

# MACD LEGISLATIVE AD HOC COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES from the  
Friday, 18th December 2020 ZOOM



*"In necessariis unitas, in non-necessariis libertas, in utrisque caritas."*

*"In essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity."*

RUPERTUS MELDENIUS, probably 1627

I read this quote over the same weekend I drafted these minutes. It seems to me an appropriate way for Conservation Districts and MACD to operate, especially during a Legislative Session. It acknowledges the independence of each of the 58 Districts to address the natural resource needs of their lands and waters. It sets a goal on how we should treat each other. It makes us think of the big picture. The obvious unifier we see in front of us this Session is the fight for the 2022/23 DNRC budget. This will be an uphill climb for us but we're focusing on it and I've seen what Districts can do when we're all pulling in the same direction. On to business...

1. The zoom began at 7:02 AM. Committee Members in attendance included Jim Simpson, Dean Rogge, Greg Jergeson, and Steve Schanaman. Others in attendance included Jeff Ryan, Ray Beck, Mark Bostrom, Jane Holzer, Liv Holt, Cole Mannix, Andrew Kretschmer, Autumn Coleman, Dan Rostad, Hailey Graf, Laura Nowlin, Roddy Rost, Tahnee Benson, Julie Ralston, and Rebecca Boslough. The zoom was staffed by Jeff Tiberi.
2. Jim welcomed Ray Beck, who has been engaged by Yellowstone Conservation District for the Session, and invited him to continue participating in these meetings, as well as the use of the MACD office should the need arise.
3. The Committee approved the minutes of the 20th November 2020 LAHC conference call.
  - a. Tasks follow up from those minutes:
    - i. TASKS NOT COMPLETED
      1. WSA letter to Congressional delegates - ltr drafted but not yet sent. Rebecca was thinking of separating this letter to an introduction followed by another letter addressing the WSA issue. With the recent news that the Montana Stockgrowers Association passed a resolution specifically addressing Hidden Pasture WSA, a third letter may be in order.
      2. DNRC budget flowchart - Jeff said that he would try to work on this but his time is tighter and tighter with all the bill drafts on line. See below for details.
    - ii. TASKS COMPLETED
      1. Legislative packet was updated and is on the website.
      2. A letter was sent to Governor-elect Gianforte and Transition Manager Mike Milburn ref CD representation should additional Covid-19 funds be received from the federal government. We'd like to be at the table to help with decisions regarding the use of those funds should they materialize. MACD is seeking input from the Districts regarding ideas for specific projects and programs that we could use should Governor-elect Gianforte accept our offer of help. Jeff thinks that "green strings attached" will be a criteria for

these funds. Any ideas we can provide will meet this criteria, coming from our background of an 80+ year focus on natural resources.

3. The MACD Board of Directors approved the LAHC recommendation to support the Floodplain Legislative Resolution on the Board's 14th December zoom. Jeff Ryan thanked the LAHC and the Board.
4. The Board also concurred with the "float" approach to the Meet and Greet date recommended by the LAHC, based on unfolding circumstances.
5. Postcard request update - Two Districts have sent congratulatory postcards to members of the Legislative leadership teams.
6. Soil Health Bill - The MACD Board voted to support the LAHC recommendation of testifying as an information witness regarding this bill. Cole Mannix, the coordinator of team building for this effort, detailed more information to the LAHC about the history of this effort. Stephanie Adams prepared draft testimony that is now under review, and thanks goes to her.

iii. STANDING ITEMS

1. Supervisor election law - Jeff had a conversation with Representative Karjula, the sponsor of this bill, and let her know that MACD President Jim Simpson was interested in testifying as a proponent.
2. I-190 update - Pot Poll update - Jim reported on a recent email he received from Rebecca tallying the votes received so far. There seems to be significant support to try to tap into this funding source. Jim would like to know more details from those Districts that oppose this potential funding source. Note that \$43 million has been added to Governor Bullock's executive budget to account for expected revenues from this initiative.
3. There were nearly 3,000 bill draft requests as of Thursday, 17th December. 160 of those have moved into a bill draft.
4. A MACD Preference List has been established. This list has all the bills we have to pay attention to. Jeff offered the LAHC the log in codes, but there were no takers. The MACD Preference List has eight pages of bills gleaned from those 3,000 bill draft requests. We don't know how many could have an impact on Districts, but each has to be looked at. Some, of course, will never be

introduced. Jeff thanked Laurie Zeller for her help populating that list.

4. New Business:

- a. 2021 weekly meetings - The LAHC will start weekly meetings on Tuesday, 12th January, 2021, at 7:00 AM. The meetings will always be on a Tuesday, but Jim said that if there were no agenda items to cancel them. All are welcome. Jim asked that the agenda be brief, and said that for bills that are obviously positively impacting CDs we will move ahead without seeking input from the Districts. This would include bills such as HB 6 and HB 7, the two bills that provide grant dollars to the Districts. He said when we see bills that are questionable, we will seek CD input.
- b. Conservation District FY22/23 funding moved into the General Fund - Mark Bostrom explained the ins and outs of moving the coal severance tax CD revenue source in its entirety to the general fund, and funding the CDs entirely from the general fund. As of today, the CDs are funded in the executive budget from the general fund. The new executive could change this, however. Mark said that he would be meeting with the executive's senior budget officer early next week about this issue. He may have a better idea of what the transition looks like after that meeting. This may be the most important piece of news in these minutes. Note that Governor-elect Gianforte's new budget must be finalized no later than 7th January 2021.
- c. MACD Resolutions Update
  - i. Flathead Resolution - Hailey Graf - A bill draft request - **LC 2292** - has moved this MACD Resolution forward. Hailey said she will continue to monitor this resolution.
  - ii. Pallid Sturgeon - Jeff Pattison - No report.
- d. **SB 20** - River Basin Advisory Council bill draft - <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/billpdf/LC0634.pdf> - Mark Bostrom, Dan Rostad and Liv Holt. There was a lengthy discussion about this bill. The LAHC asked that we continue to monitor this bill and gather more information.
- e. **HB 6** - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RENEWABLE RESOURCE GRANT AND LOAN PROGRAM:: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/billpdf/LC0460.pdf> Recommend support. Nine Districts are named in this bill, and it contains many other grant programs for CDs. The Committee agreed.
- f. **HB 7** - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECLAMATION AND DEVELOPMENT GRANTS PROGRAM: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/lhtml/LC0462.htm> Recommend support. Three CDs are named in this bill. The Committee agreed.

- g. **HB 30** - AN ACT REVISING PROVISIONS RELATED TO CONSERVATION DISTRICT VACANCIES: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/lhtml/LC0567.htm>  
Recommend support. The Committee agreed.
  - h. **SB 40** - AN ACT ADDING MEMBERS TO THE MONTANA INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/lhtml/LC0360.htm> Adds Livestock and the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission as members of the Invasive Species Council. Recommend support. The Committee agreed.
  - i. A question arose about the role of the MACD Board of Directors concerning LAHC actions - should all actions by the LAHC go to the full board for approval, or is having the president and vice president of MACD on the LAHC sufficient? See item 3 (a) above for Jim's thoughts about this.
  - j. Session rumors and misc items -
    - i. There will be an in person Session starting 4th January 2021.
    - ii. There were 27 applicants for the DNRC Director position, with 6 highly qualified candidates rising to the surface. There were 40 applicants for the DEQ Director position, with 6 highly qualified candidates rising to the surface. We are expecting announcements next week.
    - iii. The Wyoming legislature postponed the start of their biennial session by two months.
5. Comments from conference call participants not on the LAHC: None
6. Open mic:
- a. Jeff was asked to look into the LWCF program as a possible funding source for Districts. Jeff Pattison initially mentioned this idea last week. Autumn said that she understands there is a new program in LWCF concerning groundwater. (UPDATE: Jeff Tiberi contacted Sunni at NACD Northern Plains and asked for her help finding the details. Sunni has already contacted the NACD Washington, D.C. office with an inquiry.)
  - b. A survey will be sent to the Districts asking about how we select the MACD Convention location. One of the options is to have the convention in Helena every odd numbered year to coincide with the Session. The pros and cons of this were briefly discussed.
  - c. A few weeks ago, DNRC mentioned the possibility of seeking funds in **HB 3**. This bill is typically used to fill revenue and funding shortfalls in the current fiscal year (ending 30th June 2021) should there be dire needs. It is not known how low CARDD revenues will be this fiscal year, as coal tax receipts arrive at the end of each quarter. But right now they look to be lower than the levels predicted, especially since three out of the four coal companies in Montana have declared bankruptcy. Right now this bill does not have any funding for CARDD to get

them through the current fiscal year. MACD is looking to DNRC for details as this unfolds, so we can help if need be. The sponsor of this bill is from the Bitterroot, and we were thankful that Julie Ralston was on the call to hear this first hand.

- d. There are discussions about the sage grouse program being moved from DNRC to FWP under the new Administration. This is third hand information.
  - e. MACD has two lobbyists registered for the Session - Rebecca and Jeff.
  - f. MACD is still seeking information about the recently appointed Natural Resource Advisor to the Governor - Michael Freeman - and will request a meeting with him as soon as possible. MACD will also seek a meeting with the new DNRC Director once that name is public.
7. The zoom adjourned at 9:00 AM. The next zoom is scheduled for Tuesday, 12th January,, 2021 at 7:00 AM.