

MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes September 23, 2024 at 1:00pm via Zoom

At 1:00pm, Chair Karl Christians called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council Executive committee members present were Jeff Ryan, Lewis and Clark CD; Dick Iverson, Richland County CD; Karl Christians, Lewis and Clark CD; Dana Berwick, Roosevelt CD; Laura Kiehl, Petroleum County CD; and John Chase, Cascade CD. Bill Milton, CMR CWG planning committee and facilitator; Katie Lund, PCCD fiscal agent, and Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator also joined the meeting.

Approve Minutes

Approve July 30, 2024 Executive Committee meeting minutes – Dana moved to approve as amended and Laura seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Approve Sept. 6, 2024 Executive Committee meeting minutes – John moved to approve and Laura seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Financial Report

Approve outstanding bills – DNRC did not approve the travel claim as submitted for Bill Milton. We are working on remedying this so we can be reimbursed for last quarter. Funds are getting low. John moved to approve, and Laura seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Financial Report, September – Due to issues with Molly's card, the cap has been increased \$4,000. Hopefully it fixes the issues. John moved to approve, and Jeff seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Old Business

MRCDC budget amendment approval – Dick moved to approve the amended budget and John seconded. Motion approved.

New Business

CMR CWG's future discussion with planning committee – a brief discussion was held regarding the CMR CWG. A couple ideas discussed was expanding the group to beyond the CMR focus. Bison are being relocated around Montana, not just the CMR. Another thought was maybe meet less often, twice a year?, and focus on partner updates during that time. There is not another avenue for this currently and it is one of the highlights of the current meeting. The planning committee will continue this discussion either before or after the October 29 meeting in Jordan.

Committee Reports

Fort Peck Test Flows – Dick reported Sept. 15 they did drop water to 5,000cfs and will be decreasing more to about 4,000cfs. They continue to say that the flows over the summer are not the reason for decreasing the current flows so low. He also attended a Fort Peck cabin owners meeting the USACE hosted. A lot of the meeting there was frustration by the cabin owners regarding all the water and fish they removed when the spill way was used, etc. Dana reported on the MRRIC meeting held in South Dakota last week. During his presentation, he was able to share several photos regarding the test flow impacts on his pump sites. He additionally talked with a lot of folks outside of meetings. The USACE did say no test flow for 2025 due to having to get through this year's data. The USFWS wasn't in favor of this if the conditions are correct. This year wasn't a good year for the birds. With the river going down so much, electric fences are being put up to keep cattle in. There are shifts in channels since previous years. Molly mentioned there is another USACE / stakeholder meeting that has been scheduled for November 1 to go through an after-action discussion.

CMR Community Working Group – covered above.

Living On The Bank – The Realtor's meeting is in Kalispell. The table is set up for about 2 hours in the evening. Dona and Molly are working with Samantha at Flathead CD to see if someone from there can attend. LOB would pay for table and swag has been ordered. The LOB grant with Fergus CD did pay for the website this year.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – There is a Science Advisory Panel being held on October 17 in Helena focusing on economics. There is also a call out for proposals due at the end of the month.

MT Water Review – Nicole Rolf had attended the MACD Board meeting last Monday and gave a good summary. Their last working group meeting will be in October. They have a few bills drafted and looking for comments on them. The bills are posted on their website as well as all other meeting contents. The name of the draft bills are Waiver of Adverse Effect, Agency Coordination & Notice of Intent for Exempt Wells, Permit and Change Reconciliation, and Settling Provisional Permits & Change Authorizations. One we want to be sure to look at is the Notice of Intent for Exempt Wells. From Karl's understanding, a person would have to file a notice of intent prior to drilling, rather than filing the well after the fact as it is now.

River Rendezvous – Event was well attended. Being close to Helena allowed for some additional folks from Helena to come. Lots of help from Broadwater CD was greatly appreciated. Financial wise, we are nearly wrapped up. The day was informative all the way around. Molly mentioned to be brainstorming on where we want to go next year. This will be decided in November.

Partner Reports

MACD (Montana Association of Conservation Districts) – Area 6 meeting in Helena is tomorrow.

DNRC (Department of Natural Resource Conservation) – None.

NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) – None.

MRWA (Milk River Watershed Alliance) – Karl had talked with Jeff. He is frustrated with trying to get this going again. There is a lot of interest, but no one wants to step up and help do it. DNRC is discussing on taking the money back for this. MRCDC has discussed taking the group under their wing, but there has to be the interest.

CEMIST (Central and Eastern Montana Invasive Species Team) – Molly mentioned during the MACD Board meeting, Mark Bostrom specified the \$50,000 that was put in as a line up for CEMIST was denied. For now, CEMIST will need to keep working through the grants programs.

Reach Reports

Lower Reach, Dick Iverson – The river is low.

Reservoir Reach, Monte Billing – Laura reported the recent rains they had were a great blessing. It was a narrow strip through Petroleum County, but it filled reservoirs and allowed for some fall green up. There were places with 5-inch totals in about a 48-hour period. They continue to work on irrigation infrastructure.

Middle Reach, Lorri Schafer – Lorri has not been able to attend the Eastern Heath Snail meetings, so she doesn't have much to report. Hoping to make the FCD meeting next month to be updated.

Upper Reach, Jeff Ryan – After the area meeting tomorrow, they are planning an optional tour over on Prickly Pear Land Trust ground to view a stream restoration project. John Chase added that to try and bolster partners, he had an opportunity to meet an individual, Lilly McLane with the Gallatin Watershed Council. MRCDC should reach out and open up a dialogue with the Gallatin Watershed Council as we should have similar interests on benefitting the headwaters of the Missouri.

Individual CD Reports (voluntary / as needed)

None.

Coordinator Update

Molly's September report has been sent out. She asked John if it would be possible to have our November Quarterly meeting at Cascade CD's new building. John would like to see that happen. Molly will reach out to Tenlee to schedule. It was also decided the October Exec. Committee meeting will be rescheduled for October 22 at 1:00pm due to scheduling conflicts with the CMR CWG.

Upcoming Events / Important Dates

September

- 23: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting, 1:00pm**
- 24: EQC interim committee meeting
- 25: CEMIST meeting
- 25: PCCD meeting
- 30-10/3: NAISMA Conference, Missoula

October

- 9: Molly out
- 11: Molly out
- 14: Closed
- 17: WIWG SAP, Helena
- 17-18: Educators Conference, CEMIST table, Bozeman
- 29: CMR CWG, Jordan ****rescheduled date****
- 30: CEMIST meeting
- 30: PCCD meeting
- TBD: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting, 1:00pm**

November

- 1: Ranchers Resource Network
- 5: Election Day
- 6: NRCS State Technical Committee, Helena
- 11: Veterans Day
- 19: MRCDQ Quarterly meeting?
- 19-21: MACD Convention, Great Falls
- 27: CEMIST meeting?
- 27: PCCD meeting?
- 28: Thanksgiving
- 29: Molly out

With no further business John moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 2:14pm.

Approved on October 22, 2024.

Submitted by:



Molly Masters, Coordinator



Karl Christians, Chairman