



**MONTANA ASSOCIATION of
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**
We're growing Montana's future.

MACD Update - June 2022

[Revised 6.04.2022]

There's a lot of info here. Key updates are highlighted in orange

Policy and Advocacy

Interim Session:

We are currently in the interim session and looking towards the 2023 Legislative Session. MACD is currently monitoring several bills and directly working on two study bills that passed during the 2021 Legislative session:

- **HJ27 - Conservation District Funding Study Bill** is being studied in the Environmental Quality Council (EQC). The EQC next met in March and discussed a list of potential funding sources for conservation districts. *(For Background: During the 2021 Session MACD wrote and supported this bill to find a long term solution for CD funding given declining revenues from the coal severance tax.)* MACD proposed funding levels to the EQC, and the Council has a draft study bill that would allocate \$6 million annually to the Conservation District Account through a mix of Coal Severance Tax and Cannabis Tax funds.
- **SJ28 - Study of the Flathead River Erosion** is being studied by the Water Policy Interim Committee (WPIC). *(For Background: This study bill is based on MACD Resolution 20-02.)* The March WPIC included a panel discussion of erosion at a statewide level.
- MACD is also attending and monitoring the Interim Revenue Committee, Section C Budget Committee, and other committees as relevant issues arise.
- The Missouri River Conservation District Council (MRCDC) presented on the Fort Peck Test Flows at the May meeting of the Water Policy Interim Committee.

MACD Legislative Committee

The MACD Legislative Committee is providing input on policy and advocacy activities as well as developing a legislative strategy for the remainder of 2022 leading into the 2023 legislative session. Meetings are open to all CD supervisors and employees. The next meeting will be July 6th.

MACD Policy Blog

For more information and to keep up with all things policy and advocacy - please check out the MACD Policy Blog (<https://policy.macdnet.org/>)

Overview of 2021 Legislative Session Wins!

See the bottom of this document or this post on the MACD Policy Blog:

<https://policy.macdnet.org/2022/03/10/highlights-from-the-2021-legislative-session/>

MACD Operations

Strategic Planning Complete!

MACD went through Strategic Planning during 2021, during which time surveys and focus groups were held for conservation districts. Your state association now has a new Strategic Plan as well as an Operational Plan for 2022 (to make sure we have specific actions for this year)!

MACD Staff

MACD has hired a new Programs Manager - Brenna Rietmann - who comes to us from Oregon where she worked for a conservation district there, as well as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Brenna grew up on a farm in Eastern Oregon and attended the University of Montana for her undergrad as well as graduate school. She has a Masters of Public Administration and a certificate in natural resource conflict resolution. Brenna is taking over the large NRCS agreement and all NRCS related programs.

Resolutions and Committees Work Group

The Resolutions and Committees Work Group revised and updated MACD Committee structures and resolutions. This process is guided by the feedback received from districts during strategic planning. The Board approved these changes during their April Meeting and an informational session for districts was held in May.

Upcoming MACD Meetings and Events

Upcoming Meetings

- MACD Executive Committee Meeting - Monday, June 27th at 7:30am via zoom
- MACD Legislative Committee Meeting - Tentatively Wednesday, July 5th at 1pm

Upcoming Events

- Virtual Leadership Training Series

Starting in June, MACD will be hosting a monthly virtual leadership training series with Shannon Stober. Topics will include: working with staff, community leadership, working with volunteers, working with boards, and project management. These will be fairly high-level training and introductions to these topics. Shannon will also (tentatively) host an in-person training at Convention. The formal announcement for the training series will go out mid-April.

- 2022 Spring Board Meeting

The MACD Spring Board Meeting will take place in the State Capitol from June 14th-16th. All are welcome to attend. Details will be posted here on the Spring Board webpage (<https://macdnet.org/programs/spring-board-mtg/>).

- 2022 Area Meetings

Area Meetings will take place at the end of September and beginning of October.

- 2022 Convention in Helena

The 2021 MACD Annual Convention is scheduled to be held in Helena at the Delta Colonial Inn from November 15th-17th. As more details are solidified, the Convention website (<https://convention.macdnet.org/>) will be updated.

- 2023 Legislative Meet and Greet

Tentatively planned for Jan. 24th, 2023 - MACD has a legislative Meet and Greet scheduled for conservation districts, legislators, and members of the executive branch.

Highlighted Resources for June 2022

District Dispatch

If you want to stay updated with resources, funding, events, and meetings relevant for conservation districts - sign up to receive District Dispatch, our Bi-weekly MACD newsletter.

Email eric@macdnet.org to sign-up!

District Assistance

MACD is able to provide a suite of technical support to districts, including website development, email solutions, graphic design needs, online registration support, etc. Email eric@macdnet.org for assistance!

- Recently, we launched a [MACD Membership Website](#) and **marketing toolkit** that is now available for district use. This is also where our financial reports will be stored for any district to access. This is a *private, password protected part of the MACD website*. Here's the login info:
Username: membership Password: conservation2021!

2021 Legislative Session Overview

1. **HB 374** addressed the funding shortfalls from coal severance tax. Specifically, HB 374 provided a \$1,000,000 fix for the previous fiscal year as well as funding for the current biennium. This means that the DNRC Conservation Districts Bureau (CDB) has full funding for the first time in several years, which means that funding to Districts (Admin grant, 223 grants etc) has 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.
2. **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!
3. **HJ 27** is a bill to study conservation district funding. MACD drafted and supported this bill during the 2021 Session and continues to work on this with the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) during the interim session. It is critical to find a long term solution for CD funding given declining revenues from the coal severance tax.
4. **SJ 28** is the Study of Flathead River Erosion. During the interim session this bill is in the Water Policy Interim Committee (WPIC) and is based on MACD Resolution 20-02.

5. **HJ 7** is a Joint Resolution regarding the St. Mary and Milk River project. Related to MACD Resolution 20-06.
6. **SJ 6** is the Resolution on Floodplain Permit Process.
7. **SJ 7** is the Resolution to remove Hidden Pasture Creek from WSA, Based on MACD Resolution 06-10
8. **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 has been administering part of these funds specifically related to water and wastewater. MACD will keep districts information continues to come out.
9. **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.
10. **Questions? Want to get involved?** Please reach out to Rebecca Boslough (rebecca@macdnet.org) if you have any questions or would like to be involved in the future! The Legislative Committee is meeting throughout the interim session.