



Highlights

Page 2

Mark Your Calendars

Page 3

MACo Midwinter Conference Concludes

Page 4

Stress Management

Page 5

County News

Page 6

Who is Doug Kaercher: Profile

Page 7

Judge Abolishes Commission Elections in Two Districts

Page 8

Flathead County Fined for Air-Quality Violations

Pages 9-11

NACo News

Pages 12-13

Thank You MACo Supporters

Pages 14

Conclusions

Advertisements

Page 14

Get 'Er Done Wiest, Lane & Associates Inc., Morrison-Maierle, Roscoe Steel & Culvert, MACo JPIA, Great Plains Towers Inc.

Page 15

Kadmas Lee & Jackson, Stahly Engineering, MACo Property & Casualty Insurance and Workers Compensation Insurance, Robert Peccia & Associates, Joint Powers Trust, MACo Health Care Trust, MACo Risk Management & Training

Goodbye and Good Luck

MACo Past President Doug Kaercher Says Farewell

I am starting my position as a board member on the State Tax Appeal Board on March 1, 2007. This is certainly bitter-sweet – bittersweet in knowing that I am about to enter a new and exciting phase of my life, and at the same time, having to say goodbye to so many good friends.

I have been blessed, truly blessed. Yet thanks to (the grace of God), I managed to blunder through the years to arrive at this point in my life. I would never have made it this far without the help of many of you.

Perhaps the proudest day of my life was being sworn in as MACo president. If there is one thing I have learned it is that you can't do this alone. It takes friends, colleagues and family to move you forward and for me this is especially true.

I've had some wonderful successes here and I've also made some wonderful mistakes. I learned early on to take your work seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously -- few others do. And being the fool I sometimes am, and that life is a learning



Doug Kaercher
MACo Past President

experience, I would probably do it all again, mistakes and all.

Last but not least, I want to thank all of you for allowing me this great opportunity of representing MACo, being my home away from home, and providing me the opportunity to serve you. This experience has allowed me to see County government in a

light that only a few are able to experience. I will always hold a special place in my heart and I offer my best wishes for your continued success.

Always a friend,

Douglas A. Kaercher

See Doug's "Profile in Service"—which was featured in NACo's *County News*—on page 6.



MACo News

Mark Your Calendars

March	
March 1 - 4	Legislative Transmittal Break
March 3 - 7	NACo Legislative Conference, Washington, DC
March 26 - 29	MACRS Annual Conference, Kalispell
April	
April 4	MACo HCT Board of Trustees, 10 am- MACo Conference Room
April 10 - 12	JPIA/JPA Trustees meeting
April 22 - 26	Magistrates Spring Conference
April 25 - 27	NACo RAC Fly-In
April 27	Legislative Sine Die
May	
May 8 - 12	WIR, Fairbanks, AK
June	
June 4 - 15	District meetings (Tentative)
June 10 - 14	Montana Assoc. of Clerk of Courts Annual Conference, Cut Bank
June 18 - 22	Montana Association of Oil, Gas & Coal Counties Annual Meeting, Lewistown (Tentative)
June 20 - 22	Montana Sheriffs & Peace Officers Assoc. Annual Conference, Helena
June 27	MACo Board of Directors Meeting
June 27 - 29	Montana County Attorneys Association Annual Conference, West Yellowstone
July	
July 12 - 18	NACo Annual Conference, Richmond, VA
August	
Aug. 7 - 10	Western Planners Association Conference, Dickinson, ND
Aug. 20 - 24	Montana Clerk & Records Association Annual Conference, Great Falls
September	
Sept. 17 - 19	Montana Treasurers Annual Conference, Missoula
Sept. 23 - 26	MACo Annual Conference, Great Falls
Sept. 30 - Oct. 4	Magistrates Fall Conference

Cost-of-Living for County Officials' Salaries: FY 2007-2008

Pursuant to Montana Code Annotated 7-4-2503 and 7-4-2504 (1991), the cost-of-living adjustment is derived using the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (1982-84=100):

- (A) Annual CIP-U index for CY 2006: 201.6
- (B) Annual CPI-U index for CY 2005: 195.3
- (C) Index point change from 2005 to 2006: 201.6-195.3=6.3
- (D) Percent Change in annual indexes from 2005 to 2006:
 $6.3/195.3=0.032$ or 3.2%
- (E) Cost-of-living adjustment factor—100% of the percent change in the annual index from 2005 to 2006 (effective 7/1/07):
3.2%

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, and email your thoughts to:



Phone:
406.444.4380

macopb@maco.cog.mt.us
or
mail to MACo
News, 2715 Skyway
Drive, Helena, MT
59602-1213.

Annual MACo Association Survey

By Ad Hoc Evaluation Committee

The Montana Association of Counties Administrative Office has experienced a great degree of change in the last 12 months. Several key staff have taken advantage of better opportunities, and we wished them the best at the same time we welcomed new staff to the office. The association continues to grow with your guidance and input.

The annual MACo association survey has received a dismal return in the last few years. We've determined that the time has come for an overhaul. We know how busy and complicated your jobs as elected officials can get, and we appreciate that you value time and efficiency.

This year, MACo will implement the "Survey Monkey" to conduct the annual evaluation. Many commissioners or their staff recently used this tool to complete a land planning survey for the association to use legislatively. The survey response was astounding. The questions will change, and we intend to include ALL elected officials in the same survey. We welcome any input as we evaluate the content of the tool. If you have recommendations regarding the "right questions" or have related association questions that you would like to be included in this year's survey, please contact any member of the committee: Marilyn Hollister, Mack Cole, Ed Tinsley, Cynthia Johnson, or the MACo Office.

MACo is not a stagnant organization. Change and growth happen on a regular basis. We need your help.

Get a Wonderfully Crafted MACo Pin



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Happy Saint Patrick's Day!



A handful of skill is better than a bagful of gold.
~Irish Saying



MACo News

MACo Midwinter Conference Concludes

By Shantil Siaperas, MACo Publications Officer

The MACo Midwinter Conference was held February 15-17 in Helena at the Red Lion Colonial Inn. The event hosted between 125 and 150 participants. The conference's purpose is to be basically a training session for elected officials. This year—being a Legislative year—many Legislative issues were discussed.

The first day included registration and various meetings: Coalition of Forest Counties, all of the MACo Committees, Hard Rock Mining Counties, 6 County Fort Peck Lake Group, Urban Counties, and Board of Directors Dinner. Attendees who were not MACo committee members were invited and encouraged to participate in the meeting of the committee of their choice, leaving no one left out.

Day two revolved around the Road Law Seminar, which consisted of county roads and how they are created; subdivision, dedicated, and private roads; jurisdic-

tion and legal access; how to research county road records and it's importance; road funding; Revised Statute 2477; and historic rights of way. Towards the end of the day, the Oil, Gas & Coal Counties met.

Day three included the 9-1-1 Program, Secondary Roads Capital Construction Program the Department of Commerce, the Montana Voluntary Employee Benefit Association, and NACo membership benefits.

The final day's focus centered on Legislative issues, such as Senate and House Local Government Chairs, and sending conference attendees to the State Capitol for the afternoon, which included lunch with the Legislators.

Spouses were also included in the conference. Their days included speakers, tours of the old Governor's Mansion and St. Helena's Cathedral, and a presentation at Intermountain Children's Home.

All in all, the MACo Midwinter Conference was a smooth success.



Cynthia Johnson, Pondera County and Greg Chilcott, Ravalli County



Tom Lythgoe, Jefferson County



Mike Murray, Lewis and Clark County



Mack Cole, Treasure County and Don McDowell, Powder River County



County officials load the bus to go to the capital and have lunch with the Legislators.

Stress Management

Submitted by Harold Blattie, MACo Executive Director

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers called out ranged from 8oz. to 20oz. The lecturer replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance."

"In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes." He continued, "And that's the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on."

"As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden."

"So, before you return home tonight, put the burden of work/life down. Don't carry it home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you're carrying now, let them down for a moment if you can."

"Relax; pick them up later after you've rested. Life is short. Enjoy!"

And then he shared some ways of dealing with the burdens of life:

- ◆ Accept that some days you're the pigeon, and some days you're the statue.
- ◆ Always keep your words soft and sweet, just in case you have to eat them.
- ◆ Always read stuff that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it.
- ◆ Drive carefully. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their Maker.



◆ If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague.

◆ If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.

◆ It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.

◆ Never buy a car you can't push.

◆ Never put both feet in your mouth at the same time, because then you won't have a leg to stand on.

◆ Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance.

◆ Since it's the early worm that gets eaten by the bird, sleep late.

◆ The second mouse gets the cheese.

◆ When everything's coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

◆ Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.

◆ You may be only one person in the world, but you may also be the world to one person.

◆ Some mistakes are too much fun to only make once

◆ We could learn a lot from crayons. Some are sharp, some are pretty and some are dull, some have weird names, and all are different colors, but they all have to live in the same box.

"A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour."



County News

ELECTED OFFICIALS

HILL COUNTY Commissioner Doug Kaercher's resigned as of February 28. He will be replaced by Mike Wendland.

ANACONDA - DEER LODGE COUNTY Commissioner Peter Kurtz plans to step down from his District 2 Commission seat, close his bicycle sale and repair business and return to Whitefish.

STILLWATER COUNTY Attorney John Petak was hospitalized on Sunday, February 11, after suffering what is believed to have been a stroke.

RAVALLI COUNTY commissioners welcomed a new face with the hiring of a new Deputy County Attorney Alexander Beal of Lolo.

PARK COUNTY commission has appointed a Bozeman Pass-area woman, Traci Isaly, to replace Drew Shirey, who recently resigned from the County Planning Board.

TETON COUNTY'S Deputy Sheriff Mark Grove helped officers bust two alleged drug dealers and seize 3 pounds of methamphetamine, 2.5 pounds of cocaine, \$32,000 in cash, and 3 vehicles.

SUBDIVISIONS

BROADWATER COUNTY commission has approved the master plan for the 1,724-acre Rolling Glen Ranch subdivision, located south of Belgrade. The developers envision it will grow to a community of 6,500 residents of the next 34 years.

LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY commissioners approved a preliminary plat for the proposed 56-lot Lincoln Heights subdivision, located a half-mile west of Green Meadow Drive on Lincoln Road.

ANACONDA - DEER LODGE COUNTY commission approved plans for the 94.45-acre Pintlar Peaks subdivision, located northwest of Anaconda.

MISCELLANEOUS

GLACIER COUNTY commissioners were so impressed with the work being done by Browning Community Development Corporation on the Blackfeet Reservation, they voted to contribute \$20,000 in county funds to its operation.

BEAVERHEAD COUNTY commissioners plan to ask voters yet again to raise their property taxes to help pay for operations in the sheriff's department.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY commissioners approved a 10-year, \$100,000-a-year contract that awards naming rights for the MetraPark Arena to Rimrock Auto Group. Commissioners also approved an agreement with Daktronics Inc., the South Dakota company that will manufacture the large video screens to be installed inside and outside the arena.

JEFFERSON COUNTY commission voted to pay off all the county debt, sav-

ing \$30,462 in interest. The county will pay \$147,430.06 from metal mines trust funds to retire the outstanding debt on the county shop building.

CASCADE COUNTY approved a new work program for nonviolent criminals, so they will be "doing time" on the job—not in a cell. Only offenders with misdemeanor convictions for crimes such as traffic violations and petty thefts will be eligible.

MISSOULA COUNTY commissioners said they support suspending horse racing this year because of inadequate insurance for jockeys. They also said they'll consider helping the fair get through what might be a season of lower attendance and profits.

CHOUTEAU COUNTY Sheriff's office is joining law offices across the nation in an officers trading card program. The cards have the deputy's photo on one side and biographical information on the other.

STOP

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maco@maco.cog.mt.us and
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Telephone Tax Refunds for Government Entities

The IRS stated in IR 2006-82 and Notice 2006-50 that it would stop collecting the excise tax on long-distance telephone service, and provide an opportunity for taxpayers who paid the tax to request refunds. These procedures were established to allow refunds within the statute of limitations to all individuals and organizations that had paid the tax.

The Internal Revenue Service has clarified the procedure for requests for refund of telephone excise taxes by government entities. It was initially indicated that exempt organizations (including governments) would request the refund on Form 990-T, making the calculation of the refund on new Form 8913.

However, government entities are exempt from all telephone taxes for their governmental functions under section 4253(i) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, their refund requests are not covered by the provisions of Notice 2006-50. Any request for refund of telephone excise tax (whether local or long-distance) should be requested on Form 8849, Claim for Refund of Excise Taxes. Government entities should not use Form 990-T to request a refund of telephone tax. Please go to the following link for further information: www.irs.gov/govt/fslg/article/0,,id=168262,00.html.



County News

Who is Doug Kaercher: Profile

(As Seen in NACo's County News)

Douglas Kaercher: Commissioner Hill County, Former MACo Past President, NACo Board of Directors



Number of years active in NACo: five

Years in public service: five years as a city councilman, two years as a county study commission member, 10 years as a county commissioner

Occupation: full-time commissioner

Education: aviation maintenance

The hardest thing I've ever done: making my mother-in-law's casket

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Jimmy Carter, my mother-in-law (deceased) and John F. Kennedy

A dream I have is to: spend a year in Australia.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: am a commercial pilot.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: testify in front

of a Senate subcommittee.

My favorite way to relax is: taking my kids water-skiing.

I'm most proud of: being president of the Montana Association of Counties.

Every morning I read: *The Great Falls Tribune*.

My favorite meal is: pulled pork BBQ.

My pet peeve is: arrogance.

My motto is: "Do your best and people may like it."

The last book I read was: *Wager with the Wind*, by James Greiner.

My favorite movie is: *Lord of the Rings*.

My favorite music is: classic rock.

My favorite president is: Jimmy Carter.

Applications for FFY 2007 Competitive HOME Funds

The application deadline for FFY 2007 HOME grants for multi-family and single-family development projects was February 16, 2007. Local governments and Community Housing Development Organizations were eligible applicants. The Montana Department of Commerce received eight applications requesting \$3,338,051 in HOME funds. MDOC has approximately \$2 million to grant. The eight proposed projects would leverage a variety of other sources of funds for total project costs of \$23,454,457. A summary of each application follows. Grant awards will be announced no later than April 27, 2007.

Sanders County

Hillside Apartments, Plains

HOME Funds Requested: \$113,251

Project Budget: \$405,663

Sanders County is sponsoring a grant application on behalf of the Sanders County Economic Development Council to acquire the Hillside Apartments in Plains, an existing 9-unit apartment complex with eight 2-bedroom units and one 1-bedroom unit for residents with incomes at or below 80% of area median income. HOME

funds are requested to provide "gap financing" for acquisition of this apartment complex to allow the project to remain affordable to residents.

Eastern Montana Association of Affordable Housing Self-Help Housing, Yellowstone and Custer Counties

HOME Funds Requested: \$424,800

Project Budget: \$3,944,128

EMAHAH proposes a Mutual Self-Help program to construct 24 3- or 4-bedroom homebuyer units, with 17 homes in Yellowstone County and 7 homes in Custer County. The new homeowners will provide 1,200 hours of sweat equity (approximately 65% of the labor costs) under qualified supervision. The estimated sale price for each home is \$123,000. HOME funds will provide a maximum \$15,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance to each homebuyer to cover any financing gap at closing. Mortgage financing will be provided by USDA Rural Development's 502 Loan Program. All families receiving HOME assistance will be first-time homebuyers and have annual incomes at or below 80% of the area median income.



County News

Judge Abolishes Commission Elections in Two Districts

By ANTHONY QUIRINI, Ravalli Republic

Incumbent Ravalli County commissioners will not have to compete for their seats this year but will serve out their terms, a judge ruled Tuesday.

Missoula County District Court Judge John Larson ruled that incumbent commissioners will not have to run, saying the Ravalli County Local Government Review Study Commission may have failed to properly inform voters.

Judge Larson granted an injunction to holdover incumbent Commissioners Alan Thompson and Greg Chilcott. Because Commissioner Howard Lyons is unopposed in the partisan field, Larson didn't secure his seat, but said his District 5 seat would be up for election in June.

Additionally, Larson saw sufficient evidence that the study commission failed to inform voters of the ramifications of their recommended changes to county government.

In his preliminary ruling, Larson said the study commission was less than clear in informing voters about the affects of the five changes proposed on the November ballot. Voters opted to pass two recommendations - increasing the number of commissioners to five and shortening their terms to four years.

The preliminary ruling and injunction came after Larson heard oral arguments and testimony from four witnesses last week in Missoula.

The plaintiffs in the suit had three claims, but only one claim was upheld with sufficient evidence - the study commission's failure to inform the electors.

"Although this court will not consider affidavits, there is sufficient evidence in the record to establish an issue that citizens were not informed that if they voted to increase the number of commissioners from three to five while retaining staggered terms, partisan elections and countywide voting, it would abolish the terms of the current commissioners, forcing the seated commissioners to run again," he wrote in a detailed ruling.

"Without reaching a final determination of the issue, the court notes the study commission informed the voters voting against concurrent terms that commissioners would retain staggered terms. Its plan for implementing that choice is less than clear. No explanation is offered to the alternative of simply continuing staggered elections, which is what the voters were asked to change or continue."

Larson said his ruling will "minimize the damage to the voters and citizens of Ravalli County who approved

the increase in the number of commissioners in the special elections."

Representing the 10 plaintiffs in the case, William Ballew said the ruling is a win.

"I would say it is a practical decision by a very intelligent judge," he said. "These guys were hiding this information from the voters - there is no doubt about that. I feel vindicated on that."

Ravalli County Attorney George Corn said Larson crafted a "thoughtful opinion" that upholds the voters' intent to change their form of government by expanding from three commissioners to five with four-year terms.

"If the plaintiffs had been successful it would have left the old system of three commissioners and six-year terms in place, which had obviously been rejected by voters," he said. "It's a win for voters of the county who voted for the change in the structure of the county commissioner office."

Corn also said the judge's ruling was "hugely" significant because it vindicates the rights of residents to change their form of government through the local government review process.

"If the plaintiffs had succeeded, it would have nullified the voters' rights guaranteed by the Montana Constitution," he said.

The final judicial review will determine the validity of procedures followed in the local government review process, which is a review provided by Montana law every decade. Ravalli County voters elected study commissioners to analyze and recommend changes to Ravalli County government.

"(The ruling) will permit full litigation of this case regarding whether or not election of the two holdover seats should proceed or wait until the incumbent commissioners finish out their current six-years terms," Larson wrote.

Meanwhile, five candidates are vying for the District 1 seat, the Florence area, and five candidates are vying for the District 4 seat, representing the Hamilton area.

Reporter Anthony Quirini can be reached at 363-3300 or aquirini@ravallirepublic.com





County News

Flathead County Fined for Air-Quality Violations

By WILLIAM L. SPENCE, *The Daily Inter Lake*

Flathead County has been fined almost \$29,000 by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality for air quality violations related to road dust.

In a Jan. 11 letter, the agency alleged that the county failed to take “reasonable precautions to control emissions of airborne particulate matter” on its gravel roads, as required by state law.

In addition to the fine, the county has until April 1 to submit a written plan and timeline detailing how it intends to reduce dust on county roads; the plan must be implemented within 30 days after it’s approved by the state agency.

The agency offered to suspend \$18,200 of the penalty if the county fully complies with the order. Failure to comply could result in additional fines of as much as \$10,000 a day.

State officials say this is the first time any Montana county has been cited for this type of violation. The violation notice suggests the only reason things reached this point was because previous efforts to resolve the matter were ignored.

“We tried to handle it informally,” said Larry Alheim Jr., an environmental enforcement specialist with the Department of Environmental Quality. “Then we got a little more formal. We issued a warning letter, then we issued a violation letter, letting the county know we might initiate a formal enforcement effort. We didn’t get a response, so the department felt this was an appropriate next step.”

Road dust is a constant source of aggravation for county residents — particularly during the summer, when the Road Department and county commissioners are flooded with complaints.

However, there are several hundred miles of gravel or dirt roads in the valley, and the county doesn’t have the money to pave them all. It can’t offer a permanent solution to the problem, which leaves some irate citizens looking to the state for answers.

“Since 1998, we’ve received 53 complaints regarding road dust in Flathead County,” Alheim said. “Lewis and Clark was the next closest county, with 23 complaints.”

The violation notice indicates that the agency received seven complaints from nine people about excess road dust in the Flathead in 2005. Last year, it received nine complaints from 42 people.

When a complaint comes in, Alheim said, he typically issues an informal warning letter, reminding counties of the “reasonable precautions” rule and asking officials to contact the complainant and try to resolve the issue.

Prior to sending the formal warning letter last summer, he also did an onsite inspection on Jellison, Conn and Trumble Creek roads to verify the complaints.

Flathead County’s Road Department has received at



Flathead Lake, Flathead County Montana

least a dozen informal warning letters in the last two years. It doesn’t have the resources to fix the problem, though, so the letters just go in a drawer. The state’s formal warning letter and violation letter may have inadvertently suffered the same fate.

“I think the view was that the state has been sending us these letters for years, so what’s different?” said Chief Deputy County Attorney Jonathan Smith. “They keep sending us letters, we keep ignoring them, so why stop now? We don’t have the money to cure the problem, so we just put the letters in a drawer and do what we can.”

County Administrator Mike Pence said the violation notice and fine came as something of a surprise, given the history of ongoing complaints.

“We recognize that there’s a problem, but we also recognize that there’s a lack of funding to deal with the problem,” Pence said. “It would have been nice to get a phone call [from DEQ] to talk about the situation.”

Officials here have assumed that complying with the state’s “reasonable precautions” rule means paving roads.

However, Alheim said other counties satisfy the requirement in a variety of ways — including bumping the cost of controlling road dust back onto homeowners or developers.

Some of the more common options, Alheim said, include reducing speed limits on gravel roads; enforcing the existing speed limits; issuing permits to allow homeowners to do their own dust suppression, such as oiling the road in front of their homes; requiring the business or development that’s causing the additional traffic to do dust mitigation; or offering homeowners an opportunity to form

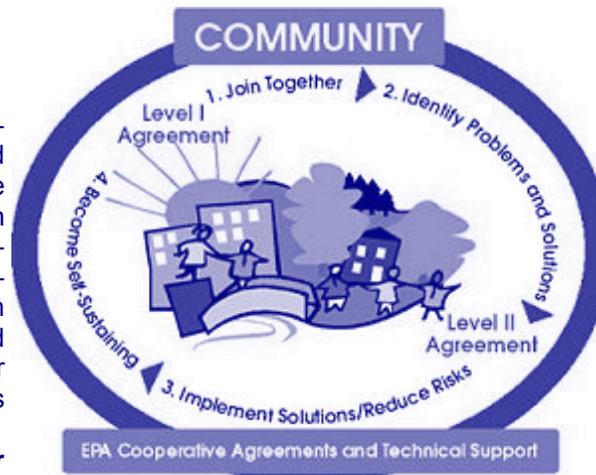
“Flathead” Continued on Page 14 . . .

Community Action for a Renewed Environment: USEPA to Award \$2.7 Million

BY: Kelly Zonderwyk
Community Services Associate,
NACo

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) will award about \$2.7 million in cooperative agreements in two levels through the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program. The CARE program, which began in 2005, helps to build broad-based local partnerships for reducing risks from toxic pollutants that come from numerous sources.

The application deadline for the 2007 CARE Cooperative Agreements RFP is April 9, 2007.



Level 1 Cooperative Agreements help communities:

1. Join together to form a broad-based partnership dedicated to reducing toxics in their local environment. Partners may include non-profit groups, community organizations, businesses, schools, and state, Tribal and local government agencies, EPA, and others Federal Agencies.

2. Identify problems and solutions. Working together, this stakeholder group assesses toxics problems in their community and considers options for reducing risks. EPA technical assistance is available to support this process.

USEPA anticipates awarding eight to ten cooperative agreements under Level 1, ranging from \$75,000 to \$100,000.

Level 2 Cooperative Agreements are for communities that already have established broad-based collaborative partnerships and have completed environmental assessments. (The successful completion of a Level 1 Cooperative Agreement is not required.) Level 2 Cooperative Agreements help communities:

3. Implement solutions and reduce risks. The partnership identifies the combination of programs that best meet the community's needs.

EPA funding helps to implement these projects, and the community begins improving its environment. Throughout the process the partnership continues to reassess risks and their priorities.

4. Become self sustaining. The community now develops new ways to attract funding and partners into their broad-based collaborative to build on its success. New problem assessments are completed and new solutions identified. As a result, the partnership becomes self-

sustaining, and continues to improve their environment where community members live work and play.

USEPA expects to award six to eight cooperative agreements, ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000.

A range of community groups may apply for funding, including county and local governments, tribes, non-profit organizations and universities. USEPA will conduct three conference calls, February 20, 26 and March 1, 2007 for prospective applicants to ask questions about the application process.

The following local governments were recent CARE recipients:

St Bernard Parish Government, Chalmette, Louisiana (2006, Level I)

Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health, Iowa (2006, Level I)

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Washington (2006, Level I)

Oneida County Health Department, New York (2005, Level I)

DeKalb County Health Department, Georgia (2005, Level I)

For additional information about CARE, projects awarded in 2005 and 2006, or how to apply for the cooperative agreements, visit USEPA's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/care> or contact Kelly Zonderwyk at 202.942.4224 or kzonderwyk@naco.org.

NACo's New Peer-to-Peer Network Now Open

NACo's Peer-to-Peer Network —called "Peer Advice" in the County Resource Center — offers information and technical assistance to county officials across the country on county issues and programs. The network is available in the Members Only section of NACo's Web site: http://www.naco.org/MOTemplate.cfm?Section=Members_Only1&Template=/Security/Login.cfm



Annual Smoke-Free Challenge

Exposure to second hand smoke causes serious health effects in children, including bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections, worsened asthma and even sudden infant death syndrome.

To protect children from secondhand smoke, NACo is challenging counties to collect the most signed Smoke-Free pledge cards. The cards ask the signer not to smoke, or

allow others to smoke, around children.

Participating counties will collect pledges from March 1 through May 31, 2007. The first ten counties to collect 500 pledges or more will receive a small stipend to help them continue their efforts.

This year, participating counties may also collect pledges online at NACo's website!

For further details on this new feature and to register your county for the 2007 Smoke-Free County Challenge contact Kelly Zonderwyk at kzonderwyk@naco.org or 202.942.4224. You must register your county to participate by March 31, 2007.

NACo conducts the annual Challenge in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and their Smoke-Free Home Pledge Campaign which focuses on children and secondhand smoke (also known as environmental tobacco smoke).

Remember: You must register your county in order to participate. To do so by the March 31, 2007 deadline contact Kelly Zonderwyk at kzonderwyk@naco.org or 202.942.4224.

National County Government Week

In 2007, the National County Government Week's theme is "Protecting the Environment." Counties can show their residents the many ways they work to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of its citizens in sensible and cost-effective ways. In the activities they plan, counties can present how they encourage energy-efficient commercial development, use fuel-efficient vehicles, promote energy-efficiency in county buildings, recycle paper and other waste, and work to protect the natural environment for their residents.

National County Government Week (NCGW) is an annual celebration of county government. First held in 1990, the goal of county government week is to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation's counties.

There are activities at the national, state and local levels during county government week. More than 1,000 counties annually participate in NCGW by holding a variety of programs and events. These include tours of county facilities, presentations in schools, meetings with business and community leaders, recognition programs for volunteers, briefings on environmental projects, and adoption of proclamations.

To read more about National County Government Week and to download a copy of the 2007 NCGW guidebook, go to NACo's website at www.naco.org.

As always, if you plan activities around this week please let us know!

Contact: Kelly Zonderwyk at kzonderwyk@naco.org or 202.942.4224.

REMINDER: Five-Star Grants for Community-Based Wetland Restoration Projects Deadline

Applications are now being taken for NACo's 2007 Five Star Restoration Challenge Grants (Deadline March 9, 2007).

NACo, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Wildlife Habitat Council, in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are pleased to solicit applications for the Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program. The Five-Star Restoration Program provides modest financial assistance on a competitive basis to support community-based wetland, riparian, and coastal habitat restoration projects that build diverse partnerships and foster local natural resource stewardship through education, outreach and training activities. In 2005, 53 projects out of 220 applications received grants of an average \$10,000. For more information and an application form, click here or go to www.naco.org/fivestar.




The National Association of Counties (NACo), in Partnership with Nationwide Retirement Solutions (NRS), and state associations of counties, provides county employees with a Section 457 Deferred Compensation Program.

Since its inception in 1980, NACo's 457 Deferred Compensation Program has grown to become the largest supplemental retirement program available to county employees.



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Retirement Must Knows

Provided by Nation Wide Retirement Solutions

You don't have to have a PhD in finance to invest for retirement. Common sense and a few simple tips can get you started.

1) This isn't your grandparent's retirement

The days of working your entire life for one employer and getting a nice pension check with health benefits are disappearing. You need to be accountable for your own future. Even though most public sector plans still have a pension, others in your household may not. Additionally, if you change jobs into the private sector, you may lose the full benefit of your pension. Be prepared with your own retirement investments.

2) Free money?

If your (or your partner's) employer offers a matching contribution to its retirement investment plan, and you aren't taking advantage of it, you are leaving a lot of free money on the table. Shame on you. Suppose a matching plan is 50 cents on the dollar up to 6% of your income. Let's assume your annual salary averages \$35,000 over your career. You missed out on \$47,000 in free money. Invested at 8% that could be as much as \$400,000*. *Investment return is not guaranteed and will vary depending upon your investments and market experience.* And of course you'll have to pay ordinary income tax upon withdrawal. Depending on the plan type your partner is invested in, there may also be a 10% penalty on distributions prior to age 59 1/2.

3) Begin as early as you can

Sometimes snowballing out of control can be a good thing. The snowball effect: "before the kids knew it, the snowball grew too big to set on top of the snowman." Did you know at an 8% return, if reinvested, \$100,000 could earn \$8,000 in one year? That's more than double what the average American defers annually in their employer's retirement plan.

\$100,000 sound huge? Not really, assuming the same 8% return, a 20 year old who starts deferring \$50 each week, could have that much by age 38. By age 65 that amount could be over \$1 million. Investment return is not guaranteed and will vary depending upon your investments and market experience. See for yourself with the Future Value Calculator.

4) Don't wait

Get started on your long term investments first. It's in the later years that investment returns may have the most effect. See #3 above, an 8% return on \$10,000 is \$800; at \$100,000, it's \$8,000. Same return, much bigger impact.

Once you have established the good habit of investing for retirement, set goals for short and long term investments like a new car or home.

5) Get your priorities straight

Invest for retirement or save for college? Of course you want to give your kids the best. Take caution! You can get a loan for college, but you can't get a loan for retirement.

6) Mix it up

Going *all in* may be fun in a game of Texas Hold'em, it isn't when it's your life savings. All investments have risk, some more than others. You should have multiple savings and investment accounts. Including bank savings, bonds and stocks (or mutual funds), and mutual funds. You also may want to have taxable investments and tax preferred investments like your deferred compensation plan. Choose investments that fit your lifestyle. We have 2 tools to help, Ibbotson Associates asset allocation modeling and Morningstar® Guidance Online**. Each service has different capabilities, select the one that's right for you.

Ibbotson

- available online and in print
- does not include other investments outside of your plan
- does not consider current account balances and deferral amounts
- does not model possible account growth
- groups investment options and recommends percentages to hold in each category based on risk tolerance and time horizon

Morningstar® Guidance OnlineSM

- available online
- incorporates current balance and deferral rates
- incorporates outside investments, including actual holdings
- takes into account household income (includes spouse)
- uses hypothetical rates of return
- recommends asset mix based on risk tolerance

7) Don't let debt ruin your plans

Sometimes it's feels easier to pay with plastic. You get instant gratification, and you don't have the guilt of taking bills out of your wallet that you know could be put to better use. Do what your grandparents did, save up for purchases. That time period will also give you time to think about whether that MP4 handheld music and video player is really something you need.

8) Team up

Just like trying to quit smoking, dieting or exercise, it's easier when you have encouragement and support. Share your goals with your closest friends and family. Get them to join you setting better habits. Together you can all work toward a more secure future.

Form Number NRW-0812AO

* assumes a career span of 45 years.

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Conclusions

Flathead: Continued From Page 8

a rural special improvement district to pay for paving the road.

Pence said Flathead County is pursuing several of these alternatives. For example, it recently formed four special improvement districts, at the request of the affected homeowners, and it's hoping to convince homeowners in the Creston and Lower Valley areas to form their own improvement districts later this year.

The districts typically sell bonds to pay for road or infrastructure improvements. Homeowners living within the district are then assessed an annual fee to pay off the bond.

(Property owners have the right to protest the formation of an improvement district, as well as the amount of the assessment. However, most new subdivisions approved by Flathead County in the last year or so included waivers that prohibit homeowners or developers from protesting the formation of a district.)

"I think improvement districts will be a major part of the [road dust] solution," Pence said. "They're an opportunity for property owners to improve the value of their land

and to improve their quality of life."

The county is working on other alternatives as well, such as impact fees for new subdivisions.

Homeowners in some rural areas have suggested that the county should simply stop approving new subdivisions until the developers or county can afford to pave the roads. The commissioners occasionally discuss that idea, but have never seriously considered it.

Moreover, the success of the special improvement district option may depend on new subdivisions and their waivers of protest, which could be used to offset protests from existing homeowners.

Smith said Flathead County intends to appeal DEQ's violation notice, as provided for by law. It will lay out the various options available to county residents for controlling road dust, in hopes of working out a settlement with the state and reducing the fine.

A date for the appeal hearing hasn't yet been set.

Reporter Bill Spence may be reached at 758-4459 or by e-mail at bspence@dailyinterlake.com

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