

MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
July 30, 2024 at 7:30am via Zoom

At 7:32am, Chair Karl Christians called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council members present were **Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; John Chase, Cascade CD; Dick Iversen, Richland CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD;** Greg Jergesen, Blaine CD; **Jeff Ryan, Lewis & Clark CD; Laura Kiehl, Petroleum CD; Monte Billing, Garfield CD; and Dana Berwick, Roosevelt CD.** Others present were Rebecca Boslough, MACD; Dona Stafford, Fergus CD; 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 the June 25, 2024 meeting. John Chase moved to approve the minutes as amended; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

FINANCIAL REPORT

Katie discussed the July financial report. Only 75% of the budget was spent in FY24; \$32,842.29 was carried over into FY25. \$21,720 is back in *Travel* (original carry over from FY2023). Total income showing in the updated FY25 budget is \$143,242 (includes all the carry over money). \$4800 is for the group benefit stipend. The health stipend is going to be tiered, so will be \$400/mth additional stipend for Molly. This can be paid by the PCCD for this year, but want to get added to the MRCDC budget moving forward if prefer to use the \$4800 somewhere else. *Postage* was bumped up to \$500, advertising to \$1000, and office supplies to \$700. Remaining \$2714.85 was put into *Capital Improvements*. Karl discussed hiring short term folks for the test flow monitoring; have \$12-13K reserved for that, and asked DNRC for \$6-8K. Thinks we should just get them hired with the current funds. Will approve at the next MRCDC meeting, after re-looking at the budget. Molly stated that the travel stipend for Bill Milton won't suffice, so she worked up a different figure. Approximately \$18K in checking and \$47K savings. Dick Iversen moved to pay the unpaid bills and approve the financial report; Dana Berwick seconded. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Fort Peck Test Flows – Dana stated that the water levels at Culbertson have been problematic for irrigators (a week ago); they were prepared for 8,000cfs, and only 7,100cfs at the time. Visited with staff from the Governors office and DNRC about getting help from the state to lean on the Corps to increase flows. They decided to stop the test flow since pallid sturgeon spawning had not been observed yet; brought the cfs closer to 8000 for irrigators. Need to get a letter with updated info sent out. Irrigators have many photos that can be presented to the Corps. MRRIC yearly meeting is in September and there will be discussion on adaptive management. Dick discussed the gage readings being 1000cfs different from Wolfpoint to Culbertson. Hoping next year to have reading that are a little more accurate. Karl stated that historically it hasn't been that difficult to calibrate those gages. Molly shared a video of the flow at Culbertson from Dana.

CMR Community Working Group – Molly stated that the CMR CWG had their in-field day the end of June in Winnett; good day but did get stormed out. Waiting on one more invoice for porta potties and then can close out that grant and reporting. Next meeting is September 19th in Jordan. Looking at doing different scaled examples of a monitoring plan in action, and funding resources. Potential presenters are Western Sustainability Exchange and World Wildlife Fund.

Living on the Bank – Dona is putting in to have the website paid for through the grant for this year. Waiting to hear back from the Realtor Association on possibly having a booth at their convention.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – Molly stated the Core Committee is still working on the Science Advisory Panel; having meeting next week discussing new funding opportunities that have come about through the water smart program with the Bureau of Reclamation. Dan Rostad has been working on trying to get support for increasing the Noxious Weed Trust Fund; working with MACO and legislative folks creating a bill that will go forward in the next legislative session.

MT Water Review – Karl stated that the group has been meeting and one of the big topics is going to be exempt wells. Exempt wells protect agriculture and livestock. Rebecca, MACD, mentioned there is an exempt wells subcommittee webinar meeting tomorrow and the links are on the DNRC Comprehensive Water Review web page; another sub-committee meeting to streamline change process on August 1st. Next stake holder working group for the Comprehensive Water Review is in Helena August 19.

River Rendezvous – Molly stated that so far 15 folks have registered for the dinner, 24 registered for the River Rendezvous. The Booklet will be printed next week; has speaker info, pictures, etc. Solomon, Big Sky Watershed member with MACD, will be filming at the River Rendezvous. Trish gave an update on sponsors. Quarterly meeting start time was discussed, decided 3pm-6pm.

PARTNER REPORTS:

MACD – Rebecca stated they have area meetings coming up end of Sept/early Oct. Couple projects working on. Completely re-done the MT Conservation Menu that has funding and program resources for CDs; launching sometime mid-Oct, but will be doing beta testing with a couple districts. Also working on grant training and management resources. Convention coming up in the fall. Call for resolutions are out; first deadline is Aug 15. Coming up on a legislative session. Can set folks up with experts to help with their resolution.

DNRC – Karl discussed having to track time and expenses, since 10% fee is no longer allowed. There are many indirect fees such as office supplies and is hard to track every expense, and there is a lot of time spent tracking time. Stated that maybe a CD can put a resolution together to go back to the 10% fee for grant administration. Becca discussed options for dealing with indirect costs. Brent stated that CEMIST wasn't able to do a percentage for supplies, just have to buy supplies themselves for PCCD. Molly stated that they tried to put together an invoice categorized as "office administration" for supplies and it was not accepted. Katie stated

that we changed the wording to “sponsorship fee” per recommendation from DNRC, and they still didn’t allow it. Greg stated that there is a need for a CD Advisory Council due to these issues.

NRCS – Molly stated that there is no NEW news on hiring a new state conservationist. Karl stated that the NRCS has a technical advisory committee where supervisors could bring concerns; discussed a few examples. He would like districts to start to bring forth concerns or issues with programs. Dick discussed finding a better way to recruit local rural kids for NRCS positions. Rebecca stated that they are hoping to go to DC in September and that could be a good opportunity with agency leadership to bring up what issues look like on the ground.

MRWA – Greg stated that ground breaking for the diversion dam, that is being paid from the infrastructure bill (\$88M) will be August 20. Discussed the failure of the syphons. The Department of Reclamation has agreed to proceed with the full reconstruction of the syphons. It is a \$70M project/50% cost share; some money left over from the infrastructure bill that can be used for that, and no cost share. The state approved a loan that doesn’t have to be paid back, just interest has to be paid. Should not have to raise water user taxes. Karl stated that not just the irrigators benefit from that system. Greg stated there will likely not be any irrigation next season so will need to see about the USDA to cover the loss of crops. Rebecca stated that they do not have a resolution asking USDA to cover costs. Greg will possibly work on a resolution.

CEMIST – Brent reported that the Watercraft Inspections stations (WIS) have inspected approximately 53,000 watercrafts to date state wide, with 25 mussel fouled boats being detected. One mussel fouled boat was "missed" and later inspected and decontaminated at a regional FWP office. The local news outlets reported a feral pig on the Fort Belknap reservation. It was in fact confirmed to be a domesticated pig by the USDA wildlife services and returned to its owner. The month of August is focused on the planning of various E&O events in September and October. CEMIST will be presenting at NAISMA this year in Missoula (Oct 3rd). Also, there are registration scholarships available from the Montana Noxious Weed Trust fund. These scholarships are for weed district, CD, and MSU extension staff. Contact Molly for information from Brent.

REACH REPORTS

Lower Reach – No report.

Reservoir Reach – No report.

Middle Reach – Karl stated there have been more grizzly bear sightings around Winifred. Dona stated Fergus CD is having a *Build and Paint a Rain Barrel* workshop August 17.

Upper Reach – Jeff stated they are having their annual Watershed Festival August 17 in Helena; will have their Rolling Rivers trailer there.

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

COORDINATOR UPDATE – Molly stated she has sent two comment letters, and will be sending two others; Test flow updates to congressional members, support of funding for the St. Mary’s system, CDAC letter, and letter regarding the State Conservationist hiring. The MT Watershed Coordination Council is doing their Watershed Campaign and featuring MRCDC August 2; created three posts with general MRCDC info, River Rendezvous and Test Flow info. Came across a post on FB from the Public Lands Council; appropriations act for FY25, section in it that blocks the BLM from implementing the conservation and landscape health rule. CMR CWG is in Jordan Sept. 19 along with the MRRIC event in Sioux Falls Sept. 17-19. She might not be able to be at the CMR CWG event; Trish offered to help at the CMR CWG event.

UPCOMING EVENTS/IMPORTANT DATES

June

- 25: MRRIC – Fish Draft AM Report
- 25: MRCDC Executive Committee meeting**
- 26: CEMIST meeting
- 26: PCCD meeting
- 27: CMR CWG Rangeland Monitoring Training**
Every Wednesday at 12:00 (mtn. time): USACE Test Flow update meeting

July

- 2: Molly out
- 9: MISC meeting, Billings
- 9: MT Comprehensive Water Review
- 12: MRRIC Fish/HC Work Group call
- 19: Molly out
- 25: MRRIC HC Work Group call
- 30: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting, 7:30am**
- 30-8/1: MRRIC AM Workshop, Omaha
- 31: CEMIST meeting
- 31: PCCD meeting
- Every Wednesday at 12:00 (mtn. time): USACE Test Flow update meeting*

August

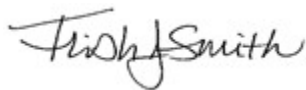
- 19: MT Comprehensive Water Review
- 21: MRCDC Quarterly meeting**
- 22: River Rendezvous**
- 28: CEMIST meeting
- 28: PCCD meeting
- Every Wednesday at 12:00 (mtn. time): USACE Test Flow update meeting*

Other

With no further business, John Chase moved to adjourn the meeting; Monte Billing seconded. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15am.

Approved on: 9/23/2024

Submitted by:



Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary



Karl Christians, Chairman