



Montana Conservation District Employee Organization

EO Annual Membership Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

12-3 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81288841157?pwd=SsCFxnD4tOzqFOTQG5uGrb5bFjAxz7.>

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12-12:45 pm Informal mixer

Prior to starting the mixer, Tom Watson from NRCS provided their partner report as he needed to be at a different meeting.

12:45 **Call to Order** – Meeting called to order officially at 12:53pm

- Roll Call
 - Sign in:
 - Area 1: Macy Fogle, Diane Black, Grace Sheridan
 - Area 2: Karen Kreitel, Caitlin Wolff, Julie Goss
 - Area 3: Barbie Martin, Tenlee Atchinson, Dona Stafford, Kim Stoltz, Diane Roberts, Cindy Florez
 - Area 4: Wendy Jones
 - Area 5: Madi Chuhlansteff, Emily Baker, Samantha Tappenbeck, Jessie Walthers, Bryan Vogt, Radley Watkins, Sonja Skovlin, Caroline McDonald, Morgan Owens, Julie Ralston
 - Area 6: Jessica Fields, Denise Donnelly, Elizabeth Emeline, Becky Clements, Chris Evans, Joe Kremer-Herman
 - On zoom: Hayley Young, Sydney Ligotti, Kylie, Sharon Fletmetis, Aimee Bailey, Cindy Frank, Rosebud CD, Elisha Dempsey, Amy Yoder, Bobbi, Lacey
 - Round-room roll call and ice breaker
- Governance Calendar Review
 - Chris Evans reviewed the Governance Calendar for November



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- Raelynn Gilbert will be coming on as an Area Director for Area III, another seat will open when Jackson Bramlette leaves his position so another seat will open in Area III
- Consent Agenda
 - [EO Board Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Committee Meeting Minutes
 - [Governance-October 22, 2024](#)
 - [Finance-October 15, 2024](#)
 - Recent Area Employee Meeting Notes

Wendy Jones made a motion “to approve the consent agenda”. Jess Fields seconded. Motion carried.

1 pm Business Meeting

- [Financial Reports](#)
 - Statement of Activity
 - Statement of Financial Position
 - Draft Budget (will be approved by EO Board)

Diane Black made a motion “to approve the financial report”. Wendy Jones seconded. Discussion regarding sources of funding and the finance committee directives for looking into grant options for the EO. A district needs to sponsor grant funds from the State, and those are subcontracted to the EO. All in favor. Motion carried.

- EO Grant Balance-\$19,637.30
 - Should cover statewide employee training and some travel to either spring board meeting or convention.



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- Dues Report
 - Only three districts did not pay dues this year.
- EO Board
 - Discussion about terms of Directors and Executive Officers
 - Directors terms are for 2 years and staggered between the areas.
 - Open Area Director Seats
 - Chris encouraged anyone that is interested in being an area director to discuss with her further.
 - Open EO Executive Positions-Who is running?
 - Anyone interested in running can nominate themselves
 - Chris is willing to stay on as president unless someone else is interested in stepping in. Jess Fields will stay on as Vice President. Julie Goss is willing to stay on as treasurer for one more year.
- Election of MACD/EO Liaison
 - Robbie Savelkoul is willing to stay on as liaison.

Julie Goss made a motion “to keep Robbie Savelkoul in this MACD/EO liaison position.” Caitlin Wolff seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

1:30 pm **Agenda Items**

- [Strategic Framework](#) & Planning
 - Presented ideas to-date
 - Draft Plan 2025-2027 (or 26): Chris reviewed the draft plan by year. We are working right now with CPS HR and they will do a presentation with us



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in January to see what they can offer to conservation districts. They provide HR, consultation, and training. DNRC is looking at doing a direct contract (that would go out for bid) similar to how the DNRC Legal is offered to districts.

- Work Group Possibilities-Need volunteers!
 - Statewide Employee (and other) Training 2025: Wendy provided an update from the Training Work Group. It will probably be a 3-day event and a survey has been sent out to check availability.
 - Other Training-Roundtable development/facilitation
 - Social/Networking at Spring Board, SET, and Convention
 - Needs/Concerns Survey
 - Messaging
- Area Director-visits to new employees-Status? and Funding
 - There are funds available for directors to do new-employee orientation visits and training. Travel funds in the amount of approximately \$4000.
- **MACD Map-Where to find, how to Edit and what to add**
 - Caveat with the map - currently won't update for some reason, MACD is working on it; Chris tried to review but it was not working well/was slow; Chris noted that MACD has hired a new communications staff person and they will be coming on board in January and the EO hopes to work with that person to update the map.
 - Chris also reviewed the MCDEO Education Mini-Library

2:00 pm Partner Reports

- Prairie Pothole Joint Venture-Lauri Hanauska-Brown
 - Partners with Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and FWP to connect with landowners and encourage ranchers to graze cattle and promote soil



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health programs to ensure a healthy and sustainable landscape. Can help groups, partners, entities apply for grants outside the Joint Venture and outreach/communication efforts. Part of the Ranchland Stewardship Alliance. Lauri can be a resource for partners looking to keep ranchers on the landscape.

- Montana Farmer Veterans Coalition-Dr. Tabitha Garvin-Betancourt
 - They understand there are veterans walking through our doors – ask that for anyone that comes in, ask if they or their loved ones have served in the armed forces because the answer to that initial program opens the door to a whole new realm of funding resources and program opportunities. Reviewed criteria for membership, provided overview of the website, and explained resources available.
- MACD-Rebecca Boslough and Dean Rogge
 - CD Trust Fund is sitting around \$20 million dollars (\$100 million cap) which has already generated additional funding for districts through CDA grants. Projections for hitting the cap has decreased to 4 years rather than 5-6 years as projected. MACD has secured a health insurance option for districts and there are listening sessions coming up that will provide information about those health insurance plans; it will be on a district by district basis and the earliest a district could enroll and have coverage is as of January 1, 2025. Legislative meet and greet in Helena on January 23rd, which is the same day as the conservation district rotunda event. Soil Health Symposium is February 4-6 in Billings. Upcoming grant writing and management training Dec 5-6 – sign up and participate at no cost (only requirement is that you commit to participate the whole time), course is capped at 50 people; CD Outreach Toolkits are available for every district, can pick up at registration table. Water Quality and Education Mini-Grants are available, Ranching for Rivers grants are available.
 - Bills to watch for in 2025 legislative session: Procurement bill coming out of DNRC aligning district, state, and federal procurement. House Bill 2



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(budget bill). Any bills related to mill levies – a lot of conversations about property taxes and rates. 310 emergency response bill considering extension of timeline for emergency response.

- Northwestern Energy-Grant Grisak
 - Grant Grisak provided presentation on the FERC licensing requirements and management plans. Partner with FWP to staff positions and monitor per the standards of the State of Montana. Technical advisory committees provide oversight for expenditures.
- Rural Development-Lea McGiboney
 - Presentation provided by Lea McGiboney on available resources, programs, funding and loan programs.
- Montana DEQ-Mark Ockey
 - No representative present, no report
- FEMA-Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities-Tentative
 - No representative present, no report
- DNRC (CDB & Range Program)-Steph Criswell, Shantell Frame-Martin
 - Shantell reported that they have a new website: mtrangelands.org; they offer a low-interest rate loan program for ranchers; the working lands internship program is available to college students for a paid internship; they also put a call out for the Leopold Conservation Award. Events: Rangelands Day in the capitol rotunda on February 25th, 406 Grazing Academy June 3-5 in Havre, June 18 MT Range Tour, and Level II Grazing Academy August 18-20 in Lewistown.
 - Steph Criswell: No new partner updates since area meetings and will provide partner update tomorrow. \$20 million in the CD Trust. Interest earnings = \$373K, have accumulated \$200K since then. Meeting minutes portal is up and running. January 23rd: Legislative education and



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awareness day in the capitol, same day as the legislative meet and greet. Rolling out the governance calendar at 11am tomorrow. Part of the governance calendar will include development of model finance and operations policies for districts.

- NRCS-Tom Watson

Tom Watson provided an update as he prepares to retire and as a new federal administration takes over. Hiring will be scaled back to pre-Inflation Reduction Act levels. He noted accomplishments through Montana Focused Conservation and that under new leadership we can have conversations with his predecessor about how well MFC is/not working and it will ultimately be the decision of his predecessor as to what happens with MFC. Kyle Tackett will be Acting State Conservationist.

2:50 pm **Open Mic**

3:00 pm **Adjournment**