

MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
April 23, 2024 at 2:00pm via Zoom

At 2:01pm, Chair Karl Christians called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council members present were **Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; John Chase, Cascade County CD; Dick Iversen, Richland CD; Jeff Ryan, Lewis & Clark CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD; Dana Berwick, Roosevelt CD; Laura Kiehl, Petroleum County CD;** Jeff Pattison, Valley CD and Greg Jergeson, Blaine County CD. Others present were Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator; Brent Smith, CEMIST Manager; Katie Lund, PCCD/MRCDC Fiscal Manager; and Trish Smith, PCCD Administrator/MRCDC Secretary. **Executive Committee Members in BOLD.*

Approve Minutes

Minutes were reviewed from March 26, 2024. John Chase moved to approve the minutes as presented; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed.

Public Comment

Molly discussed the email that she received from the Billings Gazette. They were asking if we had any comments on the Habitat Conservation Lease Program. Lorri stated that there was already an article in the paper about this, so it has already been published.

Financial Report

Katie briefly discussed the financial report. Budget vs Actual – nothing changed since last meeting. Will get about \$25K in reimbursements from the 707 grant request in the next couple weeks. We are at approximately 75% for both the budget and expenses. There will be a NACD reimbursement coming in next month. There is \$47K in the savings account and \$23K in the checking account. The fraudulent charges were reimbursed and Molly did receive her new credit card. Molly was reimbursed for her travel expenses. John Chase moved to approve the April financial report and to pay the outstanding bills; Dana Berwick seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

BLM draft EIS for Greater Sage-Grouse – Molly listened in to one of their virtual meetings, will listen to another meeting this Thursday. She discussed what she has looked over so far, but it is confusing, and a lot to look over.

USFWS invite to Montana – There was discussion on trying to figure out a time to invite Regional and DC folks for a meeting. Karl stated that Dean is wanting to do another presentation on the GCCD pilot project. Dick stated they could come to look at the test flow later this summer, whenever it works with the CMR, approximately 2-3 weeks after the test flow. Dana stated sturgeon data will probably not be ready until Nov/Dec. Molly said they are hoping to have some data by the September MRRIC meeting. Laura asked if there are before and after Saltcedar treatment photos and Karl stated that there might be with the Seven Blackfoot. We are shooting for September.

New Business

Don Steinbeiser trip to DC – Don is going to DC in June and his total travel costs will be around \$3000. The Farm Bureau, Richland & Roosevelt CDs (and possibly McCone & Valley CDs) are donating \$500 to his travel. He will advocate for the test flow and other topics on behalf of MRCDC. Dana discussed the long reach trackhoe and that it is not built for going in muddy areas, so these contractors will not want to use it following the test flows; looking for better equipment that can handle this. The number one effort is to request mitigation funds. Discussed if MRCDC can help contribute towards Don's travel. Katie stated that between the travel and fuel accounts we should be able to. Karl stated we should contribute \$1000. Dick Iversen moved to have MRCDC contribute up to \$1000 to Don Steinbeiser for the DC trip; Dana Berwick seconded. Motion passed. Jeff recommended that we need to show who all contributed when we send the *talking points* packet to Don.

Transboundary Grasslands Partnership – Molly stated they are revamping again and they want to know who is interested in still being partners and on their email list. We haven't done a lot with this group, but we are on their partners list. Jeff stated that he went to a couple of their meetings. Their group is composed of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana. Their focus is economic and ecological issues (birds, buffalo, etc.). Molly stated that we don't need to sign up again as an official partner but will stay on email list. The Council agreed.

Summer exec. Committee meeting time – Karl requested that the June and July meetings be moved earlier in the day. Dana Berwick moved to have the June and July Executive Committee Meetings at 7:30am; John Chase seconded. Motion passed.

May 21 Quarterly meeting details – Molly discussed the May 21st MRCDC Quarterly Meeting in Sidney. She has asked Joe Bonneau to attend and planning to have some field time, looking at pump sites. Also, need to have Molly's annual review and working on MRCDC outreach plan. Greg stated he will be on the road, so wondering if there will be a virtual option; Molly said there can be if Council wants it. Discussed having Molly's annual review done by a committee, over email, and then review at the Quarterly Meeting in Sidney, so folks are not waiting around. Discussed starting the meeting at 9:30am (annual review) and then go into the main meeting 10am – noon, have lunch, and then the pump site field trip.

Karl & Greg discussed Margaret Byfield's recommended course of action. Greg discussed his analysis of her recommended course of action. Karl stated we can discuss further at a future meeting.

Committee Reports

Fort Peck Test Flows – Dana stated that there was an Operations Plan Meeting in Poplar. The test flow will happen in a couple days, but will probably run out of water for the 2nd peak. The Corps says rebalancing of water will take place this winter. River is historically low for this time of year. Dick stated the sturgeon are tagged and asked them to give MRCDC a video of the sturgeon traveling the river to post on our website and present later. Even if they don't complete the test flow, this will count as one; they just need to get 3-5 done in a 10-year period. Molly stated that they are holding weekly meetings and that anyone can join to get an update on where they are at with the test flows. Discussed doing monitoring at some of the pump sites after July. Dick suggested talking with the DNRC to get some funding to find someone willing to take photos for a few weeks at rancher pump sites. Laura suggested possibly FFA kids.

CMR Community Working Group – Molly stated that they had their CMR CWG meeting last week in Fort Peck. It was well attended by NGOs; around 20 people. They had general range monitoring presentations (birds, soil, range). Planning June range monitoring tour in Petroleum County.

Living on the Bank – Molly stated that Dona was approved for Facebook advertising and she is planning to have a table at the Realtor convention. She asked Chris for updated analytics on the website. John asked if there will be a brochure made up. Molly said that there were rack cards made up that we can get more reprinted to hand out. Karl stated that some realtors are planning a workshop that Karl can come present at about the LOTB website.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – Molly stated that they were hoping to have a smaller meeting

with DNRC and Department of Ag last week, coinciding with the MISC meeting. We should be getting an update on it tomorrow at the CEMIST meeting.

MT Water Review – No update from Molly. Karl stated that the DNRC is still pushing to put their name on water rights if the land owner uses water on state land. The MT Land Board (Governor and Lt. Governor) had a meeting at the Supreme Court Chambers; a lot of folks were there voicing their concerns. The Attorney General took note and they will take that in consideration moving forward. Greg is wondering if we should start a draft resolution with MRCDC to weigh in regarding the draft bills that come out of the water review stakeholder committee. Molly stated that the MT Water Review would like to have everything they are presenting to the legislature by September.

River Rendezvous – Molly stated she sent out *Save the Date* announcements. The next Planning Committee meeting is May 1st; still working out logistics. She is meeting Dallas to finalize presenter info. Registration will be around \$25.00.

PARTNER REPORTS:

MACD – No report.

DNRC – No report.

NRCS – No report.

MRWA – Karl stated that MRWA had a meeting with Terry Profota; she worked with them figuring out a work plan for future discussion. They are wondering if MRCDC could take them under their wing (finances, etc.). Greg stated they are not sure yet how they are going to proceed. Looking for a Coordinator, similar to Molly. Karl stated there still needs to be discussion and make sure they are not stepping over/on each other. Dick asked if there was a pot of money left over for the MRWA that they could use to hire an assistant for Molly, to help with the working group.

CEMIST – Brent stated that tomorrow is the CEMIST quarterly meeting. Megan Hoyer will be presenting on Woody Invasives. June 18 is the AIS early detection and monitoring training in Fort Peck. CEMIST was awarded the MISC AIS grant for \$23K; it is for education and outreach and events.

Reach Reports

Lower Reach – No report.

Reservoir Reach – Laura stated that the Petroleum Irrigation District and McDonald Creek irrigation systems are moving forward with rehabilitation and modernization. The Ladies Day on the Range Event is scheduled for June 6th in Winnett; it has been posted and Trish will be sending out invitations soon. Trish stated the CD is having a Homesteading Workshop May 8th Noon to 3pm, and an Applicators Class (on Prairie dogs) for one applicators credit also May 8th, 3pm-4pm.

Middle Reach – No report.

Upper Reach – Jeff stated they cut over 1000 willows at Bill Gehring ranch, and planted around 500 willows on the river banks. Karl and Jeff discussed the fish screens that they are putting in and how they work (photos brought on screen of the two projects). There was the “Montana Matters” event April 13th; it was well attended with many organizations involved, including the Rolling Rivers Trailer and the Lewis and Clark Pump Trailer. John stated that Marc Shane (from Cascade CD) passed away a couple weeks ago.

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

Coordinator Update – Molly stated that she needs to get Dana a MRCDC name tag, and Karl asked for another one. BLM public lands rule was released, but it is not official until it has published. The 30/30 Atlas has been

released and available for viewing; basically, it is a summary of the NRCS work being done across the nation. Watched a webinar on the NRCS RCPP funding through IRA; \$1.5 billion with some allocated to tribes. Potential projects that could fit under this include reservoir clean out, riparian/habitat areas, and woody invasive species management. Deadline for this funding is July 2, and Conservation Districts are able to apply. We would fit under the *prairie grasslands region*, and under categories of *degraded plant conditions, excess/insufficient water and/or drought and fish/invertebrates*. Karl suggested that the council members take this to their boards to see if there is interest in either of these projects.

Upcoming Events/Important Dates

January

- 30: MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting
- 31: PCCD Meeting

February

- 6: Range Conservation Committee Meeting, Billings
- 13: WIWG Meeting
- 13: MT Comprehensive Water Review
- 15-17: MATE Show, CEMIST booth
- 19: Presidents' Day, Closed
- 21: MRCDC Quarterly Meeting, Lewistown**
- 22: CMR Community Working Group, Lewistown
- 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
- 13-26: MRCDC Executive Committee meeting
- 27: CEMIST meeting
- 27: PCCD meeting

Other

With no further business, Dick Iversen moved to adjourn the meeting; John Chase seconded. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:16pm.

Approved on: 6/25/2024

Submitted by:



Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary



Karl Christians, Chairman