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MACo JPIA/JPA

Abandoned horses looming large

By Harold Blattie, MACo Executive Director

Trigger, the Jones family's horse for more than 25 years, is getting too old to ride and has earned his well-deserved retirement. Trigger is a "bomb-proof" horse and the family's children all learned to ride on the back of this trusted family friend.

He is a patient horse, letting small children crawl around and between his legs with never a hint of harming anyone or spooking. Trigger has hauled elk and gathered cattle. He could anticipate what a cow was going to do and know where to move to block the herd-quitter, most of the time before the cow even took the first step out of place.

Trigger is just a great horse but the family is having a tough time making ends meet since Dad was laid off. With hay costing around \$200 per ton, there isn't enough money to pay for gas for the pickup, heat the house, purchase food for the family and buy hay, so the heart-breaking choice is made to sell him.

Hoping to find a good home where Trigger can live out his days, an ad is placed in the local paper but there are no responses. The hay in the barn is fast disappearing and there is no money to buy more. Dad knows Trigger needs to be put down but cannot even think of using his .22-caliber rifle, so he checked with the local vet about having Trigger humanly euthanized. The vet says it will cost \$125, plus \$150 for hauling him the local landfill and burial – an amount the family just cannot scrape together.

About the only choice left is to take Trigger to the auction. He's hauled to the local auction barn to be sold. Hoping a kind soul will buy Trigger and take him home,

but knowing he is probably headed to slaughter in another country, tearful good-byes are made.

The family goes into the auction barn and does not have to wait long until Trigger comes into the ring. The family is shocked when the auctioneer tries to start the bid at \$100. No bids. The auctioneer tries \$75, then \$50, then \$25, and, finally, \$10, but no takers. Down comes the gavel with the auctioneer announcing "No Sale." After paying the auction barn fees for the non-sale of nearly \$50, Trigger is hauled home.

That night, Dad again loads Trigger into the trailer. This

time it's for a trip deep into the heart of the area's most remote stretches. The tailgate is opened and Trigger is given a pat on the back and a parting "good luck." Dad heads home, having abandoned Trigger to fend for himself in a strange place.

OK, Harold, that's a sad story (I have no visions of any literary awards!), but what does it have to do with county government, you ask? Read on...

The number of horses being abandoned by their owners is rapidly increasing since horse slaughter for human consumption was halted in the U.S. This situation is not exclusive to Montana or to the West but is happening nationwide.

As the cost of hay has increased, coupled with people trying to make ends meet, they are often faced with the choice of feeding their horses or their families. There is virtually no market for cull horses in the U.S. When they are taken to auctions, many do not sell because the cost of transporting them out of the U.S. for slaughter is





MACo News

Commissioners, elected officials to benefit at 2009 Midwinter Conference

The 2009 edition of the annual MACo Midwinter Conference, Feb. 9-12 at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel in Helena, will be the perfect chance for county elected officials to learn more about state and local government issues.

The event is full of seminars focusing on a variety of timely and critical subjects relevant to every participant.

For more information, call MACo at (406) 444-4360 or register online at our Web site (www.maco.cog.mt.us).

DRAFT AGENDA MACo Midwinter Conference Feb. 9-12, 2009, at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel in Helena

Monday, Feb. 9

- 11 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 3 pm **Exhibitor set up**
- 1-3 pm **All MACo committees meet**
- 3:30 pm **Hard Rock Mining Counties Meeting**
- 3:30 pm **6 County Fort Peck Lake Group Meeting**
- 3:30 pm **Urban Counties Meeting**
- 6 pm **Board of Directors Dinner Meeting**

- Noon-1 pm **Lunch**
- 1-2 pm **Workshop (TBA)**
- 2-3 pm **Workshop (TBA)**
- 3-3:30 pm **Break/visit with exhibitors**
- 3:30-4:30 pm **JPIA Joint Membership Meeting**
- 4:30 pm **Reservation Counties Meeting**
- 4:30 pm **Coalition of Forest Counties Meeting**
- 6 pm **Health Care Trust Dinner Meeting**

Tuesday, Feb. 10 (Mental Health Day)

- 7:30 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 8:30-10 am **Commitment Process 101**
- 10-10:30 am **Break**
- 10:30-Noon **Mental Health Day, cont.**
- Noon-1 pm **Lunch**
- 1-2:30 pm **Mental Health Day, cont.**
- 2:30-3 pm **Break**
- 3-4:30 pm **Mental Health Day, cont.**
- 4:30 pm **Oil, Gas, and Coal Counties Meeting**
- 5:30 pm **JPIA/JPA Trustees Dinner Meeting**

Thursday, Feb. 12

- 8 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 8:30-9:30 am **General session-legislative issues
Senate & Local Government chairs**
- 9:30-10 am **Break**
- 10-11 am **General session, cont.**
- 11 am **Load buses for trip to Capitol**
- 11:30-1 pm **Lunch in the Rotunda with legislators**
- 1-4 pm **Spend remainder of day at Capitol**
- 1 pm **Bus to return to Red Lion Colonial**
- 4 pm **Bus to return to Red Lion Colonial**

Wednesday, Feb. 11

- 8 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 8-8:30 am **Workshop (TBA)**
- 8:30-10 am **Workshop (TBA)**
- 10-10:30 am **Break**
- 10:30-11:30 **Department of Commerce**
- 11:30-Noon **Department of Livestock**

MACo News Invites Letters to the Editor

*If you have a compliment, complaint,
or suggestion, please let us know!*

Please include your name and county with your letter, then send it to us!



mharbour@mtcounties.org
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MACo News
2715 Skyway Dr.
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MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

2715 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59601-2123

406.444.4360 - Fax 406.442.5238
maco@mtcounties.org



MACo News

Regular health care checks can help us age gracefully

By Owen Voigt, MACo Health Care Trust Administrator

Back in the day when I first started rodeoing, I used very little protective equipment. I was at a rodeo in Cannonball, N.D., when my hand got caught in my bareback rigging resulting in me being dragged around the arena as we were making yet another lap.

That's when I saw the catch gate sticking out about eight inches into the arena. Well, being quick with math, I could tell I wouldn't be able to stay attached to my bareback rigging and, thus, the horse, without leaving at least a part of me on the fence. The question was what part was going to stay and what part would continue to drag.

When I crashed into the gate, two things happened. Fortunately, I was detached from the horse. The bad part was my tailbone took the entire impact. I am fairly sure I know how a turkey wishbone feels after Thanksgiving dinner. After I healed and was able to return to rodeoing, I began wearing a tail pad, a piece of foam a person wears in their pants while riding to protect the anatomy.

During my most recent rodeo run, I wore a padded vest only after a horse in Idaho reared in the chute and put a perfect imprint of my rigging handle into my chest that lasted for several days. I also wore a mouth guard, neck brace, forearm pad, tail pad and enough tape to build a decent-sized raft. From Cannonball at age 19 to my most recent rodeo run at a more, um, advanced age, I went from no protective equipment to enough to make any good high school athletic director drool.

Age has a funny way of teaching us things and making us realize we are not invincible. We can only hope to learn from those lessons and apply them in our everyday life. Another thing that happens to us in real life are various diseases, from some that aren't so bad to killers. Wearing a pad may not prevent disease but there are ways to check and make sure we are healthy. Many health care plans provide for preventive benefits. The best thing a person can do to keep premiums down is to get checked as frequently as recommended for different diseases or problems.

Colon cancer is one such type of disease you can be checked for, and it's a tough way to go if diagnosed too late. It's also expensive, very painful and takes a while before you pass.

The Columbia Encyclopedia says colon cancer is a cancer of any part of the colon (often called the large intestine), and the disease is the second most common cancer diagnosed in the U.S. Epidemiological evidence has shown a diet high in fat and low in fruits, vegetables, and fiber contributes to the development of the disease. Smoking is also a factor in some types of colon cancer.

Statistically, a family history of colon cancer or cancer of the female reproductive organs, a history of colon polyps, or a history of ulcerative colitis puts one at a greater risk of developing colon cancer. Colon cancer is most common in people over age 50.

There are several tests that can be performed to determine if a person has either colon cancer or the propensity for it based on physical evidence. Of these tests the primary ones are:

1. A fecal occult blood test is a test to determine if there is blood in a person's feces indicating colon problems.
2. Sigmoidoscopy is a procedure where the bottom 18 inches of the colon is scanned to see if there is evidence of colon problems.
3. Colonoscopies are done by inserting a colonoscope into the rectum and through the intestine to determine if there are any abnormalities in the colon.
4. Virtual colonoscopies are done with a CT scan machine (sometimes called a CAT scan) or with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). The colon is inflated with air and images are recorded of the colon.

The Center for Disease Control recommends a colonoscopy every 10 years beginning at age 50 to determine if an individual has colon cancer. If colon problems are detected your health care professional will recommend follow-up care.

The MACo HCT recently approved virtual colonoscopies as a diagnostic tool for detecting colon cancer based on a recommendation by the American Cancer Society. The trust provides preventive benefits to enable a person to get checked based on the recommended schedule of the Centers for Disease Control. Some other plans out there also provide a variation of these benefits.

Do yourself, and those you love, a favor by getting checked. If you are diagnosed with colon cancer, finding it early and taking care of it right away significantly increases your chances of recovery.

Everyone here at the trust hopes you had a merry Christmas and best wishes for a happy New Year.



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Health Care Trust Calendar of Events	
Feb. 11	HCT board meet (Midwinter Conference)
April 17	Rates mailed to July renewal groups
May 1-June 15	July open enrollment period
June 15	Signed renewal rates due



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MACo News

Abandoned horses looming large, may result in county costs

Continued from front page

often more than the value of the horse.

Many horses are dropped off at auction facilities by their owners who then vanish. Others abandon horses on public lands. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) estimates there are more 33,000 wild horses on BLM range in 11 Western states. That's more than 6,000 over the target of 27,000. BLM conducts roundups to gather excess horses and attempts to adopt them. Many of these horses are not adoptable because of age and condition. The BLM has placed these horses in holding facilities and has more than 30,000 in its charge.

Caring for so many animals is crippling the agency's budget. Last year, about \$22 million of the entire horse program's \$39-million budget was spent on holding horses in agency pens. Next year, the costs are projected to grow to \$26 million with an overall budget that is being trimmed to \$37 million. Continuing current practices would require a budget of \$58 million next year, escalating to \$77 million in 2012, according to BLM estimates (*Montana Standard*, July 1, 2008).

There has been a concerted push in Congress to ban horse slaughter in the U.S. and most recently an attempt to outlaw transporting horses to slaughter facilities outside the country. U.S. Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) sought to jail or fine anyone possessing, selling, transporting or purchasing horses for slaughter. The U.S. House Judiciary

Committee rejected the bill.

Animal rights activists propose to solve this problem by having taxpayers build and maintain horse shelters. With an estimated price tag of \$2,000 annually to care for each horse, the cost of caring for some 150,000 horses abandoned or sold at auction gets into the \$300-million range (*Environment and Climate News*, January 2009).

By now I am sure you are still wondering what this has to do with county government. Here goes.....

The Montana Legislature passed Chapter 140 of the Session Laws of 1925, the "Roundup of Abandoned Horses Act." It is still valid law and has only been minimally amended since enactment and is codified in Title 81, Chapter 4, Part 5. Section 81-4-502, MCA, declares abandoned horses on the open range to be a public nuisance.

Section 81-4-503, MCA, REQUIRES a Board of County Commissioners, upon the receipt of a petition, to authorize the roundup of abandoned horses in any district in the county.

The county is allowed to charge the petitioners for the estimated cost of the roundup, then reimburse the petitioners when the horses that are gathered are sold. This was obviously written with a presumption that the horses could be sold to recover the estimated costs. The statute does not provide for charging the petitioners for the care or disposal of the horses.

Please see "Horse..." on page 6

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After





MACo News

Abandoned horses looming large, may result in county costs

Continued from previous page

So what is a county going to do with them? Sell them? Maybe, maybe not. Start your own adoption program? That's not working real well for the BLM nowadays. Euthanize them? I can see the animal rights activist lining up to prevent the use of a firearm, leaving counties the alternative of humane euthanization performed by a veterinarian. At \$250 - \$300 each, that could get expensive fast (*Section 81-4-506 authorizes the commission to sell the horses and if they cannot be sold to then destroy or otherwise dispose of them*).

Should owners appear and claim any horse gathered in a roundup, the county is allowed to charge them a \$5 roundup fee (*I have an amendment to the Obsolete Statutes bill ready that would increase the amount to \$100*).

These statutes are applicable to open range. Many areas of the state are included in herd districts where the controlling statutes are completely different. The Montana Department of Livestock has statutory responsibilities related to estrayed animals, meaning those that wander onto another person's property in contrast to those animals that are clearly abandoned. Title 81, Chapter 4, Part 6, provides for estrayed animals and requires an estrayed animal must be held by the stock inspector (DOL) for a period of not less than 30 days or more than 60 days. State Sen. John Esp (R-Big Timber) is sponsoring Senate Bill 104, which would reduce the period to not more than 30 days (<http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2009/billhtml/SB0104.htm>).

And just to further complicate the issue, 7-32-2121(4), MCA, places the duty upon the county sheriff to "perform the duties of a humane officer within the county with reference to the protection of animals." Abandoned animals will generally need to be protected, thus the sheriff now becomes involved.

The bottom line is federal land managers, state agencies and counties all have a role in addressing this growing problem – each is different but interrelated. To compound the problem, the interrelationship between federal policy and Montana law is far from clear. The problem of horse abandonment is far from epidemic but the fact it is

a growing problem cannot be ignored.

Below are several links to recent news articles from both Montana and out-of-state publications about abandoned horses. I would also encourage you to conduct a Google search for "abandoned horse" and if you have a strong stomach, do a search for "horse slaughter." Warning – you will find links to very graphic video clips.

- http://www.mtstandard.com/articles/2008/07/01/nationworld_top/20080701_nationworld_top.txt
- <http://www.mtstandard.com/articles/2008/11/17/state/hjibiicjgbfd.txt>
- <http://www.mtstandard.com/articles/2008/12/21/breaking/hjibihhidheje.txt>
- <http://www.mtstandard.com/articles/2008/12/22/ap-state-mt/d957dvig2.txt>
- <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1809950,00.html>
- http://equisearch.com/horses_care/health/rescue/abandoned_horses_050608/
- <http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/1330571,CST-NWS-horses14.article>
- http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-12-16-horses_N.htm
- <http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/daily/local/75038.php>

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Flood Insurance

Part 2 of 2

The National Flood Insurance Program, a federal program administered by FEMA, offers flood insurance in communities that have agreed to adopt and enforce minimum floodplain management standards. More than 20,000 communities participate in the NFIP.

Flood insurance covers losses caused by a general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of two or more acres of normally dry land area or of two or more properties (at least one of which is the policyholder's property) from:

- Overflow of inland or tidal waters
- Unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source
- Mudflow
- Collapse or subsidence of land along the shore of a lake or similar body of water. This must result from erosion or undermining caused by waves or currents of water that exceed normal levels and result in a flood

Flood coverage can apply to both the building and its contents. Separate deductibles apply for building damage and damaged contents. Normally, a 30-day waiting period

applies from the date the business buys the policy before coverage begins. Businesses can buy coverage through their insurance agent in amounts up to \$500,000 for the building and \$500,000 for its contents. Excess coverage may be available from specialty insurance companies.

The cost of coverage varies by the risk; the premium will be relatively low in a low-to-moderate risk area and higher near bodies of water.

Every organization should consider purchasing flood insurance. No location is immune to the risk, the cost of coverage is much less than the cost of paying for repairs out of pocket, and the protection is more reliable than possible federal disaster assistance. Because the damage can be so devastating, the risk of flooding is something no organization can afford to ignore.

CONTENT DISCLAIMER: The information provided above is provided from a general insurance/risk management perspective and is NOT legal advice. Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. (AJG) does not provide legal advice as it is not qualified to do so. AJG recommends that you seek the advice of legal counsel in order to become fully apprised of the legal implications related to the information provided above as such implications are highly dependent on the unique facts and circumstances applicable to an individual situation.

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MACo News

Granite County teams with MACo to reduce medical staff claims

By Amy Webb, administrator, Granite County Medical Center

The Granite County Medical Center was struggling with high medical and time loss workers' compensation claims. The result of these claims created escalating annual premiums affecting our meager bottom line. In an effort to respond to what was quickly becoming a financial crisis, the medical center implemented a multi-faceted approach to improving work place safety.

The center It is important to understand the context of the medical facility in terms of volume, types of services and numbers of employees. In Philipsburg, there's a 24-bed nursing home combined with a nine-bed critical access hospital, a one-bed emergency room and a rural health clinic (a second clinic is located in Drummond).

The medical center employs about 46 full-time-equivalent personnel with 56 people on the payroll. The average daily census of the nursing home is 24 and the average census in the hospital is 1.3. We average 45 patients per month in our ER through the summer and about 25 per month in the winter. Our clinics average 250 monthly visits in Philipsburg and about 110 monthly in Drummond.

Workplace safety issues were primarily located in the nursing department, kitchen and maintenance. Staff, understandably, was aware of how injuries affected the individual person, and perhaps even the department due to the impact on scheduling, but were not aware of how compromised work place safety affected the facility.

The first approach implemented was education. Staff was provided graphs displaying the incidents of workers' compensation claims, medical and time loss. The graphs were related to numbers only to ensure there was no violation of HIPAA privacy laws. Also, MACo Risk Management met with our personnel in high-incident areas to discuss the importance of personal safety and general safety awareness. Individual task analysis was completed in the maintenance, nursing and dietary departments to identify high risk activities and recommend alternative technique or purchase equipment to improve safety.

For example, the maintenance director repeatedly complained of sore arms when spreading ice melt with a five-gallon bucket. The safety committee analyzed the activity and recommended a sling for carrying smaller quantities of the product. As a result, there have been no further claims regarding ice melt.

Similarly, the kitchen was analyzed for carrying, twisting and reaching tasks. Items most commonly used from the store room were rearranged on middle shelves rather than high or low. A cart at the same height of the prep table was purchased to allow easy transport of heavy casserole pans to the oven rather than carrying them. Safety signage was posted in the kitchen as reminders of safe ways to perform common tasks.

New lifts were purchase for the nursing department

through donated funds. This increased the number of lifts available for staff use. A strict two-person per lift policy has been implemented requiring that when using a lift there must always be two staffers present for safety.

Following education and safety awareness discussions, the facility implemented a daily stretching program conducted by the physical therapist. Stretching posters are on display throughout the facility and the physical therapist announces stretches in the morning for staff to participate. Interestingly, some of the residents of the nursing home enjoy doing the stretches, too! In addition, physical therapy offers individualized strengthening programs for staff as a staff benefit.

The facility also implemented a new employee screening program designed to ensure workers are matched with jobs within their physical abilities. New candidates participate in a pre-employment drug screen, physical therapy screening specific to the essential functions of the job they are applying for and background check. Candidates who do not pass all levels of screening are not offered a position.

Environmental safety requires the eyes and ears of everyone in the facility. A maintenance binder accessible to all staff was created to record safety concerns and prioritize them for response. The maintenance staff then initials and records the date the problem was resolved.

The approaches described above were helpful in lowering incident rates of workers' compensation claims but the facility was still struggling to meet the goal of 100 days without a claim. A pizza party had been planned and signage was placed in strategic staff areas throughout the facility to keep track of the claim-free days.

It wasn't until the implementation of Safety Bingo that the entire staff really began to fully participate in safety awareness. Safety Bingo is a program where staff members receive bingo cards with their payroll stubs. There are three levels of prizes. A bingo number is called by the activities director daily. The first prize is a \$10 gift certi-

Please see "Granite..." on next page

MACo
Risk Management and Training
Emelia McEwen
Senior Loss Control Specialist
Fred Hansen
Loss Control Specialist
Phone: (406) 444-4370
Fax: (406) 442-5238

Granite County teams with MACo

Continued from previous page

cate for a straight-line bingo. The game continues for a picture-frame bingo and a prize of \$20 and finally a black-out with a prize of \$50. If there is a workers' compensation claim filed, the game starts over.

Since the implementation of Safety Bingo, staff have been more aware of their surroundings and more assertive in offering help to co-workers. No one wants to be the one who stopped the safety bingo! We reached 100 days without a claim and held a pizza party for staff. The facility is now at 151 days without a claim as of late November. The next goal is 200 days without a claim.

The combination of pre-employment screening, staff education, changes in equipment, hazard analysis related to reported incidents and increased awareness through posters and Safety Bingo has resulted in a complete turnaround for the facility with significantly improved workplace safety.



To reduce medical and time loss workers' compensation claims, the Granite County Medical Center uses these items (clockwise from top) in its facilities: patient lift; Safety Bingo card; and employee stretching chart.



Billings to host clean energy conference

You can still register for Harvesting Clean Energy 9, the Northwest's premiere gathering to advance rural economic development through clean energy production. The three-day event will be held Jan. 25-27 at the Crowne Plaza in Billings.

Clean energy offers practical, profitable opportunities for our farmers, ranchers, rural utilities and towns, tribes, and regional economy.

The conference charts the future of rural clean energy in the Northwest. Discussions focus on the steps to successful project development to cut costs on the farm and produce power or feedstocks for market.

For more information or to register, call (253) 445-4575 or visit www.harvestcleanenergy.org.

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County News

BLM to offer economic workshop

Registration is still available for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) economic workshop at the agency's Billings field office on Jan. 13. The day-long event is titled "Understanding Your County's Economy Using the Economic Profile System."

The workshop's purpose is to show how BLM land uses influence local and regional economy on BLM lands and mineral management. The BLM also will demonstrate and explain the use of the Economic Profile System (EPS) using examples from one or two counties within the study area. Successful resource management must involve those communities close to public lands. This workshop is an excellent way to learn how the economic analysis fits into the BLM resource management planning (RMP) process.

The workshop will focus on the following:

- Trends you have observed in your counties that may affect economic and social conditions
- Influence of public lands on your counties
- Any proposals, initiatives, plans, trends, etc., that may affect BLM land uses and/or BLM land use decisions
- Any other questions, concerns, issues, etc., you have about your counties' economy

For more information, contact the BLM's Kim Prill, RMP team leader, at 896-5199.

PERI conference scholarships online

Applications are available for the 12th Annual Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI) Small Entity Scholarship Program, which will provide financial assistance to help small organizations attend the 2009 Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) Conference and Expo. PERI will accept scholarship applications through Feb. 27, 2009.

PERI, a nonprofit research institute focused on risk management training and education, plans to award up to 20 scholarships valued at \$1,000 in financial assistance to small public entities and community nonprofit organizations interested in attending the 2009 PRIMA Conference in Dallas, Texas, in May.

For more information on the application, program or conference, visit www.primacentral.org, or contact PRIMA at (703) 528-7701 or info@primacentral.org.



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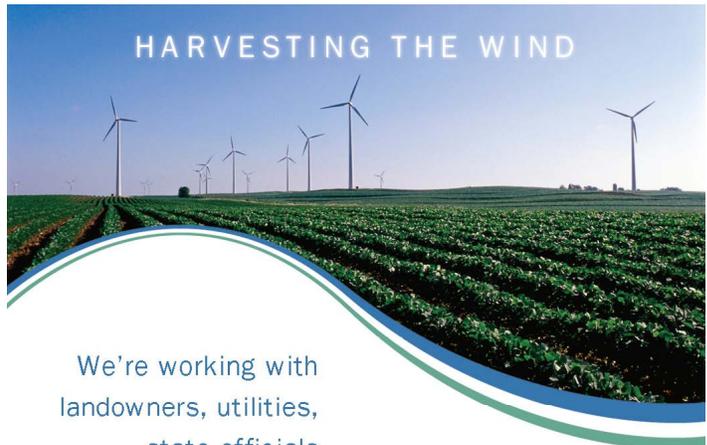


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Counties report projects worth billions ready for stimulus

A NACo snapshot survey of 73 counties from 27 states reported that 2,388 infrastructure projects totaling an estimated \$21.9 billion are “ready-to-go.” The projects would create jobs and stimulate the national and local economies if funded by a new federal economic stimulus package under consideration by Congress.

Counties responding to the survey represent more than 48.9 million U.S. residents or about 16 percent of the population.

NACo conducted the survey in December of ready-to-go projects which would help repair and renovate aging county infrastructure including transportation, water, healthcare and school systems throughout the U.S.

“County governments are poised to play a vital role in stimulating the economy, creating good jobs and providing essential, long-lasting benefits,” said NACo Executive Director Larry E. Naake.

“In this era of shrinking county revenues, increased costs and growing demands for essential services, financial assistance from the federal government to the nation’s 3,068 counties is not only appropriate but critical for economic development and sustainable communities.”

Naake also said federal investment in the nation’s infrastructure should focus on both new and deferred projects that are ready-to-go, meaning the work can begin within 120 days.

Projects in the survey include airports, housing, roads, highways, bridges, clean water, sewer, sidewalks, public transit systems, communications technology, county government buildings and schools.

Because most of America’s infrastructure is built and maintained by counties and cities, NACo is urging the Bush administration, the Obama transition team and Congress to send stimulus funds directly to local government leaders via fair and transparent distribution formula.

“We believe that this is the fastest and most effective way to achieve the intended results of a federal stimulus package,” Naake said.

The survey results do not represent all the nation’s counties’ infrastructure needs, but demonstrate the nature

of projects, the areas of need and the estimated costs to complete.

Key survey responses showed:

- 683 road and highways projects totaling \$9 billion
- 146 bridge projects totaling \$322 million
- 60 public transit system projects totaling \$209 million
- 63 airport construction projects totaling \$386 million
- 177 water system projects totaling \$1.2 billion
- 113 sewage treatment plant projects totaling \$1.3 billion
- 254 school construction projects totaling \$4.3 billion
- 309 county building projects totaling \$2.9 billion, and
- 29 hospital and health clinic projects totaling \$200 million

Local governments own and maintain 75 percent of the more than four million miles of public roads, about 50 percent of the nation’s nearly 600,000 bridges, and manage 90 percent of the public transit systems in the U.S. More than 98 percent of the nation’s investment in water infrastructure has been made at the local level. Local governments also own and operate most U.S. airports.

Visit www.naco.org to review the survey results.

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NACo News



Achievement Award Program applications due next month

NACo's Achievement Awards Program gives national recognition to innovative county government programs which modernize and streamline county government and increase services to its citizens, and applications for the 2008 awards are due Feb. 13.

Begun in 1970 and administered by the Research Division, the annual Achievement Award Program is a non-competitive awards program which seeks to recognize innovative county government programs called County Model Programs. Created as a part of NACo's *New County, USA* campaign, the Achievement Award Program continues to embody the grassroots and local government energy the program was designed to promote. The main emphasis of the *New County, USA* campaign was to modernize and streamline county government and to increase its services to its citizens; goals that are still the main emphasis of the Achievement Award Program today.

County governments across the country, working alone and in cooperation with other governments at the municipal, state and national levels, continue to develop innovative and successful programs in a wide range of service areas, including arts and historic preservation, children and youth, community and economic develop-

ment, corrections, county administration, emergency management, environmental protection, health, human services, libraries, parks and recreation, transportation, volunteers and much more.

For more information, contact Deseree Gardner at (202) 942-4228 or dgardner@naco.org, or fax your inquiry to the Research Division at (202) 737-0480.

Apply now to attend NACo meth forum

NACo, the Association of Arkansas Counties, and the Arkansas Sheriffs' Association is sponsoring a Methamphetamine Prevention Forum in Pulaski County (Little Rock), Ark., on Jan. 23. The forum is designed to educate community teams of county elected officials. The registration fee is \$100 per attendee. For more information, contact Kati Guerra at kguerra@naco.org or (202) 942-4279.

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Around Our Counties

Law Enforcement

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY was not responsible for the adequate defense of a man convicted, then exonerated, of child rape in 1987, according to a federal judge who dismissed a lawsuit filed by the man. Instead, wrote Chief U.S. District Court Judge Richard Cebull in early December, the state was responsible for controlling court-appointed counsel. The lawsuit was filed by former Billings resident Jimmy Ray Bromgard in 2004; he sought \$16.5 million in damages.

GLACIER COUNTY residents accused of beating Commissioner Ron Rides At The Door in September were charged with felony assault with a weapon in December after the case was turned over by the county attorney's office to the state attorney general. The three men, brothers from Cut Bank, allegedly attacked Rides At The Door when he tried to break up a fight outside a Cut Bank bar.

CASCADE COUNTY Attorney Brant Light resigned from office in December following his appointment by then-Attorney General Mike McGrath to the post

of state county attorney training coordinator. Brant, who had two years left on his four-year term, has been county attorney for 14 years. Commissioners later appointed John Parker, deputy county attorney, to serve out the remaining time of Light's term.

Personnel

RICHLAND COUNTY Weed Board member Johnnie Johnston was awarded the 2008 Weed Fighter of the Year award from the Montana Weed Control Association in November. Johnston, a Poplar-area farmer, has served on the board for more than 30 years. The association previously named him Weed Board Member of the Year in 2006.

JEFFERSON COUNTY Library board members in December fired Boulder librarian Cynthia Kreizwald for a variety of offenses, including alleged bad behavior. A 10-year employee, Kreizwald, through a union local president said said she plans to take the matter to arbitration.

SWEET GRASS COUNTY has a new weed control supervisor: Andrew Shirey. The 26-year-old Livingston man, who has a bachelors

degree in animal and range sciences, replaces Stacey Barta and joined the county in December.

Zoning

GALLATIN COUNTY commissioners in early December approved the expansion of gravel pit near Four Corners. It's the second permit granted since May, when citizen concern briefly halted approvals pending emergency interim zoning. Commissioners demanded the Storey Pit's owners meet several conditions before beginning the 67-acre expansion.

FLATHEAD COUNTY commissioners in December approved new subdivision regulations that will review stream setbacks on a case-by-case basis. While setbacks of 20 to 150 feet already are part of the county's zoning law, individual reviews will be conducted on subdivided land after Jan. 15. As at least one-third of the county is not zoned, setbacks are not applicable in those areas.

LINCOLN COUNTY's planning board presented commissioners with its draft county growth policy in December. The 150-page document includes zoning

and impact fees among its six sections. The commission will review the document, then either approve or reject it; if accepted, public meetings will follow in either January or February to solicit further input.

Miscellany

BUTTE-SILVER BOW COUNTY commissioners, in a 10-2 vote, approved a \$130,000 loan to Rocky Mountain Supercomputing Centers in early December. The loan, the first of three to be made over through 2010, will allow for a state-owned IBM supercomputer to be placed in Butte by year-end. The machine will allow Montana businesses, students, and other professionals to perform high-capacity computing.

ROOSEVELT COUNTY's libraries got a \$5,725 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in December to upgrade computers the foundation previously granted to the county. The county received the grant through the foundation's U.S. Library Program, which supports the efforts of public libraries to offer free access to computers, the Internet, and digital information in communities across the U.S.



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Announcements & Reminders

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2009 Holidays

The following is a list of legal holidays in 2009 and the dates they will be observed by most state employees.

Legal holidays

Martin Luther King, Jr., Day
 Lincoln's & Washington's Birthday
 Memorial Day
 Independence Day
 Labor Day
 Columbus Day
 Veterans' Day
 Thanksgiving Day
 Christmas Day

Observed

Mon., Jan. 19
 Mon., Feb. 16
 Mon., May 25
 Fri., July 3
 Mon., Sept. 7
 Mon., Oct. 12
 Wed., Nov. 11
 Thurs., Nov. 26
 Fri., Dec. 25

NOTE: If the holiday occurs on a weekend, the workday closest to the holiday is treated as the holiday for pay and leave purposes.

January

Jan. 5 61st Montana Legislature convenes*
 Jan. 13 Legislative Audit Committee meeting*
 Jan. 13-15 MACo Risk Management Loss Control Conference*

February

Feb. 9-12 MACo Midwinter Conference*
 Feb. 27-28 Legislative Transmittal Break

Upcoming Events

Sept. 20-24 MACo's 100th Annual Conference*

*All meetings are held in Helena unless noted.

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