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NACo PURCHASING PROGRAM FOR COUNTIES MACo Signs On

Government Purchasing Alliance (GPA) Vendor Contracts are now available to all Montana counties, following the recent signing of a two-year agreement between MACo and NACo. The MACo agreement is for November 1, 2003 through December 31, 2005.

The GPA offers vendor contracts competitively bid through lead public agencies to other government agencies nationwide. The vendors currently under contract may be viewed through the link on MACo's website to www.uscommunities.org.

Purchasing contracts are for office supplies, office machines and furniture, technology products, electrical and communication supplies, janitorial supplies, tools and materials, carpeting and flooring and park / playground equipment.

The original contracts with the vendors were negotiated through Los Angeles County, CA; Fairfax County, VA; Allegheny County, PA; Maricopa County AZ; Miami-Dade County, FL; and Mecklenberg County, NC. Two public school districts also arranged contracts for school supplies and equipment.

NEWSLETTER GOING ELECTRONIC Please send your email address

During the recent MACo Board Retreat (See synopsis of minutes on pages 4-6), the Board agreed to cut \$10,000 from the current MACo budget. One of the cost-cutting measures is to automate the MACo newsletter in order to save the expense of printing and mailing.

Beginning in April, the MACo Newsletter, "MACo NEWS", will no longer be mailed in hard copy. Instead, a notice and link to the newsletter will be emailed to readers.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS BE SUBMITTED TO MACo. Current email addressees are being contacted to verify that the address is correct for sending the newsletter.

The newsletter will be sent in a format which will require the Adobe Reader program. This is a free program to download and install on any computer. Go to <http://ardownload.adobe.com/pub/adobe/reader/win/>

FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GORDON MORRIS

MACo—A STORY OF SUCCESS LOOKING BACK AND GOING FORWARD

It occurs to me that there are only a handful of County Commissioners who have been involved in county government longer than I have (Barbara Evans, Missoula County; Bill Tande, Daniels County; David Miller, Wheatland County; Art Kleinjan, Blaine County). So, I believe a walk down memory lane would be useful.

When the Association was organized in 1908, there was no central office or staff. In 1972, Dean Zinnecker became the first Executive Director and had a staff of four with a budget of just under \$200,000. Mike Stevens replaced Zinnecker in 1979 and served until 1983, when I was hired. NOTE: In the period from 1979-1983, the urban counties, with the exception of Missoula, withdrew from the Association and formed the separate Urban County Coalition. It took about four years, with the help of the Association officers, to bring all of the urban counties back to MACo in 1987.

In 1983, the expenditure budget was \$232,000 dollars. The staff consisted of an Office Manager, Assistant Director, Administrative Assistant and a grant-funded research position. Following the implementation of the workers' compensation program in 1986, the Trustees hired a Risk Manager in 1987. The property and casualty program started in 1987 and the Trustees hired a marketing director in 1991. In 1995, in response to the number of personnel claims, they added the Personnel Services Administrator. With the continued growth of both programs a Risk Manager Assistant was added in 1998.

Regarding MACo administration, the budget has grown to \$594,000. There is only one more staff person in 2003 than there was in 1983. I think this is a good track record and demonstrates sound financial practices. The dues structure was implemented in 1983 and has generated approximately the same amount of revenue each year (\$212,000) for the Association. A major portion of our revenue comes from costing back services to the insurance pools.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| January 1 | New Years Day Holiday |
| January 8 | Law and Justice Interim Committee |
| January 9 | Local Government Interim Sub Committee |
| January 12-14 | MACo Risk Management Conference |
| January 13 | EQC Oversight Interim Committee |
| January 14-15 | Weed Association; Billings |
| January 19 | Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday |
| January 26 | Opening day to file for office |

UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| February 9-13 | MACo Midwinter Conference; Billings |
| February 13 | Revenue & Transportation Interim Committee |
| February 16 | Presidents Day Holiday |
| February 27-March 2 | NACo Legislative Conference, DC |
| March 23-24 | MACo Mental Health Summit; Helena |
| March 25 | Last day to file for office |
| 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 |

When I look back over the past twenty years, I must emphasize that county government has changed. However, the issues, while more complex, remain the same. The consistent issues over the 90+ years of Association business are roads and bridges, district court costs and welfare. I personally feel that MACo accomplishments in "the changing nature of county government" are: • overcoming the divisive urban-rural split, • the workers' compensation program, • the property and casualty program, • the state assumption of welfare and • the state assumption of district courts. Each of these demonstrates the effective leadership of the Officers and membership in the management of the Association's affairs.

As I see it, unfinished business includes three things in particular: • meaningful tax reform, • a state administered public defender system and • a health insurance county pool with effective cost containment.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that MACo has attained significant statewide credibility and respect. As in the life of any association, membership strength and unity is always critical and I believe that both are strong MACo characteristics. I continually hear that the opportunities to get together are anticipated positively and serve to build the networking that all groups need to survive.

MACo MIDWINTER MEETING Schedule Outline

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

10:00 am — 5:00 pm WORKSHOP
“Building County Musclepower”

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Elected Officials Conference

8:30 am Public Access - Records / Meetings
10:15 Taxable Per Diem and Mileage
11:15 HIPAA
1:00 pm Help America Vote Act
2:00 GIS Funding Proposal

OR

8:30 am — 5:00 pm WORKSHOP
“Building Effective Working Relationships”

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

DES Annual Governor’s Conference

8:30 am FEMA Region 8 Report
9:00 Yellowstone Lake Geologic Update
10:30 Bugs, Bovines & Borders
11:30 Emergency Management Overview
Noon Governor Judy Martz
1:30 pm Rocky Mountain Laboratory
2:00 Cyber-security
3:00 Fires 2003: Local Government Issues
4:00 Columbia Space Shuttle Disaster
5:00 Meeting: Fort Peck Lake Counties
6:00 MACo Board of Directors Dinner

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

DES Continued

8:00 am — Noon Response to Bombings
1:00 — 5:00 pm Grant Process

OR

MACo Midwinter Meeting

7:30 am Meeting: Reservation Counties
8:30 Mental Health Issues
10:30 Public Health / Medicaid Re-design
1:00 pm Strategic National Stockpile
2:00 Public Health Emergencies
3:00 West Nile Virus
4:30 Meetings: Urban Counties
Hard Rock Mining Counties
Oil, Gas and Coal Counties
Forest Counties

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Midwinter Meeting Continued

8:30 am MACo Dues Increase
MACo Investments
9:30 District Court Video Project
10:15 E-Government
Noon Adjournment

The full MACo Midwinter Agenda and registration forms were emailed to you on Friday, December 12.

Building County Musclepower in Challenging and Frustrating Times

I encourage commissioners and other elected officials to attend this workshop at the MACo Mid-Winter conference in Billings. I had the opportunity to attend one of Mr. Neu’s workshops through the Advanced Leadership Training Series at the NACo convention in New Orleans in 2002. He is an excellent presenter and really gives you food for thought.

The most important concept I brought home from the workshop is this – We (cities, counties, school boards, etc) all have the same constituents but we all have our own **system** to serve them. Mr. Neu helps us look at things in a different way, focus on issues and ways to provide services—not **who** provides them, coordinate our efforts, and go to the legislature with a united voice. “These are the services the people of our state need and this is how we believe those services should be delivered,” we can say.

I strongly recommend his workshop to all of you. It is worth coming early for this.

Jean Curtiss

Missoula County Commissioner

COME SEE STILLWATER COUNTY’S MOBILE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER ON DISPLAY AT MIDWINTER





**MACo BOARD OF DIRECTORS
and
MACo TAXATION, FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE
SYNOPSIS OF MINUTES—DECEMBER 2, 2003**



First Vice President Bill Kennedy, presiding, asked the members for comments as a follow-up to the September Board meeting.

Budget Committee members' comments are as follows:

- Bill Icenogge stated that the dues increase was essential, but the alternative to cut revenues should also be explored.
- Allan Underdal stated that, if member counties are satisfied with MACo services, then they need to be prepared to provide additional revenue. As far as cutting expenditures, cuts cannot be identified.
- Lee Iverson stated that, if counties need the services, they have to be prepared to pay for them.

The District Chairs then were asked to speak to the issues.

- Dave Schulz, Vice Chair for District 12, reported that Chairman Hatch and District 9 Chair, Bernie Lucas, jointly noted that, while counties are in general struggling with their own budgets, the dues still need to be increased. The only comment that they heard from the District members was that district meetings could be reduced to achieve a cost savings.

- Bill Nyby, former chair of District 1 and now MACo Fiscal Officer, reported that he would rather see an incremental increase after fully exploring cuts in the budget. He is committed to work on the issue.



- Mark Rehbein, District 2 Chair, reported that there should be consideration of cutting back on district meetings. He additionally noted that there was a lack of positive input on the dues increase.

- Carl Seilstad, District 6 Chair, commented that Judith Basin County Commissioners were opposed to a dues increase, period. He noted that it would be helpful if everyone knew when the dues were last increased and

what the services were that dues provided to counties in general. This might justify the conclusion that an increase was necessary particularly when set against the overall increase in costs associated with business in general.

- Art Kleinjan, District 4 Chair, reported that everything should be looked at as far as expenditures were concerned and any increase should be incremental.

- Arnie Gettel, District 5 Chair, noted that the counties in his District indicated they could stand a little increase associated with utility and salary increases. This was put in terms of giving MACo the tools to do the job of serving counties.

- Joan Stahl, District 3 Chair, reported that the counties in her District feel that cuts should be explored in such areas as staff travel, newsletters, health insurance costs, jobs consolidations, etc. She inquired why the Association needed a reserve and at what level it was intended to reach.

- Elaine Mann, District 8 Chair, reported that her counties recognized the need for an increase, but they too are struggling. They need and use the services more so because the counties are small.

- Donna Sevalstad, representing the Forest Counties Coalition, reported that the Board needed to make a good faith effort to reduce expenditures in conjunction with any requested dues increase.

- Rita Windom, Budget Committee member, felt that the issue is a double-edged sword: reserves are too low and costs keep going up. She felt another issue was potential terminations, which would compound the reserve problem. She recommended guarded cuts in combination with an increase in dues.

- Jean Curtiss, Urban Representative, suggested that the Board look at committee meetings for travel and per diem costs. She noted that if all the committees met in Helena, the travel costs alone would be an estimated \$16,000. We might save money with conference calling in lieu of actual meetings.

- Anita Varone, Economic Development Chair, noted dues should have increased all along incrementally. Since this has not been the case, a dues increase is both needed and timely and should be tied to a formula, which would be fair in terms of the various counties and would keep pace with inflation. She said, "Counties can't afford not to support an increase in dues."



- Mike Murray, JPA/JPIA Trustee, supported Anita's comments and added that everyone needs to understand the relationship between MACo and the Trusts. The Trusts are being assessed for services that the MACo staff provides, in addition to the services of the Trust staff. He noted that the Board needs to maintain a quality staff and salaries are directly tied to staff retention.
- Gary Fjelstad, Past President, noted that we can cut the number of district meetings, newsletters and maybe a few other things, but questioned whether they are really significant.
- Doug Kaercher, 2nd Vice President, noted that just one service to Hill County could be demonstrated to save Hill County enough to more than pay the dues as proposed.

Chairman Kennedy, asked the members to identify the positive things that MACo provides. The list is as follows:

- a legislative presence and representation, • a united front, • elected official training, • responses to various local concerns, • legal services through the Personnel Services program and the General Counsel to the Association, • information and recommendations to help all counties to be on the same page, • national representation through NACO committees, • general ability to maintain a broad public relations presence for counties, • interrelationships on behalf of counties with state agencies, • insurance programs, • resources and direction through it's officers and members, • communications to commission members and other elected officials and • MACo levels the playing field and puts a face on county government.

Board member Leo Gallagher, representing the County Attorney's Association, stated he was at the meeting for a reason that applied to everyone— "networking." He added that MACo provides a positive service by way of the historical track record and overall continuity of services to local government.

Chairman Kennedy then asked the members to list the negatives in regard to MACo. The list is:

- the cost of MACo in general was viewed as a negative, • the resolutions process, • being blindsided by counties during legislative sessions, • too many meetings, • too much money spent on the newsletter.

Jean Curtiss, Urban County Representative, noted that the effort for the dues increase really needs to be carefully marketed for the benefit of the Association members. She noted that staff, from a marketability perspective, should pursue expenditure saving, particularly by way of electronic services. She provided staff with a preliminary marketing statement for review and finalization.

2nd Vice President Kaercher's amended **motion** was before the Board:

"The Board of Directors recommends to the body of the whole, during the business session at the midwinter conference, the adoption of the 25% dues increase as presented to the membership in September at the annual conference, as a one-time assessment for fiscal year 2005, with the Taxation, Finance and Budget Committee charged to develop a long-term dues proposal to be presented to the membership in September 2004. In conjunction with the proposal to increase the dues, the Taxation, Finance and Budget Committee, working with the Executive Director and staff, is directed to reduce the fiscal year 04 budget by \$10,000 by June 30th, 2004".



The discussion of the motion focused on the possible areas to reduce the budget. Ideas that emerged consisted of: • district meetings without staff, • electronic newsletter, • alternate year schedule for the Board retreat, • cut staff travel, and • cut printing and postage. Paddy Trusler noted that this action put the burden back on the Association itself and we realize that cuts will be hard to find without damaging member services and benefits. Dan Watson predicted there would be a dues increase because it is inevitable. **The motion as amended passed with one vote in opposition.**

Recognizing the need to successfully market (lobby) the members, a statement should be prepared and distributed, which includes talking points as to why the increase is necessary. Board member Curtiss moved and Board member Mann seconded. With no discussion the motion was adopted unanimously.

MACo DUES INCREASE OF NECESSITY

Talking Points Requested by the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors, after careful consideration of all sides of the issue, has come the realization that a dues adjustment must be made, as was proposed in September. The Board considered and passed the following motion:

“The Board of Directors recommends to the body of the whole, during the business session at the midwinter conference, the adoption of the 25% dues increase as presented to the membership in September at the annual conference, as a one-time assessment for fiscal year 2005, with the Taxation, Finance and Budget Committee charged to develop a long-term dues proposal to be presented to the membership in September 2004. In conjunction with the proposal to increase the dues, the Taxation, Finance and Budget Committee, working with the Executive Director and staff, is directed to reduce the fiscal year 04 budget by \$10,000 by June 30th, 2004 ”.

Several important points need to be made associated with the above-cited Board action. Foremost is the fact that the current dues structure based upon taxable value was instituted in 1983. In 1995 a special “one time” assessment was passed by the membership specifically to provide for reserve levels at 20% of expenditures. In the current budget, FY’04, the reserve is just under 10%. If there had been an annual cost of living adjustment in the dues, revenue would have grown from \$206,000 in 1983 to \$277,452. (This assumes an increase of 1.5% per year.) On the other hand, expenditures of \$262,000 in 1983 have been keeping pace with inflation and expenditures in 2003 are budgeted at \$594,935.

This is not a permanent proposal. This needs to be understood. The motion, as well as the minutes from the September conference, clearly require a long-term proposal be developed by the Taxation, Finance and Budget Committee and brought back to the membership in September of 2004.

A second point is the fact that the Board and the Budget Committee reviewed the budget in detail, in response to the many suggestions that cuts should be made rather than adopting an increase in dues. Programs and services were studied for possible reductions. The Board realized that cuts in member expenses and NACO expenses would result in a significant and unacceptable loss of leadership and influence both in and outside of the state. We need to continue our legislative presence and representation both within MACo and NACO.

A third point is that the Board did recommend a cut in this year’s budget of \$10,000. The Budget Committee, working with MACo staff, has moved on this issue and the following cuts will be made:

- Staff travel will be reduced by \$2,000.
- Health insurance costs will be reduced by \$2,000.
- The MACo Calendar will be eliminated at a savings of \$1,200.
- “County Budgeting” and MACo Policy Statements will not be published, saving \$1,800.
- The monthly newsletter will go electronic in April 2004, saving \$2,500 in printing and postage for April - June. This, by itself, will reduce the FY’05 budget by an anticipated \$10,000.

With these considerations in mind, and understanding the finances of many counties, the Board requests membership endorsement of the motion during the February 2004 mid-winter meeting. The Board makes this recommendation based on the need to maintain a financially strong Association with the ability to respond to the needs of counties and the state.

COUNTY NEWS

NEW OFFICIALS

CASCADE COUNTY appointed Sheriff Kent Funyak to replace John Strandell who left the position for the MT Department of Justice. Sheriff Funyak is a 23 year member of the Sheriff's Department.

GALLATIN COUNTY appointed Jennifer Brandon as the new Clerk of District Court, replacing Lorraine Van Ausdol who retired. Van Ausdol served for 33 years.

BUDGETS / FINANCES

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY agreed to conduct an employee wage and classification study. One commissioner opposed because of concern that the county may not have funds to pay for higher salaries that may be recommended.

BLAINE, CASCADE, CHOUTEAU, GLACIER, HILL, JUDITH BASIN, LIBERTY, PHILLIPS, PONDERA, TETON and TOOLE COUNTIES, BLACKFEET, FORT BELKNAP and ROCKY BOY RESERVATIONS have been funded with a \$12 Million economic development grant. The coalition hopes that the grant will attract up to \$75 Million in other grants and funds.

VALLEY COUNTY protested the State policy which mandates purchases with Homeland Security Grants must be online through Fisher Equipment Catalog. Local bidders were not as expensive, and the county received permission to ignore the policy.

DAWSON COUNTY refinanced the 1996 bonds for their Law Enforcement Center and saved \$300,000 in the second half of the payments.

GALLATIN COUNTY is posting "Weekly lists of vendors paid" on its website.

BUILDINGS / FACILITIES

FLATHEAD COUNTY hopes to begin construction of a new county courthouse in the spring. Federal funding has been saved for the past ten years to pay for the 3-year construction process.

PETROLEUM COUNTY is renovating an 50-year abandoned grass airstrip built in the 1930's by Civilian Conservation Corps.

DAWSON COUNTY's recent sale of seven sections of land in Mikoshika State Park to MT Fish Wildlife and Parks is under reconsideration following a discrepancy in the selling price (\$140,000) and the FWP appraisal (\$327,478).

GALLATIN COUNTY has refused to accept city garbage at the county landfill, not because the city is not a member of the county refuse district, but because the type of waste could not be handled by the landfill.

FLATHEAD COUNTY has been named in a lawsuit opposing the decision to allow a shopping mall. A petition to put the mall proposal to a public vote is to be circulated by March 7.

NETWORKING

CUSTER and POWDER RIVER COUNTIES have a trade agreement for road maintenance on roads.

POWDER RIVER COUNTY is included in a group which is exploring a shared grant writer for both public entities and organizations.

RAVALLI and MISSOULA COUNTIES met with the Missoula mayor and economic development directors to begin a regional partnership.

GRANITE COUNTY sponsored two NASA workshops on biotechnology and its applications to forestry.

UNCLAIMED PROPERTY

The following county entities have unclaimed property, valued at more than \$50, listed with the Montana Department of Revenue. A claim may be filed at www.missingmoney.com or phone DOR (406-444-6900) to request a claim form.

Anaconda Community Hospital (3 entries)
Anaconda
Barrett Memorial Hospital
Beaverhead EMS
Billings School district #2
Blaine County DES
Browning Community Hospital
Cascade County
Cascade County Clerk & Recorder
Cascade County Treasurer (3 entries)
Cascade City County Health Department
Choteau High School
County Auditor-Controller (no county name)
Custer County Treasurer
Eastern Montana Health Coop, Miles City
Fairview Cemetery
Fallon Medical Complex
Fergus County Tax Collections
Fergus County Treasurer
Glasgow High School
Glendive Medical Center
Hinsdale High School FFA
Holy Rosary Health / Hospital, Miles City (3)
Ismay Volunteer Fire Department
Kalispell Regional Hospital (3)
Lodge Grass School
Madison County School District #2
Missoula County Court House
Missoula County Sheriff
Missoula County Treasurer
Missoula Parks and Recreation
Ovando Rural Fire District
Powder River County Law Library
Prairie County Treasurer
Roosevelt County FBP
Roy School District
Ruby Valley Hospital
Toole City- County Airport Commission
Toole County (2)
Toole County Health
Two Eagle River School
West Yellowstone High School
Whitefish North Valley Hospital

Is Consensus What We Need From County Commissioners?

Recently, a Montana newspaper published a well-reasoned editorial that took one county commissioner to task for refusing to vote with fellow commissioners on an ongoing controversial issue.

The editorial pointed to the commissioner as a chief cause of one of the county's ongoing problems. But most interestingly, the editorial also laid blame for a "rift between commissioners" squarely there. The editorial finished the lambasting with this gem: "It's abundantly clear that the county has a crisis on its hands. But resolution of that crisis will elude us until this commissioner joins colleagues in a consensus on how to deal with it."

To argue that one commissioner is solely responsible for a county commission's consensus problems is inappropriate; and to blame one, but spare the other two, fails to account for the litany of other issues on which a county commission works.

Commissioners make mistakes. But when one commissioner refuses to vote for something that costs taxpayer money and is firmly convinced it's not necessary, then we need to hear this.

This particular commissioner is not the only person involved in an issue who might be guilty of stubbornness, or the only member of a county commission who refuses to compromise on an issue. Hopefully, this won't be the last. Had the commissioner caved in, an incredible expense to the taxpayers would be evolving. For standing ground, the commissioner was cursed, criticized and continues to be viewed by many as an obstructionist - or worse.

Perhaps the commissioner has a thing or two to learn about compromise in politics and perhaps could stand to be less bull-headed about issues. But it seems inappropriate to suggest that one commissioner can single-handedly bring consensus to a body that disagrees on many issues. Whether a county commission can find consensus on any issue depends on much more than a single commissioner's ability to "play nice with the other kids."

Whatever the issue, such consensus requires an open attitude by the entire commission. The commissioners need to truly set aside politics and forget about being re-elected. It might also help if they could:

- ▶ Ignore the endless pressure from a litany of groups and organizations that constantly beat on the door for a piece of the tax pie;

- ▶ Refuse to entertain excessive lobbying by county department heads and administrators seeking a bigger and bigger share of the budget;

- ▶ Seek compromise based on educated opinions and a healthy dose of respect for the opinions of their fellow commissioners, and refrain from running knives into one another's backs because it's accepted (or expected) by those who are paying attention;

- ▶ Refuse to force one commissioner to become "odd man out" by failing to seek a fruitful dialog about every issue well before it comes up for a vote; and

- ▶ Be unafraid to make unpopular decisions.

Consensus by its very definition requires all parties to find middle ground without resorting to personal attacks and without enlisting others to chastise individual commissioners for their beliefs.

Even more importantly, we, as citizens, need to consider whether consensus should be the ultimate goal of government in the first place, and elect our leaders accordingly. Should our elected officials be asked to throw their convictions to the wind simply to reach a 3-0 vote?

We elect and compensate three commissioners so they can disagree and still get something done, do we not?

In cases where a unanimous decision is required by law (bond issues being one), isn't it preferable that our elected officials split the vote rather than rubber-stamping huge tax burdens that haven't been proven necessary?

There are too many rubber stamps in government as it is; the taxpayers are better served by a county commission that refuses to act as such.

Presented with permission from
Press Editorial
High Country Independent Press
August 21, 2003

**2004 STATE HOLIDAYS
(1-1-216 MCA)**

| | | |
|-----------|------|-----------------------------|
| JANUARY | 1 | New Year's Day |
| | 19 | Martin Luther King, Jr. Day |
| FEBRUARY | 16 | Presidents' Day |
| MAY | 31 | Memorial Day |
| JULY | 5 * | Independence Day |
| SEPTEMBER | 6 | Labor Day |
| OCTOBER | 11 | Columbus Day |
| NOVEMBER | 2 | General Election Day |
| | 11 | Veteran's Day |
| | 25 | Thanksgiving Day |
| DECEMBER | 24 * | Christmas Day |
| | 31 * | New Year's Day |

* If the holiday occurs on a weekend, the work day closest to the holiday is treated as the holiday for pay and leave purposes. In 2004, Independence Day is on Sunday, so the holiday is on Monday; Christmas is on Saturday, so the holiday is on Friday; New Years Day is on Saturday, so the holiday is on Friday.

**2004 MILEAGE
REIMBURSEMENT RATE**

2004 mileage rate for Montana local government is 37.5¢ per mile for the first 1,000 miles of travel. This rate is an increase from 36¢ last year. The 2004 rate is effect on January 1, 2004. The rate for mileage over 1,000 miles is three cents less (34.5¢) per mile. (2-18-503 MCA)

MACo VAN VANDALIZED!

Person or persons unknown have surreptitiously replaced that hallowed UM Grizzly license plate frame on the MACo van. No complaints have been filed and the current frame shall remain in place until a branch of the State University system becomes a national champion.



**JOB OPENING
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
FLATHEAD COUNTY**

This position directs, manages, supervises and administers various county functions, including financial and budgetary matters, at the direction of the County Commission.

The position requires knowledge of local government management, public administration, public budgeting and tax exempt financing. BA in finance, public administration or similar field is preferred, plus 5 years of progressively responsible experience in public/business administration and grant management with a minimum of three years of supervisory experience, or equivalent combination of education and experience.

Send letter of interest, resume, Flathead County employment application form, references and salary history to:

Flathead Job Service Workforce Center
427 First Avenue East
Kalispell, MT 59901

Salary: \$60,000+ DOE

Deadline: 01/26/04 EOE

More information: www.co.flathead.mt.us

BLAINE COUNTY RECOGNIZED

Blaine County Road Department and Supervisor Tom Fairbank were recently commended on their efficient and cooperative efforts during a Milk River bridge collapse on Highway 2, the major highway in Northern Montana. The collaborative effort also included County Sheriff Glenn Huestis and his Department, the Chinook Fire Department and Montana Department of Transportation.

Within a couple of hours the Road Department put 3 motor patrols on a county road and prepared it for the traffic from Highway 2, knowing the road would be used an indefinite amount of time. The Chinook Fire Department and Sheriff's Office provided traffic and safety control. "This responsiveness and willingness to work together with MDT turned what could have been major problems into a minor inconvenience to the traveling public," wrote Dave Hand, Have section of Montana Department of Transportation. Dave Galt, MDT Director wrote, "It is amazing to me that the Milk River Bridge reopened just 16 days after it was shut down."

“NO ENGINE BRAKES” SIGNS

By Steve Keller, DOT Traffic Unit

The new law, 61-9-321 MCA, became effective on October 1, 2003. Until this time, when a local government requested, the Department of Transportation (DOT) erected regulatory signs that prohibited the use of engine brakes. This required the local government to pass an ordinance prohibiting the use of engine brakes and then to request the sign to be installed. DOT would erect the signs along the state maintained routes, using maintenance personnel or by federal aid contract in DOT construction programs.

DOT is no longer installing the "NO ENGINE BRAKES" sign. Although no formal policy has been established, the guidelines are clearly defined. First, DOT can no longer install a regulatory sign prohibiting the use of engine brakes. Second, DOT is reviewing all proposed construction plans so that this sign will not be included in future construction projects. Third, the existing signs must be removed.

Before removing the existing signs, DOT maintenance and construction personnel will contact the local governments. DOT requests local governments to contact local City or County Attorney for an interpretation of the statute. There is no completion date for the removal of all of the existing signs. They will be removed as promptly as possible and as time permits.

SAFETY RAY SEZ

Ray Barnicoat, MACo Risk Manager



The annual MACo Loss Control Conference is ready. You will notice 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 group will be doing training on topics relative to their professions.

The conference will be held in Lewistown at the Yogo Inn and 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.

On Tuesday, breakout sessions will be in two tracks—one for LTAP and one for MSPOA until 3:00 pm. Then, the general session for all participants will go from 3:15 to 5:00 pm. Another general session will be 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 are POST certified and sheriffs attending will receive 12 credit hours. I also highly recommend that road supervisors, commissioners and safety directors attend, as there will be new information presented.

MONTANA FY 2004 FUEL TAX REVENUE

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Anaconda-Deer Lodge | \$40,291 |
| Beaverhead | \$140,940 |
| Big Horn | \$143,156 |
| Blaine | \$128,938 |
| Broadwater | \$54,373 |
| Butte-Silver Bow | \$40,631 |
| Carbon | \$86,069 |
| Carter | \$69,795 |
| Cascade | \$221,492 |
| Chouteau | \$144,108 |
| Custer | \$87,001 |
| Daniels | \$54,804 |
| Dawson | \$95,982 |
| Fallon | \$54,427 |
| Fergus | \$136,462 |
| Flathead | \$447,252 |
| Gallatin | \$263,807 |
| Garfield | \$92,095 |
| Glacier | \$114,322 |
| Golden Valley | \$36,325 |
| Granite | \$49,414 |
| Hill | \$143,517 |
| Jefferson | \$94,443 |
| Judith Basin | \$68,240 |
| Lake | \$181,005 |
| Lewis and Clark | \$258,252 |
| Liberty | \$59,351 |
| Lincoln | \$195,538 |
| Madison | \$106,689 |
| McCone | \$77,147 |
| Meagher | \$54,301 |
| Mineral | \$71,548 |
| Missoula | \$323,310 |
| Musselshell | \$55,694 |
| Park | \$107,546 |
| Petroleum | \$39,060 |
| Phillips | \$123,165 |
| Pondera | \$75,662 |
| Powder River | \$71,524 |
| Powell | \$73,054 |
| Prairie | \$46,132 |
| Ravalli | \$260,725 |
| Richland | \$97,935 |
| Roosevelt | \$109,020 |
| Rosebud | \$122,918 |
| Sanders | \$125,681 |
| Sheridan | \$82,818 |
| Stillwater | \$93,054 |
| Sweet Grass | \$50,632 |
| Teton | \$104,279 |
| Toole | \$74,928 |
| Treasure | \$23,626 |
| Valley | \$149,339 |
| Wheatland | \$38,768 |
| Wibaux | \$31,181 |
| Yellowstone | \$289,234 |

Public Assistance Bureau Downsizes to Meet Budget Reductions

By Karlene Grossberg, DPHHS Public Assistance Bureau Chief

A year ago, following the Governor's budget reductions and the Legislative Session's cuts, the Public Assistance Bureau developed a plan to reduce its spending without affecting services to clients. This process continues whenever there is an opportunity to consider whether expenditures are absolutely necessary or whether business can be conducted in a more cost effective manner.

The Public Assistance Bureau reduced operational costs and staffing of positions that were not direct service delivery positions, i.e. administrative and management staff, including staff in the central office. Volunteers were solicited for a reduction in force (RIF) or early retirement. In all, the Bureau lost the funding for eight full-time equivalent positions (FTE). However, vacancy savings from approximately 20 FTE were retained to keep the bureau's budget in the black for FY 2002 and FY2003. Many of those positions remain vacant today.

As expenditures stabilized, some vacant positions were moved from low caseload counties and re-hired in high caseload counties to equalize the workload of field staff. At the same time, some vacant positions were downgraded before they were filled, based on the caseload and workload. This process continues.

In addition, consolidation of county management continues. Nineteen county directors are being asked to supervise and manage larger county combinations. Most recently, three county director positions have been vacated (Lincoln, Richland and Rosebud Counties), and the supervisory responsibility has been reassigned to other directors. The new county combinations are as follows:

| <u>Director</u> | <u>County Combination</u> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Thorne Johnson | Sanders, Lincoln, Mineral |
| Cascade County (vacant) | Cascade and Chouteau |
| Tim Whitney | Hill, Liberty, Blaine, Phillips |
| Joan Brenner | Dawson, Richland, McCone, Prairie, Wibaux |
| Donna Orthman | Custer, North Rosebud (Forsyth), Treasure, Powder River, Carter, Fallon, Garfield |
| Jean Kukes | Big Horn, South Rosebud (Lame Deer) |
| Leni Loendorf, Acting | Roosevelt, Daniels, Sheridan, Valley |

No other combinations were changed. However, the Bureau opted to downsize from five regions to three regions when one regional field manager took an early retirement. His position will not be filled. The three regions consist of the following counties:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>Region I</u> | Lincoln, Flathead, Sanders, Lake, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, Granite, Powell, Lewis and Clark, Deer Lodge, Jefferson, Broadwater, Silver Bow, Beaverhead |
| <u>Region II</u> | Glacier, Pondera, Toole, Teton, Cascade, Chouteau, Liberty, Hill, Blaine, Phillips, Valley, Daniels, Sheridan, Roosevelt, McCone, Richland, Dawson, Prairie, Wibaux |
| <u>Region III</u> | Madison, Gallatin, Meagher, Park, Sweet Grass, Stillwater, Carbon, Wheatland, Judith Basin, Fergus, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Petroleum, Yellowstone, Big Horn, Garfield, Rosebud, Treasure, Custer, Fallon, Powder River, Carter |

Lastly, some county offices were downsized or closed. Rosebud County's Forsyth office and Glacier County's Cut Bank location were downsized as their main customer service locations are Lame Deer and Browning, respectively. Jefferson County's Boulder and Whitehall locations were closed as most clients use Helena and Butte as their main shopping and business centers. Outreach is available if the need arises. Most recently, the only staff in Granite County was promoted to a position in Butte-Silver Bow County. The caseload in Granite County will be handled by Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, with outreach services to Phillipsburg and Drummond.

Funding increases are not anticipated in the upcoming 2005 budget process, even though rent, utilities and operational costs continue to rise. The Bureau's goal is to maintain budget solvency while maintaining high quality services in the most cost effective manner. The Bureau appreciates the involvement of the county commissions in each of Montana's counties and looks forward to continued partnerships with them.

HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION

The Health Forests Restoration Act, signed in December, guides plans and actions to:

- Select projects on a collaborative basis involving local, tribal, state, Federal and non-governmental entities;
- Strengthen and improve public participation in developing high priority forest health projects by providing opportunities for earlier participation, thus accomplishing projects in a more timely fashion;
- Reduce the complexity of environmental analysis allowing federal land agencies to use the best science available to actively manage land under their protection;
- Provide a more effective appeals process based early public participation in project planning;
- Issues clear guidance for court action against forest health projects;
- Focus projects on Federal land that meet strict criteria for risk of wildfire damage to communities, water supply systems and the environment;
- Reduce dense undergrowth that fuels catastrophic fires through thinning and prescribed burns;
- Authorize the Program to protect, restore and enhance degraded forest ecosystems on private lands to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species;
- Encourage biomass energy production through grants and assistance to local communities creating market incentives for removal of otherwise valueless forest material; and
- Develop and accelerated program on certain Federal lands to combat insect infestations.

The new law was based on President's Healthy Forests Initiative, which began in August 2002. The Initiative focused on reducing the risk of catastrophic fire by thinning dense undergrowth and brush in priority locations that were chosen on a collaborative basis with selected Federals, state, tribal and local officials and communities. It provided for more timely responses to disease and insect infestations that threaten to devastate forests.

The Forest Service implemented at least 46 high priority thinning and restoration projects. The Bureau of Land Management is currently implementing more than 20 projects. Both agencies have also approved contracts to restore landscapes, reduce hazardous fuel loads and restore water quality and wildlife habitat.

The Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior have improved environmental assessment processes for priority forest health projects.

INTRODUCING ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA FLOODPLAIN MANAGERS

The Association of Montana Floodplain Managers (AMFM) represents the flood hazard specialists of local and state government, the research community, the insurance industry, and the fields of engineering, hydrologic forecasting, emergency response, water resources, and others.

AMFM began in 1999 as the supporting organization of professionals involved in floodplain management, flood hazard mitigation, flood preparedness, and flood warning and recovery. The mission to mitigate the losses, costs and human suffering caused by flooding and to promote wise use of the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains.

Goals are:

1. Reduce the loss of human life and property damage
2. Preserve the natural and cultural values of floodplains
3. Promote flood mitigation for the prevention of loss and the wise use of floodplains
4. Avoid actions that exacerbate flooding.

AMFM is committed to working with local, state, and federal agencies, the insurance and development industries, the Legislature, research and academia colleagues in floodplain management. AMFM invites all to join in working toward reduced overall flood losses and the wise use of lands.

To receive the biannual email newsletter or to join the Association, send a request to: floodsinmt@aol.com.

REGIONAL WATER SYSTEMS FUNDED

Dry Prairie Regional Water Authority:

This system consists of connecting to the existing Culbertson water treatment facility and laying 23-miles of pipe from the treatment facility to Medicine Lake (**Roosevelt and Sheridan Counties**). The contract has been awarded to Carstensen Construction of Minnesota.

"The plan now is to complete the horizontal boring required under the outlet of the Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge in the Autumn of 2004, as there is no construction activity allowed in the spring and summer due to waterfowl nesting patterns and other wildlife concerns," DNRC Regional Water Systems Coordinator, Rick Duncan said.

The funding package currently available from combined federal, state, and local funds totals approximately \$4.6 million for construction costs of the 23-mile portion of the Dry Prairie Project. A US House-Senate conference committee recently approved a \$7.5 million appropriation for the Fort Peck-Dry Prairie system for FY2004.

Rocky Boy's/North Central Montana Regional Water System:

This drinking water system will ensure that more than 18,000 residents of North Central Montana, will have access to high quality drinking water. The water will be provided to Rocky Boy's Reservation, communities, rural water districts, Hutterite colonies and other rural users of **Toole, Liberty, eastern Pondera, western Hill, northern Chouteau, and northeastern Teton Counties**. The initial draft of the Final Engineering Report (FER) was completed by HKM Engineering. The project sponsors hope the entire process will be completed and reviewed by the fall of 2005

The system includes 450 miles of transmission pipeline that will connect to existing water supply mains and distribution lines. The intake and water treatment facility will be near Tiber Dam in southwestern Liberty County. From the plant, a core transmission line will deliver water directly to the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation, with non-core transmission lines branching off the core main line to all other areas.

Dry Redwater Regional Water System:

This is projected to provide water service to approximately 5,000 residents of **McCone, Dawson, Garfield and Richland Counties**. The chronic lack of quality water in the area and the effects of the drought are the reasons for the proposed system. The 2003 Montana Legislature authorized a \$30,000 Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) Grant to fund the study. While McCone Conservation District is administering the grant, a local Steering Committee, made up of citizens, government officials and natural resource agencies, will oversee the planning and project.

Musselshell Regional Water System:

This plan is to develop a regional water system for Melstone, Musselshell, Roundup, Lavina, Broadview, Ryegate, Shawmut, Harlowton, Judith Gap, Garneill, Utica, Hobson and Moore. **Musselshell County** received \$375,000 in two separate grants from the State Coal Board to drill a test well and to complete a feasibility study. The contractor, Agri-Industries, is from North Dakota.

The drilling consists of two phases. A larger diameter borehole was drilled, cemented and encased to 840 feet. A much deeper boring is being drilled below the cemented portion. Estimated total depth of the test well will be nearly 2,300 feet into the Madison Formation. The Madison Formation is a geologically ancient limestone aquifer and is used as a primary source of water in parts of Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota.

Power - Teton County Water / Sewer District:

A \$400,000 Water Revolving Fund (WRF) Loan, administered by DNRC and DEQ, is funding phase one of a three phase project. The primary component of phase one is to construct a new water treatment building with two prefabricated conventional water treatment package plants. The package plants include both chemical and physical components to treat surface water. In addition to the facility, a 30,000 gallon clear well storage tank will be built.

According to District Manager Gene Walker, the current system processes about 50,000 gallons per day. Summer use was around 80,000 gallons per day. The new system is rated at 100,000 gallons per day

THE NEW MEDICARE PROVISIONS FOR MONTANA

Eric Ciliberti, White House Intergovernmental Affairs

- In **Spring 2004**, Montana residents will be eligible for Medicare-approved prescription drug discount cards for \$30/year, which will provide them with savings of between 10 and 25 percent off the price of most drugs.
- 28,213 beneficiaries with incomes of less than \$12,123 (\$16,362 for couples) who lack prescription drug coverage (including drug coverage under Medicaid) will get up to \$600 in annual assistance to help them afford their medicines, along with the discount card.
- In **2006**, all 142,725 Montana Medicare beneficiaries will be eligible to get prescription drug coverage through a Medicare-approved plan. In exchange for a monthly premium of about \$35, seniors who are now paying the full retail price for prescription drugs will be able to cut their drug costs roughly in half. In many cases, they will save more than 50% on what they pay for their prescription medicines.
- 39,686 Montana beneficiaries, who have limited savings and low incomes (generally below \$12,123 for individuals and \$16,232 for couples), will qualify for even more generous coverage. They will pay no premium for their prescription drug coverage, and they will be responsible for a nominal co-payment (no more than \$2 for generic drugs or \$5 for brand name drugs).
- 12,298 additional low-income beneficiaries in Montana with limited savings and incomes (below \$13,470 for individuals and \$18,180 for couples) will qualify for reduced premiums, lower deductibles and coinsurance, and no gaps in coverage.
- Rural hospitals will receive the same rate of Medicare reimbursement as urban hospitals
- Hospitals with a low volume of patients or with a disproportionate large number of low-income patients or which are population outposts will receive extra funding.

HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that Montana will receive \$20,790,000 in Anti-terrorism grants for state and local responders. This is the state share of \$2.2 Billion national funding. The funds are allocated to three programs: the **State Homeland Security Program**, the **Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program** and **Citizen Corps**. Under the new system, the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Division of the Department of Military Affairs will apply with one application, streamlining the process with which DHS distributes the funds through the state governments.

Of the total amount coming to Montana, \$15,780,000 is for the **State Homeland Security Program**. These funds will help state and local public safety and law enforcement pay for planning, training, equipment and exercises and other

costs for enhancing the capabilities to prevent, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks.

Montana's allotment grants \$4,682,000 for the **Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program** (LETPP). The funds will enhance capabilities for detecting, deterring, disrupting and preventing acts of terrorism with a focus on the prevention of a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) incident. No less than 80 percent of LETPP funds are to go to local law enforcement agencies for terrorism prevention activities.

Finally, \$328,000 is a direct grant for the **Citizen Corps** Program for planning, outreach, and management of Citizen Corps programs and activities. Montana DES will provide no less than 80 percent of Citizen Corps funds to local units of government within 60 days of receipt of funds from the Office for Domestic Preparedness.

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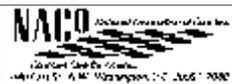
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