

Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Nov 19, 2024
In person & Zoom, Great Falls, MT

At 2:00pm, Karl Christians opened the MRCDC quarterly business meeting. Council members present were Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; Laura Kiehl, Petroleum CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD; Steve Wanderaas, McCone CD; Jay King, Petroleum CD; Monte Billing, Garfield County CD; Dick Iversen, Richland CD (Virtual); John Chase, High Plains CD; Dallas Kiehl, Broadwater CD; Jeff Pattison, Valley CD; Greg Jergeson, Blaine CD; Jeff Ryan, Lewis & Clark CD (Virtual); Rick Anderson, Chouteau CD; and Bruce Anderson, Blaine CD. Others present were Pat Anderson, Phillips CD; Barb Broberg, Glacier CD; Amy Seaman, MWCC; Veronica Grigaltchik, DNRC CDB; Steph Criswell, MT DNRC CDs Bureau Chief; Liz Lodman, MISC; Robbie Savelkoul, Roosevelt CD; Hayley Young, Valley CD (Virtual); Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist; Astor Boozer, NRCS Regional Conservationist; Michael Wendland, MSCA & Hill CD; Shane Lammerding, Phillips CD; Katie Lund, MRCDC Fiscal Manager (Virtual); Trish Smith, PCCD/MRCDC; Brent Smith, CEMIST; and Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator.

General

Everyone introduced themselves. Karl discussed the MRCDC Annual Report and asked board members to take it back to their districts and ask if there is anything the MRCDC can do for districts. Minutes were read and John Chase moved to approve the May 21, 2024 quarterly minutes as amended; Monte Billing seconded. Motion passed. Everyone reviewed the Aug 21, 2024 quarterly meeting notes.

Public Comment

None.

Financial Report

Katie went over financials. Received the \$24K quarterly reimbursement from DNRC. Sitting at 25% for income (as projected) and 27% for expenses. The PCCD approved a \$100 stipend per employee, paid with the CDA. Went over the Profit and Loss by class, and the Statement of Accounts. The checking account has \$13,647 and \$47K in savings. Discussed unpaid bills. John Chase moved to approve the November financial report and unpaid bills; Lorri Schafer seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

CMR CWG future – Discussed in *Committee Reports*.

New Business

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Draft USACE AOP change – Molly stated that the Council approved a letter (March of 2024) asking the Corp to extend the irrigation season through Sept. Lorri Schafer moved to approve the letter; John Chase seconded. Motion passed.

2025 River Rendezvous location– Discussed past locations for the River Rendezvous event (Gallatin, Petroleum, Garfield, Broadwater). Karl suggested touring the Milk River. Possibly set in Sleeping Buffalo in Valley County. No definitive decision was made on a location.

Milk River Watershed Alliance future – Karl discussed the history of the MRWA. It is composed of five districts. Discussed the MRCDC helping and absorbing the group, and having Molly spearhead hiring a part time coordinator in the future possibly. MRCDC will handle the finances. Jeff stated that they have struggled with coordinators in the past. They have done several projects. There was a meeting April 10th in Phillips County discussing options and plans. Discussed Co-oping as a hybrid for a few years with MRCDC. There is funding coming down after the Milk River issues. Challenges have been hiring and keeping the right Coordinator, lack of engagement and funding issues. Went over the MRWA's strategic plan and discussed *Option #2: Hybrid/Merge* and *Option #3*. Greg stated it is important to have more organization and there hasn't been a MRWA meeting in a long time. Discussed Molly being able to charge her time to the remainder of the grant and having a MRWA committee on the MRCDC council. Hayley, with VCCD, has approximately \$5000 in savings that is MRWA's. Molly's wages could be covered through December 31, 2024 with grant money that has to be expended by then. Discussed options for Molly's time reimbursement. Will need cooperation with districts committing to be on a committee for Molly to have direction; three of the five districts are already on the MRCDC Council. Rick Anderson moved to allow Executive Committee to draft MOU with the MRWA, for Molly Masters to serve as MRWA Coordinator for 1 year; seconded by John Chase. Motion Passed. Will meet the 1st or 2nd week in Dec. MOU will be brought to the Dec. 17 Executive Committee meeting.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Everyone looked over the Executive Committee minutes included in the packet.

CMR Community Working Group – Molly stated that we had our CMR CWG meeting Oct. 29 in Jordan. It was the last of the 3-part series on rangeland monitoring. Planning committee brainstormed ideas at the end; decided it is time for a change. Discussed having meetings less often, and having 1-2 larger symposium style meetings a year. Planning committee will meet the first part of December. Monte discussed his conversation with Paul Santavy (CMR); having a CMR meeting once a year for the CMR to give their future plans (1-year, 5-year). Karl discussed regrouping with congressionals.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – Liz Lodman discussed the WIWG. It has been a joint effort with MISC, YRCDC, Dept. of Ag., and other partners, to address Common Buckthorn, Russian Olive and Saltcedar. They received MT Noxious Weed trust funding and they have two Science Advisory Panels discussing control methods (funded by MISC). Also funding an impact study; impact to wildlife, crops, land etc., will take around eight months for that. There is not a good map of common buckthorn; really taking over areas. Goal of group is to educate and find ways to address issues; where they are taking over and doing any damage.

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Living on the Bank – Molly discussed the Realtors Association Convention in September. Worked with Flathead CD and had a booth on 310 permitting; was well received. Will be ordering more promotional products, rack cards, posters, etc. that CDs can put in their office and give to realtors and others in their area. Karl encouraged folks to look at their website.

Fort Peck Test Flows – Molly stated there will not be test flows in 2025 to allow time to go over the results from the 2024 test flow and to design the next test flow from those results. Discussed the test flow print out. Test flows were completed July 30. Since it was getting really low at Culbertsons; brought back up to 9K cfs. Posted job position for irrigator specialist but haven't received any applications. Will re-post as open till filled. Karl stated looking for someone local; Brent stated to maybe reach out to Dawson Community College to advertise. Discussed changing it to "remote" and Robbie could still oversee that employee. Dick thanked MRDC for working with irrigators and hoping to find someone to survey for crop loss and other data to be used for later. Monte discussed the test flow affecting others upstream as well.

MT's Comprehensive Water Review – Molly stated they have 3-4 bills proposed for legislative session on their website that can be reviewed. They will be having a session this Thursday at 3pm at Convention.

Partner Reports

MACD – Jeff Pattison stated that MACD is trying to get CDs to tell their story about what they do and why they exist. They are putting together bullet points for CDs. Terry Profata helped them with streamlining and strategic planning. Working on improving the resolution process. Steve Wanderaas discussed their switch over to the Workmosis financial program.

DNRC – Veronica stated she is the CDB specialist for the eastern part of the state but Steph took over for the MRDC. Discussed the water reservation program and its changes; Mary Hendrix is now the water reservation coordinator. There will be office hours at Convention. Mark Bostrom will be presenting on the trust/grant tomorrow. DNRC has a table at convention; will not be printing new CD directories but there will be an updated one online. Did many 10-minute trainings this last year. There is a feedback form on the trainings.

NRCS – Tom Watson discussed changes that will be coming in the future within NRCS. The mission hasn't changed but the message and narrative does change. They currently have 240 employees (Montana) and 55% have worked less than three years. Flexibilities are going to change in years to come. Discussed hiring issues and getting employees in remote area. Any allocated money not used will go back, so there is a delicate balance in balancing the budget. Been working on aging irrigation infrastructure across the state. Astor stated that they should have Tom's State Conservationist position announcement posted by the end of next week. There was discussion on the changes in the Farm Bill.

MRWA – Discussed later in meeting.

MCC – No report.

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CEMIST – Brent stated they are getting into convention and show season. Had quite a few AIS workshops, last in Bozeman. Citizen science was changed to Community Science. FWP has been expending a lot of funds into that program. Will have a booth at the MT Grain Growers association convention in December. Been increased efforts on the Eastern Heath Snail. Presented on the EHS at the Fergus County Livestock Association annual meeting. Doing a presentation at MACD Convention Thursday.

MISC – Liz Lodman stated that Steve Wanderaas and partners will be discussing MISC tomorrow at Convention. They will also be discussing membership.

MWCC– Amy Seaman stated that they just opened their capacity grants. The deadline for applications is Jan 9th and the unrestricted \$5000 is awarded in March – giving around five awards out. Tomorrow will be discussing at Convention how they can help CDs. Early part of next year will be opening up the Big Sky Watershed Corp program. Restricted to watershed projects.

Individual CD Reports (voluntary/as needed) – Laura discussed the new Conservation Technician the PCCD will be housing; she started November 18. There is a NACD grant that is partially funding her position. The Farmers Conservation Alliance continues to work with the Petrolia Irrigation District. The PID presented at the Butte School of Mines and Geology. There will be a water loss study being done.

John Chase discussed their new Conservation District building. MT Salinity Control Association is in the building with them.

Coordinator Update – No additional update – update in the packet.

Upcoming Events/Important Dates

November

19: MRCDC Quarterly Meeting, Great Falls

19-21: MACD Convention, Great Falls

26: PCCD Meeting

26: CEMIST Meeting

28: Thanksgiving

29: Molly out

December

3-5: MRRIC Plenary Meeting, Bellevue NE

9: Molly out

17: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting, 1:00pm

18: PCCD meeting

18: CEMIST meeting

25: Merry Christmas!

31: New Year's Eve

January

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1: New Year's Day

14: Molly out

15: Molly out

20: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, office closed

28: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting, 1:00pm

29: PCCD meeting

29: CEMIST meeting

Announcements

With no further business, Karl Christians stated the meeting was adjourned at 5:19pm.

Approved by unanimous vote on: February 25, 2025

Submitted by:



Trish Smith, Secretary



Karl Christians, Chairman