

MACD Education Committee Meeting
February 24, 2021
10 am Via Zoom Conferencing

Committee Members: Elisha Dempsey, Melissa Downing, Tony Barone, Rick Van Dyken, Bill Naegeli, Bob Petermann, Pam Liggett, Tom Dobberstein, and Greg Jergeson

Committee members in attendance were: Elisha Dempsey, Bob Petermann

Also in attendance were: Chris Evans, Laura Johnson (WSCC), Renee Nelson, Dave Martin, Eric Rannestad, Bobbi Vanattan, Diane Black, Mary Hendrix, Brandee Fladstol, Radley Watkins, Jeff Torano, Julie Goss, Amy Yoder, Andrew Kretschmer, Samantha Tappenback, Connor Mertz, Tahnee Benson, Kay Webb, Sarah Bowman, Amy Personette, Rebecca Boslough, Jeff Ryan, Stephanie Adams, Audra Bell, Robbie Savelkoul, Sarah Bowman, and Tom Nelson.

Between 25 and 29 were on the call

The meeting was called to order by Elisha Dempsey. There was no quorum, so the minutes will be approved at a later meeting.

David Martin gave a recap of the last meeting and what was discussed as far as the marketing presentations and past efforts for Conservation Districts in Montana.

Laura Johnson from the Washington State Conservation Commission presented to the group about what the state of Washington has been doing on outreach and marketing for the Conservation Districts in Washington. They no longer wanted to be considered a "best kept secret".

Smart approach to communication investments--planning process to get to a product. Following trends on how to do outreach is fast, but doesn't always get the results that you wanted. It isn't always worth the investment of money or time that was put into the product.

What's the problem? Washington identified that they no longer wanted to be a best kept secret. They'd been working hard doing outreach etc., but wanted to know why it wasn't working for them. They identified 3 hurdles, Capacity, Coordination and Cohesion. What can they leverage to fix the problems/challenges? With 45 Districts, ranging from 1 staff person to more than 20 they have a good group of CD employees. The CDs all have board members. This makes quite a team of people who are passionate about conservation.

Technology, Skilled staff and supervisors, passion=priority, willingness to share, capacity with the Conservation Commission, strength in numbers, common goals.

Formation of CPO-the Communication, Partnership and Outreach Group.

CPO membership--they wanted their members to be representative of all CDs, both staff and supervisors, from the different geographic regions, CDs of different capacity levels and they wanted landowner and land user representation. They included a representative from their state association, and someone from their Conservation Commission, as well as administrative support. They met monthly and have been for about 10 years. They've only had a couple of in-person meetings that were more formal and have met virtually otherwise.

Toolkit for leveraging assets:

1st step was creation of the CPO

2nd step was to create the toolkit for marketing hosted on the Conservation Commission's foundation/branding platform with key messages, branding and imagery for unifying promotion of CDs across state

Resource building, creating templates, trainings and other resources that meet priority CD marketing needs

Resource sharing--share templates and materials already created by SCC/CDs

Jeff Ryan asked what the Washington State Conservation Commission is. Laura said it's an independent small state agency that helps coordinate and fund conservation districts (so, sort of like what the Conservation Districts Bureau was set up to do). They administer state funds, help with operational support and promote CDs across the state. Jeff Ryan asked how much their state Fish and Wildlife are involved. They are an associate and are represented as an associate member of the CC board.

Laura extended an invitation to plagiarize anything in their marketing toolkit that is helpful to Montana's process.

scc.wa.gov/cd/marketing-toolkit

The Marketing Toolkit is organized under 5 tabs:

Branding

Instruction on how to use, color palette, logo, and tagline for the CDs of Washington State

Media and Events Messaging

Elevator Pitch

"Mad Libs" for Elevator pitch and word library--one that can be tailored to the individual conservation district community. *gives me the shivers*

Talking points about voluntary programs

Worksheet for capturing testimonials for landowners and partners-list of 10 questions to help draw out the story without coaching the person providing the testimonial.

Outreach tab

Tips to engage elected officials and decision makers

Funding for Technical assistance: What is it for and why is it important?-one sheet flyer for

collaborative partners.

List of 10 ways conservation districts can help you-visual/teaser used at tabling events etc.

Last tab is photos and graphics-this has created a repository of images and graphics that any of the CDs can use without worrying about copyrights.

Photo library built with photo contests, almost 1200 photos, free for CDs to use, all taken by CDs or staff at the CC, organized and tagged. Can be used on websites or marketing materials.

Visual equivalents for conservation measure--visual way to provide context for non-conservation audience.

So How do We Know it Worked?

Basic measures:

Recruiting/retaining members of the CPO

Around 50% are still the original and founding members

Consistently adding new members by request--not having to recruit

Support from leadership?

Support for CPO is included in annual and long range plans

agency, association and individual CDs call upon and coordinating with CPO for marketing related issues

Higher level-

Planning, investment, effort and time--85% of CDs are using marketing and toolkit resources

Marketing toolkit page is among the most visited on the CC website

Seeing the color palettes, logos etc. being used. Some CDs created own logos with the color palette. It's working for very different CDs.

At the state level they're also using the color palette to present and on annual reports etc.

25% increase in annual report views after sending direct emails to legislators, average view time was more than 8 minutes.

Other metrics:

2020 photo contest--after just a

few months: 10% increase in likes

26% increase in followers

Squishier metrics

Budget-State budget, in spite of pandemic, was really good and more promising in the governor's proposed budget

Comments by legislators--more favorable

Inclusion in new policies/programs

Scrutiny-something to be aware of and plan for--their CD board members aren't on the general ballot in Washington, so not many people participate. It's come under scrutiny. Media coverage--more districts are in the media--she gets automatic alerts

Some lessons learned

1. Identify challenges and leverage assets to address them a. We have more than we realize with supervisors and staff
2. Consistent commitment to plan and process
 - a. Coming together and determining process and not let it go by the wayside
 - b. They have split into 2 different groups, there's a separate k-12 education group that has its own consistent plan and process in place
3. Keep the group manageable-12-15 people per month at meetings consistently there and that they're representative of all the CDs.

Jeff Ryan said when she mentioned assets--how did they find out the capabilities of Supervisors and Staff?

They formed before Laura was at the commission, but at the all-District budget planning meeting, they realized that this was something they wanted to do, so they had a conversation about forming the CPO, with a sticky note chart on the wall that people signed up for. Since then, they just send out regular communications to CDs about what they're doing. She always mentions the group at meetings and such.

Radley Watkins asked if the success is judged by the success of the Statewide WSCC or on how effective the tools were for the individual districts. He asked if there's a way to measure how individual CDs found success using the tools. Laura said that Palouse was a CD that started using more icons in their newsletter and using the equivalency tools, the program that they're using (RCPP) secured match more easily in order to extend. Legislators are repeating their stories and talking points. Clark CD never really had defined branding and recently adopted the color palette. It's early, but they've had an increase in engagement. It's hard to tie that right now to the changes, but time will tell. They are seeing signs of it being helpful for CDs in securing funding.

Eric Rannestad asked her to talk a bit about strategy and methodology in setting the messaging, colors etc. His concern is that without a broad consensus, it would be hard to get CDs to utilize the tools. Two things: Why they started there--going back to best kept secret, they found that a lot of the partners and legislators didn't realize that their CD was one of 45, that CDs were actually in existence not only across the state, but across the country. There wasn't an understanding of the network of service providers

in existence. They felt like that was part of the problem. The branding of the Washington State CDs would help them tell that story. It underlined that they were all connected across the state. 2nd-in terms of buy-in, having representation from across the state was most important. The representatives would go back to their areas and get feedback and take it back to the committee. By having 12-15 CDs on the committee, they buy into it, neighboring CDs see that and become interested. Districts themselves become the spokespeople for using the toolkit.

Dave Martin brought up audiences and how they're different from area to area. Is there a way they market this to such a broad audience? Laura said that this is where having representation in the group is so important. Especially in the elevator pitch section, identifying the words that drive away audiences. Using the mad lib and word bank gives flexibility to the local level. Generalized profiles of the different growers and other audiences, they've filled out the types of things they tend to care about and barriers they see to participation with CDs. Basically, evaluating how barriers and concerns affect how the message should be delivered.

It was requested that Laura go through the marketing toolkit on the website. She went through the tabs on the site and specifically talked about the Positioning Statement that they did, before they got to the elevator pitch. The group thanked Laura for her time and effort.

Scholarships--Applications have been emailed out to the MACD committee members. There's no quorum today so no action can be taken.

Updates from DNRC and MACD

Mary Hendrix was on the call to report on DNRC's happenings. They just had a deadline for grant applications. 11 out of the 13 applications were focused on education issues. They are working on scheduling the RCAC meeting, it will probably be the last week of March. Grant awards will still be dependent on HB374. They had their first supervisor training. Module one covered CARDD and MACD resources to provide supervisors with the tools to find resources if they have the time and need. They had about 15 supervisors on the training and about 12 employees and 3 people from other organizations. It was recorded and is under the supervisor tab: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/conservation-districts/documents-trainings> .

They're planning the next training for supervisors, and a 310 training as well as water reservation training. DNRC staff is participating in the funders breakout for the MWCC annual meeting on Friday.

Stephanie Adams with MACD said there's nothing specific today, but she'll be on the MWCC annual meeting funders section during their annual meeting as well.

Legislative update-Mary Hendrix said there's a shortfall and the HB 374 that she referenced earlier is a "fix" for the shortfall. HB 6, 7, 8 and 14 are all tracking through the legislature at the moment. On a side note for legislation, the updates from Jeff Tiberi have been re-formatted and look really good.

New funding applications- None so far.

Upcoming Trainings

EO QuickBooks Training-March 3rd-5th from 10 am to noon each day. New Supervisor Training-Module 2

Bob Petermann said the last MACD meeting, they were discussing the new postcards that were made based on actual CD photos. Jeff and Rebecca have sent out postcards for CDs to use for communicating with the legislators. Inside the mailing there's an idea sheet on how they're to be used. CDs can write their personal notes on them and send them into their legislators and it's meant to be one way of many in how we communicate with them.

Bob also talked about the importance of getting members of the CD on the Planning Boards, Chamber of Commerce boards, Fair Boards etc. State statute requires a seat on the Planning Boards to be reserved for the Conservation Districts.

Elisha asked Dave about what's next with the Marketing/Outreach-He'd like to get Elisha, Chris and himself to get together to figure out what's next with that.

The next meeting will be

The meeting adjourned at 12:04 pm.

Links shared during the Zoom call:

https://mt-gov.zoom.us/rec/share/8k59UIV9nL6Jp_YLmeDryBVPy8z5JkwvGBi4Zh4GIXUVq1hMLMRkLCIzaTduwxvU.-ZOIwyexqjODUTSL

use Access Passcode: Yi1AEA*m

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/docs/cd-new/22021SUPERVISORTRAININGMODULE1RESO URCES.pdf>

https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0760/chapter_0010/part_0020/section_0110/0760-0010-0020-0110.html