

MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
August 29, 2023 at 1:00pm via Zoom

At 1:14pm, Chair Karl Christians called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council members present were Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; Dick Iversen, Richland County CD; Greg Jergeson, Blaine County CD; John Chase, Cascade County CD; Dana Berwick, Roosevelt CD; Jeff Ryan, Lewis & Clark CD; and Laura K., Petroleum County CD. Others present were Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator; Brent Smith, CEMIST Manager; Stephanie Criswell, DNRC Bureau Chief; Catey Bauer, Conservation District Specialist; Abby Weimer, CD Bureau Coordinator; and Trish Smith, PCCD Administrator/MRCDC Secretary.

Approve Minutes

Minutes were reviewed from July 25, 2023. John Chase moved to approve the July minutes; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed. Minutes were reviewed from the May 31, 2023 special meeting. John Chase moved to approve the July minutes; Laura Kiehl seconded. Motion passed.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Financial Report

Molly stated that we had to re-do the MRCDC budget that was approved in March to make some cuts to get down to the \$110,400. For the reporting requirements, will be condensing down to 5 or 6 tasks so it is broader categories that would be easier to report on. John Chase moved to approve the July financial report; Laura Kiehl seconded. Motion passed. John Chase moved to pay outstanding bills; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

MRCDC vehicle – Molly stated that we need to remove this agenda item since we have changed insurance.

PCCD/MRCDC MOU – Molly went over edits for the PCCD/MRCDC MOU. Dick Iversen moved to approve as amended; Jeff Ryan seconded. Motion passed.

New Business

There was no new business but Karl Christians mentioned to the Council that Jeff Pattison has been in the hospital.

Committee Reports

Fort Peck Test Flows – Dick Iversen stated that he attended the MRRIC meeting in Kansas City in August via Zoom. They talked about the test flow and their tour at the Fort Peck reservation. Talked about how to get the reservations involved and Dick told them the only way that will happen is if the Corps goes and meets with the tribes and see their issues and mentor them, and encourage them to come to the meetings. Also, Joe Boneau with

the Corp of Engineers discussed his meeting that he had with Dana, Dick, Federal Crop Insurance folks out of Glasgow, farmers, ranchers and irrigators. They will be having another meeting September 12th. Becca with the Federal Crop Insurance in Glasgow is working with the DC staff in the national office on Federal Crop Insurance trying to figure out in the event if there was a test flow, would or would not Federal Crop Insurance apply and if it does, under what conditions? Discussing that so farmers can know whether or not they will be insured. The Corp did ask what level to keep the river. They stated they would like it at 8000 cfs or 8500 cfs and they said they would keep it at 7500 through the end of the September. Dana stated that they are doing between 7300 cfs and 7800 cfs and that when it is at 7300 cfs he doesn't have water at his pump sites. The irrigators just need more consistency.

CMR Community Working Group – Molly stated that the next CMR CWG meeting will be September 21st in Malta. Gary Adams from APHIS will be there to discuss research that has been done with insects, grasshoppers, toads and birds and how grass will be affected in the years to come.

Living on the Bank – John Chase discussed what he brought up at the last meeting. He would like folks to look over the website to see how it flows and the ease of use. Karl suggested that the DNRC folks look it over also.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – Molly stated that the Woody Invasive Species WG will be having their first get together meeting September 6th in Lewistown from 10am-4pm. They will basically be going over what we want the group to look like in the future and who is going to be the constituents.

River Rendezvous – Molly stated that she needs to get with Katie to finish out financials for the 2023 River Rendezvous. She mentioned that we can take River Rendezvous off the agenda for a couple months until we start looking at the 2024 River Rendezvous.

Partner Reports

MACD – Karl stated that Rebecca Boslough was at the Statewide Employee Training in Fort Peck and she gave an update on how the Legislative sessions went and the projections of funding. It looks promising in a few years. Gave Kudos to MACD for getting that Legislation changed. Karl also discussed districts having to change their insurance and that it increased the insurance significantly for many districts. Stephanie stated that she visited with Rocky Mountain Insurance (which most CDs are going with) and liability and health insurance/stipend can all go into the CDA grant if funding comes down for that. She also stated that they are looking at making dues all the same across the board (around \$3K-\$4K) and those can also come from the CDA Grant. Karl stated that would be good since MRCDC pays around \$11,000 for dues right now. He stated that he would like to see MACD have a healthy budget to get a few more on their staff to help out districts.

DNRC – Stephanie Criswell stated that she has taken over the statewide programs but Veronica is still going to be the CD specialist for Petroleum County. Their grant cycle is opening September 1st and closes October 15th for Project, Planning and Pollinator grants. She discussed some of the changes that have been made in regarding grants. Working on accountability measures and updating the operations audit that the bureau had developed years ago. Trying to streamline also, so it isn't as lengthy. Preparing for Area meetings and MACD Convention.

NRCS – Molly stated that Tom Watson is back as the State Conservationist. Dana mentioned that they have only had one NRCS individual on staff in their district and have been trying to put pressure on NRCS to get more hiring done so they have more NRCS on staff at their district.

MRWA – Greg stated that they have been waiting for Jeff Pattison to get well, to get going on things again. The St. Mary Working Group has had two tours to the diversion dam and the canals. The tours have been well received. The congressional delegation has come to an agreement with Fort Belnap trips on the water compact and that has passed out of the senate unanimous. Not sure how it will end up with the possible talk of the government being shut down; so the compact with all the money may have some problems in the House

depending how things go in DC. There is around \$275 million for repairing the conveyance system from the conversion dam, without a match requirement. Karl asked if it would be helpful to write our Congressional folks a letter asking them to support the Compact and try to keep the politics (that have nothing to do with our issues out here) from keeping completion of something that has been agreed to. Jeff Ryan moved to have Molly send a letter to congressional folks with MRCDC's support for the Fort Belnap Water Compact that has been approved by the senate; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed.

CEMIST – Brent Smith stated that he just got back from the Statewide Employee Training in Fort Peck. CEMIST was invited to give presentations for AIS, feral hogs, etc. Been working with Liz Lodman from MISC for a grant/contract for an invasive species workshop in Missoula. There will also be one class in Kalispell and two classes in central and eastern Montana. There is a CEMIST meeting August 30th. Trish has continued to design the CEMIST website.

Reach Reports

Lower Reach – No Report.

Reservoir Reach – Trish stated that September 13th Petroleum County is having a Kids Ag & Conservation Education Day event (afternoon) and Fuels Mitigation meeting (evening) with our new forester Bruce Reid, facilitated by Wendy Jones from LMCD. The Area 1 meeting is going to be in Winnett this year; Jerald Beavers is coming down to speak about feral pigs.

Middle Reach – No Report.

Upper Reach – Jeff Ryan stated that mid-August they participated in the Annual Watershed Festival; 30 different folks participating. Their CD had their Rolling Rivers Trailer set up and also had their "Wonders of Willow" poster board set up that showed their latest projects at Lake Helena. Around 300 people took part in that event. John Chase stated that their 6500 square foot building is still being worked; started working on interior partitions last week. He has been working on a letter for Cascade CD to start pursuing the issue of naked river banks/flood plain issues. He presented it to the CD board and they didn't want to do anything at the moment. He hopes they can keep moving forward to get something done with the floodplain issues. Karl stated that has been a nightmare with quite a few districts. Jeff stated that we need to put a little pressure on NACD with these issues.

Individual CD Reports (voluntary/as needed) – None.

Coordinator Update

Molly stated that she has been working part time since mid-August; will work into fulltime. The written report for the 656 grant is due August 31st. Hoping to join the PCCD meeting Thursday. Sending out a Coordinator report for August that will include updated events and dates. Hoping to make it to a couple of the Area meetings. There was discussion on all the Area meeting dates.

Upcoming Events/Important Dates

August

31: PCCD Meeting

September

9: Closed

20: **MRCDC Quarterly Meeting, Malta**

21: CMR CWG, Malta

27: CEMIST Meeting

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28: PCCD Board Meeting

October

9: Closed
24: MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting
25: CEMIST Quarterly Meeting
25: PCCD Board Meeting

November

9: CMR CWG, Circle
14: MRCDC Quarterly Meeting, Billings
14-16: MACD Annual Convention
29: CEMIST Meeting
29: PCCD Board Meeting

Other

With no further business, Dana Berwick moved to adjourn the meeting; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 2:43pm.

Approved on: October 24, 2023

Submitted by:

Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary

Karl Christians, Chairman