Beartooth Resource Conservation and Development (BRCD) went to the Carbon County Commissioners last month to give their annual update on ongoing and prospective projects around the county.

Earl Atwood, General Manager, Joel Bertolino, Food and Ag Center Director and Sue Taylor, Economic Development Director represented BRCD and spoke about the various projects.

BRCD serves the cities and towns of counties of Carbon, Big Horn, Sweet Grass, and Yellowstone as a certified state-designated regional development corporation (CRDC) and as a federally designated Economic Development District (EDD). According to their handout, they work closely with local development efforts to “leverage the best possible options for communities, nonprofits, and private businesses in the region.”

Efforts this past year included: Fuels reduction on Red Lodge Mountain; an Old Roosevelt School PAR Grant; Workforce Housing Committee; the MEDA Fall Conference (the first such event held at Old Roosevelt); NRCS/RCPP Grant, Stetson Farms, Millers Custom Processing and Cold Coffee business.

Atwood introduced the annual review stating, “It is a great way to familiarize you with our activities.”

Bertolino oversees the Food and Ag projects. The purpose is to help Montanans “innovate and grow their businesses that produce and commercialize food, ag and energy projects.”

Taylor said, “The (federal) Economic Development Administration is our biggest source for funding. We’ve seen significant increases at the federal level. We use these BRCD dues to match that.” This is crucial since state funding has decreased.

The BRCD has Primary Focus Areas in which it seeks to provide “core services to constituents in our service region include needs assessment, planning, and development of business projects” according to its printout.

These focus areas include:

- Business development and financial planning assistance
- Direct business lending through the Revolving Loan Fund
- Specialized agricultural business planning and development
- Regional and local community and economic development planning and facilitation
- Assistance to municipalities and counties with improvement of public services, infrastructure and facilities

They tend to focus on projects in rural and under-served areas. Local citizens and businesses are encouraged to apply for assistance.

BRCD is home to one of four Food and Ag Development Centers (FADC) located across Montana. The Centers help producers innovate and grow businesses that produce and commercialize food, agriculture and renewable energy products and training and assistance.

BRCD also provides a Revolving Loan Fund

The purpose of the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) is to encourage and accelerate economic
development activities in the region. The role of the RLF is to provide gap financing to businesses who would find it difficult to meet conventional underwriting standards. Job creation is the primary goal, especially by providing employment to those in low and moderate income categories. The RLF is not an alternative to private lenders or equity capital. Most loans are a combination of all three.

Last cycle, four of six grants applied for in the region were approved by Montana’s Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) matching funds program. Current applications are awaiting approval and more should be known next month.

Taylor also noted BRCD’s own Revolving Loan Fund program is often able to help when grants aren’t enough. “We fill in gaps and have competitive rates.”

The BRCD often works with the data provided by state studies of the area. According to the Governor’s Office of Economic Development, in 2017, the Retail trade made up the largest percentage of businesses, at 16.2 percent, followed by Accommodation and Food Services at 10.1 percent.

In a 2017 report, the data showed Carbon County residents had a demand of $151,957,085 (average money spent per household multiplied by number of households) and $83,347,692 in supply (revenue reported by businesses in Carbon County) indicating that money was being spent by its residents but almost half was going out of county. This is significant for city and county economic planners to note because the stats show the opposite for Yellowstone County, where most residents shop locally and which draws a tremendous amount of dollars from surrounding counties.

In a study of the Food and Drink market, Carbon had $13,535,280 in demand but $18,848,865 in supply showing a surplus of $5,313,605. By using all of such data, the county or cities could take this evidence of a healthy tourist industry and possibly focus more on future development to reduce any surplus and increase income being spent locally to better meet residents’ needs and interests.

Next week: Some details of BRCD services.

Category: Local

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POLL

Should Oprah Run For U.S. President

- Yes
- No
- Don’t know

Older polls

Red Lodge Veterinary Clinic
- Complete evaluation - Surgery - Radiology - Preventive medicine - Dentistry - 24 hr. Emergency service - Mobile, on-farm service

UPCOMING EVENTS

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<tr>
<th>Wednesday, January 17, 2018 - 9:30am</th>
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Beartooth RC&D annual Report

Published Thursday, January 11, 2018

Part II

By: Eleanor Guerrero
CCN Senior Reporter

Beartooth Resource Conservation and Development, (BRCD) located in Joliet, offers many services to citizens and businesses of Carbon County as well as Big Horn, Stillwater, Sweet Grass and Yellowstone as a state-designated Certified Regional Development Corporation and federal Economic Development District. The BRCD officers spoke of a few of the services at their annual review meeting with the Carbon County Commissioners in Dec. in Red Lodge.

Joel Bertolino, Food and Ag Center Director said, "It’s not just business planning. We’ve seen some startups. We’ve offered to help with Dept. of Ag grants. Mr. Blain (Carbon County Commissioner Scott Blain) got one last year."

Regarding 2016 grant applications Bertolino said, “We worked on about a dozen. There was quite a bit of demand. There was great diversity in the types of businesses.”

The grants applied for included the melting of barley, a fresh mushrooms concern and different meat related businesses from slaughter to custom sausages.

Funding decisions should be known in February.

Last year, Stetson Farms, of Fromberg, needed equipment and received a Growth to Ag grant and in July, Miller Coors received a large federal Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS) regional conservation grant that will benefit three counties.
BRCD is working on the following Carbon County projects from 2017:
1. Fuels reduction on Red Lodge Mountain to further reduce the risk of a damaging fire event.
2. Old Roosevelt School PAR Grant: $30,000 funding package; $15,000 from the Department of Commerce-Big Sky Trust Fund and $15,000 from the Community Foundation.
3. Workforce Housing Committee-Beartooth staff participates in committee meetings as available.
4. MEDA Fall conference, Red Lodge
5. NRCS/RCPP Grant-3 county five year grant program (Carbon, Big Horn, and Yellowstone); Collaborative research project involving irrigated barley and sugar beet producers. In the process of producer application and selection into the program.
6. Stetson Farms, Fromberg-Grant for compost processing and hauling equipment.
7. Miller’s Custom Processing, Roberts. Potential Growth through ag grant for cooler equipment and assistance in applying for state certification to begin commercial processing.

Of the Miller Coors grant Bertolino said, “I help put together a grant of $500,000 over 5 years. We struck out first time. I thought we’d strike out a second but we got it.” Bertolino said of the sustainability grant, “It works with conservation districts, works on sugar beets, barley rotation to conserve soil and water and adopt soil conservation practices.”

Miller Coors is leading the effort and will manage the y grant. Although Miller Coors is located in Huntley, Carbon County producers as well as in Yellowstone and Big Horn will be able to apply. Farmers will have sensors put in the field. With this knowledge of the flow farmers can reduce water waste. The grant will include covering the cost of putting those sensors in place and collecting the data.

Bertolino said the project aims to save water and benefit recharge. “The hope is that the data received will help in the timing of irrigation to reduce water use and become more efficient.”

Earl Atwood is the General Manager for Beartooth. He noted, “They’ve been working on fuel reduction on Beartooth the Mountain and along Beartooth Front for a long time, especially the Beartooth/Urban interface.”

He observed, “If there is a fire on the hillside, they’re out of business. It’s such an important anchor (for the community).”

Atwood also serves as administrator for the U.S. Custer Gallatin working group. “It’s a pretty active collaboration,” he said. But, “I’m not a driver for politics.”

Sue Taylor, Economic Development Director reported, “We partnered with the architect’s report on RLACF for Roosevelt school.” Along with another grant it gave the board “the confidence to proceed with the building.” They had the first conference here for the fall economic development group. “ About 100 came. It was very well done,” said Taylor.

BRCD was approached by Red Lodge Youth Soccer for assistance in grants. “We are actively participating in that project.” The goal is to rehab the former dumpsite of the city, the hill between the Yellowstone Wildlife Sanctuary and the high school by Coalminer’s Park. She said, “The City got a DNRC grant to do engineering to see if can level off and cap it. The (present) cap is breaking down. Cap it and level it off and put a soccer field on it. It’s a really interesting project.”

She explained, “There is difference in height of about seven feet.” Noting environmental concerns she said, “I’m not sure you want to scrap it because of the wind.”

Taylor discussed a project in Bridger. “The Bridger Mayor has four departments in separate buildings.” These are primarily essential services that all need more room. A grant is sought to rehab a former furniture manufacturing building that has been empty a long time. They are looking at getting these services-fire/ambulance/library/police-in the same building with more space.

Carbon County Commissioner Doug Tucker mentioned the old hospital building has been sold. “We looked at the potential for remodeling. Being vacant is very detrimental.”

Taylor noted a Texas corporation bought it they don’t know their intentions.

Tucker said, “You have to understand our concerns. Now we’re happy it’s sold, even happier if someone could renovate it, But if they walk away guess who gets it?”

Carbon County Commissioner Bullock said that even if the cost of remodeling or clearing and building is covered, there’s still the issue of asbestos.

Tucker thought it would be “well over 1 million to rehab” and could over twice that cost to finish. Still, he said, “We’d love to see someone in there and do something.”

The BRCD officers are open to new ways to help in 2018. Their suggestions include: Plan review and implementation; CEDS projects and priorities; letters of support; 30 day project ID and implementation and assisting with the delivery of training specific to the needs of county residents.

Upon a request from Atwood, the commissioners approved an increase in funding to BRCD from $1,750 to $2,250. This was based on membership and increase in the per capita assessment by BRCD.
The increase was made to offset a growing gap. The officers noted there hasn't been an increase in 15 years.
The office is located in 128 S. Main, Joliet and can be reached at 406-982-3914. Citizens are encouraged to call with questions or requests for information and assistance. The above officers can also be reached by email, by using their first initial and last name @beartooth.org.

Tags:
Beartooth Resource Conservation and Development

Category:
Local

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Red Lodge Veterinary Clinic
- Laceration evaluation - Surgery - Podiatry - Preventative medicine
- Dentistry - 24 hour emergency service - Noble, on-call service.

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<td>Ambulance District</td>
<td>Rock Creek AA</td>
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<td>The Red Lodge Roberts Ambulance District will conduct a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees, Jan. 19 at 12:30 p.m. at Red Lodge Fire Station.</td>
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