

# Montana Association of Conservation Districts Employee Organization (MACD EO) Area Representative Meeting – Zoom

Wednesday February 16, 2022 – 11am

**Approved 3/16/2022**

## ATTENDEES

Area I	Tahnee Benson (Sheridan County Conservation District)
Area II	Julie Goss (Richland County Conservation District) Kay Webb (Little Beaver Conservation District)
Area III	Emma Link (Cascade Conservation District) Gail Cicon (Liberty County Conservation District)
Area IV	Sharon Flemetis (Stillwater Conservation District) Wendy Jones (Lower Musselshell Conservation District)
Area V	Julie Ralston (Bitterroot Conservation District)
Area VI	Becky Clements (Gallatin Conservation District) Chris Evans (Lewis and Clark Conservation District)

Sharon Flemetis' Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCS) computer has crashed. She doesn't have access to anything currently and is using an alternative email, until further notice she is reachable at [stillwaterconservationdistrict@gmail.com](mailto:stillwaterconservationdistrict@gmail.com). Chris Evans state that NRCS server connectivity and use for Conservation District Employees is a problem nationally. Conservation District Employees that are housed in USDA Service Centers are also struggling with the constant change in staffing percentages and thus accessibility to their offices.

Chris Evans congratulated Kay Webb on being elected as the new Area III Area Representative.

Chris Evans stated that the MACD server is currently corrupted. Anyone on the MACD server may currently be experiencing issues.

## DNRC New Employee Training

DNRC is wanting to do a new employee training next fall either close to or concurrently with MACD Convention. DNRC is looking for topic ideas for this training from the EO and is open to any level of involvement we want. Emma Link stated that she would reach out to the new employees in the form of the initial onboarding meeting going over the Employee Field Book and Handbook, and continually to gauge what the needs are of new employees. Gail Cicon stated that the new District Administrator in Toole County (Airiam Uribe) is wondering how to complete the Permissive Mill Levy. This process was discussed in depth and there is a relevant recording on our EO website that Karl Christians did years ago about the Permissive Mill Levy process.

Emma Link potentially volunteered to help with

## Reaching out to New Employees/USDA Service Center/NRCS – Occupancy Restriction Barriers

The Valley County Conservation District Administrator will be leaving soon, as well as the District Administrator in an adjoining county. Tahnee Benson discussed that several employees all started at the

same time, and no one for several months reached out with training opportunities or knew a new employee had even been hired. This is an issue that the EO is trying to combat, and Chris Evans mentioned that it really falls on the CD Supervisors to connect the new employees with the proper avenues to succeed in their job. DNRC is trying to address the CD Supervisors issues.

Chris Evans is hoping to talk about standard wording from DNRC and MACD and the formation of a template to email to new employees. For those that don't have email access, DNRC and the EO are hoping to streamline a welcome package that is sent to new employees with such things as:

- CD Law Book
- Employee Handbook
- Employee Field Guide
- Potentially swag

Gail Cicon reiterated the need for CD employees to have a separate server/computer system/email from the NRCS/USDA Service Centers. Chris Evans agrees.

Ultimately, it is the Supervisors responsibility to notify the EO/DNRC/MACD that there is a new employee.

MACD can set up a separate individual email address from NRCS/USDA Service Centers that employees can use. You can use this email on an NRCS computer, although you cannot use outlook, instead you can access everything via Google and Google Workspace. Kay Webb was able to share her Google Calendar with her District Conservationist so that they could see her schedule and such.

If the NRCS/USDA Service Center computers and servers aren't working for CD employees, we need to change that.

Discussion took place regarding who on the call is having issues with federal building access in their specific areas.

CD employees that are currently having issues accessing federal offices should reach out to their District Conservationist, Area Conservationist, or Kyle Tackett (Assistant State Conservationist (Partnerships)).

### **Reaching out to New Employee's – A Collective, how's that going?**

Chris Evans visited LaRinda Spencer, the new Administrator in Broadwater County, with DNRC. Chris uses a list (she is willing to share it!) that she roughly follows when carrying out new employee meetings. She had a discussion with DNRC regarding this and what to structure the conversation on when meeting with new employees since we are all so different in our background, skills, and work experience. The consensus was that the following should be shared:

- How CDs are structured
- Where CDs get their money
- Which partners we work with and are role with those partners
- Working with a board
- Q & A session

DNRC has committed to reimbursing a small amount to Area Representatives who are reaching out to new employees via an in-person visit. This will be based on the mileage and lodging for supervisors to

MACD Convention Travel. If any Area Representatives are going out on visits, there is a form that Mary Hendricks with DNRC will be sending out to track your mileage as well as a stipend, for reimbursement. Right now, cost of staff hours will not be covered under this.

### **Topics for SET 2023**

Heidi Fleury ideas:

- Grant writing
- Grant management – DUNS and SAMS
- Project management
- Finding more projects that are available within your CDs core funding and finding a balance that is sustainable.

Sharon Flemetis ideas:

- Recordkeeping

### **MACD Spring Board Meeting**

The EO has traditionally had a business meeting that coincides with MACD's Spring Board Meeting in June of every year. It isn't as well attended as the EO business meeting at Fall MACD Convention, none the less, there is a line item in the EO's budget for Area Representatives to attend MACD Spring Board Meeting. Sharon Flemetis encouraged Area Representatives to utilize those funds to attend (and be reimbursed) as they haven't been used for the past six years.

There are specific action items that are supposed to take place at Spring Board Meeting per our bylaws. The executive committee (Area Representatives) is supposed to meet and plan the upcoming fall business meeting. Sharon is wondering if there is something that needs to be approved from a financial standpoint at the Spring Board Meeting. Our bylaws state that Sharon will present our financials and where we are so far.

### **CD Vacancies**

Park

Dawson

Mineral

Chouteau

Philips (current employee there until the end of March)

Valley (current employee there until the end of May)

Deer Lodge Valley (employee will be starting in June, in lieu of that the current employee will stay on until then)

### **Dues**

Utilize Google Forms and try to keep it up to date listing all counties, contact information, etc. to track dues payment.

