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**Quarterly Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2015
Holiday Inn
Missoula, MT**

At 1:31 pm, Chair Dean Rogge opened the MRCDC quarterly business meeting. Council members present were; John Chase, Cascade CD; Steve Wanderaas, McCone CD; Bruce Anderson, Blaine CD; Jim Beck, Vice-Chair, Broadwater CD; Dick Iversen, Richland CD; Rick Anderson, Chouteau CD; Karl Christians, DNRC; Rachel Frost, MRCDC Coordinator; Carie Hess, MRCDC Secretary; and guests Gayla Wortman, Cascade CD; Lorna Krause, Chouteau CD; Mandie Malanado, Valley CD; Mary Hendrix, McCone CD; Barbara Martin, Big Sandy CD.

General

1. Minutes were read and Dick Iversen moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Steve Wanderaas seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
2. Carie Hess read the unpaid bills detail, Rick Anderson moved to pay the unpaid bills and Bruce Anderson seconded the motion which passed unanimously. She then presented the full financial report which Dick Iversen moved to approve as read. Bruce Anderson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

No public comment.

Reach Reports

Upper Reach – John Chase reported that they are awaiting the final report which is due November 23rd on the North Bank project. Rick Anderson talked about the cooperative agreement that is in place with Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument and the BLM to do some cottonwood plantings within the monument at Coalbanks Landing, so far there have been approximately 200 trees planted.

Middle Reach – Bruce Anderson reported that the land exchange between the Wilk's Brothers and the BLM is ongoing.

Reservoir Reach – Nothing to report this meeting.

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

Lower Reach - Dick Iversen reported that the ACOE had kept the river pretty high all summer long but that most everyone was still able to irrigate and only minor dredging was needed. The flows were dropped to 4,500 cfs on October 1st and Dick thought that if they get good snow pack that they should be able to have good flows again this spring. Dick mentioned that he had a conversation with Buzz Mattelin and that Buzz is concerned that MRRIC wants to unbalance the reservoir to mimic natural floods. Dick also mentioned that there was a lot of sand sediment in his area from the 2011 flood and that he has had good regrowth of cottonwoods. Lastly, he reported that the water depot business is down due to the oil industry's decline. He noted that on average it takes 500 to 700 truckloads of water per well for fracking. The drop in the water depot business has improved the water levels in the Fox Hill Aquifer.

DNRC - Karl Christians reported that the new sage grouse program should be up and running come January 1st and that they are on a tight time-line to make it happen on schedule. He reported that portions of the new program would contract with the University of Wyoming for technical assistance.

MACD – Elena Evans was not in attendance.

NRCS – Not present

Coordinators Report

Rachel reported that MRCDC would be featured in 2 different breakout sessions on Wednesday afternoon of the Convention. First, Dean and Rachel will present on what it takes to develop large-scale projects, both in area and in number of partners. Second, the CMR Sage Grouse Committee will present the first version of the Conservation Menu to attendees to receive feedback on missing programs or other resources that should be included.

Rachel gave the following breakdown on projects and related progress to the current workplan.

Ranching for Rivers – promoting riparian pastures vs. complete exclusion of livestock from riparian areas. We are using a 2-pronged education approach to reach producers about how to fund and implement riparian pasture projects, as well as sportsmen and recreationists to educate those folks that cattle on the streambank are not always a bad thing.

Current Status: SWCDM has helped us secure 2 grants thus far: 1 for \$11,500 that will fund the educational portion of the project, and another for \$45,000 approximately, that will be used as cost-share for producers who want to build riparian pastures. This project will focus in the Upper and Middle Reaches and promises to be a major portion of next year's work.

Montana Rangelands Partnership – Conversations following the Rangeland Monitoring Roundup prompted the formation of the Montana Rangelands Partnership; a collaborative, public-private partnership comprised of local, state, and national organizations including the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana (SWCDM), Montana State University Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Missouri River Conservation Districts Council (MRCDC), and other local, state, and federal groups, is working to place two full-time rangeland technicians in Montana. These technicians will work one-on-one with landowners to develop individual ranch management plans, initiate rangeland monitoring and support continued monitoring efforts, and aid ranchers in identifying appropriate voluntary conservation programs that best support a sustainable ranching operation and rural community. As employees of SWCDM, the technicians will be independent of any agency and will be able to provide technical assistance that is not tied to any specific programs. Additionally, they will also be qualified to write ranch plans that qualify participants for voluntary

conservation programs such as Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs), and satisfy planning requirements for NRCS program funding (such as EQIP, CSP, and ACEP). Along with the development of ranch plans, the Montana Rangelands Partnership will help ranchers initiate and sustain effective rangeland monitoring programs that provide relevant information for economic and ecological decisions.

Current Status: Secured \$399,780 through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to fund 2 full-time technicians for 3 years. Anticipate hiring the technicians in January of 2016.

CMR Community Working Group – increase the input and involvement of CDs in the management of federally owned land and help coordinate that management across federal, state and private lands. MRCDC maintains their role as the coordinating entity of the CMR Community Working Group and conservation district involvement continues to expand. This committee has expanded past the CMR region and is working to maintain landowner involvement in the many landscape conservation initiatives that have been started in that region.

SG Subcommittee: working on a Conservation Menu to empower landowners to make more informed land management decisions. The Conservation Menu will be highlighted in a breakout session tomorrow afternoon. Also working to connect MSGOT and the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Improvement Program with local landowners.

Current Status: submitted a Watershed Planning Grant through GCCD, awaiting a funding decision.

Montana Saltcedar Team – goal is to build a comprehensive saltcedar management strategy by involving all relevant land management agencies, private landowners, and weed control professionals. The Team identifies priority areas for control, supports funding acquisition, and promotes the coordinated management of weeds.

Current Status: We have completed the GIS database of current saltcedar infestations in Montana along with development of a simple process to use smart phones to capture and send infestation information to the database. PCCD and MRCDC are currently working to maintain the database, which requires quarterly maintenance. Rachel will be presenting the database and our Seven Blackfoot treatment to the Montana Weed Control Association in January, and to the Tamarisk Coalition in February. The River Rendezvous toured the Seven Blackfoot treatment area in September. We were awarded a \$20,000 223 grant through DNRC to fund the stipend for our Big Sky Watershed Corps Member, his travel, and any travel for Rachel associated with the Team.

Progress has been spotty on both Council Engagement and Outreach of Council Activities. MRRIC and monuments have been given attention as needed.

New Business

CREP Revisions – Rachel and Rick have been developing some proposed changes to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and presented these proposed changes to the full Council. Dick moved and John seconded to approve Rachel and Rick pursuing these changes to the program through discussions with NRCS and DNRC.

River Rendezvous – Rick expressed a desire for Chouteau CD to host the 2016 River Rendezvous to highlight the cottonwood plantings along the River. Karl moved and Dick seconded to approve this request. Rachel will work with Rick and Administrator, Lorna Krouse, to help with logistics of the event.

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Budgets – The budget was discussed and it was noted that there will be some adjusting that needs to be done on line items. The council car was discussed and it was noted that Rachel and Dean will work with the Petroleum CD board to make sure things are in order to get the car fixed. Carie will look into what would be covered in the policy as far having the car towed to town and if there is rental car coverage and let Rachel and Dean know. It was noted that there is a \$1000 deductible that will need to be paid.

Dates and topics of Council Quarterly meetings were discussed with the following dates and topics suggested: February – Lewistown; May – Sidney with an additional event; September – River Rendezvous in Fort Benton; November – Convention.

Rachel mentioned that she would like to go through facilitator training and several of the Council members expressed a similar desire. It was noted that Rachel would explore options and report back to the Council.

Steve invited Council members to an Invasive Species Meeting on Friday morning following the Convention to discuss weeds and related issues in Eastern MT.

With no further business coming before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Submitted by:

Approved by unanimous vote on November 17, 2015

Carie Hess, Secretary

Dean Rogge, Chairman