

Petroleum County Conservation District
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Local Common Sense Conservation
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Jay King – Chairman, **Brenda Brady**, Vice-Chairman & MSCA,
Laura Kiehl – Treasurer & MRCDC, **Ralph Corbett** – Urban Supervisor, **Rodney Rowton** – Rural
Supervisor, **Butch Arthur** – Urban Supervisor, **Nathan Descheemaeker** – Supervisor

February 29, 2024

Call to order: Chair Jay King called the regular meeting of the Petroleum County Conservation District to order at 5:04pm. Those present were Jay King, Rodney Rowton, Ralph Corbett, Butch Arthur, Laura Kiehl and Nate Descheemaeker. Others present in person were Evert Brady, Brent Smith, CEMIST; and Trish Smith, PCCD Administrator. Others in attendance virtually were Therese Hartman, MSGOT; Nick Schultz, land owner; Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator; Veronica Grigaltchik, DNRC CD Specialist and Allison Martin, MWC. Brenda Brady was absent.

Approval of Absences: There was discussion on what qualifies as an approved absence, and that whatever is decided will need to be added to the PCCD personnel policy. Will re-discuss at the next meeting.

Approval of Minutes: Ralph Corbett moved to approve the January 31, 2024 regular board meeting minutes; Laura Kiehl seconded. Motion passed. Ralph Corbett moved to approve the February 7, 2024 special board meeting minutes; Rodney Rowton seconded. Motion passed.

Guest/Public Comment: None.

Partner Reports:

MRCDC: Molly discussed her updated time sheet to incorporate comp time. Will be submitting the new time sheet to Katie tomorrow. MRCDC Quarterly and CMR CWG meetings were last week. She sent out the recording of the presentation at the quarterly meeting by Margaret Bayfield, Executive Director from American Stewards of Liberty. Elk management plan was the main topic at the CMR CWG meeting. The River Rendezvous will be August 22nd in the Townsend, MT area. Looking at having the CMR CWG tour the end of June; range monitoring 101 type tour. Looking to apply for a grant to get monitoring kits. Working on a *USFWS Refuge System Rule change on BIDEH and Fort Peck Test Flows* comment letters. Have a special meeting tomorrow morning to approve the letters.

MWC: Rodney, new MWC Board Member, discussed the last MWC meeting February 13th. Cori Hach, Water Planning, Implementation and Communications Bureau Chief, was there to present on the DNRC Comprehensive Water Review and to give a stakeholder group overview. She discussed judicial needs and how one court addresses all water issues. Allison stated she has been working on meeting planning, working on her annual performance review and submitted the final report for the encroachment grant. Also working on a Watershed Restoration Plan with the DEQ. She plans to be in person at a future PCCD meeting in the next few months.

MSGOT: No report.

MSU Extension: Trish discussed several spring workshops that she is working on organizing with Cody Ream from MSU Extension. Planning a homesteading and Rejuvra workshop, and also another applicators class for credits (prairie dogs). It will be a 3 workshop/class one day event early May.

DNRC: Veronica stated that the 2024 CDA grant application closes March 1st at midnight and she hasn't heard word yet when fiscal year 2025 CDA will open up. Will potentially just amend the current agreements and just add funds that way. Declaration of Oath forms need to be submitted by March 11. They are putting on some strategic planning meetings March 5 and 6. Project, pollinator and planning grants close mid-March.

NRCS: No report.

Pheasants Forever: No report.

Winnett ACES: No report.

CEMIST: Brent stated that they had their Executive Council meeting yesterday. Looking at pursuing line-item funding but that will need all Montana CD support since it will come out of CDA funding. Will need to have everything lined out by July 1, 2025. The Council has a vacancy and plan to fill that spot with Megan Hoyer, with Yellowstone County Weed District. Next week is the Feral Pig tour on the highline. Jered Beaver is a main presenter.

BLM: No report.

Supervisor Reports:

Brenda Brady: No report.

Laura Kiehl: Discussed the current status on the Petrolia Irrigation grant. The planning grant of \$30,000 was received for the Low Line Canal Pipeline Conversion PER.

Ralph Corbett: Ralph is trying to figure out who the Petroleum County Weed current supervisor. The city is needing to find a place to store chemicals.

Jay King: No report.

Rodney Rowton: No report.

Nate Descheemaeker: No report.

Butch Arthur: No report.

Old Business:

A. **MSGOT Lease Contracts:** Therese gave a brief update on where things stand with the MSGOT lease contracts. They are now looking at other options. Western Sustainability Exchange has offered to hold one or more of the leases. She stated that MSGOT's lawyer would *prefer* that if WSE holds the leases, they will also be doing the range monitoring. Jay asked if the \$30K audit offer was still on the table. Therese specified that was offered when there were no other options, but now they are weighing other options and stated *I guess I would say I don't have an answer until we get down the road*. Therese continued by saying it was their *preference* to find another option to avoid having to pay for an audit. Jay specifically asked if there had been direction from her board to remove the \$30K and she said there hadn't been. When asked if it would be possible for WSE to hold the lease(s), but still have the PCCD do the range monitoring, Therese said *unlikely* and stated again that they preferred WSE to do the range monitoring if they hold the lease(s). Therese discussed the other option of having MACD holding the leases and contracting the PCCD to do the range monitoring. Everyone voiced their concerns and

frustrations with the process, communication, and time spent by the CD to make things work. While the landowners voiced that their preference would be to work with the CD, it currently looks like that probably won't be the route MSGOT chooses. Therese stated she will not know anything more from MACD on what they can offer until after the MACD March board meeting. The CD will hold off on going forward until they hear more from MSGOT/MACD.

B. McDonald Irrigation – Grant: Trish stated that the planning grant of \$25K was received and things are progressing forward. She will reach out to WWC Engineering to get an update on their end.

C. Fuels Mitigation Program –Grant: Trish is going to be working through getting this grant submitted if the board agrees that we should go forward with it. The board thought it was a good idea since it is for 5 years and will give plenty of time to figure out project areas. She is getting help from LMCD since they are applying for the same grant.

D. CDA Grant – Trish stated that this has been submitted. Veronica stated that they have gone through the applications that have already been submitted and will be going through the remainder in the next couple weeks. By our next board meeting we should have heard something on what we are being awarded.

E. Template Regarding Resolution -No update, tabled until the next meeting.

F. No Till Drill Agreement – Looked over the No-Till agreement that was updated at the February 7th special meeting. Had discussion on line #13 of the agreement. Updated that line to read *Agree to completely clean out the seed box and/or the fertilizer box when I finish using the drill or a cost of \$100.00 plus \$80/hour will be charged.* Ralph Corbett moved to approve the No Till Drill agreement as amended; Rodney Rowton seconded. Motion passed.

New Business:

A. 310 Updates – The board reviewed the Twin Creeks Farm & Ranch 310 application. Ralph Corbett moved to approve the Twin Creeks Farm & Ranch 310 application; Rod Rowton seconded. Motion passed.

B. TA2023 MOA – Laura Kiehl moved to approve the TA2023 MOA; Rodney seconded. Motion passed. Jay King signed the agreement.

C. DNRC Contract for AIS Train the Trainer Workshop – Brent stated that the contract is still in negotiations. Requesting approximately \$20K for two AIS Train the Trainer workshops. It will also pay for salary, time and travel for CEMIST staff, and professional instructor services. Jay discussed that we still need to set aside 1% on grant applications/contracts to start building an audit fund. Will move this item to old business for future discussion.

D. CDB Project Grant – CEMIST E & O– Brent discussed and presented the draft budget and metrics of the CDB Project Grant application for CEMIST. Current funding runs out in September. Splitting time between current grant and Wendy's grant every other quarter. CEMIST applied for the AIS grant. Wendy also has a pending TA2023 grant for some of Brent's time. CEMIST council decided to work towards applying for the project grant. Will need to get an Authorizing Statement signed with the grant application. Laura Kiehl moved to approve the draft budget and moving forward with the grant application; Ralph Corbett seconded. Motion passed.

E. Letter of Support for ACES Grant approval – Rodney Rowton moved to approve the letter of

support for the Winnett ACES National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant proposal; Butch Arthur seconded. Motion passed.

- F. Employee Comp Time**— Laura discussed the documents that Karl Christians, MRCDC Chair, put together to help explain employee comp time. Would have to update the personnel policy to reflect changes. Molly discussed the updated timesheet that she worked up with Karl. Will move to old business to approve at the next meeting.

Administrative:

A. Grant & District Updates

Discussed the election process and where we are currently at with elections and Oath of Office forms. Looked over administrator monthly report and grant sheet.

1. 10-minute training – Long Range & Annual Work Plans: Looked over and discussed the 1st quarter OP and made updates. Added a section for administrative tasks. Veronica emailed Trish the Governance Calendar to help with timelines in the administrative tasks section. Looked over the current Annual Work Plan and made amendments. Will put this under new business for the next meeting to approve the Annual Work Plan after updated.

Financial:

1. Petroleum CD: Ralph Corbett moved to pay the PCCD unpaid bills; Rodney Rowton seconded. Motion passed.


2. Missouri River CD Council: Ralph Corbett moved to pay the MRCDC unpaid bills; Rodney Rowton seconded. Motion passed.

Correspondence: The MACD Dues form was the only correspondence. It will be added to a future agenda to approve after the CDA additional funding comes in.

Announcements:

A. Next Board meeting: Wednesday, March 27, 5pm, PCCD Office.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 7:29pm


Jay King, Chair


Trish J. Smith, District Administrator