

**MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**March 25, 2025 at 1:00pm via Zoom**

At 1:01pm, Chair Karl Christians called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council members present were **Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD; Jeff Ryan, Lewis & Clark CD; Laura Kiehl, Petroleum CD; John Chase, High Plains CD; Dana Berwick, Roosevelt CD;** Greg Jergeson, Blaine CD; and Steve Wanderaas, McCone CD; and Shane Lammerding, Phillips CD. Others present were Robbie Savelkoul, Roosevelt CD; Dona Stafford, Fergus CD; Cora Gray, Phillips CD; Katee Guderjahn, Chouteau CD; Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator; Brent Smith, CEMIST Manager; and Trish Smith, PCCD Administrator/MRCDC Secretary. *\*Executive Committee Members in **BOLD**.*

**APPROVE MINUTES**

Minutes were reviewed from the Jan 28, 2025 MRCDC executive committee meeting. John Chase moved to approve the minutes as amended; Lori seconded. Motion passed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Molly discussed the March financial report. Received last quarter's DNRC grant reimbursement. This is the 1<sup>st</sup> month charging out Cameron's time; cutting a check from the CD and then billing MRCDC. Went over unpaid bills. John Chase moved to pay the unpaid bills and approve the financial report; Lorri Schafer seconded. Motion passed.

**OLD BUSINESS**

*Drone purchase* – Molly discussed her research looking into drone models; discussed several options, approximately \$2000 for a good one. Karl discussed all the ways the drone can be used on projects. Dana Berwick moved to purchase the more expensive drone with accessories (approx. \$2200) with pending approval from DNRC; John Chase seconded. Motion passed.

*Work plan review* – Molly presented an updated work plan for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. Discussed work plan changes. Added in MRRIC activities and Fort Peck test flow in their own categories and added MRWA. Added LOB website outreach. Some previous tasks have grown and/or changed (CEMIST, MISC, MACD, Woody invasives). Changes with CMR-CWG since reduced to meeting 1-2 times a year. *Irrigation Water & Drought Issues* changed to *Water and Drought Issues* to encompass Aquifer problems, recharge management, and other related water and drought concerns. Laura stated that the MOU in the MWRA section should include Valley County. Molly will update and resend out and will approve at the April meeting. CDA applications are due May 31 so it will be tight if we wait until the quarterly to do the approval. The executive committee will get together and present the budget in April, and it will be approved then.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

*Budget review:* Molly was hoping to start looking at the budget, was not able to get the most recent figures in the document. Molly will send it out and it will be reviewed along with the workplan and discussed/approved at the April meeting.

*Petrolia Irrigation District support letter:* Laura discussed the letter and the PID request; repair to the canal that will be integrated into the modernization project. Karl suggested a few corrections to the letter. Dana Berwick moved to approve both letters of support (Petrolia Irrigation District and Fort Peck Tribe Irrigations); John Chase seconded. Laura Kiehl abstained from the PID letter. Motion passed.

*April meeting date:* Meetings – Karl Christians moved to change the April Executive Committee meeting to April 22; John Chase seconded. Motion passed.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

*Fort Peck Test Flows* — Molly and Dana gave an update on what Cameron has been up to with the Test Flows. Cameron is getting some data collected; surveyed 10 people and about 15 pump sites so far. Meeting up with Roosevelt & Richland CD, Dana and Dick this week to look at a few pump sites. Dana discussed Test Flows. MRRIC is having a meeting tomorrow and in May; preparation for the science workshop. Molly stated that Dan Rostad has asked if interested in applying for another DNRC grant to help fund travel to MRRIC activities. Molly stated MRRIC has travel covered in their current funds. Dana discussed the budget for MRRIC, and that he agreed to hold off on applying with the DNRC for more travel funds.

*CMR Community Working Group* – Molly stated that the planning committee met and reviewed the survey results and feedback from October's meeting. They decided to move forward with the CMR CWG, meeting 1-2 times a year. Maybe a tour along with the meeting. Looking at a meeting this fall. Going to reach out to Listserv to see if anyone has any specific ideas for locations. Paula gave a CMR update; no longer working remotely and limited funds. If there is another early retirement option, several will be taking that. At this time, unable to give a definitive answer on CMR's future participation.

*Living on the Bank* – Molly stated Dona and Molly gave a presentation at the MCDEO Roundtable meeting last week. Went through the website with folks and it went really well; several CDs have reached out for more information.

*Woody Invasive Species Working Group* – Molly stated that the core group has been meeting frequently, looking at the strategic plan and giving feedback. Had applied for a Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant to help with advertising and doing a tour looking at treatment sites. Did not get the grant since education and outreach grants were not accepted this year. Looking at shifting money around. The current Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant ends October 31; \$5K left for advertising. YRDC will be able to contribute \$5K. Molly asked if MRCDC would like to put up any funds for the Woody Invasive Species Working Group. Steve discussed a summer 2026 tour in the Billings area with landowners/managers and a few politicians. Brent discussed the IPM guides being put together; one-page best management info/plans. Karl stated that MRCDC will know more if they are able to fiscally help out the group after their budget is finalized. Karl asked Molly to discuss with DNRC and if that is a possibility.

*MRWA (Milk River Watershed Alliance)* – Greg discussed their progress on their Milk River project; seems to be ahead of schedule. Using State funding to fill gaps during the Federal freezes. Looking at additional funding. Canals estimated around \$200 million for the project. Molly stated that they updated their original timeline for water delivery in September to early July. MACD is currently in DC. Greg and Karl emphasized the importance of engaging the congressional delegation to ensure proper resource allocation for the Milk River project, highlighting its benefits beyond irrigation to include municipalities, wildlife, fisheries, and

groundwater recharge. Molly discussed the PCCD/VCCD MOU meeting March 17. MOU will be approved and signed at the PCCD and VCCD's upcoming meetings. Meeting in April to look at the work plan and figure out representatives from all the CDs for the MRWA committee.

River Rendezvous – Molly discussed the River Rendezvous planning meeting. Planning tour of the Milk River system from Dodson bladder to below Vandalia Dam; shooting for the 1<sup>st</sup> week in September. Discussed other potential dates for the tour in August and September.

#### **PARTNER REPORTS:**

MACD – No report.

DNRC – No report.

NRCS – No report.

CEMIST – Brent thanks MRCDC for the letter of support. Gave a brief update on the grant application; submitted CDB project grant and encouraged council members to provide supportive comments on the DNRC CDB website. Attending Kid's Conservation Education day and Earth Day events. There were 2 mussel-fouled boats detected at the Dillon station in SW Montana; boats coming from warmer southern areas.

#### **REACH REPORTS**

*Lower Reach* – No report.

*Reservoir Reach* – Laura discussed a 310 inspection replacing a bridge affected by bank erosion. Trish discussed the PCCD's plans to hire a Water Conservation Program Coordinator by the end of May. Funding secured for the position: \$5K from MWCC, \$50K from DNRC, and \$25K from Plank Stewardship Initiative.

*Middle Reach* – Dona reported receiving a watershed coordinator grant. Plans for a rain barrel workshop May 17. Received a technical assistance grant for a feasibility study on Cottonwood Creek. Discussed her tree sales. Trish added that they have sold around 1200 trees.

*Upper Reach* – No report.

*Individual CD Reports (voluntary/as needed)* – Trish discussed several PCCD upcoming events; tree workshop March 27, virtual fencing workshop June 10, and Ladies Day on the Range event on June 11. Karl discussed the increasing popularity of virtual fencing technology. Jeff Ryan reminded all about the upcoming Youth Awareness Day on April 19 at the Helena fairgrounds.

**COORDINATOR UPDATE** – Molly has been attending all of the MACD Legislative Committee meetings. She reported on Senate Bill 472. The original intent was to increase potential fines related to the 310 law. An amendment potentially changes jurisdiction with the logging association and their assessment law. MACD is working to get the bill tabled to allow for the CD resolution process. Executive action on the bill scheduled for the following day. The grizzly bear public comment period extended to May 16. Final rule expected by Jan 2026. Karl proposed holding a Zoom meeting together feedback from affected members. Council to consider drafting a letter after hearing community input. April 17 will be the Ranchers Resource Network meeting in Helena (also Zoom). April 18 will be the DNRC CDB grant hearings; open to public and zoom, CDs encouraged to participate and provide input. FEMA Independence Act mentioned; potential detachment of FEMA from DHS. Discussed an update with the Fox Hills Hell Creek Aquifer legislation; some confusion regarding the temporary closure and its impact on different aquifers.

**MRCDC**  
**PO Box 118**  
**Winnett, MT 59087**



**Phone: (406) 454-0056**  
**[mrcdc@macdnet.org](mailto:mrcdc@macdnet.org)**  
**[www.missouririvercouncil.info](http://www.missouririvercouncil.info)**

### **March**

**25: MRCDC Exec. Committee meeting, 1pm**  
26: PCCD meeting  
26: CEMIST meeting  
TBD: CMR CWG planning committee  
TBD: MRWA meeting  
Weekly on Tuesdays at 7am: MACD Legislative Committee meetings

### **April**

17: RRN meeting, Helena  
19: Lewis & Clark CD Conservation Day  
21: Easter Monday, Closed  
30: PCCD meeting – MRCDC Presentation/update  
30: CEMIST meeting  
**TBD: MRCDC Exec. Committee**  
Weekly on Tuesdays at 7am: MACD Legislative Committee meetings

### **Other**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:54pm.

Approved on: 4/22/2025

Submitted by:

---

Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary

---

Karl Christians, Chairman