible applicants to be included are: fire departments, rural fire districts, fire service areas, volunteer fire companies or other fire service organizations in communities with populations of 10,000 or less.

**The maximum grant amount for a single applicant is \$20,000.** The single applications for a group of communities, i.e., countywide fire councils, countywide fire departments, etc., may have a total population of over 10,000. Applications can be submitted for projects such as department or district organization and planning, fire prevention, fire training and fire equipment. (Construction or improvement of fire stations, normal operational expenses and maintenance do not qualify for VFA/RFA funds.)

In 2002, this grant program received applications from every county in the state, requesting \$2.6 million dollars in funding. Sixty-nine grants were awarded, totaling the \$1.2 million received from the Forest Service and Interior agencies.

Details are available by contacting your local DNRC office, by calling (406) 542-4228, or on the Internet at:

[www.dnrc.state.mt.us/forestry/dnrcfiresite/volfire.htm](http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/forestry/dnrcfiresite/volfire.htm)

## United States Fire Administration Announces 2003 Grants

The United States Fire Administration has announced the *2003 Assistance to Firefighters Grants*. All fire departments, throughout the United States, are invited to apply.

E-Applications, as well as the 2003 Program Guide can be found at:

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov>.

In addition, a telephone help line has been opened at 866-274-0960.

This phone number is for fire service personnel needing answers to questions not found in the guidelines.

If you would prefer to email your questions, that address is:

[usfagrants@fema.gov](mailto:usfagrants@fema.gov).

**The grant application period ends at 5:00 pm on April 11, 2003.**

The Assistance for Firefighters Grant Program assists rural, urban and suburban fire departments throughout the United States. All current 2003 Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program information is posted on the USFA web site at

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov>

And a help line has been opened at:

1-866-274-0960.

*The USFA is a part of FEMA, and both are a part of the Department of Homeland Security.*

## INVESTMENTS: STATEMENT SHOCK

For these past two years, our investment statements show negative returns, courtesy of losses in the stock markets. In addition, media reports about recent political and financial uncertainty are nearly daily events. Times of uncertainty may not be the best for making major decisions, but if we allow the emotionalism of negative media reports to push away the logic and strategy of long-term planning, we can make poor investment decisions.

That said, now may be a good time to review your investment strategy. Set your asset allocation policy first, and then stay the course with an appropriate mix of stocks, bonds and cash for your risk tolerance and investment time horizon.

Investing is a long-term proposition. Don't let your emotions overpower your sense of reason. Do reassure yourself that you're on track with your investment strategies for asset allocation and diversification.

Nationwide Retirement Solutions provide online workshops where you can learn about the Morningstar ClearFuture investment guidance tools to help:

- 1) overcome "investment statement shock" as you learn about what's going on in the markets and
- 2) ensure your assets are invested according to your tolerance for risk and your plans.

It's quick. It's easy. And it's online right now at [www.NRSeducation.com](http://www.NRSeducation.com)

## REQUEST TO CONTINUE DROUGHT DESIGNATION

On January 24, 2003, Governor Judy Martz requested a Natural Disaster Determination (NDD) for all 56 counties in Montana as a continuation of the 2002 designation. **Counties do not need to send letters requesting inclusion in the determination.**

The NDD has nothing to do with the "Emergency Conservation Program" or the "CRP Hay-ing and Grazing" programs. These two are entirely separate from NDD and handled directly through the Farm Service Agency Service Centers.

Farm Service Agency will be working to identify the counties that qualify for the NDD. This will not occur until after crop yields have been determined. Notification of the NDD, after the crop yields are in, is perfect timing because the loan program only stays open for an eight- month window. Most producers do their operational financing between November and March of the coming year. The early determinations in the past have caused the loan program to sunset in November and some producers have missed the opportunity to access the assistance.

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### OOOPS! - - Recall that email!

Have you ever accidentally sent an e-mail you wish you could un-send? If you use Microsoft Outlook and the recipient also uses Outlook, you can recall the message—if you do the following before the person has opened it:

- \* Open the "Sent Items" folder
- \* Double click and open the message you want to recall
- \* On the "Actions" menu, click "Recall this message"
- \* To recall the message, highlight and click "Delete Unread Copies of the Message"

OR

To replace the message with another one, click "Delete Unread Copies and Replace with a New Message"

- \* To find out if you were successful, select "Tell Me if Recall Succeeds or Fails for Each Recipient"
- \* Click OK to receive results

## GRANTS AND LOANS MONTANA AERONAUTICS DIVISION FISCAL YEAR 2004

<u>AIRPORT</u>	<u>GRANT</u>	<u>LOAN</u>
Fallon County & Baker	\$6,000	
Sweet Grass & Big Timber		\$46,103
Powder River at Broadus	\$66,484	\$33,516
Teton County & Choteau	\$10,600	\$5,000
Glacier County & Cut Bank	\$7,500	
Lincoln County at Eureka	\$23,000	
Park County at Gardiner	\$5,166	
Valley County & Glasgow	\$40,000	\$40,000
Dawson County at Glendive	\$36,000	
Blaine County & Harlem	\$50,000	
Blaine County at Hogeland	\$10,000	
Garfield County at Jordan	\$60,000	\$60,000
Poplar & Fort Peck Reservation	\$11,862	\$11,862
Carbon County & Red Lodge	\$10,000	
Musselshell County & Roundup	\$17,424	\$17,424
Daniels County & Scobey	\$7,511	\$7,511
Richland Co.-Sidney Authority	\$47,960	\$63,210
St. Ignatius	\$7,000	
Stevensville	\$23,000	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$434,341</b>	<b>\$289,792</b>

### FY '03 Extensions

Ravalli County at Hamilton	\$75,000	\$108,874
Granite County at Philipsburg	\$50,000	\$60,000
Sanders County at Plains	\$7,968	
Richland Co.-Sidney Authority	\$46,000	\$15,500

### Pavement Preservation Program

<u>AIRPORT</u>	<u>GRANT</u>	<u>EXTENSION</u>
Billings	\$10,500	\$7,200
Gallatin County Authority	\$10,500	\$12,500
Bert Mooney Authority (Butte)	\$10,500	
Great Falls Authority	\$10,500	
Lewis & Clark County Authority	\$10,500	\$12,500
Flathead Municipal Authority	\$10,500	
Missoula County Authority	\$10,500	

**Totals**  
**\$73,500**

**The St. Ignatius Airport  
in Lake County  
has been named the  
"Airport of the Year"  
by  
Montana Aeronautics Division.**

## WORKSTATION SOLUTIONS

By  
Emelia McEwen, MACo Assistant Risk Manager



How can employees be sure they are implementing the right solution the first time?

“A simple, systematic process can be used to find the best solution for addressing stressors found in the office workstation,” said David Brodie, Director of Training and Education at Ergonomics Center of North Carolina. Brodie outlines two areas where employers can cut costs and obtain the correct safety solution the first time around.

### Adjust furniture and layout

Too many offices buy new expensive ergonomic equipment and furniture before assessing what they already have. One of the simplest solutions is to make adjustments to existing office furniture and workplace layout. Many individuals are using equipment that can fit them, but it seems uncomfortable due to poor adjustments or setup.

Assess the workplace by measuring chair and work surface heights.

- 1) Height of the chair should be such that the thighs are parallel to the floor while the feet are flat on the floor. There should be about three-fingers width between the end of the seat pan and the back of the worker's leg. Armrests should be adjusted to slightly below the height of the elbow while working. Lumbar support should be approximately at belt-loop

height.

- 2) The keyboard should be at a height so that the worker's elbows are bent at 90 degrees. The tray should be angled so that the worker's wrists are straight when hands are on the keyboard.

If adjusting the current setup does not provide a complete fix, the next option is to purchase equipment.

### Purchase needed items

The acquisition of furniture and equipment in the office environment is a very important decision from both an economic and ergonomic point of view. If the correct choice is made, then a valuable addition has been made to the office. Brodie offered the following tips for purchasing equipment:

- 1) **Reduce the options.**  
Even if only one supplier is used, there still may be a large number of options. A good rule of thumb to apply here is quality vs quantity.
- 2) **Try before you buy.**  
An equipment evaluation should assess adjustability, design, task and aesthetics. Whenever possible, evaluate a piece of furniture in the office setting before it is purchased. Regardless of how the best possible options are determined, the final decision on usability depends on the employee. Does the piece fit the person and/or the office space? Has the piece accommodated the needs of the

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE MOTEL ROOMS IN DEMAND MAKE RESERVATIONS NOW

MACo Annual Conference, scheduled for September 21-24 in Lewistown, is at the same time as pheasant hunting season. Motels are willing to set aside only a limited number of rooms in each complex for MACo guests.

However, if we make reservations early and the motels realize we need more rooms, they will open more rooms to accommodate MACo delegates.

Please make your reservations as soon as possible. Be sure to ask for rooms set aside for MACo. The motels which currently have MACo rooms set aside are:

**Yogo Inn** (conference center)  
538-8721 (refer to MACo Room  
Block / Group 657)  
State summer rate \$55 + tax

**Mountain View**  
538-3457 (Ilene)  
Continental breakfast  
Single \$32.25 Double \$42.65

**Super 8**  
538-3581 (Annette)  
State summer rate \$55 + tax

**B & B Motel**  
538-5496  
Single \$45 Double \$50

**Sunset Motel**  
538-8741 (Candy)  
Single \$34.32 Double \$43.68

**Trails End Motel**  
538-5468 (Julie)  
Single \$38 Double \$43

No MACo set-aside  
**Willow Tree Bed & Breakfast**  
538-8844 Double \$75

# COUNTY NEWS

## BLM RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCILS SEEK NOMINATIONS

Nominations for Category 3 (elected state, county or local government) should include a background information form (including Category) and letter of reference. The nominations are to be submitted to the appropriate BLM field manager by April 21. The three-year terms will begin September 21.

Western Montana: One opening

Rick Hotaling  
BLM Field Manager  
106 N. Parkmont  
Butte, MT 59701  
406-533-7600

Central Montana: One opening

Dave Mari  
BLM Field Manager  
Airport Road  
Lewistown, MT 59457  
406-538-7461

Eastern Montana: One full opening plus one opening for the remainder of a term (one year) due to resignation of a member

Dave McInay  
BLM Field Manager  
111 Garryowen Road  
Miles City, MT 59301  
406-233-2800

## EDUCATION

VALLEY COUNTY Commission is in the exploratory stage of organizing a community college using Fort Peck Community College as the parent organization, with a separate board for the new site. The college would be linked to MSU Northern or Rocky Mountain College

## INVESTMENTS

LINCOLN COUNTY moved more of its investments from the State Investment Pool (STIP) to a private investment group, hoping to better the rate of return.

## WEED CONTROL

BROADWATER COUNTY held a mail vote in March for weed control tax levy.

## TRUANCY ORDINANCE

ANACONDA-DEER LODGE COUNTY is considering a truancy ordinance to set a misdemeanor offense for parents whose children in grades one through eight routinely miss school.

## LAWSUITS

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY hopes to join in a lawsuit seeking to overturn an annexation by the City of Billings, in order to protect its interest in county sewer system which serves the annexed subdivision.

LINCOLN COUNTY had hoped the lawsuit against the Kootenai National Forest would be dropped after several public meetings. However, the Ecology Center and the Lands Council of Spokane plan to continue the suit, which threatens timber sales.

GALLATIN COUNTY is taking two steps to avoid an ACLU jail lawsuit. One step is to upgrade the current jail. The other step is to use a new federal grant to construct a low-security building to house non-violent criminals. At issue is source of funding for annual maintenance costs.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY filed suit against the Billing Gazette in response to **the newspaper's request for public records** for three people involved with the public defender position. The county asks a judge to determine right-to-privacy and which records can be released to the public.

ROOSEVELT COUNTY may join other Montana libraries in a small claims litigation to retrieve \$2,500 in subscription renewals paid in advance to a company which later filed bankruptcy.

## HEALTH CARE

RAVALLI COUNTY agreed to budget an annual amount for three years, as part of a federal grant application to open a community health clinic.

TETON COUNTY appointed six residents to review options for increasing revenue and residents at the County Nursing Home.

## RESIGNATION

BEAVERHEAD COUNTY Coroner Kenneth Brunkhorst resigned because the State ordered an autopsy for an infant, **overriding the work he had done.** "I can not in good conscience hold this office and execute orders within a system that so **violates the freedoms I hold sacred,**" he wrote, after explaining he had given the family the choice of the autopsy or not.

## BACKGROUND CHECKS

HILL COUNTY will begin doing background checks on applicants for positions that require working with money. Currently **the Sheriff's office is the only county office** which conducts background checks. The County does require drug tests for all potential employees.

## VOUNTEERS

DAWSON COUNTY recognized value of volunteers on county appointed boards—143 volunteers on the various boards, donating 2 hours a month, equated to 3,432 hours of volunteer labor on behalf of the county each year. If an average wage for public service were \$10 / hr., this would equate to \$34, 320 worth of donated time.

## FACILITIES

CASCADE COUNTY, faced with nearly \$1 million in repairs to the ice rink in Four Seasons Arena, received pleas from famed skaters who began careers there.

RICHLAND COUNTY explained that there was no tax increase to pay for the new building at the Fairgrounds because capital improvement funds were used.

BEAVERHEAD COUNTY is considering the purchase and relocation of a National Guard Armory when the Guard moves to a new building.

## PUBLIC RECORD PROTECTION

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY has removed **from the county's website any data** that could enable identity theft, such as social security numbers, signatures, owner information on real estate records, etc.

## MOSQUITO CONTROL AND WEST NILE VIRUS

While horse owners and birders may be at increased susceptibility to West Nile Virus (WNV), it is the human disease that will generate the most public alarm. In 2002, Illinois had 873 cases and 60 deaths; Michigan had 554 cases and 50 deaths; Ohio had 444 cases and 31 deaths; Louisiana had 330 cases and 24 deaths. Most human disease is a flu-like illness, but there are instances of encephalitis (brain inflammation), especially among the elderly, and deaths. We should anticipate diagnosis of human cases this spring and we can also expect demands on public officials to do something.

Public health can provide information about personal protection (i.e., use of clothing, insecticides and avoidance) and habitat control to prevent mosquito bites. A challenging pressure on local governmental entities will be requests for mosquito abatement. In jurisdictions with mosquito districts, this issue is easier to address. Lacking a mosquito district, local governments need to consider storm-water drainage, roadside habitats, private property owners who are non-compliant about habitat control, and possible referrals to private pest control operators.

The goal of the response should be to control the spread of the virus. Mosquitoes, including at least nine species identified in the Northwest, spread it. Birds are “definitive hosts.” This means that when a carrier mosquito bites a bird (the crow family seems most susceptible), the bird becomes infected. When a mosquito bites an infected bird, it takes in WNV-laden blood and can then spread the virus when it bites another bird or some mammals. We humans and horses are called “accidental” or “dead-end hosts.” That means that we don’t contribute to the life cycle of the virus. Carrier mosquitoes can infect humans and horses but the mosquitoes cannot pick up the virus from us.

Things to consider for a WNV response plan include: clarification of roles and responsibilities (this problem touches many agencies), surveillance, mosquito control (personal protection, habitat control), and public information.

## MONTANA TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIPS

Montana Transportation Partnerships is a coalition of transportation service providers, transportation associations, persons with disabilities, seniors, transportation-disadvantaged, and state human service agency representatives.

Montana Transportation Partnerships has been working toward statewide transportation systems since 1999. The mission of the Partnership is: ***To ensure Montanans, in their community of choice, have accessible, safe, affordable, and reliable transportation services through the development of coordinated systems.***

In Montana, transportation continues to be cited as a primary obstacle to independence. Current information gathered through public forums, surveys and needs assessments from case managers and family members consistently rate transportation as one of the top three barriers to independence and employment.

The Partnership has taken an active role in using and coordinating transportation resources on the local levels. As part of this process, grants have been received from five different national agencies to develop coordinated transportation systems using technology, technical assistance, planning, and advocacy resources.

### **Partnership Accomplishments**

- Provided funding to develop and disseminate a Coordination Toolkit, a step-by-step guide for local transit providers to begin coordinating current resources in their communities
- Recommended that Montana Department of Transportation include representation of persons with disabilities and seniors on transportation committees or councils
- Met with representatives from Florida, Oregon, and Virginia, who came to Montana to provide information and technical assistance on statewide coordination efforts
- Subcontracted a site for national demonstration of a voucher model for rural transportation to the Salish Kootenai 121 Project.
- Awarded grants to plan and support coordinated transportation models to be replicated statewide.

**NACo Public Lands Steering Committee  
Synopsis of Report  
by Connie Eissinger, McCone County**

Endangered Species Act Reform

Nancy Macan McNally, Executive Director of National Endangered Species Act Coalition, advised counties involved in land use planning not to use critical habitat language or plan for single species, but rather to plan for multiple species and a mosaic pattern of habitat management.

President's Healthy Forests Initiative

Mark Rey, Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, noted that: 1. An experimental effort has been made to treat ten of the most affected forest areas. 2. Permit authority must be granted to forests at the local level to permit fuels reduction contracts. The Administration plans to allow the Forest Service to use analyses of similar projects instead of developing analyses specific to each project and to allow streamlined environmental assessments. They hope to hear appeals only if the appealing entity has participated in the entire EIS process.

Department of Interior Initiatives

J. O. Ratliff, Assistant to Secretary for Land & Minerals Management, emphasized sustainable, working land which produces food, fibre and recreation for the nation. The Administration hopes to remove invasive species, to reduce hazardous fuels, to develop natural gas use and to provide access to resources on public lands.

American Lands Alliance, Forest Guardians and a biodiversity group in Idaho initiated litigation to raise livestock grazing fees because "ranchers encourage ecological damage to national forests." Ratliff advised using the postage-paid envelopes from these groups asking for donations to mail back 3-pound lead weights.

National Forest Counties Restoration Program

Michael Nimison, Otero County, New Mexico, said the program's objective is to develop a skeleton plan for each state to adapt for its own use. Counties must take the lead in restoration because land cannot wait for laws to be changed.

Steve Campbell, Arizona Cooperative Extension Service, commented that the catastrophic fires and insect infestations are nature's way of cleaning up hazards from overgrowth.

**NACo Transportation Committee  
Synopsis of Report  
by Vern Petersen, Fergus County**

I chaired the Highway-Mass Transit subcommittee meeting in the absence of the Chair. We heard an update from Glen Whitly on the TEA 21 renewal efforts. Glen has testified a couple of times, keeping emphasis on full funding, rural input in planning process, and continued funding for mass transit.

We had a lengthy discussion on a resolution to raise the user fee on fuel. We ended up recommending the resolution.

Saturday, when we met as the full Transportation Steering Committee, we heard a report from Jennifer Dorn, Administrator of the Federal Transit Authority. She talked almost entirely on funding. They want to put \$1.5 billion in new starts and \$145 million to mitigate handicap barriers to mass transit.

We also heard a very upbeat report from Amtrak's new hired gun—David Gunn, that is. He is getting Amtrak out of the freight business where they have lost millions of dollars. He says Amtrak as we know it is here to stay (with subsidies), but new routes are very doubtful.

We adopted the resolution in support of raising the federal fuel tax and the one to reauthorize Air 2. We tabled one that would have expanded the eligibility for CMAQ funds to other counties. The rationale was there isn't enough money now to get all communities into compliance and this would just divide the same pie more times.

If you're planning a trip overseas, Washington DC is a perfect place to practice being where you don't speak the language. Most taxi drivers are from Pakistan and don't speak English. So you won't know the fare or how much of Delaware and Virginia and Ohio you should see on your way to your hotel with the meter running! In some of the hotels, some of the desk clerks attempt to speak English with very little luck. None of the room service people speak English and in some restaurants you just point at the menu, the waiter takes the menu to the cook and points, and the cook sends back whatever he thinks it might be.

Then there's the deal with me and Mickey—but you don't wanna know.

## NACo INFORMATION

Some counties across the nation are already feeling real effects from state budget shortfalls and are anticipating drastic measures such as eliminating health insurance for county employees, introducing new taxes and laying off staff.

Marion County, Illinois, is a worst-case scenario. Facing a \$1.2 million budget deficit, the county became the first county in Illinois to end health insurance benefits for its 130 employees. Officials said rising insurance costs and rising payments for housing prisoners outside the county were the causes of the axed insurance benefits. County employees have also been laid off. The Law Enforcement budget will need about \$1 million more in the next budget year than it did four years ago. So, the County is considering a local sales tax on selected items such as restaurant food and clothing for a "public safety" tax.

Hennepin County, Minnesota, was hit hard by the downturns in the travel industry and is hoping county staffing levels will decrease by attrition. Their one economic bright spot for the county is a recent increase in employment training programs. However, with the layoffs from the travel industry, employment for laid-off county workers will be difficult.

In California, cuts in state funding to counties include the proposal to end paying counties for revenues lost by reduction of vehicle-license fees. Counties are considering layoffs, salary

cuts and longer waits for county services such as public assistance or public health. Some county officials are anticipating the early release of some prisoners, closing parks and libraries.

Meanwhile, other counties are working on economic development projects to restore decreased county funds in the future.

Pennsylvania may provide one of the best examples of successful use of enterprise zones. As a direct result of the Pennsylvania Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs), more than 10,000 jobs have been created since the program was introduced in 1999. It's a state and county program that offers tax incentives, often eliminating state and local taxes, for relocation of businesses to "poor" areas. "It's pretty gutsy – wiping out a huge chunk of the tax base for a while. It is a little bit of a balancing act – spending money to make money," said Douglas Hill, Executive Director, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

In Seneca County, New York, a sparsely populated region near Finger Lakes, their economic development efforts began in 1993. The Seneca County Industrial Development Agency (SCIDA) provides low-interest loans in combination with those offered by the towns and the County. Mark Sawyer, SCIDA Director, said, "Can you give everything away and pile that burden on other citizens and

residents in the county? No, our county board tries to balance sales, property and income taxes as one broad base."

Moorhead, a town in Clay County, Minnesota, has 31,000 residents who make up more than half of the county population. Clay County Commissioner Jon Evert explained, "Last year, we had an investigative committee to get aggressive with economic development. We're the only county on the western edge of Minnesota that had any growth at all in the '90s. Clay County is basically the "twin city" of Fargo, North Dakota, which is booming in many ways. We have not had to do any layoffs, but we certainly don't know what will happen this coming year."

Waupaca County, Wisconsin, has not only been layoff free, it's actually increased its number of jobs and seemingly has no worries about the potential of eliminated funding from the state legislature. "We have three communities, and an influx of small businesses that each have five, six, 10 people working at them," said Duane Brown, county board chairman. "There are some jobs here. They're not the highest paying, but you can find them." Brown went on to explain that much of what keeps the local economy vital is the heavy corridor of traffic that runs through the County with commuters headed to and from urban areas.

Selections from a two-part series  
by Paul Mackie  
NACo News, Volume 35, No. 3 and 4

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