



2021 Western Interstate Region Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

May 27, 2021 | The Bitterroot River Inn
Hamilton, Mont.

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[Meeting Recording](#)

WIR Leadership:

- President: The Hon. **Greg Chilcott**, Commissioner, Ravalli County, Mont.
 - First Vice President: The Hon. **Mark Whitney**, Commissioner, Beaver County, Utah
 - Second Vice President: The Hon. **Dan Joyce**, Judge, Malheur County, Ore.
 - Past President: The Hon. **Joel Bousman**, Commissioner, Sublette County, Wyo.
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9:00-9:15 am: Welcome, Pledge, Introductions

- **The Hon. Greg Chilcott**, Commissioner, Ravalli County, Mont.

9:15-9:45 am: U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Forest Service Region 1 includes 25 million acres of land within 12 national forests and grasslands in five states, including Montana. Region 1 includes the second largest wilderness area in the United States as well as numerous active vegetation management projects. Regional Forester Leanne Martin discussed efforts to improve landscape and watershed quality and how the Forest Service is working with intergovernmental partners to reduce fuel loads and grow rural economies.

- **Leanne Martin**, Region 1 Forester, U.S. Forest Service (Virtual)

9:45-10:15 am: Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages over 248.3 million acres of land and roughly 700 million acres of subsurface minerals nationwide. State and local officials play a key role in helping the agency to meet its multiple-use mission. Nada Culver, Acting Director of the BLM, updated the Board on resource development policies, wildlife management, and the new administration's efforts to engage with counties.

- **Nada Culver**, Deputy Director for Policy and Programs, Exercising the delegated authority of the Bureau of Land Management Director (Virtual)

10:15-10:45 am: Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

The Montana DNRC's mission is to help ensure the state's land and water resources provide benefits for present and future generations. DNRC is organized in seven divisions, including Water Resources, Oil/Gas Conservation, and Forestry. DNRC Director Amanda Kaster discussed the new Gianforte administration's plans for implementing its resource development and conservation policies.

- **Amanda Kaster**, Director, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (Virtual)

10:45-11:15 am: Legislative Update

Jonathan Shuffield gave an update on the finances for the Western Interstate Region and legislative priorities.

- **Jonathan Shuffield**, Associate Legislative Director, NACo

11:15 am-12:00 pm: Roundtable discussion on conservation/30x30

12:00-1:00 pm: Lunch at Hotel

1:00-1:30 pm: Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC)

WIR's Public Lands Trust contributes to WFLC so that counties are represented. WFLC Executive Director Mike Zupko updated the WIR Board on recent activities and opportunities for future engagement on issues surrounding wildland fire and public lands management.

- **Mike Zupko**, Executive Director, Wildland Fire Leadership Council (Virtual)

1:30-2:00 pm: USDA Rural Development

USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provides much-needed funding for infrastructure improvements to rural communities. These include water and waste treatment, electric power and telecommunications services. RUS Acting Administrator Christopher McLean discussed his agency's mission and how counties can access federal funds to improve broadband and utilities services in your communities.

- **Christopher McLean**, Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service (Virtual)

2:00-2:45 pm: Farm to School Meals

The Ravalli County Economic Development Authority has conducted a two-year project to improve school meals. The goal is to prepare meals that include more locally produced food, following a recent state report that found farm-to-school programs promote healthy eating and ease food supply chain disruptions. Julie Foster, the Executive Director of the Ravalli County Economic Development Authority, discussed the results of this project.

- **Julie Foster**, Executive Director, Ravalli County Economic Development Authority
- **Laura Garber**, Owner, Homestead Organics

2:45-3:15 pm: State Legislative Update—Montana

Eric Bryson, Executive Director of the Montana Association of Counties, discussed efforts to pass legislation allowing counties to establish special districts to acquire SRS funding, which allows counties to avoid the prior-year payment deduction under PILT.

- **Eric Bryson**, Executive Director, Montana Association of Counties

3:15-4:15 pm: Roundtable on issues affecting counties and state associations

4:15-5:00 pm: Election and Installation of Officers

- Commissioner Mark Whitney Beaver County, Utah was elected WIR President without opposition
- Judge Dan Joyce from Malheur County, Oregon was elected WIR First Vice President without opposition
- **Candidates for WIR 2nd Vice President:**
 - Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry, Eagle County, Colo.
 - Commissioner John Espy, Carbon County, Wyo.
 - Commissioner Wes McCart, Stevens County, Wash.
- Commissioner John Espy from Carbon County, Wyoming was elected WIR Second Vice President on the first ballot.