

McCone Conservation District  
Board Meeting Minutes  
January 8, 2014

A regular meeting of the McCone Conservation District Board of Supervisors was held on January 8, 2014 at the McCone County USDA field office. Those in attendance were Steve Wanderaas-Chairman, Emily Guldberg-Vice Chair, Larry Nagel-Urban Supervisor, Jenny Garoutte-Supervisor, Mary Hendrix-Administrator, and Johnna Blankenship with NRCS. Matt Beery was not in attendance.

The following visitors were also present: Le Anna Johnson with CBM, Scott Brown with MSCA, Rachel Frost with MRCDC and Dean Rogge with MACD & CMR Community Working Group. The meeting was called to order by Steve Wanderaas at 1:01pm.

Meeting minutes from December 2013 were reviewed. Steve requested two minor corrections "Rachel Frost is from MRCDC, not SWMI" and "Jeff Moos with DRWA should be Jim Moos with DRWA". Changes were approved. Larry made a motion to approve the amended minutes and Jenny seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2013-2014 Budget was reviewed. Emily made a motion to approve the 2013-2014 Budget and Jenny seconded the motion. Budget passed.

Treasurer's Reports were reviewed. Larry made a motion to approve the reports and Emily seconded the motion. Motion passed.

**Following Correspondence & Visitors**

Le Anna Johnson from Coal Bed Methane updated group on their program. The Coal Bed Methane Protection Act (CBMPA) was implemented in 2001 by the Montana Legislature to create a long term compensation account and to establish the Coal Bed Methane Protection Program. A landowner may apply for compensation up to \$50,000 and may not exceed 75% of the cost of damages for the loss of agricultural production, loss of land value, lost value of improvements or the reduction in quantity or quality of water attributable to coal bed methane development.

As it soon became clear, the importance of collecting baseline water quality and quantity was a vital component to aid conservation districts in the review process of a claim. It is recommended that a third party conducts these baseline collections. There are several companies you may contract for these services in Billings. Once data is collected for the program, they are housed in the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Groundwater Information Center online database. Right now, the Program's water monitoring concentrates only on coal and coal bed methane issues. They would like to expand their scope to include water monitoring for oil and gas concerns in the future.

On July 1, 2014, a new water monitoring grant will be available.

Scott Brown from Montana Salinity Control Association updated group on their program with DNRC. The purpose of this monitoring program is to establish baseline groundwater quality and availability in advance of oil and gas activity and also in areas currently at risk from oil field activities. It characterizes well water and aquifers currently used for domestic or stock water. Information collected will show evidence of water quality and quantity before oil and gas development activities take place, provide comparative data if a landowner notices a change in water quality and availability when a participating well is resampled and provide additional data for current and future aquifer characteristic studies.

MSCA provides the technical and coordination assistance for any task throughout the process. As McCone County is eligible to participate in the groundwater baseline sampling program, DNRC can provide a list of wells categorized by risk from oil field activities. The district will then select wells to be sampled, will obtain signed consent forms and receive payment from well owner (10% of baseline sampling costs approximately \$120.00). A DNRC contractor will conduct the tests and samplings. DNRC will provide a summary of results and individual well reports to distribute to well owners. Findings will be published in Annual reports in January 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Rachel Frost from Missouri River Conservation Districts Council updated group on their 2013-2014 work plan. Group is focusing on Outreach, Weeds/AIS, Bison, CMR Community Working Group, CREP/Native Riparian Task Force, Montana Water Supply Initiative, Public lands management and Monuments.

Dean Rogge from Garfield County updated group on CMR Community Working Group and MACD. Dean reiterated the importance of participation in the CMR Community Working Group. Their main focus remains promoting the common good for the area around the CMR. He shared his experiences forging relationships with other agencies and environmental groups through CMR.

MACD updates: Jeff Tiberi is still there, but the organization is looking for his replacement, there are 3 or 4 viable candidates at this time. The MACD scholarship for (2) \$500.00 is available for any high school senior or secondary student pursuing coursework/degree in natural resources and conservation.

Scott Kaiser from DNRC updated group on grants. The deadline for the RDG planning grant is May 15, 2014. This biennium grant may be applied to upwards of \$50,000.00 and will go before the next legislature session.

### **Public Comments on District Business**

There were no public comments on the Districts business at this meeting.

### **Administrator's Report**

Mary expressed her interest in purchasing a printer / scanner machine for the district. She shared that there is funding available for administrative type equipment through DNRC. It will cost \$150.00. Jenny made a motion to approve the purchase of the equipment and Steve seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Website update discussed with board. She is still working on it and hope to have it operational by the end of January. A McCone conservation district logo was located and she will use that on the website. Mission statement is still a work in progress.

Mary had been asked to serve on the MACDEO training committee. Jenny made a motion to approve appointment and Larry seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### **Field Office Report**

Johnna discussed the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The application due date has been extended to February 7, 2014. She has received 9 applications to date. 2013 payments are in progress. All others who opted for 2014 payment have been sent their payment applications. Timeline: Still waiting on enhancement job sheets, CMT evaluations completed by March 21, Field Visits completed by May 9 and Final Obligations by June 13, 2014. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ranking starts at the first of the year and expects awards to be presented in early March 2014. McCone County has 3 EQIP applications in 2013.

Jim Sparks "The Weed Guy" will be in Glendive on February 4, 2014. Flyers for the workshop are forthcoming.

NRCS continues in outreach to the community. Will be a presence at the first annual Circle Ag Show and continue with Resource Conservation articles in the Circle Banner. If you have any suggestions for topics, please let her know.

She would like to discuss the possibility of a community garden at the next board meeting.

### **Old Business**

Johnna shared that NRCS is willing to work with individuals on a case by case basis with regards to the bison fence specifications. Steve has requested that a representative from NRCS be present at the next board meeting to discuss this further so this agenda item will be tabled until then.

Emily contacted Candy Milroy regarding an audit of the financial books and she had declined. Steve will speak with Karl Christians regarding the structure of the audit at the supervisors training on January 15, 2014.

Mary passed out the inventory list to board. It was discussed that what is listed is all we have. Some items have not sold in a number of years, so it was determined not to re-order those items. Larry inquired about hydro-source and Mary will look into purchasing that for the upcoming tree ordering & delivery season.

A signature was required for Supervisor per diem / reimbursement policy that was approved of in July 2013. Steve signed it and it is now on file.

The following verbiage was added to the Cooperative Working Agreement (CWA). "The parties also agree to establish a method of meaningful communication on a weekly basis (NRCS staff, CD staff and at least one CD board member)". Emily made a motion to approve the amended CWA and Jenny seconded the motion. Motion carried. This was forwarded to Joyce Swartzendruber and there are indications that this will be adopted as our agreement. We are awaiting a new CWA for signature.

### **New Business**

New color maps that show topography for McCone County are available to order. They will be \$35.00 each.

Briefly discussed the TransCanada grant and check. The grant's purpose is for construction of sidewalks at Sullivan Street Park. This check has been deposited into the district's account and available solely for its intended use. Jerry Meissner to submit bills and conservation district will either reimburse him or pay them from this account.

The conservation district credit card was tabled for the next board meeting.

Upcoming trainings and events:

1/9/14:	Richland County Ag Show, Mark Henning presenting from 3:30pm-4:30pm
1/15/14:	New Supervisor Training, Miles City
1/25/14:	Circle Ag Show
1/27/14:	Extension is sponsoring a Grazing Workshop
1/28-29/14:	"No-Till on the Plains" Salina, KS
1/29-30/14:	Winter Grazing Seminar, Miles City
2/5/14:	Conservation District Board Meeting
2/10-11/14:	Advanced Supervisor Training / 310 permit workshop, Miles City
2/12/14:	Soil Health Workshop, Circle
2/13/14:	Soil Health Workshop, Garfield County

2/19/14: CMR Community Working Group (tentative date), location?  
Late February: Chair/Vice Chair video conference workshop

Tree planter / fabric layer – both equipment s require new seats as well as a jack for the end of the tree planter.  
Steve to contact Claude Loberg for fabrication costs.

In county/out of county usage of equipment addressed. Would like to keep equipment in county only and have customers fill out a rental agreement as well. This has been tabled until the next board meeting.

Next board meeting will be held on the first Wednesday of the month, February 5, 2014.

Steve made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:15pm and Larry seconded the motion. Motion passed.

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Mary Hendrix, District Administrator

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Steve Wanderaas, Chairman