

**MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
December 17, 2024 at 1:00pm via Zoom**

At 1:02pm, Chair Karl Christians called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council members present were **Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD;** Greg Jergesen, Blaine CD; **Monte Billing, Garfield CD; Jeff Ryan, Lewis & Clark CD; Dick Iversen, Richland CD; and Laura Kiehl, Petroleum CD.** Others present were Robbie Savelkoul, Roosevelt CD; Hayley Young, Vally CD; Cora Gray, Phillips CD; 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 October 22, 2024 meeting. Lorri Schafer moved to approve the minutes; Karl Christians seconded. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

FINANCIAL REPORT

Katie discussed the December financial report. Submitted the quarterly reimbursement to DNRC, but they are wanting more documentation. Half way through year and sitting at around 35% for expenses. Went over the break downs by class. Termination account needs to reviewed periodically; can have two years' worth in that account. Checking account has \$1,011; potentially need to be moving from savings to get by until get reimbursements. Karl stated to move what is needed from savings, just send out an email what was transferred. Dona mailed out their reimbursement check for \$3,391. DNRC wants a breakdown on Katie's time, and more documentation of sponsorship fee, River Rendezvous, annual insurance payment, etc. Went over unpaid bills. Dick Iversen moved to pay the unpaid bills and approve the financial report; Lorri Shafer seconded. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

DNRC CD grant hearing process comment letter (formerly CDAC duties) – Molly joined on Zoom for their grant hearings during convention. There were no comments in person or online. Robbie stated that there were 9 projects and approximately \$160K awarded, the majority for strategic planning, a couple for equipment, and education mini-grants. It was agreed that CDAC should not have been eliminated and money should be used for projects, not so much on planning. Focus seems to be more on planning, and not on the ground conservation; spending so much money on planning, no funds left to do the projects planned. There was other discussion stating the decisions need to be back to the advisory council; that we need to have folks with on-the-ground experience making decisions on grants, and that we should go forward with our letter. Molly discussed the letter; similar to a comment letter written up last spring, just added a few paragraphs. Dick Iversen moved to go ahead with the comment letter to the DNRC, with amendments discussed; Laura Kiehl seconded. Motion passed.

2025 River Rendezvous location – Karl stated that the Milk River might be turned back on earlier than planned, so maybe have River Rendezvous at the time that they project turning the water back on. Asked if other ideas of locations. Dick stated possible down in the lower reach area. Molly stated John Chase mentioned having it in Great Falls; showing what FWP does for Pallid Sturgeon on the upper part of the Missouri River. Greg stated they will be done with the Fresno Dam Safety Project if can move the event closer to September. Laura suggested having it east of Malta, at Buffalo. Lorri stated if we did that, could also look at Sleeping Buffalo next to Nelson Reservoir. Discussed the timing of the year to have the River Rendezvous. Proposals for each location are to be made in January with a decision to be made after.

NEW BUSINESS

MOU agreement with MRWA – Molly stated that MRWA had a meeting last week. They discussed the couple grants ending at the end of the year, looking at possibly purchasing equipment with those grants, and moving forward with the MRWA, under the umbrella of MRCDC. Waiting for the okay from DNRC; they are just needing more justification for the drone and camcorder. She gave them the justifications for use but hasn't heard back yet. There was a motion to accept the MOU as amended during the MRWA meeting, as long as DNRC legal council approves. There were concerns regarding #2 & 4 in the MOU under FUNDING and if it is needed to keep them in the MOU or not. The proposed MOU is financial focused, may need more of an agreement that outlines duties and other items. Greg voiced his concerns having the PCCD having the final say in who MRWA accepts money from. Karl stated they are fiscally responsible so anything grant related (including project approval) would have to be though the PCCD. Lorri asked if MRWA has the ability to hold their own funds or if they need someone to be a fiscal manager. Karl stated the MOU was already approved last week at the MRWA meeting so moving forward with it once we hear back from DNRC.

MWCC membership – Molly discussed the Montana Watershed Coordination Council's membership program. Membership cost is based on the operation budget per year, so would be \$150/year, if MRCDC wanted to be a member of MWCC. Tabled until the Jan meeting to present on benefits to MRCDC for being a member.

RRAC Recommendations to FWP comment letter – due 12/23 – Molly gave a brief background on the River Recreation Advisory Council. Discussed edits to the comment letter. Karl Christians moved to send the RRAC Recommendations to FWP comment letter, as amended; Laura Kiehl seconded. Motion passed.

NRCS State Conservationist hiring comment letter – Molly stated that they just opened up hiring process for the new NRCS State Conservationist. Discussed what the MRCDC would like to see in the new State Conservationist. Discussed the comment letter and edits. Dick Iversen moved to approve the letter as amended; Laura Kiehl seconded. Motion passed. Discussed who to Cc the letter when it is sent.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Fort Peck Test Flows – Dick stated they will be spending the next two years analyzing data of this last test flow. Probably not going to do it this coming spring because there is not enough water in the reservoir. Corp is looking at extending irrigation season through September, but dropping the flows in the summer to make up that difference. Molly discussed an applicant that will be turning in a resume and cover letter soon. Dick asked if we could have that sent out before the next meeting, and ready to approve at the January meeting.

CMR Community Working Group – Will be getting a planning committee together in January.

Living on the Bank – Dona stated that their grant is coming to an end so they moved some of the money to Molly to order some outreach materials to hand out.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – Molly stated last week the advisory council reviewed the summary for the science advisory panels that have been held, as well as looking at education and outreach material and funding to do so in the coming year. They have funds through YRDC, etc. Looking at applying for additional funds through a Noxious Trust Fund grant that is due in January for TV ads, tour, etc. Molly offered to help for the tour.

River Rendezvous – Discussed prior.

MRWA (Milk River Watershed Alliance) – Discussed prior.

PARTNER REPORTS:

MACD – Karl stated that NACD Convention is in February in Salt Lake City.

DNRC – No report.

NRCS –Karl stated that Aster is flying the State Conservationist announcement.

MRWA – No report.

CEMIST – Brent stated they are in Convention and Show season; Stockgrowers, Grain Growers, etc. Karl asked about the Golden Mussel that was found in California. Brent gave a short overview of the Golden Mussel.

REACH REPORTS

Lower Reach – Dick discussed the Interim Water Policy Committee, and the amount of water used for oil fracking. They started to drill wells in the Fox Hills and build these massive ponds to get enough for one frack that lasts 4-5 days. Five years ago, they used 30-50K barrels per well; 300-400K now. Water does not go back into the atmosphere; it is pumped down to the Dakotas since it can't be reused with all the chemicals and salt in it.

Reservoir Reach – Laura stated that the PCCD will be having a local working group meeting this winter, MSGOT range monitoring will commence soon, and hosting a variety of events and workshops this spring. Skylar Stenson is the new Conservation Technician who will be helping develop fencing projects and waterlines with ACES; housed in the same office as the NRCS/CD. We are also considering looking into a grant with MWCC to create a Water Conservation Technician position. This technician will work on water conservation projects in Petroleum County; water storage, irrigation infrastructure updates, etc. For Garfield County CD, Monte stated that they are still working on the pilot project and will have a possible presentation to the CMR; not sure when. Not sure if the Little Shell has their long-term lease at Hell Creek or not yet.

Middle Reach – Dona discussed her tree sales.

Upper Reach – Jeff stated their past fisheries biologist, Adam Strainer, is now the Chief of the Fisheries Division.

Individual CD Reports (voluntary/as needed) – Robbie discussed a workshop Steve Kenyan (?); plan on doing after the Soil Health Symposium in February. Cora stated they will be having their local working group meeting at the end of January, and will be hosting the Range Days in 2026/2027.

COORDINATOR UPDATE – Molly stated she attended the MT Public Lands Council meeting that was held in conjunction with the Stockgrowers in Billings. Many concerns MRCDC has had were discussed including public lands, ranching permits, etc. There was an update on the Public Lands Rule.

December

3-5: MRRIC Plenary Meeting

4: MSGA Convention, Billings

9-10: Molly out

12: MRWA meeting

17: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting,

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1:00pm
18: PCCD meeting
18: CEMIST meeting
25: Merry Christmas!
24-26: Molly out
31: New Year's Eve

January

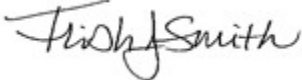
1: New Year's Day
13-14: Molly out
20: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, office closed
23: CD's Rotunda Day at the Capitol
28: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting,
1:00pm
29: PCCD meeting
29: CEMIST meeting

Other

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:02pm.

Approved on: 01/28/2025

Submitted by:



Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary



Karl Christians, Chairman