

1101 11th Avenue
Helena, Mt. 59601



Phone: (406) 454-0056
mrcdc@macdnet.org
www.MissouriRiverCouncil.info

**Quarterly Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2016
Golden Prairie Best Western Meeting Room
Sidney, MT**

At 2:31 pm, Chair Jim Beck opened the MRCDC quarterly business meeting. Council members present were; Steve Wanderaas, McCone CD; John Chase, Cascade CD; Laura Kiehl, Petroleum CD; Dean Rogge, Garfield CD; Bruce Anderson, Blaine CD; Dana Darlington, Big Sandy CD; Rick Anderson, Chouteau CD; Dick Iversen, Richland CD; Jenifer Anderson, Phillips CD; Ron Garwood, Valley CD; Karl Christians, DNRC; Rachel Frost, MRCDC Coordinator; Carie Hess, MRCDC Secretary; and guests Hal DeBoer, Lisa Darlington, Ron Stoneberg, Marilyn Black, Mike Bakus (FWP), Ken Granger (FWP), Diane Ahlgren, Dan Stilson, Steve Hertle, and Burt Hopewell.

General

1. Minutes were read and John Chase moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Dick Iversen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
2. Carie Hess presented the financial report to the council for review and briefly overviewed each page in the meeting packet asking if there were any questions as she went. Ron Garwood moved to approve as submitted and Steve Wanderaas seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Also a revised budget with the twenty percent withheld was submitted to the council to be reviewed. It was noted that both Rachel Frost and Carie Hess are tracking the current budget as if it were withheld to make sure that the council does not overspend. It was also noted that the council has asked for and received about half of its full allocation at this time.
3. Guests were asked if they had any comments and it was noted that there were no comments at this time.

Reach Reports

Upper Reach – John Chase gave a handout of the Upper Reach activities on the river. Those projects or issues are as follows:

- Upper Reach representatives will meet to discuss the merits of a proposal by John Chase for MRCDC to be involved in producing a DVD/ Video program directed at those who purchase or intend to develop stream bank properties. The proposed project title is “Living on the Bank”.
- Acid mine drainage into Belt Creek (a tributary to the Missouri River). The Montana Department of Environmental Quality is planning for a water treatment facility in Belt, Montana. It is thought that the MRCDC may be able to offer support for a watershed restoration plan.

Gallatin Conservation District
Broadwater Conservation District
Lewis & Clark Conservation District
Cascade Conservation District
Chouteau County Conservation District

Blaine County Conservation District
Big Sandy Conservation District
Fergus County Conservation District
Petroleum County Conservation District
Phillips Conservation District

Garfield County Conservation District
Valley County Conservation District
McCone Conservation District
Roosevelt County Conservation District
Richland County Conservation District

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- Forest issues on private land. DNRC and American Forest Foundation just announced the launch of the Golden Crown Stewardship Initiative to bring technical and financial assistance to private landowners to improve forest resiliency (thinning and fuels reduction) along select drainages into the Missouri River in Cascade and Lewis and Clark counties. If requested, MRCDC should do whatever it can to assist or promote the program.
- The stalled “North Bank” project in Great Falls. Cascade CD secured funding to complete a preliminary engineering report; hopefully the city of Great Falls and Calumet will see the desirability of attempting to move forward with the project. A meeting is planned for early 2017 with a proposed date of January 12th.

Middle Reach – Bruce Anderson gave the following projects or concerns for the Middle Reach area.

- On October 4, 2016 USDA hosted one of 18 Strike Force town hall meetings in Chinook. This meeting had a very diverse group of people in attendance just a few were: FSA, NRCS, farmers, ranchers, irrigators, teachers, finance suppliers, clergy, realtors, food bank volunteers, school officials, St. Mary’s work group members and MRWA members. The USDA’s goals are:
 - Improve economic viability
 - Promote resident communities
 - Expand USDA program education for residents, employees, and partners.
- The discussion included these topics:
 - Land Use (private and public)
 - Economic development
 - Farm operating/ risk management
 - Food security and other topics
- The USDA will have a report available from the outcome of these meetings

Reservoir Reach – Laura Kiehl reported the following for the Reservoir Reach area.

- A weed survey was conducted along the Musselshell in Petroleum County by the Montana Conservation Corp. This crew treated for spotted knapweed and inventoried for Saltcedar using GOD to record areas of infestation.
- A Columbus Day storm brought unusual rainfall yet again to the Musselshell watershed, with some areas reporting as much as six inches in two days.
- An RRGL grant application was submitted to have Channel Migration Zone mapping done on the entire Musselshell River.

Lower Reach – Dick Iversen reported on projects and issues for the Lower Reach area.

- Ranching for Rivers had one application from the area. Three miles of fence, one offsite watering facility, and over seven miles of Missouri River protected. This project allows for rotational grazing in eight different units. In 2016 four of the eight were grazed. The council’s technician set up monitoring plots on the project in June 2016.
- The council member spoke in Caldwell Idaho at the University of Idaho’s Rangeland Fall Forum about the ranching for rivers program.
- The area was toured in November and data was gathered on the future Saltcedar project and grant proposal.

DNRC – Karl reported that budgets were coming out in the next day to DNRC but it would be a couple of weeks before DNRC finalized the outcome for districts and the council. Karl mentioned that due to the decrease in coal tax revenues, DNRC is seeking general fund money for operating costs in 2017-2018. He also reported that DNRC as a whole is going through a planning process and developing a work plan. The top five issues or priorities that came up are:

1. Empowering districts/ facilitation trainings
2. board leadership
3. communication strategy/ succession planning
4. education program
5. resource development

MACD – No report at this time.

NRCS – No report at this time.

Steve Wanderaas mentioned that the Governor’s Invasive Species Council has a newsletter called “The Bulletin” out and encouraged supervisors and districts to get a copy.

Coordinators Report –

- Ranching for Rivers – Rachel reported that the RRGL grant application through Chouteau Conservation District ranked 41 out of 94 and that they are waiting to hear more.
- CMR Working Group - Rachel noted that there would not be a December meeting.
- Montana Rangelands Partnership – Rachel reported that there would be a presentation on this program on Thursday as one of the breakout sessions.

Council Year in Review

Council Members, Carie, and Rachel presented a slide show of Council activities and accomplishments in 2016.

New Business

Quarterly Meeting Proposals – There were several different ways discussed to make the quarterly meetings more meaningful and how to make the business portions shorter. It was noted that the council should have one meeting that is focused on planning, one during the river rendezvous, one for partners, and one for professional development.

Legislative Meet & Greet – Rachel reported that this is scheduled for January 24th in Helena and that MACD is looking for partners for the event.

Announcements:

Dana Darlington brought up the idea of forming an advisory committee of diverse partners to send letters to the congressional delegates and Bureau of Interior about designated areas.

With no further business coming before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Submitted by:

Approved by unanimous vote on January 5, 2016

Carie Hess, Secretary

Jim Beck, Chairman