

*Montana Association of Conservation Districts
Employees Organization*



ANNUAL FALL BUSINESS MEETING

November 22, 2002
Annual MACD State Convention
Yogo Inn
Lewistown, Montana

The Annual Fall Business Meeting was held at the Yogo Inn on Friday, November 22, 2002 in Lewistown in conjunction with the annual MACD State Convention. Vice-President Chris Evans called the meeting to order at 9:00a.m as President Julie Goss was unable to attend. Also in attendance were Dave Kascht, NRCS liaison, and Bob Fossum, MACD Vice-President was in and out.

- AREA I Pat Johnson, Valley County CD, Glasgow (Sec/Treas)
Bobbi George, Daniels County CD, Scobey
Jodi Pierson, Garfield County CD, Jordan
- AREA II Kathy Sikorski, Little Beaver Cons. District, Baker
Carol Watts, Custer County CD, Miles City
- AREA III Gloria Mason, Glacier County CD, Cut Bank
Chi McCuin, Pondera County CD, Conrad
Marlene Moon, Liberty County CD, Chester
Shonny Nordlund, Fergus County CD, Lewistown
Shannon Sattleen, Blaine County CD, Chinook
Sara Shepard, Toole County CD, Shelby
Ron Strugielski, Chouteau County CD, Fort Benton
Teresa Wilhelms, Judith Basin CD, Stanford
- AREA IV Stephanie Fox, Treasure County CD, Hysham
Barbara Berry, Stillwater CD, Columbus
Tami Kimball, Rosebud CD, Forsyth
Penny Landon, Carbon County CD, Joliet
- AREA V Jean Dunn, Green Mountain CD, Trout Creek
- AREA VI Michelle LeBeau, Gallatin CD, Bozeman
Nadine Armstrong, Meagher County CD, White Sulphur Springs
Chris Evans, Lewis & Clark CD, Helena (Vice-President)
Amy Miller, Park CD, Livingston

As you can see each Area had a representative in attendance.

After Dave gave his report introductions were given and Chris had everyone look over the agenda to see if there needed to be any additions. A few of the items on the agenda have already been touched on during Dave's report. Break Time!!

MINUTES

Jean Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2002 Spring Executive Board meeting. Kathy Sikorski seconded the motion, motion carried.

Marlene Moon reminded everyone that there is a sympathy card for Jan Fontaine for everyone to sign and also a going away card for Julia Bitz.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Pat thought she was being so efficient by making sure everyone received a copy of the treasurers' report, back-up documentation and proposed budget all in one. However, a few individuals didn't realize you had to click on each tab at the bottom of the workbook to see/print each section. Ha.Ha. Some didn't realize there were more than 3 tabs on the bottom – that you needed to arrow over to see the next tab after the third one. Oh well, everyone took a few minutes to look over the shared copies of the treasurer's report. Jean Dunn made a motion to accept the treasurer's report dated 10/31/02. Barbara Berry seconded the motion, motion carried and the financial report will be filed for audit. Shared copies of the Proposed Budget for the fiscal year 2002-2003 were reviewed. A question was asked about the Fees Collected line item. Pat explained that those are fees that are charged to non-members for attending EO training sessions. Congratulations were extended to everyone in attendance as their dues are all paid and everyone has a vote today. Barbara Berry made a motion to accept the proposed budget. Bobbi George seconded the motion, motion carried.

TRAINING COMMITTEE SURVEY

Chris reported she had the training surveys that were returned to her. She needs to get together with the other members of the committee who are: Kathy Sikorski, Chi McCuin and Jean Dunn. Chris will make copies of what she has and perhaps they could have an email session or teleconference to discuss them. Training is being requested on the very basic stuff to the complicated such as ArcView. Since there are a lot of new administrators we need to get a game plan on maybe a beginners training and advanced training – somehow find a balance there. One suggestion made by Marlene Moon was to have each new administration go to Helena for some orientation. Maybe come up with a basic list that everyone needs. A suggestion was made to read over the employee handbook. Bobbi also asked if anyone had trouble with having to change their password every two weeks. Penny Landon reported that it had helped for her to go to Helena after she was hired. Helps to put faces to names, etc. Chris also said that Area Directors need to step up and help out new administrators. Perhaps call them and see how they are doing, etc. Carol Watts is the new administrator for Custer County and asked who her Area directors were. She took DeAnna's place (who was a director) so basically she only has one director – Renee Nelson, Wibaux and Julie Goss, President is also in her area. Chris also stated that Jan is good with Quick Books and Excel. So is Pat. It is very beneficial for new administrators to be able to go to another office for help. There are no interruptions. It would also be beneficial for a member of each Districts' board to attend another Districts' monthly meeting to observe what they do.

Chris has hardly received any feedback from supervisors on what they would like training on. The training the EO puts on isn't just for us but for everyone.

Chris reiterated that it is important to get any training concerns to the training committee.

SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

Pat gave the scholarship report since Julie was unable to attend the meeting. There were 7 applicants for Scholarships this year. It was decided to award a scholarship to all 7 applicants to be divided as evenly as possible. The scholarships were funded at 70% and were awarded to the following individuals: Karen Petersen, Granite CD, Philipsburg; Pam Grubb, Hill County CD, Havre; Pat Anderson, Phillips CD, Malta; Nadine Armstrong; Meagher County CD, White Sulphur Springs – all were awarded mileage; rooms and mileage are Bobbi George, Daniels County CD, Scobey and Carol Watts, Custer County CD, Miles City and room only was Chi McCuin, Pondera County CD, Conrad. Karen Petersen ended up declining, as she was unable to attend, so the scholarships will be increased accordingly. All recipients were all very appreciative but; Chi did report that her room is very unacceptable.

Chris brought up that we need to change the way the scholarships are handled. How many of the individuals who received scholarships are at this meeting? The whole idea of the scholarship is so that Jan will have extra help. It was felt that new administrators benefit from attending the scholarships. All scholarship recipients need to check in with Jan to find out what she needs help with. One suggestion is to have any new administrators that go to convention be approached by an

administrator that has been around for a while. Also, ALL area administrators from the convention host area are to help with the convention.

Carol suggested encouraging the new administrators to go straight to the registration table and introduce themselves and have someone from the host area help them out.

Bob suggested having a small social get together either the night before or the morning of the first day of convention to get acquainted with each other.

ENVIROTHON – SHONNY NORDLUND

Shonny gave a report on the Envirothon which is held in Lewistown. This year the Envirothon will be held May 5th & 6th. She handed out brochures to be passed around to the various schools. There were 90 students (18 teams) involved last year. The largest Envirothon they have ever had was with 27 teams. If someone is interested they can give her a call. Her email is on the brochure and there is a web site that was done by Ross Campbell. Shonny encouraged everyone to attend an Envirothon. Teresa reported that she helped with the Envirothon and is definitely an experience everyone should experience.

CONVENTION ACTIVITIES REPORT

Chris said that Julie Goss had appointed Marlene and Pat to go over the convention activities. The raffle turned out really well. We had three pieces of beveled glass for the raffle this year. Marlene guessed that we had about \$300 over and above the cost of the raffle items.

The entertainment this year was Ryan Taylor. We are not sure of the total cost. MACD and MSCA said that they would help with the entertainment costs. His round trip train ticket was \$95; his speaking fee is \$600 + his room; and there is a car rental fee from Malta to Lewistown and back. It was reported that MSCA is paying for the cost of his room and MACD did send a check for \$800 for entertainment costs.

Gloria Mason reminded everyone about the storytelling conference to be held in April in Cutbank. The cost is \$10 and there is a great cross section of story tellers. Rob Quist and Ryan Taylor have been there. Gloria tried to email the information to everyone.

The picture that was auctioned off was sold for \$75. The print was donated and all we had to pay for was the frame that was \$12.

OLD BUSINESS

COMMON COMPUTING ENVIRONMENT (CCE)

Dave Kascht covers the CCE under the NRCS Report.

FUND RAISING-EMPOWERING CD'S PINS, ETC.

Barb Berry gave a report on the CD Pins that were done by Montana Silversmiths. They donated the set-up fee, which is around \$250, and we have sold about half of them already. The pins can be worn by anyone; they are not just for District personnel. Barb did not know if there would be a minimum amount to order more if we need them. Pat will have them in her possession so if anybody wants one they can contact her until we run out. Marlene made a motion that a thank-you be sent to Montana Silversmiths. Jodi seconded the motion, motion carried.

ROLLING RIVER TRAILERS

Dave Martin was unable to attend the meeting so Chris asked if anyone had any comments on the trailers. Bobbi reported that when she went to pick up the trailer, to be used at their fair, that it couldn't be found at first and then, when it was found, the water had not been drained out of it and the hitch had been removed and had pushed the trailer up against the building. Bobbi's husband

had to use their handyman jack on it. If she hadn't had her husband with her she would have had to just leave it. Bobbi was asked if she had reported this to Dave. She had not. Bob said to let MACD handle it. If anyone uses the rolling river trailer please send a thank-you to Dave.

NEW BUSINESS

Bob suggested having a training session at the Spring meeting which is to be held in Helena. Shonny stated that she didn't know the Spring meeting was open to everyone. Chris told her that all of our meetings are open to everyone. Only officers and directors can vote at the spring meeting and all paid-up members can vote at the fall meeting.

NRCS UPDATE ON FARM BILL & TPS

Dave Kascht covers the Farm Bill and the Technical Provider Service under the NRCS Report.

NACD ASSOC. MEMBERSHIP DRIVE & NACD LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS FUND

NACD is recruiting for Associate Members. Julie had sent some info to Chris that she shared with everyone. If you recruit a new member for NACD or, join yourself, \$10 from each membership will go to help NCDEA. If anyone is interested in becoming an NACD associate member please let her know. Chris suggested we encourage our supervisors to join also.

DONATION TO NCDEA SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT FUND

Chris said that NCDEA is looking for donations to the Scholarship Endowment Fund. One suggestion was a donation in memory of Diane Jones. This subject was tabled until the spring meeting.

Julie also wanted Chris to encourage the Districts to hold legislative forums in the form of a breakfast, lunch, etc. This helps the legislature become aware of conservation districts and their purpose.

Gloria reminded everyone to have the Lazy Green "C" visible. That Lazy Green "C" means conservation. Marlene also reiterated that you not use a form letter to contact your legislators.

TRAINING WORKSHOPS ON METH LABS

Marlene thought it would be a good idea to have some training on what a Methamphetamine (meth) lab is with so many of us out in the field. How to recognize one, etc. A meth lab becomes a toxic waste once the site is established. Maybe a public meeting, etc. or you can contact your local law enforcement for training. Meth is becoming a real big problem very quickly especially in your rural areas.

310 CHANGES

Laurie Zeller has been wonderful at keeping everyone up-to-date on the 310 law changes. Has everyone read their info. Make sure the supervisors are kept up-to-date also.

PRIVACY ISSUE

Apparently Julie Goss has been receiving requests on how to deal with privacy issues when dealing with the producers, etc. The email from Ray Beck that came from Don McIntyre states the Districts should follow the same procedures as NRCS personnel when it comes to sharing info with someone other than the producer whose file you are working on. In other words, do not divulge anything that is in a producers' file to anyone other than the producer. When including info in the Districts' minutes only include what issue was discussed and the action taken but no details pertaining to the actual application.

Also, along these lines, if you are in one of your board meetings and you need to discuss something that you do not feel comfortable discussing in front of the DC you can request Executive Session and have the DC leave the meeting. You have the right.

AGENCY REPORTS

NRCS

Since Dave Kascht had another meeting to attend his report was given at the beginning of our meeting instead of at the end with the other Agency reports. He also gave an update on the Farm Bill and the TPS (Technical Provider Service). The new farm bill has changed the parameters of the TSP so that they can be paid for. EQIP is the biggest cost share program. Within 3 years EQIP is supposed to be up to \$1.3 billion. In Montana we had been getting \$5 million. This year we received between \$10-11 million and for the upcoming year (2003) it is anticipated getting \$18-20 million. At its highest level we could receive up to \$30 million for the program. The intent of the TSP is to recognize that NRCS staff is decreasing and they are having a hard time keeping up with the workload they have. The expectation is to not hire additional federal employees. The intent is to make up for the workload by hiring technical service providers. It is not true that third party providers are going to be doing everything. The program is very specific as to what TSP can be hired for – technical assistance for conservation planning and designing and implementing conservation practices. There is also talk of a certification process for the individuals that have the qualifications. NRCS will continue to provide information and education activities and working with partners. Not looking at a huge workload in the next year or so that TSP will be needed. Would like to encourage the conservation districts develop their capacity a little more to provide the actual technical assistance. Chris asked Dave what kind of training he would recommend since the main goal of the EO is to provide training. One of the things he came up with is ArcView and GIS. ESRI has an online basic course that he thinks is a couple hundred dollars that is covered by the license NRCS has to enable the Districts to sign up for the course. NRCS would help the Districts get information on this. Chris asked the administrators how they felt about having some training sessions set up in Miles City and Helena. Dave would encourage staggering the training so that you don't lose the basic info that you learn. Take the online course as a supplement. He feels ArcView is a tremendous potential for the Districts and NRCS is willing to help out with the training.

The computer will probably be upgraded to WindowsXP sometime this spring. That is the goal anyway. All work stations needed to be migrated before any more upgrades can be done. So, that is part of the reason XP has not been made available yet. Otherwise the workstations would not be able to talk to each other. Dave looks for March to be the soonest for any of this to happen. A couple other things that affect the Districts is that they are making a major effort to upgrade the access speed in all offices. In most of the field office service centers with multiple agencies and a number of employees they will be getting the T1 – super fast internet line. Should make a big difference when downloading pictures, etc. Should be able to see a significant increase in the performance of our computers. Along with this, there is also an intention to buy at least one digital camera for every field office that will be a better quality camera than most of the DC's say they need. The USDA CCE is the largest single computer network in the world. Dave asked everyone to have a little patience until all of the kinks get worked out. Basically, the computers we received are for the Districts' specific use. The contract signed with NRCS states that the computer is for the EXCLUSIVE USE of the Conservation District. NRCS personnel must check with the District employee before using the computer. You have the right to say "no" you cannot use my computer. Theoretically the only way NRCS can use our computers is to work out some kind of agreement with the District. NRCS personnel cannot just help themselves to your computer anytime they want to. The DC has no right to assign the password for your computer.

Dave said that he would be happy to help us out with concerns we may have. His phone #587-6794 and email dave.Kascht@mt.usda.gov. Also suggested asking the Asst. State Conservationist attend the monthly board meeting. Not only when there are problems but also when things are going great. Some of the concerns that District employees have with NRCS personnel could be brought to the Asst. State Conservationists' attention at these meetings.

Chris also reminded everyone that there is a grievance policy in place. A copy has been emailed to every District on more than one occasion. Don't be afraid to use it.

Ron Strugielski reported a concern he had with expensive laptops sitting around and not being used. He also asked who has responsibility for all of this equipment. His concern being if an auditor were to come in. He is overwhelmed by the number of machines not being used.

Dave reported that an inventory had been completed on all of the CCE equipment and all had been accounted for. He also wanted everyone to be aware that Internet access can be monitored and to be careful what sites you are accessing. He also said that in addition to the digital camera each office will also be getting a GPS unit that the Districts will have access to. The licenses that we have on the Dell computers are the same as NRCS which entitles us to use Microsoft Office Suite and all of the ESRI which is ArcView and ArcInfo which is the more complex version. Steve Van Fossen is extremely knowledgeable in the use of the GIS programs.

Jean Dunn explained the GIS work study program they have with their high school. The students not only get credit for the class but get paid for it also. It is an inexpensive way to get some technical assistance.

Chris thanked Dave for coming. A round of applause was given. He was very informative and helpful and we are happy to have Dave as our liaison.

MACD

Bob Fossum thanked everyone for all of our hard work for this last year especially for the special session. MACD will be calling on us for this next session also. Mainly MACD needs us to work on our Board of Supervisors to get out and get, in touch with their legislators – both sides – Senate and House. Bob said he was at the meeting just to say “hi” that he hasn't forgotten us and that he just wanted to say “thanks”. Without us he wouldn't be here, couldn't do it. Also reported that the EO will have a seat on the State Technical Committee. “Thank-you and keep up the good work for us. You guys are really great. Thank-you for giving us a really good convention. You guys did a lot of work and just thank-you. I can't say it any better than that.”

Bob also suggested notifying your MACD Area Directors notices of meetings ahead of time so that the MACD directors can have a chance of attending your particular board meetings.

DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS

Chris reminded everyone that an Area II director needs to be appointed. Barb has been appointed in Area IV and Jodi has been appointed in Area I. Elections will be held at the spring meeting for President, Vice-President and Sec/Treasurer in addition to having Area elections. More info will be distributed when the time gets closer.

Bobbi asked what we owed for our breakfast and Chris reported that her Board is paying for it. A big thank-you was given. Chris also apologized for the length of the meeting. Everyone thought a lot of information was disseminated and were not put out by the length of the meeting.

There being no further business, Bobbi George made a motion we adjourn. Jodi Pierson seconded the motion, motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 12:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Johnson

Pat Johnson
Secretary/Treasurer