

# MACD Executive Directors Report

## for 4/12/21 Board Meeting

### Legislature and Advocacy

MACD has been advocating for conservation district funding in the 2021 Montana State Legislature, alongside many other issues impacting districts.

- The Governor signed [HB 374](#), which addresses the funding shortfalls from coal severance tax. Specifically, HB 374 will provide a \$1,000,000 fix for this current fiscal year as well as funding for the next biennium. This means that [DNRC CARDD](#) (which includes the Conservation Districts Bureau) will have full funding for the first time in several years, which means that funding to Districts (Admin grant, 223 grants etc) will NOT be impacted by coal tax shortfalls. *MACD has been working hard on HB 374, and this is a HUGE WIN for Districts!* There is a two year sunset on this bill, which makes HJ 27 (see below) very important for districts.
- [HJ 27](#) is a bill to study conservation district funding. This bill was introduced at the end of March and had a hearing on March 31st. MACD will be pushing this bill, as it is important to find a long term solution for CD funding given declining revenues from the coal severance tax.
- [HB 632](#) deals with the distribution of some of the ARPA ([American Rescue Plan Act](#)) money. CD's are not currently named under local government in the bill, so MACD has been working alongside other entities (irrigation districts etc) to get this definition changed through an amendment. MACD is also lobbying to restore funding for the St. Mary's project, which was unfortunately removed from the bill abruptly as of 4/6/2021.

Other bills MACD has been supporting include a Resolution on floodplain permit process, establishing an interim committee on soil health (did not pass), a Joint Resolution regarding the St. Mary and Milk River Project, and a Pull the Plug Bill related to aquatic invasive species (AIS). As the session has progressed, the number of bills that MACD is monitoring has dramatically decreased.

### Meeting with Director Kaster on 3/22/2021

Jim Simpson, Dean Rogge, Rebecca Boslough, and Jeff Tiberi met with Director Kaster on Monday 3/22 at the Director's request. Director Kaster wanted to talk about services CARDD provides to districts, the Return on Investment (ROI) document for the Budget Director, the relationship between MACD and districts, and Director Kaster's focus on having a close working relationship with DEQ, FWP, and other agencies. Director Kaster would like to continue these meetings. Director Kaster is very interested in how CD's can be supported by CARDD, as well as other parts of DNRC and other state agencies.

## **Annual MACD Events:**

### Spring Board Meeting

The MACD Spring Board Meeting is planning for June 7-9th in Helena. We have a block of rooms at Jorgenson's and have reserved the Old Senate Chambers (room 303). They have not yet opened up reservations for the rotunda, but when they do we will try to make a reservation for that area for lunches.

### Area Meetings

Area Meetings will take place at the end of September and beginning of October. A full schedule for MACD Meetings in 2021 can be found on the website here: [https://macdnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-MEETING-CALENDAR\\_updated-3.29\\_v2-1.pdf](https://macdnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-MEETING-CALENDAR_updated-3.29_v2-1.pdf)

- The District Operations Committee is working on updated guidance for Area Meeting planning, as District hosts should begin planning for Areas Meetings soon. Additionally, both DNRC Director Amanda Kaster and the Governor's Natural Resource Advisor Michael Freeman are interested in attending Area Meetings, so Area Hosts should make sure to extend an invitation to them. Rebecca Boslough has sent them the Area Meeting dates and can help facilitate these invitations if needed.

### 2021 Convention in Great Falls

At this time, we are planning for an in-person convention. The 2021 MACD Annual Convention is scheduled to be held in Great Falls at the Heritage Inn the week of November from November 16th to the 18th, with an MACD Board Meeting the morning of the 19th. The Convention Planning Committee is currently meeting every two weeks.

## **MACD Operations**

### Merger

MACD and SWCDM were legally merged as of January 1st, 2021. We are now in the nitty gritty process of completing legal and financial steps of the merger. We are planning to have all steps of the merger completed by the 2021 Convention at the latest, including a new website!

- Additionally, I am now the signatory for MACD contract and agreements that were formally for SWCDM (now the Programs Committee)

### Other items of note

- There is an updated calendar on the MACD website. Please let an MACD Staff member know if you would like to submit any events.
- The MACD Staff each developed job descriptions, which will be reviewed by the Personnel Committee.
- MACD, DNRC, NRCS, and MACD EO have been working on a CD Services Directory, which will go up on the MACD website soon!

- The Montana Conservationist (TMC) will restart at the end of this month. Eric will be gathering stories and photos. Reach out to him if you have ideas or content!

### Committees

- The Soil and Land Use Committee has created a Forestry Subcommittee, and they are looking for members! Please let Stephanie Adams know if you are interested in joining! ([stephanie@macdnet.org](mailto:stephanie@macdnet.org))
- The Education Committee has created a Communications, Planning, and Outreach (CPO) subcommittee / workgroup. Stay tuned for more information on this!
- The MACD Standing Committees (Education, District Operations, Soil and Land Use, and Water Resources) are currently reviewing all resolutions in the MACD Resolution Library. The committees will be contacting sponsoring districts and making recommendations on whether resolutions are still relevant, have been accomplished, or if they should stay 'active.'

### **CARES Act - Local Government Reimbursement Program (LGRP)**

The Department of Administration told me that the final reimbursement requests should have been processed by the end of March. Please check with your county if you have *not* received reimbursement for eligible items purchased by districts by Nov 30th and submitted for reimbursement by the deadline.

### **Soil Corps Idea - AmeriCorps Planning Grant**

- Through conversations with the MT Office of Community Service (OCS), MACD developed the idea of a Soil Corps AmeriCorps program that would serve conservation districts and their partners by placing AmeriCorps members in their offices. We are not starting a program at this time, but OCS did recommend that we consider applying for an AmeriCorps planning grant. A planning grant would give MACD a year to gather input from districts over 12 months to determine if a Soil Corps program is worth pursuing and what it would look like. Districts would have a chance to shape this. Additionally, a major benefit of the planning grant is that it does not require that we start a program at the end (especially if we were to hear from Districts that a Soil Corps program is not the right fit).
- At this time, MACD is considering applying for the planning grant. The Board will make this determination at their April 12th meeting.
- This is a 'window of opportunity' for districts that MACD is exploring. A Soil Corps program could potentially gel with the new NRCS Soil Health Strategic plan and aligns with Americorps getting more funding this year.

## **Infrastructure Project Ideas:**

- We are gathering ideas to prepare for the possibility of federal funding for infrastructure. If you have any ideas for programs or projects related to infrastructure (irrigation, water etc!) please let MACD know!

## **Brief overview of ED meetings and events since the last board meeting:**

### Committee Meetings

- Convention Planning Committee
- Legislative Ad Hoc Committee
- Education Committee
- MACD Executive Committee Meeting
- Soil and Land Use Committee Meeting

### Other meetings and Events

- Monthly MACD Board Meetings
- Weekly legislative meeting with the Department of Natural Resources (DNRC)
- Weekly MACD Leadership meeting
- Weekly MACD staff meetings
- Monthly call with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Monthly meeting with MWCC
- Attend weekly CDB meetings
- Will start regular meetings with EO president
- CD Employee Roundtable
- CORE Partners Meeting
- Strategic communications planning with Elisha, Dave, and Chris
- State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)
- NACD Northern Plains Regional Meeting
- Introductory meeting with Aubrey Evans, the new NACD Representative
- State Partnership Meeting for NACD 2021 Technical Assistance Requests
- MACD DNRC Communications Contract Meeting
- Soil Corps AmeriCorps Planning Grant - Partners Meeting
- Various meetings and calls with legislators and agency leadership

## **Upcoming Meetings and Events**

- Judging Envirothon in Lewistown on April 20th
- More meetings with legislators!
- Standing meetings, committee meetings, and other partner meetings