

Quarterly Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2024
In person & Zoom, Lewistown, MT

At 2:30pm, Chair Karl Christians opened the MRCDC quarterly business meeting. Council members present were Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; Laura Kiehl, Petroleum County CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD; Monte Billing, Garfield County CD; Dean Rogge, Garfield CD; Dana Berwick, Roosevelt CD; Greg Jergeson, BCCD; John Chase, Cascade CD (virtual); Hal DeBoer, Phillips CD; and Craig French, Phillips CD. Others present were Connie French, Phillips CD; Zane Fulbright, BLM-UMRB; Autumn Holzgen, MCC (virtual); Audrey Wright, MCC (virtual); Margaret Bayfield, American Stewards of Liberty (virtual); Dona Stafford, Fergus CD; Macy Fogle, Garfield CD; Barb Martin, BSCD (Virtual); Brent Smith, CEMIST Program Manager; Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator; and Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary.

General

Everyone introduced themselves. Minutes were read and Dana Berwick moved to approve the November 14th, 2023 quarterly minutes; Laura Kiehl seconded. Motion passed.

Public Comment

None.

Financial Report

Molly briefly discussed the financial report. We are 50% through the fiscal year and also 50% through the budget, so right on track. Bills to be paid: PCCD invoice and Fergus County Fairgrounds for the CMR CWG meeting. John Chase moved to pay the unpaid bills and approve the financial report; Dana Berwick seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

Reservoir Reach representative election – Monte Billing is the designated representative for GCCD. Dean Rogge is no longer the designated representative for Reservoir Reach, so leaves a spot open on the Executive Committee. Molly stated that since Laura Kiehl is the MRCDC past Chair, she is already on the Executive Committee. Karl Christians asked Monte Billing if he would like to be the Reservoir Reach representative and be on the Executive Committee; Monte agreed to be on the committee. Dana Berwick moved to nominate Monte Billing as the Reservoir Reach Representative on the Executive Committee; Lorri Schafer seconded. Motion passed.

New Business

USFWS Refuge System Rule change on BIDEH – Molly gave a quick overview on the comment letter for the USFWS Refuge System Rule Change on BIDEH; which stands for Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health. The comment letter is due March 4th. There was

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extensive discussion on the letter. Karl stated we need to do what we can to allow grazing to be used as a tool. John Chase stated that we need to add a section in the letter that expands on the need for appropriate grazing. Dana Berwick states that the letter fits within our bounds for a comment letter. Greg stated to make sure that we are careful on how we phrase everything. Everyone will look over the letter and get comments to Molly by February 26th. There will be a special Executive Committee Meeting March 1st at 7:30am to approve the comment letter.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Everyone looked over the January 30th Executive Committee minutes. Before the March Executive Committee meeting need to add Dana Berwick in the *Roll Call*, change “Aquafor” to “Aquifer” and change “gal” to Ginette Abdo.

CMR Community Working Group – Molly stated that there is a CMR CWG Meeting tomorrow at the fairgrounds. Fish Wildlife and Parks will be presenting on their Elk management plan. There will be a panel discussion in the afternoon. Handed out “Save the Dates” for the rest of the CMR CWG meetings. Karl discussed future CMR CWG meeting topics and the direction the group is going. Laura stated that Winnett ACES will be sponsoring the Range Monitoring group.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – Molly discussed the last meeting that was Feb 13th in Lewistown. There was drone discussion regarding mapping of certain species and also spraying noxious weeds. The next Science Advisory Panel meeting will be potentially April 17th or 19th, on either side of the MISC meeting. They went through the surveys; 59 total surveys returned. There were 22 “I don’t know” of Common Buckthorn. Saltcedar was the most known.

Living on the Bank – John Chase stated that he has printed various sections of the website to read through each section. Doing the right thing for the river to your financial advantage. He wants everyone to weigh in on the layout – simple and direct or more information. Brief discussion on advertising was held and will need followup.

Fort Peck Test Flows – Dana stated that there is a Stakeholder meeting Feb 27th with Joe Bonneau. Right now all signs point to a test flow happening this summer, but won’t know for sure until know the snow pack levels. Received email from the Corp – they want a 100-foot buffer and to monitor pump sites to see what is happening. There is a two-page legal document that needs to be signed; looking at having a DNRC-CDB legal to look over the document. Wondered if they should get together a FB page/group to share information.

MT’s Comprehensive Water Review – Molly didn’t have an update. Lorri stated that they just shut down a well near Helena.

River Rendezvous – Next planning meeting will be Feb 26th. No new updates since the last Executive Committee meeting. August 22nd is date for the River Rendezvous with it being centralized out of Townsend.

Partner Reports

MACD – Dean Rogge stated that MACD is trying to decide if they are going to DC for the spring fly in. Topics they want to discuss during the fly in may be expansion possible of refuges and BLM conservation leasing – Want to have a discussion with leaders of CDs, Commissioners, and

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other Ag groups and get a letter together to send to DC – collaborative effort. MACD should be able to do a lot more helping districts with the extra dues money coming in. Spring Board Meeting will be in Helena again, June 11-15. Karl did an excellent job in San Diego at NACD.

DNRC – No report.

NRCS – No report.

MRWA – Greg stated that the Fort Belknap Compact Bill passed unanimously at the senate, got to the house and then didn't pass.

MCC – Autumn Holzgen stated that they have their field crews, fellows and interns all on board; 40 members across the state, mostly in eastern and central Montana. The Havre member is serving with the CD. Audrey Wright introduced herself; she is helping Autumn out through this year. They have two full mesic restorations crews and one fall LTPBR crew.

CEMIST – Brent Smith stated last week that CEMIST was set up at the MATE show in Billings. Working contract with the DNRC for more education and outreach classes. Applying for project grants for education and outreach. Funding is drawing down and waiting on our AIS grant. USGS is going to be giving a presentation in March on the invasive mussel risk assessment model for the Missouri River Basin. NAISMA will be Sept 30 -Oct 3rd in Missoula – might be the last time it is in Montana for a while. Feral pig tour will be March 4th-8th on the highline.

Reach Reports

Lower Reach – Dana – No report.

Reservoir Reach – Monte stated that the Dry-Redwater Water Authority (DRWA) is still struggling along. The end goal is to have a treatment plant at Rock Creek to pull water out. It is an active group and they are putting water to people in Sidney. They have done a lot of different studies on sites. The Little Shell Tribe is taking over Hell Creek State Park. Dean stated that they hired Dusty Olson back to be the AIS Station Coordinator. Going to be getting together with the CMR to do another presentation on their pilot project.

Middle Reach – No report.

Upper Reach – Karl stated that they have had a few 310 permits.

Individual CD Reports (voluntary/as needed) – John Chase stated that Cascade CD moved into their new building a week ago. At the moment will not be providing a building for the USDA – due to a certain clause issue that came up. Conni French stated that Phillips County CD purchased a No-Till Drill. They are needing to work up a No-Till Drill rental agreement and has received several examples from other CDs. Phillips CD is also working on tree orders and their strategic plan. Dona Stafford stated that the Fergus CD has a lot of tree orders. Zane Fulbright, Manager of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Bureau, gave a shout out to John Chase who was his JH Science teacher. He stated that the refuge managers were all going to be meeting together soon from the region, and any information on the public lands rule as not come out yet. There was an executive leadership team meeting recently so should be more

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information out in the next few weeks. Zane also discussed several projects they have going on and the science plan they are working on for the monument. He handed out monument maps.

Coordinator Update – Molly stated she brought travel vouchers that can be filled out to get travel reimbursed for the meeting.

4:30pm: Margaret Bayfield Executive Director from American Stewards of Liberty gave a presentation discussing how local governments can approach asking for federal coordination. Mission is to protect property rights and helping local governments regain control. They are a national organization. Uncovered the 30/30 agenda and trying to stop this agenda. Been tracking the NACs since 2021. They had over 20 members that were able to put together a campaign to oppose the NAC. Molly will have the recording link if anyone wants to listen to the presentation.

Upcoming Events/Important Dates

February

21: MRCDC Quarterly Meeting, Lewistown

22: CMR Community Working Group, Lewistown

26: River Rendezvous Planning Meeting

27: Stakeholder Ft. Peck Test Flow Meeting

28: Ranching For Rivers meeting

28: CEMIST meeting

28: PCCD meeting

29: Leap Year! An extra day

March

11-13: MRNRC Conference, virtual

12-13: MT Comprehensive Water Review

26: MRCDC Executive Committee meeting

27: CEMIST meeting

27: PCCD meeting

April

9-10: MT Water Review, Miles City

18: CMR CWG, Fort Peck

23: MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting

24: CEMIST Meeting

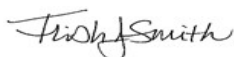
24: PCCD Meeting

Announcements

With no further business, Karl Christians stated the meeting was adjourned at 6:22pm.

Approved by unanimous vote on: 5/21/2024

Submitted by:



Trish Smith, Secretary



Karl Christians, Chairman