



Montana Association of Conservation Districts

# MONTANA ASSOCIATION of CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

*We're growing Montana's future.*

## MACD BOARD MEETING

June 9th, 2021

## Meeting Minutes

### BOARD MEMBERS

Jim Simpson (PRES)	William Bernard ( 1)	Steve Hertel (3)	Don Youngbauer ( 4)	Mike Hansen ( 6)
Gary Giem (TREAS)	Tony Barone ( 2)	Gayla Wortman (3)	Steve Schanaman(4)	Rick VanDyken(6)
Dean Rogge ( VP)	Roddy Rost ( 2)	Mark Suta (3)	Pete Woll (5)	
Steve Wanderaas ( 1)	Bob Peterman (2)	Judi Knapp (4)	Bill Naegeli ( 5)	

**PARTNERS AND OTHERS PRESENT:** Rebecca Boslough, Melissa Downing, Stephanie Adams, Eric Rannestad, Jill Henrichsen, Randall Hopkins, Dave Martin, Pam Liggett, Jeff Pattison, Tom Watson, Kyle Tackett, Autumn Coleman, Steve Hedstrom, Jason Garber, Jeff Tiberi

### CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Jim Simpson at 9am.

#### Motion to Approve May Meeting Minutes:

- Motion to Approve: Roddy Rost
- Seconded: Judi Knapp
- Discussion: none
- VOTE: Motion Carries

### FINANCIAL MATTERS

#### Motion to approve Mid-year Financial Report

- Motion: Steve Wanderaas
- Seconded: Gayla Wortman
- Discussion: The loan on the office will be paid off by December 2022.
  - If Sage Grouse are listed this could potentially impact the SGI positions run through MACD
- VOTE: Motion Carries

**Approval of up to \$937.10 for Jim Simpson’s legislative travel to Helena**

- Motion: Dean Rogge
- Seconded: Steve Wanderaas
- Discussion: A big thank you to Jim for all of his work on the legislative session.
- VOTE: Motion Carries

**Motion to approve 1000 for Rebecca Boslough to attend part or all of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) Annual Summit**

- Motion: Steve Wanderaas
- Seconded: Dean Rogge
- Discussion: This is a very good opportunity to meet and connect with legislators as well as key district partners.
- VOTE: Motion carries

**Motion to approve up to \$1000 for Steve Hedstrom to travel to the NACD Summer Meeting in Chicago**

- Motion: Steve Wanderaas
- Seconded: Judi knapp
- Discussion: none
- VOTE: Motion Carries

**Motion to approve up to \$150 for Zoom subscription**

- Motion: Gayla Wortman
- Seconded: Steve Wanderaas
- Discussion: none
- VOTE: Motion Carries

**Motion to renew conference call line**

- Motion: Dean Rogge
- Seconded: Steve Wanderaas
- Discussion: none
- VOTE: Motion Carries

**Move that MACD pass on the \$1400 Zoom Webinar Subscription until it is deemed necessary**

- Motion: Mike Hansen
- Seconded: Gayla Wortman
- Discussion: Gayla agrees. If we need this, we will purchase it at that time.
- VOTE: Motion Carries

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***OLD BUSINESS***

**Quorum issues in standing committees**

- Encouragement for participation in standing committees.
- Full participation is necessary for decision making and assigning tasks as committee workload increases.

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## NEW BUSINESS

### Resolution Review

#### Discussion:

- Each committee has been tasked with reviewing past resolutions and either sunseting them or retaining them based on feedback from the sponsoring Conservation District. This will be publicly sent out on our website so everyone can see the options. These will also be reviewed at Area Meetings and voted on as a slate, unless there are objections.
- Moving forward, MACD will create an enhanced resolution process that better describes the process for sunseting.
- MACD needs greater accountability in the resolution process. This will be a big part of the strategic planning process.
- Resolutions should automatically sunset unless other action is taken. Every resolution has a sunset date. Specific information must be given on why the resolution is retained.
- Will there be amendments to resolutions?
  - No. In this case resolutions should be sunsetted and then passed again.
- Is NACD resolution policy book available online?
  - Steve Hedstrom will send this out
- How are resolutions prioritized? Could this be part of the strategic planning process?
- Need administrative help or a lobbyist to free up more ED time to work on resolutions.
- How can we better engage districts in the resolution process?
- Valley CD has a lot of resolutions they want addressed. This is a common perspective of many districts.
- How can MACD engage sponsoring districts, committees, partners in pushing forward resolutions? How will we monitor this in the strategic plan?
  - And WHAT does this look like on the website, reporting to districts, and the strategic plan... could we loop in committees on resolutions? Or largely LAHC?? How to engage people in resolutions (board directors included)
- In regards to the PILT resolution, MACo said don't go there with the PILT issue. We were advised not to jeopardize that. We were advised that Districts should work directly with their counties.
- HJ7 was a big deal that MACD really supported.
- How to bring sponsoring districts into the resolution process? This could go to District Operations.
- What is the Farm Bureau Resolution Process? What can we learn from it? Pat Anderson has the Farm Bureau Plan and we will look at it.
  - We need to figure out what we can take from processes of other organizations while also remembering that MACD has fewer staff and financial resources. So how can we learn these lessons and better leverage the resources we *do* have?

### Committee Reports

#### District Operations - Steve Hertel

- District Ops has been working on documents for Area Hosts, as well as review of resolutions.
- The resolutions under review will need to be put out on the website before the Area meetings
- District Operations needs to set a deadline for when all resolutions under review will go out to

Districts.

- The process document for resolutions will need to be updated.

### Education

- The Education Committee is almost completely done with the resolution review process.
- Shonny Nordlund submitted an Envirothon report.

### Water

- They want an archive of resolutions that don't make it. How can we archive it?
- Going through Area they came from. Area instead of just individual districts.
- Board interest of experience with this other process to go to Areas instead of individual districts.

### Soil and Land Use

- Soil and Land Use has completed their resolutions review.
- They are currently recruiting for the Forestry Subcommittee and currently have 6 volunteers. Steve Hedstrom offered to help and provide background on the Forest Action Plan. Need to coordinate this with the NRCS State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

### Programs Committee

- Reach out to Stephanie with questions or with ideas.
- There is still a vacant spot on this committee.
- Stephanie submitted a Program Committee update/overview.

### Nominations

#### **Motion to appoint Dan Rostad as the East of the Divide Representative to the Nutrient Work Group**

- Motion: Steve Wanderaas
- Seconded: Judi Knapp
- Discussion: Last week the deadline was extended to June 18th for the West of the Divide representative
- VOTE: Motion carries

#### **Motion to appoint Julie Goss to the DNRC Water Reservations committee.**

- Motion: Dean Rogge
- Seconded: Steve Wanderaas
- Discussion:
- VOTE: Motion carries

#### **Motion to appoint Gayla Wortman, Mark Suta and Dean Rogge to the DNRC Conservation Districts Focus Group.**

- Motion: Steve Hertel
- Seconded: Rick VanDyken
- Discussion: Autumn Coleman stated that the focus group would target questions to business needs of Districts and do additional surveys and outreach to Districts. Nothing formal has been put together yet on the focus group. They will wait until the new CDB staff leadership is hired. The entire state of Montana went through reclassification of positions. There is no longer a classification as section chief or bureau chief - classification is now program managers. This

person will still oversee the budget and staff. A lot of people then choose working titles that may not say 'program manager,' using the more familiar titles like 'Bureau Chief' instead.

- VOTE: Motion Carries

### **Legislative Report**

The 2021 Legislative Session officially ended as of April 29th! MACD focused efforts on conservation district funding, alongside many other issues impacting districts. Here are the highlights of several key bills we worked on. (Please note this is not an exhaustive list - which can be provided through the LAHC minutes if you are interested!)

- **HB 374** addressed the funding shortfalls from coal severance tax. Specifically, HB 374 provided 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) has 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 worked 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.
- **HB 2** is the General Appropriations Act. We worked hard to maintain the CD budget and fortunately did not receive the 10% cut that many other programs did!
- **HJ 27** is a bill to study conservation district funding. MACD will be pushing the importance of this bill during the interim session, as it is important to find a long term solution for CD funding given declining revenues from the coal severance tax. MACD President Jim Simpson plans to be very involved in this process. Related to MACD Resolution 08-02.
- **SJ 28** is the Study of the Flathead River Erosion. This study bill will be addressed during the interim session! Based on MACD Resolution 20-02.
- **HJ 7** is a Joint Resolution regarding the St. Mary and Milk River project. Related to MACD Resolution 20-06.
- **SJ 6** is the Resolution on Floodplain Permit Process.
- **SJ 7** is the Resolution to remove Hidden Pasture Creek from WSA, Based on MACD Resolution 06-10
- **HB 632** deals with the distribution of some of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) money. CD's were not named under local government in the bill, so MACD worked alongside other entities (irrigation districts etc) to get this definition changed through an amendment! DNRC CARDD will be administering part of these funds specifically related to water and wastewater. MACD will keep districts informed as more information comes down from the federal government.
- **After Action Review:** MACD and DNRC participated in an After Action Review (AAR) to reflect on the 2021 session and start planning for the 2023 session.
- Please contact Rebecca if you would like to get involved.

## **Soil Health**

### Discussion:

- NRCS has looked at the Soil Health Strategic Plan and the potential for a coalition. It needs to be slowed down and a number of questions asked.
- NRCS has offered to pay 50% of a proposal of up to \$60k (matched with non-federal funds). Match does not need to be in place to get started. Tom Watson has given Cole Mannix and the informal steering committee through the first or second of July to finalize. Grow Montana previously committed \$10k to the process. The steering committee will need to come up with an additional \$20k.
- Tom Watson stated that both North and South Dakota have strong, producer-led soil health coalitions and that NRCS is here to provide information and support. Soil Health needs to be about education, creating community for interested folks, etc. It needs to be voluntary.
- There is strong interest from NRCS and others to make sure that conservation districts are in a leadership role in this effort.

### **Motion for MACD to administer funds for a coordinator and pursue the concept of a soil health coalition (as outlined in the NRCS Montana Soil Health Strategic Plan)**

- Motion: Don Youngbauer
- Seconded: Rick VanDyken
- Discussion: This is a preliminary step to allow MACD to administer funds and take a leadership role in this effort, should funds become available and this initiative move forward. NRCS needs to make a decision by July 1 if funds will go to this effort through MACD.
- VOTE: Motion Carries

## **Operation Outreach**

### Discussion:

- Should this effort be maintained, changed, or scrapped?
- Original idea: Board members assigned certain CDs in their areas to talk to them at least 2x a year.
- Operation Outreach came from Jeff Tiberi and Lewis and Clark Conservation District with the purpose of focusing on better communication with Districts.
  - How do you measure the effectiveness?
- Does document with talking points help? Board members say yes.
  - Rebecca will continue sending out monthly talking points of key information MACD would like to make sure Districts know about.
- What information do we need from Districts?

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

Tom Watson

- Recognition for MACD Staff
- 30x30 - This administration and the secretary have some new priorities: Climate change and climate smart agriculture, urban agriculture, and social justice
  - They still fit with what NRCS does and the programs they have
- Chief Cosby was confirmed. He is a former state conservationist from Ohio
- NRCS has been hiring a ton of people in MT. They are on pace to hire 55 new employees before the 15th of July. They were given direct hire authority.
- St Mary's: NRCS invested 1.1 million into Farmer's Conservation Alliance last year to write irrigation improvement grants for the aging infrastructure across the state. This includes work with the Joint Board of Control, as well as the Sun River Watershed Group and several irrigation districts.
- NRCS has a new agreement with Farmers Conservation Alliance that will exceed 2 million dollars. This will include putting irrigation into the pipeline for federal funding outside of the farm bill. A full scale watershed plan is required to access this other funding. There is a NEPA context to this.
  - An EIS will likely be necessary for NRCS Participation with St. Mary's.
- Montana Focused Conservation: NRCS now has over 100 TIPs that are investment ready across the state. This year's EQIP allocation is \$32 million (last year was \$35million). Not sure if they will get more EQIP, but they will continue to try. They are upping their game on the forestry landscape. Roughly 4 out of every 10 TIPs have something to do with Forestry.
  - This allows NRCS to work in public private cross-boundary wildfire arena
  - Helping make investment on private land with forestry resource concern
- Continue to work with tribal partners across the state. There are now 8 federally recognized tribes. NRCS makes significant investments with tribes each year.
  - How can MACD help NRCS by reenergizing tribal CDs, helping tribes get CDs started, and bringing them into the CD family.

Kyle Tackett

- NRCS is excited to have CDs involved in putting TIPs together
- Kyle Leads the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)
  - Built out forestry subcommittee
    - New State Forester
- Sage Grouse
  - Continue to invest
  - Keep ranchers on the land and keep habitat
  - Continuing to prioritize capacity through MACD agreement
- Agreement that NRCS has with MACD.

This will close in a year. There will be time to revisit and re-prioritize.

## Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Autumn Coleman, DNRC Conservation and Resource Development Division (CARDD)

- There is American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that covers necessary water and sewer infrastructure. The Legislature defined how the money would be divided through HB632. There are competitive grants and minimum allocation grants. <https://arpa-mtdnrc.hub.arcgis.com/>
- Please see the DNRC CARDD Report (attached) for the full report.

Stacey Barta, DNRC Rangelands

- Four working lands interns
- Montana Ranch Tour Sept 8 and 9 in Malta
- Range improvement loan program did administrative rules
- Range camp cancelled due to low registration numbers

Stephanie Criswell, Montana Invasive Species Council (DNRC)

- It's Noxious Weed Awareness Week and the governor issued a proclamation recognizing this.
- MISC was established in 2014 by Executive Order and is programmatic in statute.
- There is a lot of CD representation on MISC.
- MISC is co-hosting the North American Invasive Species Council in September
  - There will be scholarships to attend.

Jason Garber, 310

- Montana joint application Districts use to review 310 permitting was updated last month
- Montana Stream Permitting Binder - contact Jason to get one! There is also a PDF on the website

Mary Hendrix, DNRC Conservation Districts Bureau

- New CDB position advertised, Closes June 23rd
- Grants
  - 33 applications for Admin Grants (some with 310 component)
  - 22 CDs for 310 component
  - There are 3 cds that have not applied for either
  - Looking at 36k baseline per CD
  - \$62.37 per 310 permit, no cap
  - There will be a second round of applications for administrative grants if funding is available
- Continuing training
  - Updated CD resource documents page

Heidi Anderson-Folnagy

- Legislature:
  - All Renewable Resource Grants and Loans (RRGL) funded
  - Reclamation Development Grant (RDG) Program (part of HB 7 and 14) included 3 CD projects

- Planning grants are open right now! Up to \$50k. Closes August 12. For RDG Program
  - RDG Program (mitigate natural resource issues caused by extraction)

### **Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks**

Tom Woolf, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Bureau

- Working closely with CDs on AIS outreach and education. Please let Tom know if there is interest from your Districts
- AIS directly threatens irrigated agriculture - awareness is key! Districts set up well to deliver message
- Early detection monitoring for AIS is critical. FWP is looking for groups to work on these things

### **Resource conservation Advisory Council (RCAC)**

Gayla Wortman

- Please see RCAC handout

### **Missouri River Conservation District Council (MRCDC)**

Steve Wanderaas

- Molly Masters, the new MRCDC Coordinator, started on 6/8.
- Working on Ft. Peck Test Flows.

### **Yellowstone Conservation District Council (YRCDC)**

Dan Rostad

- More than 20 years ago, YRCDC formed to do cumulative effects assessment (CEA) finished in 2017
- Promotion, implementation, and updates
- 11 districts + 2 at large for upper and lower
- Member of MACD: non-voting presence.
- DNRC funding - YRCDC was told that River councils may not receive funding during the DNRC budget crisis.
- Michael Perkins joined through Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) Conservation Fellows

### **Milk River Watershed Alliance (MRWA)**

Jeff Pattison

- Drop 5 failure
- HJ7 on St Mary's
- Produced video - recently updated
- Expanding partnerships

### **Montana Salinity Control Association (MSCA)**

Tera Ryan

- Sharing duties with Scott Brown.
- New Chairman

### **MACD Employe Organization**

Heidi Fleury

- 120 employees in the state
- EO is the support system for the staff
- Board
  - Heidi - President
  - Chris Evans will take over as Vice President (previously Katie Mumford)
  - Emma Link is the Secretary
  - Sharon Flemetis is the Treasurer
- Eric Rannestad (MACD) helped with new MACD EO website
- Monthly roundtable
- New employee training
- A lot of retirements coming up (Guelda, Shonny, etc) - more and more important to make sure there is a system in place

### **National Association of Conservation Districts**

Steve Hedstrom

- Open up the NACD Website - a lot of information on there that we can all use!
- Coleman Garrison, the policy lead for NACD, recently left.
- NACD regional calls - include regional reps from NRCS
- Aubrey Evans is the new NACD Northern Plains Representative.
- Next Generation Leadership institute - Is anyone interested?
- The Legislative Committee and Natural Resource Committee are both taking a close look at the 30x30
- Steve Hedstrom trying to connect the Invasive species Resource Policy Group (RPG) with Steve Wanderaas.
- National Conservation Planning Partnership
- Owen Simms was a past NACD President from Montana. There are Blue Spruce trees planted outside the Capitol in his honor.

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***MEETING ADJOURNED***

### **Meeting adjourned**

- Motion: Mark Suta
- Second: Dean Rogge
- Discussion:
- VOTE: Meeting Adjourned