



MONTANA FARM BUREAU *News Brief*

We Care for the Country

August 2020

TOP STORIES



MFBF President Hans McPherson (left) with USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey and Congressman Greg Gianforte at the McPherson Farm in Stevensville.

MFBF members host, meet USDA, EPA officials

In the past month, Montana Farm Bureau leaders hosted an event as well as attended meetings with government agency heads and Montana Congressmen.

On July 13, MFBF President Hans McPherson hosted a roundtable meeting at his farm in Stevensville to discuss current agricultural issues and federal programs for agriculture with USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey and Montana Representative Greg Gianforte. Also attending the July 13 event was Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Tom Watson and several local farmers and ranchers.

Whether the farmers were talking about beef or apples, the most common concern was how vulnerable farmers and ranchers are to market disruptions.

In addition to a lively roundtable discussion, the group took a tour of

Bitterroot Valley where they saw how farms had successfully implemented the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Northey then traveled to Great Falls where MFBF Executive Vice President John Youngberg met with him and Congressman Steve Daines on ag issues at another round table event.

On July 24, Youngberg, District 1 Director Craig Blevins and his wife, Beth, along with Northwest County Farm Bureau members Jack and Susan Lake, met with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler at the MSU Northwest Research Station in Kalispell. Wheeler was visiting Brownfields projects in the west and spent time in Kalispell visiting with farmers about water reuse and crop inputs.

For the full story, visit mfbf.org.

WLC photo contest

Don't forget to get those cameras out, start snapping and submit your photos to the 2020 MFBF Women's Leadership Committee Photo Contest. There are four categories: Ag Families/Communities; Education and Communication; Ag Labor and Supporting the Environment.

Photos will be voted for online and at the convention for combined votes to decide the winners.

There is a \$75 prize to the winner of each category, with the overall winner receiving one-year *free* MFBF membership.

Photos, along with the entrant's MFBF membership number, must be emailed to: Mary Hill, BarJRGelbvieh@3rivers.net with MFBF Photo Contest 2020 in the subject line. Deadline is November 2.

Please note the contest is for amateur photographers only and photo must be taken by the entrant.

Dues Due!

Annual renewal notices for memberships with expirations in September and October are being sent out soon, so keep an eye out for your notice in the mail. You can either tear off the renewal notice tab and send it back to us along with a check, or go to mfbf.org to pay your membership renewal online. Look for the RENEW button at the top of the home page.

This year MFBF has added an option to donate to the MFBF PAC along with the Foundation, so don't forget to check the box on the top of the renewal notice to let us know which entity you are donating to. Thanks in advance for supporting our PAC and Foundation.

MFBF hosts candidate education forum

The Montana Farm Bureau, along with other industry groups, hosted a candidate education forum June 29 in Helena for prospective state legislators. The event enabled Farm Bureau to meet with candidates running for different state legislative seats and offer education about the organization as well as the offer to develop relationships.

Candidates learned about what these industry groups are doing, how they interact during the legislative session as well as outside of it and become familiar with whom they will be working with in Helena.

Boots on the Hill

MFBF's National Affairs Director Nicole Rolf and State Affairs Director Rachel Cone have started a quarterly *Boots on the Hill* report. Although *Boots* was originally started as a weekly report for the Montana Legislative Session, this quarterly report will inform members about MFBF policy and pending legislation, reports from interim committee attended and more.

The April - June 2020 *Boots on the Hill* is available online at www.mfbf.org/News/News-Brief. Look for the icon for August 2020 News Brief Plus. If you'd like to receive the members-only version please send your email address to rachelc@mfbf.org or call 406-587-3153.

Contribute to the PAC

Worried about what you're seeing in the news? Want to help a candidate with knowledge about agriculture and shared values get elected in November?

Farm Bureau members can contribute to the Montana Farm Bureau PAC. All donations, regardless of size, truly make a difference.

If you wish to make a voluntary contribution, please send your check to: Montana Farm Bureau PAC, 502 S. 19th Ave, Suite 104, Bozeman, MT 59718.

Welcome new members

Montana Farm Bureau gives a hearty welcome to new members who realize the importance of belonging to the state's largest ag organization.

Carbon-Stillwater – Patricia Sundberg, Adam Sutcliffe; Cascade – Jeff Marn, Jason and Marilyn Weaver; Chouteau – S. Strickland, Norton and Faye Westrum; Custer-Fallon – Andy and Theresa Zook; Dawson-Wibaux – Merle and Connie Mullet; Fergus – Trent and Laurie Goettlich, Chip and Jennifer Styer; Lewis & Clark – Cody and Susan Mitchell; Meagher – Brian Bodell; Musselshell – Brett and Olivia Adolph; Northwest – Chris Dawidowicz, Chase Goplen, Brailey and Alora Lavanway, Judy Moehle, Sara and Joseph Stenberg; Phillips – Donni and Terri Linn; Ravalli – Robert and Joyce Schroeder, Scott and Jasmin Shinn; Roosevelt – Michael and Janice Bowman; Sweet Grass – Catherine Kirchnerd.



Win a Polaris Ranger

Montana Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher Committee is thrilled that for the sixth consecutive year, Montana Polaris is the sponsor of the YF&R Discussion Meet, awarding a Ranger® Side by Side UTV to the winner of that competition. The Discussion Meet is open to ages 18-35 and will take place Tuesday, November 10 during the MFBF Annual Convention in Billings.

Thanks to these participating Polaris dealers for supporting our Young Farmers and Ranchers: Gallatin Recreation, Bozeman; Helena Cycle, Helena; Yellowstone Polaris, Billings; Beaverhead Motors, Dillon; Riverside Marine & Cycle, Miles City; Montana Power Products, Ronan; Jesco Marine, Kalispell; Redline Sports, Inc, Butte; Lewistown Honda & Polaris, Lewistown; and Hi-line Polaris, Havre; Sports City Cyclery, Great Falls and Kurt's Polaris, Missoula.

For more information on the MFBF YF&R Discussion Meet/2020 Discussion Meet questions, visit www.mfbf.org/programs/young-farmers-ranchers or contact Sue Ann Streufert, 406-587-3153, sueanns@mfbf.org.

Calendar

Long Range Planning Committee
August 31
Lewistown

Budget Committee
September 1
Lewistown

MFBF Board Meeting
September 14-15
Lewistown

Young Ag Leadership Conference
CANCELLED

MFBF Convention
November 9-12
Billings

People

John Youngberg was interviewed by Andy Schwab, Northern Ag Network, during the meeting with EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler in Kalispell, as well as by the Prairie Star. Youngberg and Kim Gibbs were interviewed by KMON and Northern Ag Network regarding the beef processing program at MCC.

Hans McPherson was interviewed by Lane Nordlund (Montana News Network) about the AFBF Zoom Council of Presidents meeting with President Donald Trump and USDA's Under Secretary Bill Northey's visit to his farm in Stevensville. Prairie Star interviewed Lacey Sutherlin regarding Northey's visit.

Nicole Rolf interviewed with Montana Public Radio regarding changes in the Paycheck Protection Program.

Election slide decks

The American Farm Bureau Advocacy and Political Affairs (A&PA) team is providing 2020 election slide decks with political analysis for the presidential election, the U.S. Senate and U.S. House. Additionally, they are providing analysis of the race for the White House and other critical federal races as they unfold. These dissections are non-partisan and draw on AP&A's combined decades of experience in campaigns and grassroots organizing.

Check out www.fb.org/news/category/the-state.

StoneX same great service

INTL Stone has changed their name to StoneX but they are still offering the same great risk management benefits to MFBF members as they have done previously. The company offers customized commodity marketing plans, powerful data management solutions, financial executive products, market insights and education.

With StoneX you can access market data and insights to make informed marketing decisions.

Visit FB.org/StoneX for more info.

Farm Dog of the Year

Farmers are invited to submit nominations for the 2021 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year contest, with support from Purina. This is the third year of the contest, which celebrates farm and ranch dogs. Desired attributes in the Farm Dog of the Year include helpfulness to the farmer and his/her family, playfulness and obedience.

Eligibility guidelines and submission requirements are available at <https://fb.org/2021farmdog>. Applications must be received by Aug. 20, 2020,

NEPA Comments

The Montana Farm Bureau applauds the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)'s final rule, the "Update to the Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act."

This is the first comprehensive update to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 40 years. The regulations are a welcome modernization of the federal environmental review process which will benefit both the environment and the American economy.

The Montana Farm Bureau submitted comments on the proposal. (See comments on the August News Brief Plus.)

The comments included a modernization of NEPA that will promote more efficient, effective, and timely federal environmental reviews.

MFBF Executive Vice President John Youngberg noted, "Although the NEPA review doesn't necessarily impact most of agriculture, the way NEPA is implemented can have secondary effects on farms and ranches, particularly those who work with federal lands. Keeping federal forests and rangelands healthy and productive is critical to farmers and ranchers who rely on the land and share this public trust with their rural communities."

Youngberg added that it's important to note that this NEPA update does not change any underlying environmental law.



Cattle report released by USDA

The Montana Farm Bureau was pleased to see the USDA has released a report regarding the investigation disparities between prices paid to ranchers and beef prices at the grocery store. MFBF and other state Farm Bureaus had called for an investigation. However, Farm Bureaus are still awaiting the Department of Justice's report concerning

price manipulation by beef processors.

"The Montana Farm Bureau asked USDA to expand an ongoing investigation to include possible market manipulation during the coronavirus pandemic, especially with regard to low prices being paid to cow/calf producers," said MFBF President Hans McPherson. "It was obvious something was wrong when we saw consumers paying higher prices for meat yet the farmers and ranchers were being paid less. The USDA report is a good first step in understanding what's going on with beef pricing."

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall noted, "We appreciate the USDA's thorough examination of the beef markets but it's important to note the scrutiny of the markets is not concluded. USDA indicates their examination continues and investigations by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, as well as the Department of Justice, are ongoing."

Visit <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/usda-releases-report-on-investigation-into-beef-and-cattle-price-spread>.

Seeding Rural Resilience Act covers mental health

The House and Senate recently passed a Farm Bureau-supported measure designed to help farmers respond to stress and decrease the stigma associated with mental health care in rural communities. The Seeding Rural Resilience Act was included in each chamber's version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

"The recent pandemic, challenging weather, destructive pests, trade disputes, labor shortages and market volatility over the past few years have brought an unprecedented level of pressure on America's farmers. A 2019 Farm Bureau survey shows that an overwhelming majority of farmers and farmworkers say financial issues, farm or business problems and fear of losing their farm negatively impact their mental health," AFBF President Zippy Duvall said in a letter to senators urging them to approve the Seeding Rural Resilience Act as an amendment to the defense authorization bill.

Passage of the bill is part of Farm Bureau's efforts to reduce the stigma surrounding the topic of mental health in rural communities and to provide relevant information to farm families on this important topic. Montana Senator Jon Tester was one of the senators who introduced the act last year. The House and Senate must negotiate a single national defense authorization bill before it goes to the president for his signature.

MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION
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COUNTY NEWS

Counties busy with fairs, board meetings

Whether they met via Zoom or at an outdoor venue, county Farm Bureaus have been staying in touch and making plans for August events as well as planning their annual meetings.

Powder River/Carter County plans to have a booth, hand out water and sponsor awards at both the Powder River and the Carter County Fairs. They are going to have a local photo contest and drawing contest for elementary and high school students. In addition, the county Farm Bureau will be donating the Legacies history to book to Henry Mallet Memorial Li-

brary in Broadus and the public library in Ekalaka.

Lewis & Clark County held an outdoor board meeting July 29 where they discussed their upcoming annual meeting.

Park County was sponsor of the Park County Fair which consisted of an ag fair with 4-H, FFA and Open classes and had its highest grossing sale ever. Many of Park County members serve on 4-H Council/FFA Alumni boards. The fair added the ability to bid online which helped tremendously.

The boards of **Gallatin, Meagher, Park, Cascade, Carbon/Stillwater** and **Sweet Grass** have held/have planned meetings.

The state of Montana, and more specifically **Southwest Counties Farm Bureau** member **Kiley Martinell**, was featured in the latest Beef It's What's for Dinner/United We Steak Beef Council Campaign.

Sweet Grass County handed out bottled water during their county fair sale July 31.



4-H Project Parade

4-H members took their 4-H projects to two local nursing homes as part of the Central Montana Fair.

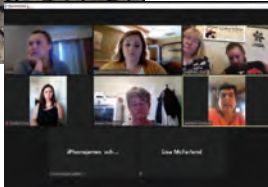
"We figured if the residents could not come to the fair, we would bring the fair to them," said event organizer **Kris Descheemaeker** with **Fergus County Farm Bureau** who sponsored the event and gave each participant a coupon for a milk shake at the 4-H booth as a thank you.

The 4-H members had rabbits, chickens, a duck, a dog and a tick tack toe board that were put on parade outside residents' windows at Valla Vista and The Villa. Residents from the Central Montana Nursing and Rehab Center were able to line up outside and watch as 4-H members walked their projects by the residents, keeping social distancing rules in play.



Above: Lewis & Clark County holds an outdoor board meeting.

Right: A Yellowstone County Zoom board meeting.





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, July 23, 2020

CONTACT

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Montana Department of Transportation begins implementing new load posting signs on bridges around the state

Helena, Mont. — The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has begun implementation of new load posting procedures on public bridges across the state as mandated by the [Federal Highway Administration \(FHWA\)](#). As a result, motorists may soon start to notice new weight limits and signs on some bridges. The postings are part of recently updated federal requirements for bridge load rating and posting.

Bridge weight restrictions are required when the engineering analysis of a bridge, known as a load rating, indicates that it cannot carry standard, legal loads. Load ratings provide information about how much distributed weight can safely pass over a bridge. Load posting is required when a load rating indicates that a bridge cannot safely carry certain loads that would otherwise be legal in the state of Montana. Load posting signs show maximum weight limits for different vehicle types, depending on their axle configuration.

“Many older bridges were never designed to carry vehicle types that have become common in present-day use, and some bridges have deteriorated over time,” MDT Bridge Engineer Stephanie Brandenberger said. “Bridge weight restriction signs are posted to keep motorists safe and to ensure that the bridge remains functional. We need to prevent heavy loads from crossing and overstressing the bridge, which can lead to both visible and hidden damage.”

MDT is currently updating load ratings for 4,500 public bridges across the state, including approximately 2,500 owned and maintained by MDT. This effort is expected to take about four years to complete.

Brandenberger emphasized that weight restrictions do not mean a bridge is unsafe, as long as vehicles meet posted limitations. “MDT needs the public’s help in understanding and following weight restrictions – for their own safety, but also to help maintain bridge integrity and safeguard bridge longevity,” Brandenberger said.



MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

March 10, 2020

Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20203

RE: Docket Number: CEQ-2019-0003, Update to the Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act

The Montana Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) is Montana's largest agriculture organization, representing more than 20,000 member families from all across our great state. Our farmer and rancher members raise crops and livestock, utilize the nation's infrastructure, and rely on the energy and materials that come from the responsible development of natural resources, so the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are very important to us. It's also important to remember that Montana has its own environmental policy act, known as the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). We believe protecting the environment in an efficient and effective manner and allowing responsible development of our natural resources is essential. These proposed updates will advance the true goals and intent of the statute, reduce paperwork and delays, and promote better environmental policy decision making.

MFBF appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) proposal to update its regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, (NEPA). We also appreciate President Trump's Executive Order 13807, establishing a One Federal Decision policy, including a two-year goal for completing environmental reviews on large projects and encouraging the modernization of regulations. Efficiency and modernization is important to our farmer and rancher members, so we welcome this update, wholeheartedly.

Here are MFBF's positions on several updates in the proposal:

1) Page and Time Limits

The proposal to set presumptive page and time limits for EA and EIS documents is a simple and critical improvement to NEPA. Setting limits will encourage timely decision-making processes on the regulatory side. Likewise, it will make reading and interpreting the documents more manageable for citizens. In that spirit, MFBF's comments will be concise.

2) Appropriately Excluding Farm Loans and Guarantees from "Major Federal Actions"

The revised definition contained in §1508.1(q) ties the phrase "major federal action" more closely to the words of the statute. In particular, we strongly agree that major federal actions do not include non-Federal projects with minimal Federal funding or minimal Federal involvement where the agency cannot control the outcome of the project. Accordingly, MFBF supports the regulations specifying that farm ownership and operating loan guarantees provided by

the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the business loan guarantee programs of the Small Business Administration (SBA) are not major federal actions.

3) NEPA Applicability Analysis

MFBF supports CEQ's efforts to clarify the threshold question of whether NEPA applies to the proposed federal action. Not all decisions made by the Federal government need a NEPA analysis and clarifying when it is necessary will increase efficiency in the process.

4) Apply NEPA Early in the Process

MFBF supports provisions to improve the consistency of NEPA analysis and "concentrate on relevant environmental analysis" rather than "producing an encyclopedia of all applicable information." Concentrating on relevant material is all that should matter, whereas collecting other random information is not productive.

5) Categorical Exclusions

In the past, NEPA evaluations have significantly delayed meaningful and timely actions on essential federal land management projects. Farm Bureau supports identifying and implementing categories of federal actions that normally do not have significant effects and excluding them from detailed review.

6) Lead and Cooperating Agencies

It only makes sense to increase interagency coordination for more effective NEPA reviews. Specifically, the proposed revisions require the development of a joint schedule and identification of milestones for environmental reviews to create a more transparent NEPA process. MFBF strongly supports county and state governments being included in the process as cooperating agencies and having state and local plans considered in the NEPA process.

7) Judicial Review

MFBF supports the proposal to clarify parameters for public comment and cooperating agency comment and to disregard any comments made after the comment period ends. We also support the proposal to clarify that judicial review may only occur after the lead agency has issued the record of decision or taken other final agency action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'HMcPherson', written in a cursive style.

Hans McPherson, President