

# Beartooth Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.

## Joliet, Montana

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### **2015 Success Stories**

**Brief 2015 Project Summaries are included here to recap our efforts in 2015:**

Crow Agency Rest Area: Beartooth RC&D is fulfilling the role of liaison for this project, which has now moved beyond the site selection and preliminary site layout phases. This is a collaborative development project including the Crow Tribe, MT Dept. of Transportation, and National Park Service. Participating parties are working towards the potential co-location of a Crow tribal museum, State of MT Rest Area, and Little Big Horn Battlefield Visitor's Center.

BillingsWorks Workforce Council: As reported earlier in this annual update, a full-time workforce coordinator has been hired to implement the strategic goals of this project that was initiated during 2014. Big Sky Economic Development is the lead agency in this effort and they have also launched a recruitment website similar to the state of Montana's site to further encourage employee relocation to the region. This is an initiative we are looking forward to be involved with since it has such a big impact on underemployment issues in the Billings area.

Red Lodge's Old Roosevelt School: Beartooth RC&D had received a \$15,750 Big Sky Trust Fund planning grant to assist with the hiring of a consultant to conduct a feasibility study for Red Lodge's Old Roosevelt School. The consultant delivered his final report to the committee in December of 2015 and the Red Lodge School District is now better able to make a determination as to the potential reuse of Old Roosevelt. Beartooth continues to assist with this project as a member of the Advisory Committee.

Big Timber Resource Team Assessment – One Year Celebration: On a particularly blustery night and following day in early December, key members of the community along with two of the original assessment team members, Beartooth's economic development director, and several State of Montana employees came together in Big Timber to celebrate the one-year anniversary of their community assessment. The event was intended to recap milestones achieved during 2015 and reinvigorate efforts to move forward with various priorities identified by the community. It was a well-attended and upbeat event that will likely initiate a few new projects during 2016.

Montana Main Street Project: Beartooth staff attended the Governor's Workforce Summit in Bozeman to learn more about activities happening throughout the state and networking with workforce sector resources. As a result of attending the summit, we are exploring the possibility

of encouraging the creation of industry sector groups in our service region, including specialty manufacturing and potentially an ag-based sector group.

C&K Meats: This is a family owned and operated state inspected meat processing facility in Forsythe, MT. Beartooth FADC staff continues to work with them and assist this business in developing a Growth Through Ag grant for a business expansion. They made a successful presentation to the Growth Through Ag committee on November 17<sup>th</sup>. The business secured funding to purchase \$50,000.00 in equipment to assist their business growth.

Story Mill: Dan Story in Laurel works for safflower technologies buying and sourcing specialty crops and oilseeds for producers in Montana. He and his wife have decided to start their own business milling some specialty grains and pressing oil seeds for sale locally. They have been working on the upgrading their facilities and installing their equipment for seed processing. The business was awarded \$8,000.00 from the Growth Through Ag program.

One Montana: This Company, headquartered in Bozeman completed a feasibility study for a new multi-species (primarily beef and bison) meat processing facility to be located in Montana and they needed assistance to apply for grant funding to develop a business prospectus for the proposed project. Beartooth was able to assist in grant preparation to fund this phase of the project in the amount of \$6,500 from Big Sky Trust Fund.

Stillwater County Branding: Marissa Hauge, with Stillwater County Economic Development approached Beartooth late in the year to request assistance with the facilitation of two branding workshops. These were held in November and December and we are looking forward to further involvement in this project during 2016. By developing a cohesive brand they will be able to better market and promote the County to visitors and potential new residents and businesses while being able to make better decisions as to where and why to spend their limited marketing dollars to ensure better results.

Rocky Fork Food Hub: Rocky Fork Food Hub based in Red Lodge, MT is a small business that provides a service marketing locally produced foods to consumers seeking local foods via a website that is constantly updated. In 2014 we assisted the group in securing grant funding through USDA to assist them in marketing to both their producers and consumers for their business. The consultant delivered a new logo, Facebook page and marketing materials for the project in 2015.

Coal Country Coalition: Early in the 2015, our region began to take action to address potential impacts caused by pending changes in the regulation of coal mining and generation in Montana. The Corette Plant in Billings was mothballed in February and taken down at the end of the year. As a result of this closure and other indicators from our region and surrounding areas, we made a decision to become a partner in a Coal Country Coalition in order to take proactive steps to gain a better understanding of just what could potentially happen that would negatively impact our region, especially in terms of job outmigration. Beartooth was the lead agency in securing half of the funding needed to commission an impact study to look at the economic footprint of coal, assess workforce skill sets and develop strategies to minimize potential negative impacts. We were able to secure \$50,000 in funding from The Big Sky Trust Fund and have submitted an

application to EDA for the balance of the project funding. We hope to have this project underway in the second quarter of 2016.

Infrastructure Working Group: During the Fall Montana Economic Development Association (MEDA) conference held in Billings, an afternoon session “Call to Action” was devoted to a discussion on infrastructure deficiencies and sources of funding and what we might be able to do to increase infrastructure investment throughout the state. Beartooth’s economic development director is part of the working group that continues to address this vital issue.

Lockwood TEDD: Beartooth partnered with Big Sky EDA on this project to address the need for planned industrial space in the Lockwood neighborhood east of Billings. During 2015, we assisted in securing the funding package to hire a consultant to prepare planning documents for the Commissioners’ consideration. Early in the project it became evident that additional funding would be necessary in order to complete the scope of work. This was accomplished and the Steering Committee was able to come to a decision as to which firm to hire for the project. Contract documents were completed at the very end of the year and the work is scheduled to be completed during the first half of 2016.

Custer-Gallatin Working Group: Beartooth continues to provide support services to this collaborative working group in the form of meeting facilitation and coordination, website maintenance, fiscal management and planning. The members of the working group represent a total of nine counties and the monthly meetings are generally held in Bozeman. During the course of 2015, the group worked towards the development of a more cohesive effort and realized the importance of ongoing communication.

The Pub at Billings Central Catholic High School: Beartooth was contacted by the Montana Department of Commerce to take part in a “Shark Tank” type review of a student run business located in the school. The enterprise is an ongoing initiative, but the students graduate out of the business each year. Near the beginning of the school year, the students have to make a presentation worthy of receiving seed money for the academic year. Beartooth’s economic development director took part in the presentation this fall and it was a good experience for all parties. As economic developers we don’t always have the opportunity to cultivate student entrepreneurship, but this was a refreshing exception.