

**Montana Association of Conservation Districts Employee Organization
(MACD EO) Business Meeting – 2021 Montana Association of
Conservation Districts (MACD) Convention**

Tuesday November 16, 2021 – 1pm

IN-PERSON ATTENDEES

Kay Webb	Little Beaver Conservation District	Aubrey Evans	National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Northern Plains Region Representative
Heidi Fleury	Lake County Conservation District	Tenlee Atchison	Cascade Conservation District
Angie Stahl	Treasure County Conservation District	Wendy Jones	Lower Musselshell Conservation District
Kylie Martin	Big Horn Conservation District	Chris Evans	Lewis and Clark Conservation District
Emma Link	Cascade Conservation District	Sharon Fletmetis	Stillwater Conservation District
Shonny Nordlund	Fergus Conservation District	Teresa Wilhelms	Judith Basin Conservation District
Eric Rannestad	MACD	Gail Cicon	Liberty County Conservation District
Sarah Tunge	National Conservation District Employees Association	Donna Stafford	Fergus Conservation District
Stephanie Criswell	Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)	Randell Hopkins	DNRC
Rae Lynn Hays	Lincoln Conservation District	Nancy Moorhouse	Teton Conservation District
Connor Mertz	Lewis and Clark Conservation District	Mary Hendrix	DNRC
Elisha Dempsey	Toole County Conservation District	Tahnee Benson	Sheridan County Conservation District
Amy Yoder	Sheridan County Conservation District	Ginger Rigdon	Flathead Conservation District
Dusty Olson	Garfield County Conservation District	Tom Watson	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Kyle Tackett	NRCS		

ZOOM ATTENDEES

Becky Clements	Gallatin Conservation District	Bobbi Vannattan	Rosebud Conservation District
Bryan Vogt	Missoula Conservation District	Diane Black	McCone Conservation District
Elizabeth Emeline	Gallatin Conservation District	Emily Baker	Eastern Sanders Conservation District
Jess Fields	Beaverhead Conservation District	Julie Ralston	Bitterroot Conservation District
Julie Goss	Richland County Conservation District	Radley Watkins	Missoula Conservation District
Robbie Savelkoul	Roosevelt County Conservation District	Samantha Tappenbeck	Flathead Conservation District
Sarah Klaus	Lake County Conservation District	Sydney Lyons	Gallatin Conservation District
Liz Riter	Powder River Conservation District		

MACD EO President Heidi Fleury called the meeting to order at 1pm.

President Report

Fleury stated that EO Roundtables have been a tremendous success since their inception in mid-2021. EO Roundtables take place on the 3rd Wednesday of every month via Zoom, and aim to facilitate discussion, provide resources, and education for new and seasoned Conservation District employees and supervisors. Monthly EO Roundtables each have a different topic of focus relevant and/or important to how Conservation Districts function.

Vice President Report

Vice President Chris Evans shared a passable form where in-person attendees were able to circle and rank listed topics for upcoming EO Roundtables, as well as add their own topic ideas. Zoom attendees will receive an emailed copy to fill out.

National Conservation District Employee Association (NCDEA) Presentation

Sarah Tunge – Northern Plains Region Director NCDEA

NCDEA's primary mission is to advocate for and build capacity within conservation district employees throughout the country. Secondly their focus is to offer advice, encouragement, and assistance in moving state conservation district employee organizations forward.

NCDEA Regional Directors and Board Members do a lot of behind-the-scenes work, including:

- Sitting on national committee's:
 - Policy
 - Training
 - Strengthening partnerships

Currently NCDEA is working on a strategic plan, the main cornerstone of this plan is how they currently carryout outreach to employees throughout the nation. Moving forward a major goal of NCDEA is to do a better job at outreach.

NCDEA moving forward also hopes to hold a yearly leadership training, the focus of these trainings includes – personnel management, conflict resolution, personal development. Networking is an added benefit of attending.

For the rest of her time Sarah spoke about building capacity for individual Conservation Districts and how her own (North Dakota) and other state employee organizations are helping their employees and providing resources for them.

North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association (NDCDEA) is currently working on how the Local Work Groups are functioning and brainstorming on how to make them mutually beneficial. They are also looking at technical employee training for Conservation District employees (those that help with NRCS programming).

North Dakota has 54 Conservation Districts with approximately 110 employees, they also struggle with high employee turnover due to low wages and lack of benefits. ND Districts can levy up to 2.5 mills – in some counties 1 mill is \$150,000 and in others its \$10,000. The NDCDEA is a 501c3. This gives them access to a lot of different grants that they wouldn't have access to if they weren't fully incorporated. They administer two statewide grants for the State of North Dakota and can recoup the administration fee for doing that, which is a source of income. The NDCDEA does not have any full-time staff, Conservation District employees volunteer their time. This is common throughout the nation.

Stephanie Criswell (DNRC) asked if North Dakota has a similar state counterpart like DNRC in Montana. Sarah stated ND used to but doesn't anymore. North Dakota does have a state soil conservation advisory committee that is very supportive of the NDCDEA. NDCDEA is a very active association and is good at finding funding to pay for staff and technical project funding. They are well suited for this role, and it has fallen on them as there is not a strong state agency like DNRC in North Dakota.

Lastly, North Dakota Conservation District Boards are structured similarly to the way they are in MT.

Sarah Tunge email - northernplainsrep@ncdea.org

Business Meeting

MACD EO was formed in 1993. The MACD EO mission is to provide a professional network of conservation district employees for mutual support and education. The executive committee is made up of twelve volunteer Conservation District staff, there are two representatives in each of the six areas. Our fiscal year follows the calendar year.

President Heidi Fleury shared the goals she has for the MACD EO moving forward. She would like the MACD EO to continue to provide scholarships to employees to attend trainings. She encouraged all employees to pay their dues, this would amount to approximately \$3,000 and would allow for more opportunities to provide scholarship and training opportunities. Sharon Flemetis will be sending out invoices for the upcoming fiscal year (2022). There is a sign-in sheet going around, attendees are asked to sign-in by their District, this sign-in sheet also indicates whether the employee/district has paid dues for 2021.

Meeting Minutes

MACD EO Secretary Emma Link sent out unapproved minutes for review. Unapproved minutes were from November 2020 (MACD EO Business Meeting), and a virtual Area Representative call (October 15th, 2021). They were sent out via email. Emma Link called for corrections.

Chris Evans moved to approve the minutes from November 2020 and October 15th, 2021, as submitted, Teresa Wilhelms seconded. Motion approved

Financial Report

MACD EO Treasurer Sharon Flemetis prepared the FY 2022 Budget for comment and review. She looked back at the budget over the past 10 years to help her budget for 2022 and prepared a report sharing this. She also provided a balance sheet report, we currently have \$14,101 in checking, a bit more in savings. She does not have the exact number as she doesn't have access to the savings account statements, due to an account EIN mishap.

Teresa Wilhelms motioned to add Sharon Flemetis to the savings account at Stockman's Bank. Link seconded.

Discussion: Gail Cicon asked if there was a reason that the bank wasn't taking the EIN.

Teresa Wilhelms stated that the EO was always changing banks with the changing of MACD EO officers, before an EIN number was obtained. For this reason, the EO bank account was put under Judith Basin Conservation District, with a third-party reviewer to protect all involved.

Motion carried.

Chris Evans moved to approve the FY 2022 Budget. Teresa Wilhelms seconded.

Discussion: There are concerns on whether the EO will make money on this year's convention event and in future years. Teresa Wilhelms commented on the 2021 convention budget stating, the cost for the EO dinner and event was set before the EO was consulted.

Chris Evans stated, there needs a be a written agreement between the EO and MACD regarding the EO event and dinner that coincides with convention regarding ticket pricing and event managing.

Sharon Flemetis stated she lowered some amounts for 2022 for the convention EO event and dinner line item so that we could attempt to make a profit in 2022. She also noted that the \$1400 budget for office supplies in 2022 is to purchase a computer and software for the current EO Treasurer and any future officers that hold that position.

Chris Evans stated that we should always profit from our EO event and dinner at convention, as it is currently our main fundraiser for the year.

Currently the FY 2022 is not balanced. It is in the hole.

Fleury stated we could take some money from a line item that won't be used in 2022 to balance the budget.

Motion failed.

Chris Evans moved to approve the 2022 budget with the following amendments, that we move the \$1,250 in the leadership training line item to office supplies in the amount of \$500, and an additional \$300 to entertainment for the EO event, with the idea that the \$500 in office supplies will cover a computer and software for the EO. Link seconded.

Discussion: Elisha Dempsey mentioned the possibility of COVID money, ARPA or the like, to pay for a computer.

It was assured that in addition to the amount line itemed in office supplies for the computer and software, the EO will also apply for grant to pay for the computer.

Motion carried.

Sharon stated to please reach out to her with questions or if you would like a different financial report.

Scholarships Recipients 2021

Amy Yoder

Kylie Martin

Angie Stahl

EO Name Change and 501c3 Incorporation

Heidi Fleury stated that we are often seen as subsidiary to MACD. We have an entirely different mission than MACD. In lieu of that she would like to entertain a motion to change the name of the MACD EO to the Montana Conservation District Employee Organization (MCDEO).

Teresa Wilhelms moved to change the name from MACD EO to MCDEO. Chris Evans seconded.

Discussion: Radley Watkins shared that Conservation District Supervisors could see this change as eventual creation of an employee's union that represents itself. That could mean that individual districts possibly would not direct funds to the EO, and that employees would have fund it entirely, or individual district may not allow employees to spend any time during their regular working hours to commit to the organizations work.

Teresa Wilhelms stated we have used MACD insurance in the past for events. We would not be able to do this if we became a 501c3. That said, you can get temporary event insurance.

Julie Ralston shared concerns about liability insurance.

Sarah Tunge stated that NDCDEA uses a temporary liability insurance policy for their events. Sometimes when events are co-sponsored an agreement is created where NDCDEA will share the co-sponsors liability insurance for that specific event. She also mentioned that for the union concerns, it could be written into our new bylaws that employees must pay for their membership dues to the organization out of their own pocket, instead of the individual district paying their dues.

Would MACD see this as a splitting of a partnership? The consensus was no. We are moving into the model that already exists at the federal level.

The EIN is currently in the MACD EO name, but it can easily be changed.

Motion approved.

Teresa Wilhelms moved to fill out the paperwork to become incorporated as a 501c3. Chris Evans seconded.

Discussion: Discussion took place regarding the cost to accomplish this. The cost at the state level was estimated to be \$75.00. At the federal level, the IRS bases it on the amount of money you have in your checking account, estimated cost to complete was at \$400 - \$600. The EO Treasurer will take care of the annual reporting and filing. The EO will have an option to list directors and members as well.

Bryan Vogt stated that there needs to be clear messaging that we are not a union.

Heidi Fleury mentioned we will create an MOU with MACD.

Motion approved.

Teresa Wilhelms moved that we open a new checking and savings account at Stockman's Bank for MCDEO after the paperwork is filled out for the name change and incorporation. Chris Evans seconded.

Motion carried.

Current Area Representatives

Heidi Fleury shared a newly created Area Representative job description. She called for any additions to the job description. She then mentioned that there are currently Area Representative vacancies in Area I and II. Nominations are not required at this time but if anyone is interested, they should reach out.

Area Representatives serve 3-year terms, staggered between areas. She attempted to try and figure out when the current Area Representatives terms started. That attempt was unsuccessful. For that reason, as of 2022, we are starting over on terms, using 2022 as the starting point.

Link moved to adjourn the meeting. Kylie Martin seconded. Motion carried.

Partner Reports

Stephanie Criswell, DNRC Bureau Chief, the DNRC CARRD Division will be fully staffed by the end of the year. Hailey Graf and a woman who will work out of Circle, MT have accepted the positions. A strategic planning session will take place in January. The wage survey is out, the report on this should be out in January. Directory has not yet been printed; you can fill out a form to request how many copies you want of it at the DNRC vendor table.

Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist. Masks are still required in federal buildings. NRCS may possibly be losing staff over the vaccine mandate. Offices are at varying percentages of "open", depending upon county and city infection rates.

Teresa Wilhelms asked about use of conference rooms in USDA facilities for Conservation District board meetings. Tom Watson stated, you can use them after hours, because it would potentially put them over on numbers during the day.

Partnership with NRCS and Conservation Districts is strong.

Rebecca Boslough, MACD Executive Director. The new MACD strategic plan was under review by the MACD Board this morning. The hope is to break it into smaller operational chunks, with the overarching goal being to make sure they are supporting districts as best as they possibly can.

HJ27 is a study bill that MACD wrote and put forward during this past legislative session. The decline in coal severance tax which funds the DNRC CARRD division and subsequently districts through grants and support left a shortfall in the 2021 budget. This decline is expected to continue, thus HJ27 is a study bill looking into alternative funding sources for DNRC CARRD. The legislative interim committee – Environmental Quality Committee, has been tasked with studying these alternative funding sources. There will be a panel on this tomorrow. Stay tuned for more information as this unfolds.

Aubrey Evans, Northern Plains Region Representative, National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). Currently NACD is working hard on the infrastructure bill, NACD and other 165 agriculture groups are encouraging congress to propose about 28 billion into USDA conservation programs through the infrastructure bill.

NACD has started offering health insurance, they are still working out the kinks, she is looking for feedback on it.

Heidi Fleury is requesting that when they work out the health insurance kinks that Aubrey do a presentation and training on how to use it, at an EO Roundtable.

Wendy Jones, Area IV Representative, Central and Eastern Montana Invasive Species Team (CEMIST) Coordinator. There are several new Area IV employees, Area IV is looking to provide them with a new employee training, other new employees throughout the state may be able to join.

CEMIST helps with education and outreach on all taxa invasive species for Conservation Districts and the agriculture and varying industry sectors. All are invited to CEMIST meetings, feel free to reach out.