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NEW MACo PHONE NUMBERS COMING JUNE 11:
MAIN OFFICE: 444-4360 INSURANCE OFFICE: 444-4370

E-government for Montana counties: MyLocalGov.com

The Montana Association of Counties recently requested proposals for a self-funding e-government solution that would provide web pages and allow members to accept payments online for multiple types of bills. MACo's goal was to help its members advance to new technology at a minimal cost and with few IT resources. There were four respondents and MyLocalGov.com was the successful proposal.

MyLocalGov is a nationwide corporation focused on providing e-government and software solutions for local government. The agreement with MyLocalGov provides a web portal for the Association and a one-page website for each county. Each county web page can offer the option to accept payments by credit cards and e-checks online for real estate taxes, personal property taxes, permits, citations, utility bills and motor vehicle licensing renewals. MACo was able to negotiate lower rates, a revenue sharing with the participating counties and low setup costs by using the size of our membership.

The web page for each county is free and provided by My-

LocalGov. MACo would like to have all counties online with a web page by the end of this year and establish online payment systems within the next two years.

The option to accept payments online has a one time set up fee, depending on the program and the county's 2000 population base.

<u>COUNTY POPULATION</u>	<u>FEE</u>
up to 2,500	\$1,000
2,500—5,000	\$1,500
5,000—20,000	\$2,000
20,000—45,000	\$3,000
45,000—70,000	\$4,000
70,000—100,000	\$5,000
over 100,000	\$6,000

Taxpayers will be charged nominal fees for paying on-line. A \$2 transaction cost will be charged for electronic transfers from checking accounts. \$1.75, plus the convenience fee charge by the credit card, will be added to all credit card payments.

Any county interested in establishing a web page and online payment systems should contact Harold Blattie or Gordon Morris, who will pass requests to MyLocalGov representatives. A MyLocalGov representative will contact each interested county with more information.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 1	Clerk & Recorder notification for budgets
June 3	MACo Conference Planning Committee Call
June 4	JPA/JPIA Defense Counsel / Trustees Retreat
June 8	Primary Election
June 10	County budget estimates to Clerk & Recorder
June 10-12	Fire Alliance Conference; Billings Holiday Inn
June 11	MACo Board meeting; MACo; 10:00 am
June 15-18	Sheriffs & Peace Officers Convention; Polson
June 16	Oil, Gas and Coal Counties; Lewistown
June 17	Drought Advisory Committee; DEQ; 9:30 am
June 21-24	Clerks of District Court Convention; Superior
June 28-30	MACo Economic Development Committee

UPCOMING EVENTS

July	County Budget Hearings
July 5	Independence Day Holiday
July 6-10	County Attorney Convention; Polson
July 16-20	NACo Annual Conference; Phoenix
August 9	County Budgets adopted; Tax levies set
August 10	MACITA; MACo Conference Room

COMPENSATION BOARDS

MCA 7-4-2503(4)(a) The county compensation board shall hold hearings annually for the purpose of reviewing the compensation paid to county officers. The compensation board may consider the compensation paid to comparable officials in other Montana counties, other states, state government, federal government and private enterprise.

Population may be used in compensation board deliberations. (<http://ceic.commerce.state.mt.us/EstimatesCntyPop.html>) .

Cost-of-living	2.3%
Mileage	37.5¢ per mile up to 1,000 miles 34.5¢ per mile over 1,000 miles.
Travel	\$35 for motel room until May 15 \$55 May 15 to October 15 only \$5 morning meal \$6 mid-day meal \$12 for evening (total \$23/day).

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IN MEMORIAM

Former Garfield County Commissioner April Milroy passed away in April, her birthday month, after a long fight with breast cancer. She served on the Garfield County Commission from 1985-1991.

In addition to her local government service, April spent her lifetime ranching, especially enjoying sheep and Angora goats, which were her size. She was instrumental in facilitating passage of Medical Assistance Facility Act and establishing a new Garfield County Health Center, where she took extra time to entertain with her piano playing.

She is survived by her husband and two children.

Former Carbon County Clerk and Recorder Roger Dean Newman died on Friday, May 28, after a 16 year battle with leukemia. Roger served as Clerk and Recorder from 1985 until retirement in 2002.

Before his county service, Roger was in the Air Force as a Flight Simulator Technician, taught history and coached in Lockwood and Belfry and owned/managed "Newman's Corner" bar and the Elks Club in Red Lodge.

He is survived by his wife, Berry, 3 daughters and 8 grandchildren and great grandchildren.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

By Bob Buzzas

Walk through just about any community in Montana and you're likely to see the products of one of Montana's ten Human Resource Development Councils (HRDC).

HRDCs are part of the national network of Community Action Agencies created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. In Montana, non-profit community-based organizations are helping individuals and families to move from poverty to self-sufficiency. They do so through partnerships which provide a comprehensive array of services and innovative programs.

HRDCs promote "maximum feasible participation" through governance by "tri-partite" boards consisting of representatives of local elected officials, low-income families and community-based organizations. Not only are low-income people involved in identifying their needs and designing solutions, but many are hired as staff to help others.

Counties play a big role, according to Vic Miller, former Blaine County Commissioner and now director of the District IV HRDC. Miller said that 42 county commissioners serve on HRDC Boards along with another 14 representatives appointed by county commissions. According to Miller, county commissioners are involved because, "HRDC's are making differences in people's lives daily. By stabilizing this segment of the population, we stop the descent into costly assistance programs. It is a short term investment rather than a long term drain on funds."

Each HRDC is different and the programs vary to reflect the needs and resources of each district. Together, they provide over 210 programs such as Case Management, Referrals, Emergency Food & Shelter, Heating Assistance, Weatherization, Head Start, Affordable Housing, Employment & Training, Economic Development, Children & Youth Programs, Senior Citizen Programs and Health Care.

HRDC's have also created new independent programs such as the Montana Conservation Corps, Capital Opportunities Health Care, Energy Share and the Montana Continuum of Care Coalition for the Homeless.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program 2004 GRANTS TO COUNTIES

The HOME Investment Partnership Program provides funds to local governments and states for new construction, rehabilitation, acquisition of standard housing, assistance to homebuyers, and tenant-based rental assistance.

2004 grants have been awarded to:

Cascade County: \$275,000 (part of \$778,500) Assistance for 15 households to purchase, construct, rehabilitate or demolish and construct homes

Flathead County: \$448,000 (part of \$490,906) Rehabilitation of 30+ low-income senior homes

Lincoln County: \$400,000 (part of \$467,000) Construct five low-income senior apartments in the Town of Troy

Missoula County: \$282,918 (part of \$609,428) Duplex housing and service for 8 people with severe physical disabilities from brain injuries

Ravalli County: \$500,000 (part of \$2,641,195) Homebuyer assistance for 15+ low income households and purchase of 8 units of affordable housing

Twelve of sixteen applications were funded with a total of \$4,885,876 as part of total costs estimated at \$18,662,908.

Other grants were awarded to the Town of Bridger, Flathead Lake CHDO, Glacier Housing Foundation, homeWORD of Missoula, City of Bozeman, District IX HRDC, and District XI HRC.

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MACo Policy Committees Goals, Objectives, Procedures

NOTE: This is a proposed policy developed by President Carol Brooker for presentation to the MACo Board of Directors.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the MACo policy committee process is to propose solutions to problems and concerns facing county government and to review and respond to federal and state legislative proposals and administrative regulations, which affect Montana counties. To meet these goals, each MACo policy committee works with the following objectives in mind:

Maintain effective, two-way communication to educate commissioners on the latest developments with issues, and to ensure that MACo staff has sufficient input from local officials to advocate accurately on behalf of counties.

Recommend policy positions specific to federal and state legislative proposals and administrative regulations, and develop legislative proposals to submit for passage by the appropriate legislative body.

Build consensus for support or opposition among legislators and other advocacy groups regarding recommended laws or rules which may help or constrain county government operations.

Annually review existing policy positions, propose necessary revisions and submit proposed revisions to MACo's full membership for approval.

Rules and Operating Procedures

1. Voting Procedure

At each policy committee meeting, the Committee Chair calls the meeting to order and carries out the meeting agenda. If the Chair is absent, these responsibilities are performed by the Vice-Chair. Records of attendance and participation are maintained.

- a. Each committee member has one (1) vote.
- b. If a committee member is unable to attend and designates an official representative to serve in his/her place, that representative may vote on behalf of the committee member if he/she informs the Committee Chair of his/her intent at the beginning of the meeting.
- c. Non-members, except for those identified as official representatives pursuant to paragraph (b) above, will not vote during committee meetings. However, non-

members may participate in committee discussions and may offer proposed policy statements and amendments.

d. The Chair will vote on official business (proposed policies and amendments) only if a tie-breaking vote is necessary.

2. Proposed Policy Statements and Amendments

Any committee member may offer a proposed policy statement or an amendment to an existing policy statement.

a. It will be the responsibility of the Chair (or officer in charge of the meeting) to repeat the stated proposal for benefit of the full membership. The Chair will then call upon committee members to discuss the proposal as it has been offered. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair will call for a vote on the proposal.

b. Proposed policy statements and amendments must be approved by a simple majority of committee members that are present before being adopted as committee recommendations.

3. Committee Membership

Committee membership composition is as follows:

a. Each committee shall have two officers, Chair and Vice-Chair, who are appointed by the MACo President annually.

b. Each committee has a minimum of five (5) members.

c. While not required, it is a goal of the Association to have each MACo district represented on every committee where possible.

d. Elected county officials and county staff may serve on any policy committee. MACo's President will appoint policy committee members on an annual basis, and these appointments will be based (where possible) upon the requests of county officials that notify the Association of their committee preferences.

e. MACo's President serves as an ex-officio member of all policy committees.

Continued on next page

NEW MACo PHONE NUMBERS

**MAIN OFFICE: 444-4360
INSURANCE OFFICE: 444-4370**

MACo Committees continued

4. Meetings

Each committee is required to meet at least twice during a calendar year, as determined by the Chair. Chairs are encouraged to work with MACo staff in determining meeting locations so as to take advantage of reducing costs associated with member travel and hence stay within the recommended budget. Each committee will have an assigned budget of fifteen (15) hundred dollars. This may be adjusted by the MACo Fiscal Officer and MACo Finance Officer upon a determination that it is justified in reference to accomplishing the committee's assigned responsibilities.

a. In addition to the required meetings, committee meetings may be called at any time by either the Association President or the committee chair. These meetings are scheduled to help the respective committees either conduct official business or attend educational events such as field trips or fact-finding meetings sponsored by public agencies or private sector entities whose primary purpose is of importance to the work of the committee.

b. All committee meetings are open to all elected county commissioners, elected CEO's and county staff.

c. Any committee may appoint ex-officio members as necessary. These individuals may represent either public or private sector agencies, and may include representatives of MACo's associate members. The formal appointment of ex-officio members will be the responsibility of the committee chair.

If a committee selects individuals to serve as ex-officio members, it will be done with the understanding that they do not have voting privileges. However, an ex-officio member may participate in any general discussion conducted by a committee, and will be notified of all committee meetings.

5. Subcommittees

MACo's President, or any of the committee chairs may, when necessary, appoint subcommittees for specific topics. The subcommittees also will have a chair and vice-chair. The subcommittee will be composed of an appropriate number of members to conduct its assigned task. Each established subcommittee will be given a specific time period in which to conduct its task. The time period may be extended upon the request of the subcommittee chair. Subcommittees will be called upon to make policy recommendations to the standing committee under which they are assigned. A simple majority vote of the subcommittee members in attendance will be required in order to forward policy recommendations to the full committee.

CURRENT MACo COMMITTEES

Agriculture	7 Members from 7 Districts plus Weed Assoc. Rep.
Conference Planning	5 Members
Economic Development	9 Members from 6 Districts
Health & Human Services	10 Members from 7 Districts
Information Technology	7 Members from 6 Districts plus 4 MACITA and 1 State ITSD
Justice & Public Safety	12 Members from 9 Districts plus 1 Sheriff Assoc.
Land Use Planning	11 Members from 7 Districts plus Weed Assoc. Rep.
Public Lands	11 Members from 9 Districts plus Weed Assoc. Rep.
Resolutions	7 Members from 7 Districts
Taxation, Budget	9 Members from 7 Districts
Transportation	7 Members from 7 Districts plus 1 LTAP, 2 MACRS Weed Assoc. Rep.

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DROUGHT CONTINUES—May 2004 Status

The State of Montana has asked the State of Wyoming to shut off pre-1950 junior water rights in the Tongue, Powder and Little Powder Rivers, in order to provide for more senior water rights holders in Montana. Wyoming has agreed to meet this June, but said they don't feel they have any obligation to make more water available. The problem stems from two different state interpretations of the Yellowstone River Compact. Montana DNRC is hoping the two states can work out the disputed interpretation informally.

Meanwhile, eleven counties and three Reservations have been declared natural disaster areas: Chouteau, Garfield, Granite, Mineral, Missoula, Petroleum, Pondera, Prairie, Ravalli, Treasure and Valley Counties, and Flathead-Salish-Kootenai, Blackfeet and Fort Peck Reservations.

Counties have installed weather stations as part of the Montana Counties Soil Climate Network Project include Toole, Fergus, Yellowstone, Stillwater, Pondera, Liberty, Hill, Carbon, Chouteau, Cascade, Golden Valley and Glacier.

Beaverhead	Severe Drought
Big Horn	Severe Drought
Blaine	Drought Alert
Broadwater	Severe Drought
Carbon	Severe Drought
Carter	Severe Drought
Cascade	Severe Drought
Chouteau	Severe Drought
Custer	Severe Drought
Daniels	No Drought
Dawson	Drought Alert
Deer Lodge	Drought Alert
Fallon	Severe Drought
Fergus	Severe Drought
Flathead	Severe Drought
Gallatin	Severe Drought
Garfield	Slightly Dry
Glacier	Severe Drought
Golden Valley	Severe Drought
Granite	Drought Alert
Hill	Severe Drought
Jefferson	Severe Drought
Judith Basin	Severe Drought
Lake	Severe Drought

Lewis & Clark	Severe Drought
Liberty	Severe Drought
Lincoln	Severe Drought
Madison	Severe Drought
McCone	Slightly Dry
Meagher	Severe Drought
Mineral	Drought Alert
Missoula	Drought Alert
Musselshell	Severe Drought
Park	Severe Drought
Petroleum	Drought Alert
Phillips	Slightly Dry
Pondera	Severe Drought
Powder River	Severe Drought
Powell	Drought Alert
Prairie	Drought Alert
Ravalli	Drought Alert
Richland	No Drought
Roosevelt	No Drought
Rosebud	Severe Drought
Sanders	Severe Drought
Sheridan	No Drought
Silver Bow	Severe Drought
Stillwater	Severe Drought
Sweet Grass	Severe Drought
Teton	Severe Drought
Toole	Severe Drought
Treasure	Severe Drought
Valley	Slightly Dry
Wheatland	Severe Drought
Wibaux	Drought Alert
Yellowstone	Severe Drought

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MACo PHONE NUMBERS
(starting June 11)

MAIN NUMBER
444-4360

INSURANCE
444-4370

COUNTY NEWS

COUNTY OFFICIALS

ANACONDA-DEER LODGE

COUNTY Chief Executive Peter Boyce has resigned to begin as a county administrator in Wabasha County, Minnesota. Daniel Cox has been appointed to serve until the election. Four candidates have filed for the position.

TOOLE COUNTY Justice of Peace Janice Morrison resigned in March. Russ Mann, a retired Shelby school teacher, was appointed to fill the position until an elected Justice takes office.

PUBLIC HEALTH

MADISON COUNTY is considering moving the public health program into the county nursing homes as one of many possible solutions to financial problems.

FALLON COUNTY Hospital Board is seeking two more Philippine nurses to alleviate the cost of contracted nurses.

FERGUS, WHEATLAND, JUDITH BASIN, PETROLEUM, GOLDEN VALLEY, and MUSSELSHELL COUNTIES, the Central Montana Health District, has been criticized for not providing health services. The group has proposed reorganization plans to add staff and coordinate with the schools.

JEFFERSON COUNTY declined a settlement offer for the lawsuit filed against the closure of the county public health nursing office. The settlement proposed to dismiss the lawsuit if the county restored all public health services and rehired the former public health nurse.

PUBLIC SAFETY

GALLATIN COUNTY has created a new "Office of Court Services" to oversee alternatives to jail crowding, such as pre-trial releases, work release and other alternative sentencing.

DAWSON COUNTY has developed four options for offender sentencing and release: 1) Ankle bracelets which signal location of offenders at home; 2) Sobriety monitoring devices; 3) GPS monitors for 24-hour tracking and 4) GPS tracking system which reports every 10 seconds.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY fire departments, which are contracted by Department of Natural Resources to fight fire on state lands, submitted a list of required training needs which were being unmet.

DEVELOPMENT

FERGUS COUNTY and Lewistown received a national transportation research project. The Western Transportation Institute will test electronic sensors which detect wild animals at roadsides and send warning signals to drivers. Testing will include winter maintenance technology and driver training.

RAVALLI COUNTY is considering sending minor subdivision reviews directly to the county commissioners, bypassing the Planning Board, which is deluged with proposals. Subdivision regulations would have to be amended.

RICHLAND COUNTY is the site for a new gas plant. The plant will gather natural gas produced in the field, process the gas and extract natural gas liquids.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY's

Community of Lockwood, which abuts the City of Billings, cannot incorporate unless the City refuses to annex. State law prohibits the incorporation of a community that is located within three miles of another incorporated community.

FLATHEAD COUNTY is considering an open space bond issue to purchase conservation easements on farmland.

GALLATIN COUNTY agreed to spend \$300,000 of open space bond funds for two more conservation easements, adding 6,307 acres to crop and pasture land which is off-limits for development.

GALLATIN COUNTY approved a private golf and ski development in Big Sky after developers agreed to consider helping pay for an airport exit off I-90 in Belgrade.

DAWSON and PRAIRIE COUNTIES have been asked to adjust the county line so all land owned by a taxpayer will be in Prairie County.

GARFIELD COUNTY is resurfacing the county airport, after receiving federal funding for a 10% county - 90% federal cost share.

RICHLAND COUNTY residents have expressed concerns for maintenance of county roads following continued oil and mineral development on state lands.

There are more public road miles in Montana than Interstate miles in the entire United States.

"BearFacts" Beartooth RC&D
Vol. 4 Issue 2

Montana Fire Alliance Conference June 10 - 13

The 2004 Montana Fire Alliance Conference at the Holiday Inn Grand in Billings will be a combined conference for all fire, rescue, EMS personnel and administrators.

According to Ross Fitzgerald, Conference Committee Chair, "This is a rare opportunity for career and volunteer emergency response personnel to train and share ideas. We are anticipating over 1,000 folks from all aspects emergency response as well as related state and federal support/response agencies. Accredited/certified training, hands-on workshops, leadership presentations, vendor displays, apparatus (new & antique) parade, memorial dedication, live entertainment, BBQ's, ...are activities for fire/rescue folks and families."

An entertaining part of the conference is for competitions held in the evenings. Events will include a hydrant / hose hook-up competition, a bucket brigade race and a water tug-of-war.

To register, contact the Alliance at 406-443-7487 or go to the Alliance's website at www.montanafirealliance.org

FOR SALE 1999 CATERPILLAR LANDFILL COMPACTOR

The Compactor (826G, S/N LN00557) has 7500 hours and will be available the week of August 30, 2004. Minimum bid is \$100,000. The equipment is sold with no warranties, as is-where is. Transport of compactor is the responsibility of the purchaser. Sealed bids are to be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 16, 2004 to:

Lewis and Clark County Public Works Department
3402 Cooney Drive
Helena, MT 59602

The machine is available for inspection/appraisal by appointment only at 4075 Deal Road, Helena MT. To schedule an appointment contact Darrel Folkvord, Fleet Manager, at 447-1632 or dfolkvord@co.lewis-clark.mt.us or Stan Munson, Landfill Mechanic, at 227-1177.

Further information on the machine or the bidding process is available from Folkvord at dfolkvord@co.lewis-clark.mt.us .

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL WATER ADJUDICATION FUNDING

Redstark Classroom, Museum of the Rockies,
Bozeman, Montana
June 7, 2004

The Legislative EQC has established a work group to address different alternatives to fund Montana's water adjudication program, aiming to complete it through the first decree phase in 15 years. The work group will discuss a funding proposal and hear the stakeholders thoughts and alternatives to the proposal.

The proposal on funding issues and other information is available at http://leg.state.mt.us/css/lepo/2003_2004/default.asp

State of Montana 2006-2007 Strategic Plan for Information Technology

We all are aware of the crucial role that Information Technology plays in our daily lives. We have worked to develop a sound plan to guide us as we manage IT on behalf of all Montanans. We invite you to read the plan at: <http://www.discoveringmontana.com/itsd/stratplan/statewideplan.asp> .

Brian Wolf
CIO

Scott Lockwood
IT Planner

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Wednesday June 23

Colstrip High School

9:00 – 5:30 (with lunch)

Tours: Rosebud Power Plant

Western Energy reclamation

Speakers (Invited):

- Dr. Paul Polzin, U of M Bureau of Business & Economic Research
- Mike Kreipe, Network Planning, BPA Transmission Business Line
- Mark Lindberg, Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity

Sponsored by Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC) and Montanan's for Responsible Energy Development (MRED)

SAFETY RAY SEZ

**Ray Barnicoat
MACo Risk Manager**



The earlier a county reports workers' compensation injuries, the lower the claim costs are likely to be. Even a week's delay can increase claim costs by 10 percent.

A new study by The Hartford Financial Services Group, one of the nation's top providers of workers' compensation, found that claims filed a month or more after an injury cost an average of 48% more than those reported the first week.

"Workers' compensation has provided valuable protection to workers for nearly 100 years, but it is a significant expense - whether by purchased insurance or self-insurance," said Tom Johnston, senior vice president and chief actuary of The Hartford's property-casualty operations.

In its study, The Hartford analyzed more than 41,000 workers' compensation claims filed between 2000 and 2003. The injuries that prompted the claims fell into three categories - back injuries, carpal-tunnel syndrome and miscellaneous injuries - which together represent about two-thirds of all workers' compensation claims. The study excluded claims for open wounds, fractures and dislocations, which are almost always reported within 48 hours of occurrence. The analysis shows that reporting back sprain or strain during the first week can save an average of 25% of medical and lost-time costs. Carpal-tunnel syndrome and other nervous system-inflammation injuries cost 23% less if reported the first week. The miscellaneous category of injuries cost 18% less.

"A delay in reporting a claim often means a delay in starting appropriate treatment. This adds to the recovery time and the cost of medical care and wage replacement," said Cal Hudson, The Hartford's senior vice president, property-casualty claims. "These costs are exacerbated by today's approach to treatment with different, more expensive pain-management techniques, including more high-priced drugs and greater use of physical therapy and chiropractic services," he added.

Counties should take steps to prevent injuries, but it's equally important to control claim costs. Early reporting can make that happen.

OFF-THE-JOB

**Emelia McEwen
MACo Risk Management Assistant**



A recent survey of the on-the-job impact of off-the-job injuries has found that, while such injuries are high-cost to employers, few employers make an effort to help prevent them.

"Employers have vested interests in the safety and health of their employees at work and away from work," said Alan McMillan, president of the National Safety Council, which conducted the survey.

"Employers pay many of the costs associated with medical care, insurance and lost productivity resulting from injuries suffered by employees and their families," he said.

Cumulative trauma disorders can be particularly affected by off-work activities. Over 80% of disabling injuries reported last year were unrelated to work, McMillan said.

"We must take the same focus and intensity that we have applied to workplace safety and apply them to injury prevention in our homes, communities and motor vehicles," he said.

The majority of employers in the survey stated that they recognized the potential impact of the off-the-job injuries, but few attempt to address the problem.

While the survey did indicate that programs focusing on free-time health and safety were becoming more common in workplaces, the majority of programs didn't focus on issues such as ergonomics of the home computer station.

Most of the programs focused instead on smoking cessation, fitness training, stress management or weight management.

MACo JPIA

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METHAMPHETAMINE AND RURAL COUNTIES

Big Horn County, Wyoming and its county seat, Lovell (population 2,264) have become infested by methamphetamine producers. In the past two years, about 70 people in Lovell and two nearby towns have been convicted of buying or selling meth. Burglaries have mushroomed; one suspected witness' house was fire-bombed and the Wyoming Department of Family Services has taken children away from parents so incapacitated by meth that they have forgotten to feed the children.

Methamphetamine is a powerful manufactured stimulant that produces bursts of energy and euphoria but can lead to depression, violent paranoia and brain damage. Wyoming, the least populated state in the country, has meth use at a rate of more than twice the national average, according to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration.

Meth use and crime are also overrunning rural counties in **Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, North Dakota and the Texas Panhandle.**

Fox Butterfield, New York Times

In Iowa, rapidly growing methamphetamine use is behind a surge in thefts of tractors and other heavy farm equipment, as well as burglaries in vacant farmsteads, according to Todd Johnson, Audubon County Sheriff. In addition, thefts of the fertilizer, anhydrous ammonia, for the process of making the drug escalated. So, **20 counties in Iowa** placed locks on anhydrous storage tanks at the local co-ops. The locks are comprised of hardened steel and cannot be cut by saws, torches, bolt cutters or drills.

Des Moines County, Iowa, developed a program that joined merchants with law enforcement to reduce the production. The "STOP Meth" program was created after it was discovered that the majority of people being arrested for the purchase of meth precursors were not residents of the county. The County had become a regional shopping center for meth makers. So, the program teaches area retailers to be alert to consumers purchasing drug making materials and what type of information law enforcement will need to make arrests. Warning stickers about

the program are posted in area merchants' windows warning meth makers that they will be reported and arrested.

Home-cooked meth is now so common in Iowa, and so toxic, that the legislature had made manufacturing it around children a form of child abuse.

The Iowa County, February 2004.
Denise Obrecht, Iowa State Association of Counties

Clay County, North Dakota, is considering an ordinance that would require property owners to hire hazardous waste certified contractors to clean sites contaminated by meth production. The ordinance would require authorities to mark all affected structures with a placard until the site is sufficiently cleaned. Those living in close proximity would also be notified. If a property owner refuses to cooperate, the county could have the site cleaned and assess the cost back on the owner's taxes. It costs anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000 to clean the site of a former meth lab.

County News March 2004
North Dakota Association of Counties

In **Montana**, "Cracking Down on Methamphetamine", a problem-solving summit hosted by Governor Judy Martz, began development of a comprehensive plan to reduce the production, distribution and use of meth. "Montana's prison and courts are inundated with individuals involved in the use, production and sale of methamphetamine," she wrote. "We must evaluate the effectiveness of current sentencing requirements and look for alternative sentencing options that will appropriately punish those who break the law and prevent them from recommitting crimes."

Attorney General Mike McGrath has pages and links devoted to this problem in Montana at:

www.doj.state.mt.us/safety/methinmontana.asp

Attorney General McGrath is also instrumental as a leader in *MethFree MT*, an organization which provides a wide array of research, planning, technical support and public education for leaders and citizens of Montana. The information is available at: www.methfreemt.org

**WESTERN INTERSTATE REGION (WIR)
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**
 WIR VP Connie Eissinger, McCone County

A presentation from
Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Land and Minerals Chad Calvert noted that most of the leadership appointees of the current administration are from western states.

Current BLM departments include Renewable Resources, Minerals and Realty, Fire and Aviation, Information Management, Communications, Human Resources and Business & Fiscal Resources.

Planning projects in progress now for Montana include the Dillon RMP, the Powder River/Billings RMP and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

They have issued 3,700 applications for drilling. He noted that there were 4000 permits for oil and gas issued in 1998, 3200 issued in 2001, 2300 in '02 and 2000 in '03. The last administration heavily supported renewable energy, but they issued only 20 geo-thermal permits. There were 73 issued in 2003.

Sage Grouse habitat is a continuing study, with December being the target date to establish listing or not. States have had two months to clarify where the birds exist and what threats there are.

The first Utah road case is under review. The General Accounting Office is saying that the Memorandum of Understanding with Utah is in violation of the law. The Department of Interior wants to show that the MOU works.

In Oregon, after several devastating forest fires, community leaders convinced the state to float a bond issue to re-forest the devastated areas. Volunteers planted thousands of seedlings and conifer seeds were sown by air. A pre-release prison work camp is located in the forest and prisoners are tasked with forest road maintenance and forest health maintenance.

**FINANCE and INTERGOVERNMENTAL
 AFFAIRS STEERING COMMITTEE**
 Allan Underdal, Toole County

The Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee has three subcommittees: Intergovernmental Affairs, Capital Financing and Fiscal Policy.

In the Intergovernmental Affairs subcommittee we had speakers on Federal Indian Law. A Resolution was proposed by members from New York and California, with amendments offered by Oregon, to address the gaming impacts to local governments, specifically the need for local governments to have input and participation in the process between the Federal Government and the Indian Tribes. No vote was taken on this resolution. The other topic was the seemingly large number of tribes that are petitioning for federal recognition.

We unanimously passed a resolution in support of English as the Official Language of Government.

In the late 1960's Congress passed the Alternative Minimum Tax to make sure wealthy people couldn't avoid paying any federal income tax. We passed a resolution asking Congress to index the tax to shift it back to its original purpose.

Other topics discussed were tax exempt leasing, the internet tax moratorium, continued support for the streamlined sales and use tax, the woes of the Federal Budget, and finished up with a summary of what is happening with election reform.

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In the May issue of this newsletter, these MACo-supporting businesses were inadvertently left off the list of Affiliate Members. I regret the formatting error.

Marie McAlear, Newsletter Editor

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