



HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS ISSUE

Page 2

ASSISTANCE CENTER con't

Page 3

MACo COMMITTEES

Page 4

SALARIES / HEALTH INS.

Page 5

STATE TAX COLLECTIONS

Page 6

NEW FINANCE OFFICER

Page 7

COUNTY NEWS

Page 8

LOSS CONTROL TRAINING

Page 9

TO COUNT OR BE COUNTED

Page 10

NACO REPORTS

MACo News
Montana Association of Counties
2715 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59602
Phone (406) 457-7207
Fax (406) 442-5238
Website: <http://maco.cog.mt.us>

ARTICLES ARE WELCOMED
BEFORE THE 20TH OF EACH
MONTH

Email: macopb@maco.cog.mt.us
Subscriptions are \$25 per year.

Mobil Technical Assistance Center Stillwater County



On the national level, Homeland Security is a current topic, but Stillwater County has been concerned about Disaster and Emergency Services for many years. As county planners discussed issues of safety and health for their citizens, they broadened the scope to be better prepared to address any situation that might arise. They felt a mobile unit would be best-equipped to handle data processing, communications and to conduct county business. Jim Larson, GIS / Weed Specialist, was a major player in designing the unit.

Communication Center

Data transfer is available through a satellite system that allows for transmission to all locations in the state and nation. The system works well with e-mail and provides rapid use of information available from state and federal departments. With this system the County can send and receive information that is important for record keeping as well as obtaining instructions. They no longer use a cumbersome telephone modem connection.

Local Government (portable courthouse)

The facility has up to 6 work stations. Two are connected to the server and four stations for lap top computers can be accessed by wireless connection. This provides the capability of continuing the financial, bookkeeping, payroll, recording and other functions of county government. The Black Mountain Software is loaded on the server so staff can log in and access backup tapes to continue their functions of government. All the programs are the same as those in the courthouse. The only functions of government that aren't available are those relying on the state access and law enforcement / justice.

Mapping Capability

The GPS system is tied in with the programs loaded on the server. This provides the capability of reproducing maps of an area involved in fire, flood, bio-terrorism or other disaster. A recent trial run of the unit resulted in the production of more than 600 maps that were used in the mock situation. There are several printers

and a plotter that allows for any size map to be reproduced. The maps are dependent on the GPS work that is done by agencies, so coordination is the key element.

Information Presentation

A projector in the unit will transmit computer-generated data to a screen above the conference table in the former living room of the 40-foot trailer. This allows everyone to view the same information. In addition, several layers of maps from a determined area can be displayed and printed out for field convenience. Examples of layers are the base map, roads, bridges, culverts, car passes, signs, cadastral maps, hazardous material sites, utility lines, building and home locations, etc. There is also a 3-D program for more visual presentation. The conference room can accommodate eight people, seated.

Disaster Situations

Visualize the possibility of an outbreak of a deadly disease in livestock. Veterinarians will be able to set up a laboratory that will process samples and provide data transfer to the state veterinarian. Additionally, should Medial Doctors have a need for setting up a portable laboratory for a human outbreak, this can be done as well. The unit has refrigerator, freezer, heat, hot water, space for special tables, air conditioning and wiring for any situation. The Mobil Technical Assistance Center is equipped with a generator so it is readily available for use anytime.

Summary

This is an answer to Homeland Security in a small rural county in Montana. Stillwater County feels possibilities for expansion and improvements are endless. They are pleased with this arrangement as it is a step above Incident Command vehicles and serves as an important resource for the designers, planners, analyzers, and specialized service providers who may need to respond to a disaster or emergency.

Thank you to Commissioner Chuck Egan,
Stillwater County,
for submitting this article.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

December 2	MACo Board and Tax/Finance Committee
December 2-4	MACo Board Retreat; Butte
December 4-5	County Attorneys Association, Billings
December 5	District Court Council; Justice Building
December 10	Zoning and Land Use Law Class; Helena
December 11-12	Revenue & Transportation Interim Committee
December 12	BOS Council of Commissioners; MACo; 1:00
December 12	JPIA Policy / Underwriting Advisory Group
December 25	Christmas Day Holiday

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 1	New Years Day Holiday
January 12-14	MACo Risk Management Conference
January 14-15	Weed Association; Billings
February 16	Presidents Day Holiday
January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday
February 9-13	MACo Midwinter Conference; Billings
February 27-March 2	NACo Legislative Conference, DC
April 8-9	JPIA Renewals Meeting
April 13-15	Road Supervisors Convention; Bozeman
April 26-30	Magistrates Convention; Butte
April 28-30	School Superintendents Convention; Livingston

HOLI DAY GREETINGS

FROM MACO STAFF



Front Row L-R: Greg Jackson, JPIA Insurance Marketing
Harold Blattie, Assistant Director
Gordon Morris, Executive Director
Jack Holstrom, Personnel Services
Ray Barnicoat, JPA Risk Manager

Back Row L-R: Oline Barta, Administrative Assistant
Emelia McEwen, JPA Assistant Risk Manager
Carla Smith, Finance Officer
Karen Houston, Meeting Planner
Fran Monro, JPA / JPIA Administrative Assistant
Marie McAlear, Publications

MACo COMMITTEES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	Carol Brooker, Sanders County
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT	Bill Kennedy, Yellowstone County
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT	Doug Kaercher, Hill County
FISCAL OFFICER	Bill Nyby, Sheridan County
PAST PRESIDENT	Gary Fjelstad, Rosebud County
URBAN REPRESENTATIVE	Jean Curtiss, Missoula, County

AGRICULTURE

KATHY BESSETTE, Chair, Hill Co.
DAVE REINHARDT, Valley County
MAUREEN DAVEY, Stillwater Co.
DAVE SCHULZ, Madison County
HERB TOWNSEND, Meagher Co.
KEN EVANS, Chouteau County
ROBERT GOFFENA, Musselshell
JIM SPARKS, Weed Association
HAROLD BLATTIE, MACo

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ANITA VARONE, Chair, Lewis-Clark
JAMES O'HARA, Chouteau County
CYNTHIA JOHNSON, Pondera Co.
ELAINE MANN, Broadwater County
MIKE MCGINLEY, Beaverhead Co.
BETTY LUND, Ravalli County
JOANN HUFFSMITH, Granite Co.
MACK COLE, Treasure County
GARY MACDONALD, Roosevelt
GORDON MORRIS, MACo

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

BILL KENNEDY, Chair, Yellowstone
DON RIEGER, Fallon County
DON STEPLER, Richland County
TOM BENNETT, Wheatland County
JEAN CURTISS, Missoula County
MILT MARKUSON, Carter County
DOUG KAERCHER, Hill County
JOAN KRAUSE, Golden Valley Co.
CLIFFORD BARE, Stillwater County
BETTY HAGFELDT, Daniels Co.
GORDON MORRIS, MACo

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

MARY SEXTON, Chair, Teton Co.
MARK REHBEIN, Richland County
HARVEY WORRALL, Chouteau Co.
JIM RENO, Yellowstone County
RUSS TEMPEL, Liberty County
FERRIS TOAVS, Roosevelt County

CORAL CUMMINGS, Lincoln County
ART PEMBROKE, Lewis-Clark Co. IT
NORM CALVERT, Flathead County IT
JIM DOLEZAL, Missoula County IT
ROSS CAVAZOS, Yellowstone Co. IT
JEFF BRANDT, State ISD
TONY HERBERT, State ISD
HAROLD BLATTIE, MACo

JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

RODDY ROST, Chair, Fallon County
GARY FJELSTAD, Rosebud County
CLIFF BROPHY, Stillwater County
JIM DECKERT, Dawson County
JOHN KONZEN, Lincoln County
SAM HARRIS, Pondera County
GARTH HAUGLAND, Beaverhead
PAUL BEAUSOLEIL, Ana.-Deer Lodge
BRYAN ADOLPH, Musselshell County
KEN RONISH, Fergus County
JOHN PRETTY ON TOP, Big Horn Co.
GREG CHILCOTT, Ravalli County
ED TINSLEY, Lewis & Clark County
GORDON MORRIS, MACo

LAND USE PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT

HOWARD GIPE, Chair, Flathead Co.
PADDY TRUSLER, Lake County
JOHN PRINKKI, Chair, Carbon County
SHERRY CARGILL, Jefferson County
CHUCK EGAN, Stillwater County
EARL MARTIN, Granite County
BILL MURDOCK, Gallatin County
BILL CAREY, Missoula County
TED COFFMAN, Madison County
JIM DURGAN, Park County
DEB RANUM, Fallon County
JED FISHER, Weed Association
HAROLD BLATTIE, MACo

PUBLIC LANDS

CONNIE EISSINGER, Chair
ELAINE ALLESTAD, Sweet Grass
JUDY STANG, Mineral County
CARL SEILSTAD, Fergus County
ED DIEMERT, Liberty County
ALAN THOMPSON, Ravalli County
FRANK NELSON, Madison County
TROY BLUNT, Phillips County
DONNA SEVALSTAD, Beaverhead
MIKE MURRAY, Lewis & Clark Co.
BETTY AYE, Powder River County
SCOTT BOCKNESS, Weed Assn.
HAROLD BLATTIE, MACo

RESOLUTIONS

MIKE MURRAY, Chair, Lewis-Clark
JENNIFER S. MITCHELL, Gallatin
CAROL KIENENBERGER, Phillips
ALBERT BROWN, Carbon County
ART KLEINJAN, Blaine County
LANCE OLSON, Cascade County
JANET KELLY, Custer County
GORDON MORRIS, MACo
HAROLD BLATTIE, MACo

TAXATION, FINANCE & BUDGET

BILL NYBY, Chair, Sheridan County
DAN WATSON, Rosebud County
ALLAN UNDERDAL, Toole County
LEE IVERSON, Petroleum County
BILL ICENOGGLE, Glacier County
RITA WINDOM, Lincoln County
TOM NELSON, Wibaux County
SANDRA BOARDMAN, Blaine Co.
GAIL PATTON, Sanders County
GORDON MORRIS, MACo
HAROLD BLATTIE, MACo

TRANSPORTATION

VERN PETERSEN, Chair, Fergus
JAMIE DOGETT, Meagher Co.
HENRY JOHNSON, Richland Co.
HAROLD LAWS, Sanders County
JOHN OSTLUND, Yellowstone Co.
JOAN STAHL, Rosebud County
RICHARD DUNBAR, Phillips Co.
SAM GIANFRANCISCO, LTAP

2003-2004 SALARY INCREASES for ELECTED OFFICIALS

COUNTY	SALARIES (COLA 1.6%)	COUNTY	SALARIES (COLA 1.6%)
ANACONDA-DEERLODGE	3%	MADISON	4%
BEAVERHEAD	3.96%	McCONE	1.6%
BIG HORN	10.28%	MEAGHER	1.6%
BLAINE	3.85%	MINERAL	1.6%
BROADWATER	1.6%	MISSOULA	3% + 1% longevity
BUTTE-SILVER BOW	3%	MUSSELSHELL	1.6%
CARBON	2%	PARK	2.2%
CARTER	3.2%	PETROLEUM	0
CASCADE	.1%	PHILLIPS	1.9%
CHOUTEAU	2.8%	PONDERA	3%
CUSTER	1.6%	POWDER RIVER	0
DANIELS	2.5%	POWELL	2%
DAWSON	5.1%	PRAIRIE	1.6%
FALLON	4.3%	RAVALLI	2%
FERGUS	1.6%	RICHLAND	4.1%
FLATHEAD	4.8%	ROOSEVELT	1.465%
GALLATIN	2%	ROSEBUD	2.5%
GARFIELD	1.6%	SANDERS	1.6%
GLACIER	1.6%	SHERIDAN	1.6%
GOLDEN VALLEY	0	STILLWATER	1.6% + 1% longevity
GRANITE	1.6%	SWEET GRASS	1.6%
HILL	1.6%	TETON	5%
JEFFERSON	1% + 1% longevity	TOOLE	3%
JUDITH BASIN	2% + longevity	TREASURE	2.6%
LAKE	3%	VALLEY	7%
LEWIS & CLARK	5%	WHEATLAND	2%
LIBERTY	4.4%	WIBAUX	1.6%
LINCOLN	1.6%	YELLOWSTONE	1% + 1% longevity

STATE COLLECTION of CENTRALLY ASSESSED PROPERTY TAXES

By L. Harold Blattie

The Interim Education and Local Government Committee met Thursday, October 30, 2003 in Helena. At the meeting we learned that a committee member (whose county was significantly impacted by the PP&L tax protest) does not plan to bring the issue of state collection of taxes on centrally assessed property taxes to the Committee, but we understand that he does intend to pursue legislation that will help mitigate the effects of such taxes paid under protest.

While there are no proposals to review at this time, I would like to examine some aspects of a potential proposal. In doing this, I have made some assumptions that may, or may not, be accurate.

An owner of centrally assessed property would receive a single tax bill from the State, rather than a separate tax bill from each county. The tax bill would impose a flat number of mills across the State, irrespective of the mills being assessed in any local jurisdiction. This would eliminate a disparate number of mills being levied from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The amount of the tax by the State would be based on the total statewide taxes paid in a base year. Replacement dollars for local jurisdictions would be distributed through the Entitlement Share or a similar reimbursement program.

The primary benefit for local governments is removal of the uncertainty and risk with taxpayer appeals of taxable value and/or paying taxes under pro-

test. However, the State would need to distribute funds that they may, or may not, receive. This change would de-couple the reimbursement to each county from the taxes actually paid, leaving the risk of appeals and protests with the State.

For some centrally assessed properties, the value is currently decreasing due to depreciation and/or reduced revenue generation by the facility being taxed. This reduces the taxable value of those properties, which, absent increased mills being levied, causes a reduction in revenue. If the money went into the Entitlement Share, it could become part of the base and be subject to the annual growth rate, as is the rest of the Entitlement Share money. This would provide for annual growth in revenue for counties.

It is difficult to assume that the legislature would agree to a completely decoupled reimbursement. If the taxes collected went down by ten percent in a given year and the reimbursement grew by 2 percent, the State would come up short 12%. I doubt that this would be acceptable to the State. Further, there could be potential problems with conflicts between counties and the State over tax liens and which entity's lien would be superior.

In addition, if a new, major project were built and were centrally assessed (ie. a pipeline or electrical transmission line), the local area would have to mitigate the impacts such as roads and law enforcement with

no additional revenue being generated to address those impacts. The State would be the sole beneficiary of the increased tax base unless some mechanism were built in to make adjustments to any reimbursement mechanism for new construction.

Finally, because the tax base would be less, local revenue would be lost because of inflation and the number of the mills that float due to changes (additions and deletions) in property being taxed. The tax base for permissive levies would be lost because the reimbursement would not be part of the overall tax base for a county. This would impact the countywide education levies, as well as all locally imposed levies. Also lost would be that portion of the tax base for any future growth in the permissive health insurance levies.

All in all it would appear that this proposal, while perhaps providing some benefits such as reduced exposure to appeals in taxable value and protested taxes, would be detrimental to local government unless many safeguards were built into the legislation. Tax money tied up due to protests has caused many counties, municipalities, special districts and school districts some very difficult times and that some change to rectify this situation is warranted. The question is how best to accomplish what is needed without compromising a local jurisdiction's ability to fund its needs.

**Introducing
MACo Finance Officer
Patricia Foster**



MACo welcomes Patti Foster as the new MACo Finance Officer. She began her duties on December 1.

Patti brings a wide variety of accounting knowledge, leadership and communication skills to MACo. For the past three years she has owned and managed her own CPA firm, serving over 180 clients. Before starting her own business, she acted as CPA controller for a property management business, worked for a large CPA firm, and served on the State Tax Appeal Board.

Her formal education includes a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting from Carroll College and certification as a public accountant.

**D.E.S. ADMINISTRATOR
JIM GREENE
RETIRES**



Jim Greene, DES Administrator, announced his retirement effective at the end of December.

Jim began working as DES Administrator at the end of 1993. He had transferred from the then Department of State Lands where he was the Fire Program Manager for Central Montana. He had been with the Department for 22 years.

Jim, and his wife, Jeanne, plan to stay in Helena. Jim will remain active in emergency management with projects at Texas A&M, FEMA and the National Emergency Management Association.

He has always appreciated his association with MACo and hopes to maintain the many friendships he developed over the years.

IN MEMORIAM

KATHLEEN ALLEY, former Dawson County Commissioner, passed away at her home following a battle with ovarian cancer. She was 51. Kathy served on the County Commission from 1996 to 2002. During her term she had an instrumental role in securing funding for a new senior citizens center. She was a tireless volunteer for many local boards, groups and activities. Kathy is survived by her husband, Ken, two children, Jessica and Jeremy, her mother, a sister and a brother.

JERRY ALLEN, former Ravalli County Commissioner, died at his home from cancer. He was three days from his 64th birthday. Jerry joined the County Road Department in the early 1970's. He served as county commissioner from 1986 to 1998. He was the only Ravalli County Commissioner in 30 years to serve two consecutive terms. Jerry was fiscally very conservative and served on state-wide groups related to finance. He is survived by his wife, Wilma, three children and his sister.

COUNTY NEWS

NEW OFFICIALS

FERGUS COUNTY has a new Sheriff. Tom Killham assumed the responsibilities following Ronald Rowton's resignation.

CUSTER COUNTY appointed Garry Bunke to serve as County Attorney until he runs for the remainder of the term vacated by Coleen Magera.

POWDER RIVER COUNTY Sanitarian resigned due to limited time to comply with the Food and Consumer Safety Bureau's requirement for two fiscal year inspections per establishment. He recommended that **Carter, Fallon and Powder River Counties** share a full-time sanitarian.

FALLON COUNTY abandoned ground work for a gas well because they had no mineral rights for drilling. They offered to help the Town of Baker pursue municipal development of a gas well.

BUTTE-SILVER BOW COUNTY approved a policy to guide future development of private bridges on the Big Hole River and Silver Bow Creek. The policy won broad support from recreation, conservation, agriculture and land development groups. The policy requires that all future bridges be necessary to support existing agricultural operations. The proposed bridge can also have a subdivision tie-in, but bridges proposed solely to accommodate residential development will be denied. All future bridges must be free-standing, with no structural supports in the water channel and must be located where the banks have been stable for at least 50 years. Property owners will assume full liability for their bridges and submit long-term management plans.

BROADWATER COUNTY is supporting the second annual charity ball to be held in the courthouse in March to raise money for local medical services.

CHOUTEAU COUNTY issued a statement to land owners in an effort to avoid losing a portion of the county's gas tax funds from improper placement of "No Hunting Signs" on county right-of-way. "Anyone who posts "No Hunting" or "No Trespassing" signs of any kind on county right-of-way loses one mile of Gas Tax funds for each sign posted." Such signs are to be posted approximately three feet inside the property line to avoid loss of funding.

GALLATIN COUNTY has prepared writs for 19 delinquent tax payers. This is part of an effort to track down roughly 600 delinquent taxpayers and collect more than \$550,000 in overdue taxes. After an initial notice that the taxes were overdue, the Sheriff's Office sent out letters warning that the writs were pending.

ROSEBUD COUNTY is proposing changes in the Sheriff's Office responsiveness to the Town of Colstrip. The city pays \$410,000 annually for county law enforcement and estimates another \$100,000 to run a city police department, but have been unhappy with the county services.

MADISON COUNTY was approached by a local hospital administrator about the possibility of creating a public health district between **Beaverhead, Jefferson and Madison Counties**. The district would allow the three counties to share administrative duties for public health.

DAWSON COUNTY Road Department has begun the process to establish a new unit with American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

JEFFERSON COUNTY formed an advisory group of fifteen county residents, county employees and elected officials to help determine the best voted mill levy options. The range of options go from a "no proposed mill levy" to a mill levy total that would fully fund all county programs and services prior to the recent budget and personnel cuts.

FERGUS COUNTY passed an ordinance, "Preservation of Fergus County's Livestock Heritage," which may be in contradiction of the Hunter's Initiative I-143, passed by Montana voters in 2000. The ordinance is being interpreted as allowing for-fee slaughter on game farms because livestock owners have a fundamental right to acquire, possess and dispose of their private property, as afforded in the State Constitution.

HILL COUNTY Sheriff's Office employees have begun mediation to resolve issues of longevity, shift differential pay and cell phone use.

MACo has issued a Request-for-Proposal to provide self-funded electronic government as an Association service to the 56 member counties. The Association is seeking a suite of web-based software solutions for local governments, to enable on-line licensing, permitting, code enforcement, utility billing, real estate tax collections as well as various fees. Interested vendors have until 5:00 pm, December 31, 2003, to submit proposals. The RFP can be found on the MACo website.

SAFETY RAY SEZ

Ray Barnicoat
MACo Risk Manager



COMING SOON

The annual MACo Loss Control Conference program is in the final planning stage. You should have received information in November. You might have noticed some changes to the traditional program.

This year, MACo Risk Management has partnered with the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) and the Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officers Association (MSPOA). Each of the three groups will be doing training on topics relative to their professions.

The conference will be held in Lewistown at the Yogo Inn in order to balance the travel distances for all. A block of rooms has been reserved at State rate. **Attendees must have their rooms reserved before December 27, 2003.**

The conference will begin on Monday, January 12, 2004. At 1:00 pm, the sheriffs will have a four-hour training session on providing information

to the public. This is in response to the articles on this subject that were published in newspapers throughout the state in October.

Breakout sessions will begin Tuesday morning. There will be two tracks—one for LTAP and one for MSPOA from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. The general sessions will include all participants and will be from 3:15 to 5:00 pm and again on Wednesday from 8:00 am to noon, when the conference will conclude.

I strongly recommend that all sheriffs attend this conference because the training topics are of great importance to controlling liability risks. All law enforcement sessions will be POST certified and sheriffs attending will receive 12 credit hours.

I also highly recommend that road supervisors, commissioners and safety directors attend the conference, as there will be new information presented. All participants will be able to go home with usable information.

WATER RESERVOIR LEVELS IN THE WEST

ARIZONA	28% of capacity	38% is normal
COLORADO	46% of capacity	61% is normal
IDAHO	44%	66%
MONTANA	65%	81%
NEVADA	21%	53%
NEW MEXICO	18%	53%
OREGON	18%	43%
UTAH	22%	67%
WASHINGTON	19%	43%
WYOMING	24%	56%

US Natural Resources Conservation Service; October 1, 2003

Attorney General OPINION

Volume 50 No. 3

Question: Is a county water district subject to the State of Montana Single Audit Act whether or not it has accepted local, state or federal funds?

Held: A county water district, as a defined local government entity, is subject to the requirements of the State of Montana Single Audit Act, whether or not it has accepted local, state or federal funds during the year.

Requested by:
Scott Darkenwald, Director
Department of Administration

FIRE-RELATED TAX RELIEF

A property owner whose home or outbuildings were partially or totally destroyed by wildfire may be eligible for property tax relief. The tax relief is prorated based on the number of days in the tax year that the property was unusable. Form AB 25 is to be completed by December 31 for tax relief for 2003 and submitted to Montana Department of Revenue.

A forest owner whose standing timber has been destroyed by wildfire could receive a 50% reduction in assessed value for 20 years beginning with the 2004 tax year. The forestland must have been classified as commercial forestland prior to the loss. Form AB-26 is to be completed by the first Monday in June or within 30 days of receipt of the 2004 property tax assessment.

RURAL AMERICA BY THE NUMBERS To Count or To Be Counted

**By Dan McKenzie
Kentucky Rural Community
Assistance Program
Summer 2003 "Rural Matters"
(a quarterly publication of Rural
Community Assistance Program)**

Following the end of every decade and its ensuing census, prodigies set to work redefining things we thought we understood. Recently "rural community" has apparently fallen into that abyss of mysteries begging for meaning. It seems shortsighted to package the differences, which give us definition and substance, and have them reduced to discreet terms and bell curves. Certainly there is value in profiling rural America for comparisons, but it may be of equal importance to remember the contributions those communities make to the whole.

Kentucky Highway 9 is a gray ribbon of asphalt lacing its way from the confluence of the Big Sandy and Ohio Rivers in northeastern Kentucky and steaming over the rolling countryside to eventually bond with Interstate 75 south of Cincinnati. The topography along the route is dotted with small communities intermittently scattered among the valleys. Midway on the route, between Ashland and Alexandria, the town of Maysville announces its presence with a sign, serving notice to travelers that Miss America once made her home in one of the clean

and freshly painted houses adorning the river.

As the highway meanders on its northwesterly course and Maysville has become lost some miles back in the rearview mirror, the casual traveler could become mesmerized by the serenity on display. One could easily fail to notice the left turn, identified only as State Road 10, near the sign proclaiming Germantown, population 213. State Road 10 could give texture to one's sense of how "The Road Not Taken" might have looked had Frost chosen to paint. To dismiss the turn would be to forfeit an opportunity to observe and measure the character and sturdiness that knitted the country's bones.

Entrance to the town is marked with a "Patrolled by Radar" sign that is humorous at best and dishonest in fact, giving hint to Saturday night rowdies to take their business elsewhere. Rounding the big right-handed curve allows both the nearside and distant end of Germantown's main thoroughfare to come into view, along with another sign. This one, located directly in front of the "county" building, announces the line of demarcation for counties Bracken and Mason. To share one post would have been a feat of epic cooperation rarely witnessed in Kentucky counties.

The building, a tumbling red brick structure of early 20th century vintage and the former home of the Masonic Lodge, does little to attract one's interest. For that matter, there are no symptoms suggesting local government's role is remotely superior or haughty. This is ap-

propriate for Germantown, because local government strides the pavement in work boots with determination and purpose. Perhaps the building serves to remind us that citizenship is less about show and more about participation.

In the center of town is an abandoned cemetery marking the resting places of former residents, some of whom were born when buffalo grazed the valleys. Respect for those long departed and entombed in the town's center is evidenced by the meticulous upkeep of the grounds. Moreover, respect for those presently living may be observed by the frugal and watchful way the community is managed. On a typical weekend afternoon, it would not be uncommon to find one of the county commissioners, trudging along behind a lawnmower cutting the cemetery grass. Beads of sweat and the contribution of a few weekend hours are not the usual perks associated with elected office, but that's the way it's done in Germantown.

As we seek to define rural America by assigning shape and proportion, we may be remiss if we neglect to carry our examination beyond the veneer of numerical delineation and statistical analysis. The sense of belonging that reverberates in rural communities all across our country is the essence of what we, as a nation, are about. Putting some numbers together in a census tract and counting for something are not the same things. It's when you take your turn behind the lawnmower that you may have just added up to something.



NACo INFORMATION



Human Resources Management for Rural Counties

One Source, an alliance of several companies that provide a wide range of human resource services, has been selected as NACo's Financial Services (FSC) private sector partner for small and rural counties.

Managing human resources presents an enormous challenge for many small and rural counties. Few have the luxury of dedicated staff to handle the day-to-day issues of payroll, benefits management, testing and training. Without adequate access to in-house legal and risk management services, these counties can be more vulnerable to lawsuits.

The FSC conducted an extensive survey of counties with a population under 50,000 and found significant concern about this problem and very limited resources to address it. As a result, NACo identified needed services such as:

- development of personnel and policy manuals
- codification of job descriptions
- diversity and workplace training
- salary and benefit comparisons and best practices
- pay plan consultation
- incident management training, which includes both preventative training and training to manage a violent incident after the fact
- health and welfare benefits for employees
- risk management services
- group insurance plans
- payroll services

- testing for prospective hires and promotional candidates in key employment areas, including public safety, and
- assistance with HIPAA compliance.

One Source's business alliances provide a wide variety of HR services at an affordable price.

- **CPS:** A nonprofit public agency (Joint Powers Authority) that offers low cost human resource services to public and nonprofit agencies.
- **Hays Companies:** Provides group health insurance, employee voluntary insurance, public official coverage and other risk management and loss control services.
- **Ceridian:** Processes payroll for more than 20,000 entities (many of which are local government agencies) with less than 100 employees.
- **Employee Relations Network:** Provides pre-employment background checks.
- **CPI:** A national benefits communication and enrollment firm utilizing Web-based solutions to educate, inform and enroll employees in insurance programs.
- **Clayton Group Services:** An occupational health and safety provider.

NACo FSC and One Source are currently finalizing an agreement and are actively seeking pilot counties for the program.

Acts of Caring Awards for volunteer programs

NACo will again recognize volunteer programs through the Acts of Caring Awards, a national program honoring community-based, county government initiatives. The awards will be presented during National County Government Week, April 18 – 25 in a ceremony in DC.

Up to 33 programs will be recognized as outstanding Acts of Caring. Based on county size, as many as three programs will be recognized in each of 11 categories: Arts & Culture; Civic Education & Public Information; Criminal Justice; Elderly Services; Emergency Management; Environment; Health Services; Libraries; Parks & Recreation; Programs for Children & Youth and Social Services. Three special awards also will be given:

- 1) The Legacy Award for Excellence and Innovation
- 2) The Youth Literacy Mentoring Award
- 3) The Youth Service Award.

Awards may be presented in each of three population categories to ensure that urban and rural areas all receive the recognition they deserve.

Any county government that is a member of NACo with an active program that meets the contest criteria is eligible to participate. The deadline for entries is Friday, January 16. Entries should be sent to NACo at 440 First St., NW, Washington, DC 20001. An award application is available at www.naco.org (just

PLEASE SUPPORT MACo SUPPORTERS

MORRISON - MAIERLE
ENGINEERS • SCIENTISTS • SURVEYORS • PLANNERS
 Providing resources in partnership with clients
 to achieve their goals
 Billings • Bozeman • Helena • Kalispell • Great Falls • Missoula • Phoenix

MACo Associate Member
 Phone: 406-442-3050
 Fax: 406-442-7862
 Web page: www.m-m.net

MORRISON MAIERLE, INC.
 An Employee-Owned Company


ROSCOE STEEL & CULVERT
 The **Most Reliable** Source of Products
 Required for County Road Projects

406 / 656-2253
 2847 Hesper Road
 Billings, MT 59102

406 / 542-0345
 5405 Momont Road
 Missoula, MT 59802



Gordon E. Hoven
 Montana Public Finance
 406 443-4958



Securities products and services are offered through U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray Inc.,
 member SIPC and NYSE, Inc., a subsidiary of U.S. Bancorp. 500-0634

MACo JPIA
 Property and Casualty Insurance for Public Entities
Personnel Services

Jack Holstrom
 Attorney at Law

1 - 800- 471- 6304
macops@maco.cog.mt.us



Nationwide Retirement Solutions
 a Nationwide Financial company

The National Association of Counties (NACo), in partnership with Nationwide Retirement Solutions (NRS) and state associations of counties, provides county employees with a Section 457 Deferred Compensation Program.

Since its inception in 1980, NACo's Deferred Compensation Program has grown to become the largest supplemental retirement income program available to county employees. NACo's 457 Deferred Compensation Program assets exceed \$6.0 billion.

We're Better than the Competition

- **RANKS #1 IN FIXED OPTIONS** by an independent consultant firm
- **REPRESENTS OVER 380,000** county employees and retirees
- **USES STRINGENT SELECTION AND DESELECTION CRITERIA** to determine the best investment options to offer employees
- **RECEIVES ENDORSEMENTS** of 42 State Associations of Counties
- **OFFERS EDUCATION RESOURCES THROUGH Morningstar** – experts in planning advice, investment-related education, and guidance solutions



Board Of Directors

President: Carol Brooker
 Commissioner, Sanders County
 1st Vice President: Bill Kennedy
 Commissioner, Yellowstone County
 2nd Vice President: Doug Kaercher
 Commissioner, Hill County
 Fiscal Officer: Bill Nyby
 Commissioner, Sheridan County
 Urban Representative: Jean Curtiss
 Commissioner, Missoula County
 Past President: Gary Fjelstad
 Commissioner, Rosebud County

District Chairs

1. Richard Dunbar, Phillips County
2. Mark Rehbein, Richland County
3. Joan Stahl, Rosebud County
4. Art Kleinjan, Blaine County
5. Arnold Gettel, Teton County
6. Carl Seilstad, Fergus County
7. John Prinkki, Carbon County
8. Elaine Mann, BroadwaterCounty
9. Bernie Lucas, Meagher County
10. Paddy Trusler, Lake County
11. Alan Thompson, Ravalli County
12. Thomas Hatch, Powell County

Associate Board Members

Leo Gallagher, Lewis & Clark County Attorney
 Paulette DeHart, Lewis & Clark Co. Clerk/Recorder
 Marilyn Hollister, Rosebud Co. Clerk / District Court
Joseph Christiaens, Pondera Co. Coroner's Office
 Gary Olsen, Broadwater County Justice of Peace
 Karla Christensen, Garfield County
 Superintendent of Schools
 John Strandell, Cascade County Sheriff
 Carol Bean, Custer County Treasurer

Staff

C. Gordon Morris.....Executive Director
 L. Harold Blattie.....Assistant Director
 Carla Smith.....Financial Officer
 Oline BartaAdministrative Assistant
 Marie McAlearPublications Officer
 Karen HoustonMeeting Planner
 Ray Barnicoat.....Risk Manager
 Emelia McEwen.....Assistant Risk Manager
 Greg JacksonJPIA Marketing Director
 Jack Holstrom.....Personnel Services
 Fran Monro.....JPA/JPIA Admin. Assistant

Affiliate Members

alternative service concepts (asc), Helena
 Browning Ferris Industries of Montana (BFI)
 Employee Benefits Mgmt. Services (EBMS)
 Entranco, Inc., Helena
 GeoComm, Inc., Missoula
 Life Care Services, Missoula
 Montana Association of County Information
 Technology Administrators (MACITA)
 Montana Association of County Road
 Supervisors (MACRS)
 Montana Contractors Association, Helena
 MDU Resources Group, Inc., Helena
 Morrison-Maierle, Inc., Helena
 MSU Extension Service, Bozeman
 Norman Grosfield, Helena
 NorthWestern Energy, Helena
 Roscoe Steel & Culvert , Billings & Missoula
 Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc., Bozeman
 Stahly Engineering, Helena and Bozeman
 Tractor & Equipment Company, Williston ND
 Tractor & Equipment Company, Great Falls
 Tractor & Equipment Company, Billings