



# Montana Conservation District Employee Organization

## Fall Membership Meeting November 15, 2022, 12-3 pm Delta Colonial Hotel, Helena Montana

The 2022 fall meeting of the Montana Conservation District Employee Organization was called to order by President Heidi Fleury on November 11, 2022, during the MACD Annual Convention.

**Members present included:**

Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6
*Dusty Olson	*Julie Goss	*Jackson Bramlette	*Sharon Flemetis	*Heidi Fleury	*Chris Evans
Diane Black	Kay Webb	*Dona Stafford	*Wendy Jones	*Julie Ralston	*Becky Clements
Amy Yoder	Liz Riter	Kim Stolz	Kylie Martin	Emma Baker	Elizabeth Emeline
Robbie Savelkoul-Z	Jessica Beagles	Cindy Florez	Angie Stahl	Sarah Busmire	Connor Metz
	Renee Nelson-Z	Barbie Martin	Ashley Thompson	Rae Lynn Hays	Audra Bell
		Tenlee Atchison		Samantha Tappenbeck	Sydney Lyons
		Teresa Wilhelms-Z		Bryan Vogt	Diane Johnson
				Radley Watkins	Gillian Rowe
				Jessie Walters	
				Cathy Johnson-Z	

\* Denotes Area Representative

Z denotes participation on zoom

**Guests:** Mary Hendrix, DNRC-CDB, Terry Profota-Sage for Success; **On ZOOM:** Elisha Dempsey.

Joining later in the meeting: Dean Rogge, MACD Chairman, Steve Hertel, MACD Vice Chair, Rebecca Boslough-King Executive Director MACD, Tom Watson, MT NRCS State Conservationist, Kyle Tackett, Assistant State Conservationist.

The meeting began with introductions of members and the sharing of a professional goal for 2023. Terry Profota, Sage for Success, discussed with the members a plan to change the EO's structure to nonprofit status. Heidi explained the reason for the EO to move in a nonprofit direction was to access funding sources we don't qualify for without the nonprofit status. Terry Profota explained the nonprofit status is an income tax designation for businesses.

- IRS c3 only designation that allows for tax deductibility of donations
- 1023 application Exemption EZ- costs \$350.00, requires some structure, Limited to \$50,000 in donations? for the first 3 years, takes about 4 weeks to be approved by IRS
- Full 1023 application -Costs \$650.00 takes 3-6 months for approval, Need a board of directors who have fiscal responsibility for the organization, must follow state and federal laws, directors and officers insurance - \$1000.00/ year, Detailed minutes must be kept, Finance committee recommended, annual filing fee required by the state of Montana \$20.00 ( Secretary of State) Filing of a 990 with the IRS -Required (another fee each year for preparation of return) May require a paid bookkeeper to keep books, manage grants, reporting and filing, etc.
- Fiscal Sponsorship- Grow your program and get necessary structure in place and then move to nonprofit status, more organized than our current way of doing business, need a 501c3 entity (like MACD) with a similar mission and create an agreement with that organization, pay a small fee (5-7%) of total funds, EO would have an advisory group to make program decisions and would operate similar to a nonprofit. The Sponsor is legally responsible, and their board would be the ultimate decision maker in the agreement, the EO could make limits on the decision making through the agreement. Special liability Insurance would be paid by the EO but the sponsor is in charge of all of the legal filings, Bryan Vogt suggested that MWCC might be another entity that could be a sponsor for the EO.

Heidi Fleury suggested the EO has 3 choices: Nonprofit, Fiscal Sponsorship or Business as Usual. Terry suggested we may possibly be designated a c6 by the IRS. Discussion on the topic varied: If we don't receive funds for donors wanting a deduction does the status make a difference? What is our goal? Is it training funds from NRCS? Can we be a c3 status or a c6 status to get funds from NRCS? Heidi Fleury said she would check with Tom Watson. Kim Stolz asked who would do all the work, writing and managing grants, turnover of administrators makes continuity difficult, do we want to give 5-7% to a Fiscal Sponsor, DNRC is supposed to do the training for CD's, Does MACD have the capacity to be a fiscal sponsor, Will our funds be kept separate from the Fiscal Sponsor? Terry reassured the group that this could be attained through a fiscal sponsorship.

Suggestions from Terry going forward: Research the Fiscal Sponsorship, see if it fits our needs and the parameters of NRCS and other entities to see if it would result in additional funding.

Wendy Jones asked if it would be better to define our training needs before we explore the fiscal sponsorship. Bryan Vogt said he was cautiously optimistic about partner involvement moving forward, he feels that keeping things as they are, with an employee committee assessing the training needs of the EO/Employees could be met.

Kay Webb moved to continue to explore our options and the goals of the EO, continuing to operate the EO as we have in the past until the 2023 Fall meeting with updates on options at the Spring meeting. Bryan Vogt second, motion carried.

Sharon Flemetis moved to seek recommendations from an accountant on the pros and cons of our options and clarifying any required reporting as we stand now or if we move to another status using the EO grant managed by Lewis and Clark CD. Chris Evans, second, Motion carried, 3 nays. Elisha Dempsey said that Liz Moore at MNA has an accountant that could help us.

Fall 2021 Minutes- Motion by Cheryl Miller, second by Angie Stahl; to approve Fall 2021 meeting minutes; motion carried.

Sharon Flemetis gave the Treasurer's report; discussion was held about various reports, grants and bank balances. Discussion was held about having a plan for funds in the savings account. Motion by Tenlee Atchison to boost the scholarship line item in the budget to \$5000.00 for convention scholarships and to balance our budget. Radley Watkins second. Discussion on balancing the budget by adding to the scholarship line and several suggestions were made concerning the proposed budget: transferring retained funds to the scholarship line, adding to the income side of the budget by a "transfer from savings" line. Motion was made to move the \$1550 for the leadership expense line into the scholarship funds by Chris Evans, second by Brian Vogt. Motion carried. Motion by Brian Vogt to approve the budget, second by Wendy Jones, motion carried.

Election of Officers: President and Vice President are up for Election, 2-year terms ending in 2024. The secretary position is open due to the loss of Emma Link; that term ends in 2023.

President: Nomination of Chris Evans by Julie Goss, Cheryl Miller second, motion carried. No other nominations were received.

Vice President: Motion by Tenlee Atchison to nominate Dona Stafford, second by Sarah Busmire; motion carried. No other nominations were received.

Secretary: Motion by Kim Stoltz to nominate Diane Roberts, Diane declined the nomination. Motion by Chris Evans to nominate Julie Goss, Wendy Jones second. No other nominations were received.

SET 2023- Dusty Olson and others in the eastern and central part of the state are part of the planning committee.

## **Open Mic**

Dean Rogge and Steve Hertel – MACD Chair and Vice Chair joined the meeting. Dean stated his appreciation for the CD Employees and the funding bill in the legislature is in direct response to help get employees better pay, more hours, and benefits. Dean said MACD is working on providing transparency and activities as part of the Strategic Plan. Further discussion on the EO becoming a c3, Radley Watkins asked if MACD could provide the Software and training that the CD Employees need. Steve responded that he wasn't sure we needed the c3, but we should look at the fiscal sponsorship. Tenlee Atchison spoke about some of the history of the EO and the role of coordinating training. Dean Rogge asked how the Bootcamp was funded. It was funded through a DNRC CD project grant and an EO grant managed by Lewis and Clark for EO needs. Rebecca Boslough-King joined the meeting at 2:30.

Heidi Fleury spoke about the letter she sent to NRCS on behalf of the EO, she had a lot of feedback from employees. The intention of the letter was to improve communications and working relationships with NRCS. Several issues are national and not state issues.

Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist and Kyle Tackett, Assistant State Conservationist joined the meeting to introduce themselves. Discussion took place on the working relationships and personality conflicts that occur between NRCS and CDs, and how they should be handled. Tom felt the EO was not the appropriate means to bring up the personnel issues. The initial introduction between new CD employees and NRCS Staff to discuss projects, missions and collaborations should be taking place and if it isn't he should be made aware of it. He explained that NRCS Staff met the last couple of days and the problem was discussed. Radley Watkins suggested that NRCS should have a standard procedure if they don't already have one on addressing new CD employees. Diane Roberts said she used the MOU to help her understand the relationship between Districts and NRCS and to start a conversation with NRCS and her board, since no conversation had occurred when she started. Wendy Jones suggested that the CD Boards should be responsible for reviewing the MOU/CWA. This review should happen annually in all districts. Tom said he wants to have the traditional partnership with Districts, recognizing that the relationship is different due to changes in mission, co-locations, pandemic, etc.

Tenlee Atchison stated that it comes down to respectful relationships, from both sides NRCS and CD's. Chris Evans said CD staff should initiate conversation with local NRCS, collaboration and communication need to go in both directions.

Tom requested a detailed proposal of what the NRCS can invest in for the EO, solutions to issues. He would like to work on "formalizing" the new employee onboarding process.

Bryan Vogt asked what is the protocol for dealing with CD staff/ NRCS Staff issues? Tom Suggested the CD Supervisor/Personnel person should contact NRCS. In short if your district has a CD/NRCS problem, issue or concern he would like to know about it.

Background check requirements and addressing the USDA computer issues, protocols, etc. are becoming part of the “onboarding” of new employees. If you have problems with any of these please contact Tom or Kyle.

Auction Items for the MACD Auction and EO Raffle items can be dropped off at the registration desk. EO will be selling 50/50 tickets until the banquet on Thursday evening. EO fundraising event will be held on Wednesday evening.

Scholarship recipients need to check at the registration desk to see where help is needed.

Brian Vogt moved to adjourn the meeting, Samantha Tappenbeck second. Motion carried.