



February, 2010

Greetings and best wishes for a happy and successful 2010!

I don't know who still calls this time of the year the "off" season but it feels just as busy as the summer anymore. Sure, we don't have as many visitors or staff this time of year, but all the planning, reacting to requests and wrap up from the last year seem to more than fill the day!

I have been thinking about MRPA and although there is not an exacting job description for the President, I have been able to do some MRPA work, hopefully of some significance! Although the way this winter has been going, watching the snow accumulate in Billings has almost been a full time job!

- We have the mid year meeting scheduled for March 8th at the Beall Park Recreation Center, 415 North Bozeman Avenue, Bozeman starting at 9:00 am. Thanks to Jamie Siatta, who should at this point be a mom, for setting this up. All board members are expected to be there and all general members are welcome as well. I have attached the agenda.
- Tri State/Trails Conference. A group of us met under the able leadership of Bob Walker in West Yellowstone on November 6th to continue planning for this great conference. It will include both gathering with our fellow park professional from Idaho and Wyoming but also serve as the Montana State Trails Conference. Under the incredible chairmanship of Bob Walker, the event seems to really be coming together. The call for papers has gone out and we will meet again following the mid-year meeting in Bozeman. Contact Bob at mttrails@bresnan.net with your ideas or if you are willing to help. It will need all of our participation.
- LWCF. There are several bills before congress right now regarding the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These budget times are tough but both our senators are on board with this and in fact Senator Baucus is an original sponsor and Senator Tester is now also signed on as a sponsor to SB 2747, The Land and Water Conservation Authorization and Funding Act of 2009. There is a large coalition of supporters for this bill and we have signed on with that group as well as sent our own letters of support and encouragement to our Senators. It's hard to say how this bill will fare. One issue that we raised with our Senators was to get equitable funding for the state side of this fund. This is the portion that goes to the state agency – in our case Fish, Wildlife and Parks – for use on state and local

projects. This is the vehicle for getting funding to cities and towns for recreational facilities. State Park directors from across the country including Montana are also working with their own governors to urge a dedicated amount to the states and local communities. I urge you to follow this issue and have supporters in your community ready to contact our Senators if the bill starts to move. I have asked Joe to post our letters on the website so you can see what some of the issues are. The president's proposed budget has the stateside of LWCF budgeted at \$50 million, up from \$40 million last year, so that is a positive sign. Chas Van Genderen, Montana State Parks Administrator will be at the mid-year meeting to discuss LWCF and other issues – yet another reason to attend!

- I served as part of the review committee for a grant program called “Communities Putting Prevention to Work”. There were two openings for each state to apply to this federal program and Missoula and Helena were each selected to do so. Billings and Great Falls also applied. These projects all involved wellness and fitness and it was a little surprising that parks weren't more involved with what was mainly medical/health projects and initiatives. I urge each of you to keep connected with your local public health agencies since there is such a natural connection and opportunity for partnerships there.

A reminder from Jenny Alexander – 2010 membership dues are due! Jenny's email is jalexander@mt.gov. The application form is on our website under “About MRPA” (thanks Joe) so please get those dues in! The “Institutional” membership is a great way to get more folks involved with MRPA – hint, hint!

Well, that about wraps it for me. I hope each of you take a little time in your busy day to assist in MRPA activities, whether it is to garner support for LWCF, recruit a new member, or to assist in planning for our upcoming Tri State Conference. Together, we can keep moving and supporting both ourselves as professionals and our profession as an essential part of our communities.

With warmest regards,

Doug

Doug Habermann
MRPA President