

MRCDC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2026 at 1:00pm via Zoom

At 1:03pm, Chair Dana Berwick called the MRCDC Executive Committee meeting to order.

Council members present were **Dana Berwick, Roosevelt CD; Dallas Diehl, Broadwater CD; John Chase, High Plains CD; Karl Christians, Lewis & Clark CD; Dick Iversen, Richland CD; John Chase, High Plains CD; Lorri Schafer, Fergus CD;** Greg Jergesen, Blaine CD; and Tom Beck, Roosevelt CD. Others present were Brent Smith, CEMIST; Robbie Savelkoul, Roosevelt CD; 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 December 16, 2025, MRCDC executive committee meeting. John Chase moved to approve the minutes as amended; Dick Iverson seconded. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Molly received a BLM email regarding MRCDC comments and also their notice of proposed decision document (Buffalo); will send detailed information to board.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Katie went over the January financials, noting that, while we're midway through the fiscal year, the budget is slightly skewed with the last 707 grant ending on September 30, leaving us at 28% for income. The next grant reimbursement request is ready to be submitted. Expenses are at 60%; over 50% due to year end expenses in September. Operating now under the new DNRC 766 grant, and the NRCS and SSA grants. Checking account is in the negative due to held checks for PCCD, and the \$26K will not resolve this, so guidance is needed on whether to request an advance from DNRC or withdraw from savings. Clarified Molly's checks, and reimbursements. Dick Iverson moved to ask for a \$30K advance from DNRC and if denied will take out of savings (as needed); John Chase seconded. Motion Passed. John Chase moved to pay the unpaid bills; Dallas Diehl seconded. Motion passed. Dallas Diehl moved to approve the financial report; John Chase seconded. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

River Rendezvous location – Molly proposed having the next 2026 River Rendezvous event in the Sidney area focusing on test flows and data centers, with insights from the Williston plant. Dallas Diehl moved to approve the River Rendezvous location in the Sidney area looking at data centers and test flows; John Chase seconded. Dana mentioned the possibility of discussing the Fox Hills Aquifer. Dick noted they will be having a meeting on the interim study bill and resurfacing some of the permits. Molly discussed the River Rendezvous event duration; either two ½ days or one full day. Also asked which CDs would like to be on planning committee. Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

Test Flow Update letter approval – Molly discussed the letter. Dana stated to Cc the attorney general's office. John Chase moved to approve the Test Flow letter; Dick Iversen seconded. Motion passed.

2026 Calendar Review – Molly presented her proposed calendar dates for 2026. March 23rd approved for the next MRCDC quarterly meeting in Lewistown, coinciding with her travel for the Woody Invasives Working Group meeting March 24.

MRRIC Travel – Molly reported that MRRIC was canceled in November, and they are currently working on rescheduling. There are no travel funds available through MRRIC. Molly requested approval for her travel expenses, which are estimated to be in the range of \$500 to \$1,000, for the plane fare, plus per diem, car rental, and hotel accommodations. Robbie mentioned that Roosevelt has funds available to assist with Molly's travel costs since it's test flow related. Dick Iversen moved to send Molly to MRRIC; John Chase seconded. Motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Fort Peck test flows – The committee is planning a producer meeting during MonDak Ag Days, with a MRCDC table at the trade show on March 6th, and an MRCDC presentation scheduled for that afternoon (3pm), with Joe Bonneau invited. The costs will be covered by Roosevelt CD funds. Dana shared the snowpack report and stated would like to inform local representatives about the March 6th presentation. The details of the MRRIC plenary discussions remain uncertain. Gave a brief history of test flows.

CMR CWG – No update.

Living on the Bank – John reported that High Plains hired on a new Resource Technician to help with river issues. He has ideas on adjustments on the Living on the Bank website. He has been asked to write a proposal and John will bring for discussion to the next MRCDC meeting.

Woody Invasive Species Working Group – Molly discussed notes from the last working group meeting. The Core group is planning a full working group meeting March 24. Discussed the River Tour; still in planning stage. Discussed need for a Woody Invasive Species Working Group logo. Molly's sister-in-law is a graphic designer; \$750 base cost (\$75-100 per partner if split). Council will discuss at next month's meeting.

MRWA – Greg expressed frustration about the lack of activity and quorum issues. They are having a Zoom meeting in February to plan an April 22nd in-person meeting at the Northern Ag Research Center outside of Havre. Purpose of the meeting is to determine if districts are truly committed.

River Rendezvous – No report, discussed prior. John added that High Plains would like to host 2027.

Ranching for Rivers – Molly stated that MACD is applying for DEQ funds again; will send draft application for review. Change of personnel in the last couple years has been a challenge. Planning

to revamp program by the end of February using funds received last year; updating application materials and review criteria.

PARTNER REPORTS:

MACD – Karl has stepped down from his NACD position. Tom Beck is stepping into that position.

DNRC – No report.

NRCS – Molly reported on the NRCS meeting she listened in on. NRCS is shifting towards outcomes-based conservation versus TIP-focused approach while still using TIPS and added opportunities through EQIP and CSP.

CEMIST – Brent reported that applied for an AIS grant. Will testify in March on the grant to MISC. If awarded will focus on agricultural and irrigator outreach for aquatic invasive species. Have a CEMIST table at the MATE show in February. March 11th putting on an Invasive Annual Grasses workshop in Winnett. There will be four presenters, 6 applicator credits available and a free lunch.

REACH REPORTS

Lower Reach – No report.

Reservoir Reach – Trish reported that she is working on planning several workshops/events and securing grant funding; NACD TA grant applied for and helping with other grants.

Middle Reach – Lorri is retiring from her job the end of this week.

Upper Reach – John stated that the 3-mile Muddy Creek project has been delayed after a key landowner backed out; entire project must be redesigned to shift focus downstream but will still move forward with existing funding.

Individual CD Reports (voluntary/as needed) – Karl reported that Lewis & Clark CD has been dealing with 310 issues; excessive water diversions. A neighbor of the young rancher, informed a judge about a creek-blocking dam, leading to its removal. Karl discovered a historical diversion and headgate used for 50 years, with a judge hearing scheduled to clear up misinformation. The district prefers cooperating with landowners, especially young operators making honest mistakes. Greg stated that he participates in a biweekly task force aiming to increase maximum fines for 310 violations, with plans to draft recommendations by February's end, urging all conservation districts to prepare for discussions.

COORDINATOR UPDATE – Molly is requesting CD representative forms to be turned in; has only received a handful from districts, so will send another reminder. The DNRC grant will expire June 30, so need to reapply. Molly will confirm the application timeline and deadlines with DNRC. Proposed topics for the March quarterly meeting include reviewing the work plan, grant and budget, 310 updates from Haylie Graf, and an update from the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology regarding Fox Hills-Hell Creek Aquifer monitoring.

January

28: PCCD Board Meeting

February

16: Presidents' Day

18: CEMIST meeting

12-14: MATE Show

24: MRCDC Exec. Committee, 1:00pm

25: PCCD Board Meeting

25: WIWG Core Group Meeting

25: MRWA meeting

March

6: MonDak Ag Days – MRCDC tabling and test flow presentation

18: CEMIST meeting

24: Full WIWG meeting, Lewistown

24-25: EQC meeting

25: PCCD Board Meeting

26-27: WPIC meeting

TBD: MRCDC meeting

31-4/2: MRRIC Plenary

Other

With no further business, Dana Berwick adjourned the meeting at 2:34pm.

Approved on: 2/24/2026

Submitted by:



Trish Smith, MRCDC Secretary



Dana Berwick, Chairman