

MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2025 at 4:00pm via Zoom

At 4:05pm, Vice Chair Dallas Diehl called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council members present were **Dallas Diehl, Broadwater CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD; John Chase, High Plains CD**; Greg Jergesen, Blaine CD; **Dick Iversen, Richland CD; John Chase, High Plains CD**; and **Jeff Ryan, Lewis & Clark CD**. Others present were Katherine Kirsch, DNRC; Brent Smith, CEMIST; Katie Lund, MRCDC Fiscal Manager; Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator; and Trish Smith, MRCDC/PCCD. *Executive Committee Members in **BOLD**.

APPROVE MINUTES

Minutes were reviewed from the October 27, 2025, MRCDC executive committee meeting. John Chase moved to approve the minutes as amended; Lorri Schafer seconded. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Katie reported on the financial report. We are 5 months through the FY, 2 months into the new budget year; \$37K of income (50% of budget). Final 707 grant reimbursement of \$19,890 received December 9th, closing grant. Expenses at 53% of budget. Capital improvement of \$9,200 for vehicle depreciation will be moved to depreciation account pending fund availability. Checking account shows negative \$29,697 due to pending reimbursements. Checks to PCCD held pending 707 reimbursement and SSA reimbursement. Vehicle depreciation account holds \$23,786, plus \$9,200 pending. Anticipated 766 grant reimbursement of \$25,000 to \$30,000, plus \$19,890 from 707 and SSA reimbursement. Profit and loss show 766 grant expenditures of \$25,467.52 (billed to DNRC quarterly), with 20 additional days of December expenses to add. Lorri Schafer moved to approve the financial report; John Chase seconded. Motion passed. John Chase moved to pay the unpaid bills; Lorri Schafer seconded. Motion passed. Molly mentioned travel vouchers sent out, only received one back.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

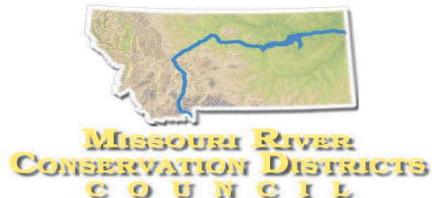
NEW BUSINESS

Approving CEMIST AIS grant support letter – Brent gave an overview of the grant and CEMIST. Jeff Ryan moved to approve the CEMIST AIS grant support letter; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Fort Peck test flows – Dick reported that they have a meeting tomorrow to discuss lessons learned and next test flow plans. Cameron has his report out. Molly reported that there are science advisory panels scheduled the last two days. Government shutdown delayed the big multi-day meeting from

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November to spring (dates TBD). Irrigator meeting tentatively planned for February with committee members Dick, Dana, Julie and Robbie. Joe Bonneau invited to present on information, data, and next test flow design to gather irrigator input. Senator Daines and Congressman Troy Downing introduced legislation keeping operational control and financial responsibility of lower Yellowstone fish bypass channel under Bureau of Reclamation. Prevents repair cost transfer to irrigators after certain timeframe.

CMR CWG – No update.

Living on the Bank – John reported that a watershed group is planning Living on the Land workshops this summer and they will promote Living on the Bank. Their new employee will also.

Woody invasive species working group – Full working group meeting tentatively March 24th in Lewistown (hybrid format). Draft agenda includes discussing funding for administrator position (currently unfunded). Summer river tour of woody invasives projects along Yellowstone River in Billings area tentatively August 12th.

MRWA – Greg reported a January 14th meeting. Important meeting with potential partner feedback on watershed-related work. Five CDs (possibly six if Big Sandy interested) are interested in working with the MRWA. Pursuing an active operating organization. Future agenda will include the 310 working group report, in particular regarding the SB472 regarding 310 violations. Draft legislation targeted for June for all districts to review. Molly suggested inviting Hailey Graff to the next MRCDC Quarterly meeting to give an update. Lake Sherburne and St. Mary Canal increasing releases to 525 CFS through December 22nd to remove excess November-December storage from snow-melt weather pattern.

River Rendezvous – Molly stated that the Sydney area was tentatively selected for test flow related activities and other topics. Will finalize details at another meeting. Jeff brought up additional reports on test flow, expressing curiosity about how to effectively communicate this information to congressional members. It's crucial that they are informed about test flows. Molly shared promising updates regarding the 2025 test flow. Dick mentioned that the council needs to determine the best way to present this to congressional representatives. Molly noted that a draft letter has been prepared for approval at the January meeting.

PARTNER REPORTS:

MACD – No report

DNRC – No report.

NRCS – Molly reported that Gayle Barry indicated that NRCS is currently not proceeding with the TIP process but will be evaluating their approach. There will be a focus on other projects, including regenerative agriculture.

CEMIST – Brent reported that they will be having an invasive annual grasses workshop in Winnett March 11. Working on Citizen Science outreach to increase iNaturalist app usage for species reporting. The App receives 8 million monthly uploads of invasive and native species.

REACH REPORTS

Lower Reach – Dick reported that the Fox Hills formation study bill (House Bill 695) passed with council and MACD help. Formation runs from Jordan east to eastern third of Montana, used for fracking and oil field development. Formation is artesian, losing pressure. Bureau of Mines and Geology studying issue, with more data expected by spring. Fort Union formation (100-200 feet deep vs Fox Hills at 1,000-1,500 feet) being considered for fracking, causing major issues. Dry Red Water board drawn into controversy with accusations about pushing fracking for water spillage. Dry Red Water not yet authorized for construction, hoping for next year. Freedom of Information Act calls consuming time and money. Water situation described as exploding due to extended oil well drilling. Missouri and Yellowstone rivers potentially reaching water availability limits. Fort Peck Tribes controls half of Missouri River water, may shut off new developments. Exempt well lawsuit developing. Bitcoin and data center activities expanding. Williston data center when complete will use power equivalent to Las Vegas with only eight employees. Dozen oil wells with Bitcoin mines using four 3,000 horsepower motors (12,000 total horsepower). New power plants in Williams County, North Dakota require capacity equivalent to Colstrip (1,500-2,000 megawatts). Concern Montana lacks power infrastructure for data center expansion. Greg stated that CDs need to look at how power is applied, water usage, etc. Lorri stated that Montana doesn't have the infrastructure to support these. John reported on the MT Salinity Control meeting they sponsored; topics included the GFs development authority and windfarms, 40 in attendance.

Reservoir Reach – Trish gave Laura Kiehl's update. The PID is possibly having a tour in April to bring in as many high-ranking officials as possible to see the project and hopefully help get funding. Trish reported that they had our final Musselshell riverbank restoration project tour Dec 10th, with around 25 attendees.

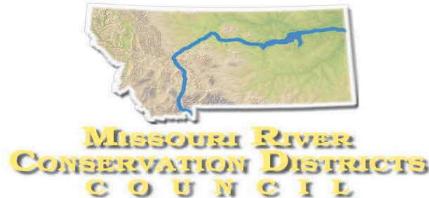
Middle Reach – Lorri stated they have had several 310s and received a fuels mitigation grant with the BLM.

Upper Reach – Jeff reported on a brush matrix bank restoration demonstration planned for April or May on Prickly Pear Creek, utilizing a cost-effective technique of embedding small brush and live willow cuttings into the eroding bank at under \$30 per foot, significantly cheaper than riprap. Cascade County's new floodplain administrator has a better and more friendly approach on permitting (without requiring engineering reviews) and hope to plant willow without engineering review and advance Naked River Banks initiative. Senator Daines and Representative Troy Downing have introduced floodplain enhancement bills to streamline compliance, saving time and money. High Plains hired a new resource technician to focus on water issues. High Plains agreed to supervise the McDonald Pass boat inspection station.

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

COORDINATOR UPDATE – Molly emailed out the CD representative forms and would like back by January. Phillips CD looking for new CD administrator; Connie French is helping in the interim. January 13-14 EQC meeting in Helena. MRWA meeting is January 14, Woody Invasive Working Group meeting set for January 15th, and February or March will have a test flow irrigator meeting and in

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person MRWA meeting. Spring quarterly meeting will elect reach representatives.

December

16-17: MRRIC Fish Fall Science meeting
17: PCCD Board Meeting
25: Christmas, closed
31: New Year's Eve

January

1: Happy New Year!
12: WPIC meeting
19: Marin Luther King Jr. Day
21: CEMIST meeting
27: MRCDC Exec. Committee, 1:00pm
28: PCCD Board Meeting
TBD: Test Flow gathering?
TBD: MRWA meeting
TBD: WIWG meeting

February

16: Presidents' Day
18: CEMIST meeting
24: MRCDC Exec. Committee, 1:00pm
25: PCCD Board Meeting

Other

With no further business, Dallas Diehl called for a motion to adjourn. John Chase moved to adjourn the meeting; Lorri Schafer seconded. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 5:24pm.

Approved on: 1-27-2026

Submitted by:

Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary

Dana Berwick, Chairman