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**Quarterly Meeting Minutes
August 24, 2015
Jordan Field Office Conference Room
Jordan, MT**

At 5:07 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; Karl Christians, DNRC; Elena Evans, MACD; Rachel Frost, MRCDC Coordinator; Carie Hess, MRCDC Secretary; and guest Tarra Nickol, Garfield CD Administrator.

General

1. Minutes were read and Dick Iversen moved to approve the minutes as submitted. John Chase seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
2. Carie Hess read the unpaid bills detail with the corrections and noted that the Executive Committee had approved these transactions the week before. She then presented the full financial report which John Chase moved to approve as read. Bruce Anderson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

No public comment.

Reach Reports

Upper Reach – John Chase reported that there was a meeting for the North Bank project where the engineering firm presented the alternatives developed for the project. However, the only people present were from the conservation district and none of the other partners attended the meeting.

Middle Reach – Bruce Anderson reported that he had attended the Bison EIS meeting in Malta and that the majority of people in attendance were in favor of the no action alternative. He also reported that he had attended an August 13th tour of Ryan Dam which was hosted by Northwest Energy to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the dam old. He mentioned that the Wilks Brothers are looking at a land swap in Blaine and Fergus counties, which has local people concerned about losing access to public lands.

Reservoir Reach – Dean Rogge noted that he would like to see more council members attend the CMR Community Working Group meeting in Circle to show support.

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. It was also noted that maintenance is a constant with the dredging project, but that the project funds itself with rental/use fees. Dick also reported that falling oil prices have resulted in a decline in the oil industry in eastern Montana.

DNRC - Karl Christians reported that Carolyn Sime was hired as the new Sage Grouse Coordinator and that she is slated to start September 8th. He also reported that Stacey Barta was hired as the new Rangeland Resource Coordinator and she also will be starting September 8th. He stated that she will be contacting districts about forming range committees to facilitate communication about rangeland issues. He also reported that the Coalbed Methane Program is waiting to see how much funding they receive and how to move forward.

MACD – Elena Evans reported that the area meetings are coming up and that, so far, only 2 resolutions have been submitted to MACD. She also noted that MACD is proposing changes to their bylaws to simplify some processes and these will be considered at the Convention. She also noted that MACD is exploring the programmatic Bison EIS and looking for more ways to ensure that the local citizens have a say in the process.

NRCS – Not present

Coordinators Report

CMR CWG – Rachel reported that the next meeting is scheduled for August 26th with a presentation by FWP on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Bison Conservation and Management in Montana. She noted that this meeting will be informational only, with no public comment being taken by FWP. She also reported that the sage grouse subcommittee is focusing on 3 primary tasks identified in the work plan; outreach to local landowners, conservation menu, and gathering feedback on new management guidelines associated with sage grouse plans.

Montana Rangelands Partnership – Rachel reported that she is working with SWCDM to find funding for the technicians and finalize the locations for the technicians. There is a possibility that NRCS may contribute funding for one of the positions. The possible locations are in Miles City and Lewistown, and the positions should be funded for 3 years. These techs would be tasked with hosting workshops, establishing monitoring programs for landowners, and creating support networks to help maintain monitoring efforts.

Riparian Pastures – Rachel reported that she has been applying for grants through SWCDM because of their 501C3 status, which is required by many private foundations. It was mentioned that Rob Hazelwood might be a funding source, but that care needs to be taken to have the project drive the funding, not the funding drive the project. Rachel asked that if supervisors know of people that would be interested in building riparian pastures to have them contact her.

Montana Saltcedar Team – Rachel reported that River Rendezvous will highlight the efforts to treat public and private land in the Seven Blackfoot drainage in Garfield County. Rachel and Matt will have an opportunity to talk about the Montana Saltcedar Team and their other efforts with mapping and monitoring during the River Rendezvous.

New Business

Forest Service Management Plans – The Council reviewed the draft “Talking Points for Forest Service Plan Revisions” to be presented at the public listening sessions hosted by the US Forest Service as part of its process to revise the Helena and Lewis and Clark National Forest Management Plan. Rachel reported that she attended

the Helena listening session on August 19th. At that meeting, she learned that up to 37 reaches of rivers and streams within the forest maybe designated as “wild and scenic”, “scenic”, or “recreational”. Those designations should be out within the next month and Rachel will look into the criteria used to determine which reaches would receive a special designation. It was noted that there is an active Conservation District Forest Committee in Area 5. It was also noted that stream health and public education should be added as talking points to the draft document. It was suggested that Rachel put in the suggested addition and then the Council would review the talking points again for final approval.

Budgets - It was noted that the council did receive the full withholding of \$21,200 to allocate and expend by the end of September. It was agreed that after the final bills are paid, that the remaining funds for fiscal year 2015 should go into the termination account and a vehicle depreciation fund. It was discussed that Rachel would finalize the 2015 allocations and adjust the 2016 allocations and would email those out to the council before the next executive committee call.

Fiscal Sponsor MOU's with Petroleum CD – The revised MOU between the Council and the Petroleum County Conservation District was brought before the full council for approval. John Chase moved to approve the MOU and Steve Wanderaas seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Reach Engagement – Rachel submitted her Reach engagement proposal to the Council. After some brief discussion the Council reached consensus for her to proceed as planned.

MACD Convention meeting – Rachel reported that she is working with Elena to have a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) session at the convention that would provide information on funding and program guidelines

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