

1601 2nd Ave. North, Ste. 601
Great Falls, MT 59401



Phone: (406) 454-0056
mrcdc@MissouriRiverCouncil.info
www.MissouriRiverCouncil.info

Quarterly Meeting Minutes November 18th, 2008 MACD Convention Missoula, MT

General:

Chairman Jim Beck opened the meeting at 4:40 P.M. Council Members present were: Chairman Jim Beck; John Chase representing the Cascade County CD; Paul Gies representing the Fergus CD; Curt McCann representing the Blaine County CD; Rick Anderson representing the Chouteau County CD; Buzz Mattelin representing the Roosevelt County CD; Karl Christians representing DNRC; Randy Phelan representing NRCS; and Jeff Tiberi representing MACD. See attached sign-in roster for others present.

Given Ray Beck's schedule for the evening, it was requested and approved to move the DNRC report up to the beginning of the meeting.

1. DNRC Report – Ray reported that with the Legislative session beginning in January, the Council should contact the members of the Natural Resources committee as soon as they are assigned. He noted that state government was on a “flat line” with no increases to the budget. The Council's funding is secure at the current level and there were no changes planned. He also noted that with the new USDA appointment, letters through the Congressional offices urging that the western perspective be a focus of new appointees would be appropriate.
2. Travel Vouchers were provided.
3. The meeting minutes from the September 4th, 2008 Quarterly meeting were reviewed. Rick moved to approve the meeting minutes as submitted; John seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
4. The Executive Committee reported that since the last full Council meeting, they have:
 - Approved appointment of Larry Mires to serve as Vicki's alternate on the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC).
 - Approved and submitted comments on the CMR draft management alternatives.
 - Approved the purchase of 250 grocery bags with the Council logo on them for distribution at Convention.
 - Agreed to collect funds from members to help sponsor a “pink basket” for the MACDEO and breast cancer awareness fund raising event at the MACD Convention.
5. The financial report was presented and discussed. Rick moved to approve the Financial Report, Curt seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
6. Correspondence received and sent since the last meeting was presented and reviewed.
7. Coordinator's Report: Vicki referenced her monthly reports and noted that she has been working on the following:

Gallatin Conservation District
Broadwater Conservation District
Lewis & Clark Conservation District
Cascade County Conservation District
Chouteau County Conservation District

Blaine County Conservation District
Big Sandy Conservation District
Fergus County Conservation District
Petroleum County Conservation District
Phillips Conservation District

Garfield County Conservation District
Valley County Conservation District
McCone Conservation District
Roosevelt County Conservation District
Richland County Conservation District

- Completing the car body removal project with Alan Rollo and the follow-on restoration work with the Holy Spirit 7th Grade Eco-Challenge team.
- Researching and drafting a response to the Riparian Action Plan drafted for the Monument area.
- Drafting and sending a response to the CMR draft management alternatives.
- Working with the Garfield County CD and MACD to draft a resolution for the Convention regarding the CMR planning process and management alternatives.

New Business:

1. CMR Comprehensive Management Plan – The Council's letter dated October 31, 2008 was discussed. Diane Ahlgren from the Petroleum County CD discussed their concerns and stated that they appreciated the Council's involvement. Others noted that it was important to stay involved and continue advocating that the USFWS work more closely with local landowners. Buzz Mattelin relayed a conversation that he and Vicki had with the USFWS Regional Director, Steve Guertin, while they were at the MRRIC meeting in St. Louis. Mr. Guertin stated that the planning process was designed to be open and transparent with emphasis on public involvement. Additionally, it was noted that the MOU between the USFWS and the NACD is being updated and prepared for signature at the NACD convention in February. The Council also discussed the resolution addressing the CMR management planning process. The resolution is sponsored by the Garfield County CD and will be heard in the Operations Committee at 1:45 PM in Parlor A. The Council agreed to attend the committee meeting and offer support for the resolution.
2. Monument NRST Workshop and Action Plan – Paul discussed the recent workshop, noting that the BLM is caught in the middle between environmental-type groups and ranchers. He noted that the best outcome is cooperation, while the worst outcome is a lawsuit. Paul also proposed that the Council consider an educational project and trip for college students along the river in the Monument. The Council discussed the draft response letter that Vicki had prepared. Rick noted that the intent of the enclosure should be clearly identified. Rick moved to send the letter with that addition, Paul seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
3. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Annual Operating Plan – Buzz noted that the Council again sponsored the annual stakeholders' meeting prior to the Corps' public meeting. Stakeholders appreciated the lower winter releases and expressed some concerns about the "mini test" of releasing water over the spillway. They noted that the Environmental Assessment and stop protocols should be reviewed and updated. Additionally, some concerns with early July flows were noted and the Corps was very willing to listen to and work with the irrigators to alleviate their concerns. Buzz moved to approve the letter with one change to bullet item #5 – remove the reference to the LoMoCRM. John seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Buzz also noted that he had attended the first MRRIC meeting. Montana has 5 members on MRRIC – Buzz represents irrigation, Vick represents CDs, Dave Schwarz represents tributaries, Deb Madison represents the Fort Peck tribes, and Tim Bryggman represents the state of Montana. He noted that the group makes consensus recommendations on the current Corps recovery plan as well as the Corps' future plans. Buzz stayed an extra day to take in the Missouri River sedimentation meeting. He noted that prior to the construction of the main stem dams, the Missouri River added 70% of the sediment to the Mississippi River, now it only adds about 10%. The Missouri's riverbed has degraded about 10-feet in the Kansas City area, causing a need for more water to be released from the upper basin in order to reach the water intakes in the lower basin.

4. Elections –
Executive Committee – John moved to conduct the elections by mail-in ballot, Curt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Chairman – after discussing possible scenarios and the benefits of rotating the Chairmanship throughout the river, Paul moved to table the election until the January meeting, Rick seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Old Business:

1. Car Body Removal Project – Vicki reported that 23,000 pounds of material, including 20 car bodies and 2 truck loads of trash were removed from the riverbank upstream from Great Falls. Alan Rollo facilitated the project and completed the necessary administrative work. The total operating expenses were \$3,540, which were paid by private landowners. The administrative expenses were \$520, paid by the Council to Alan Rollo. Restoration of the site was completed by the 7th grade Eco-Challenge team from the Holy Spirit School in Great Falls. The students are enrolled in a national competition and are recruiting other schools to adopt riparian areas and complete restoration or clean-up work. John Chase attended the restoration and provided photos of the work. Vicki asked if the Council would like to reimburse the team's postage expenses for mailing recruitment letters to 431 schools across the state. Paul moved to pay the team's postage expenses, Rick seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Vicki also noted that the project received media attention on the KRTV news, the Great Falls Tribune, and it may be featured in the Montana Water Center's 2009 calendar.
2. MRRIC Meeting Report – Vicki's written report was discussed briefly and it was noted that the highlights of the meeting were covered during Buzz's discussion under New Business items.

Reports

1. Upper Reach – Jim recently attended a Water Forum sponsored by the MSU Billings Urban Institute and he presented information on it. The forum focused on water issues and the use of new technology to meld two or more historically opposed views together in a cooperative effort. Also of interest was a presentation on climatology noting that although the volume of our precipitation may not be changing drastically, it will be coming at different times of the year, which will impact all water users. Jim also attended the American Water Resources Association Montana Section meeting. He noted that many of the presentations were on theoretical topics, but one in particular that may be useful was regarding armored stanchion water access where water gaps are divided into narrow sections to limit cattle to just drinking the water. Jim distributed his notes and an abstract on the presentation titled "Armored Stanchion Cattle Water Access Effects on E. coli, Suspended Sediment, and Nutrient Loading to Spring Creeks".

John provided an update on the Whitmore Ravine in Cascade County. He stated that a dry weather flow study had been published. The study found that drain tiles under the runway and leaking pipes throughout the base were major contributors to the runoff entering the Whitmore Ravine. He also noted that preliminary planning is being done on an NRCS project along the middle fork. The plan calls for an off-channel pond to receive the base flow until it is full. All peak flows would still go to the ravine. The project cost would be about \$700,000, with NRCS providing \$500,000. One concern that has been raised is the use of NRCS Farm Bill funds to fix a problem caused by a Department of Defense facility.

The list of questions regarding CDs and County Planning Boards was discussed. It was noted that most planning boards do not seem to have a sound rural or agricultural representation and that many have multiple representatives from developers and realtors. Additionally, it was noted that CDs should reach out to the County Planning Boards and Commissioners to provide information, for example, CDs could arrange for NRCS soil scientists to present relevant information to the Planning Board. It was agreed that those present at the meeting would mark their priority questions on the list and return it to Vicki.

Vicki would compile the results and ensure that the highest priority questions are addressed at the MACD Round Table discussion later in the convention.

2. Middle Reach – The Council noted that issues surrounding the NRST workshop and riparian action plan had already been addressed during new business. Paul noted that he recently attended the “Riparian Management Summit” in South Dakota. The summit gave a good overview of impacts to riparian areas throughout time. One noteworthy presentation was given by Dr. Debbie Finch regarding exclosures. Dr. Finch’s presentation noted that by working with farmers and ranchers on restoration projects, they can create additional recreation opportunities (like fishing) that can generate additional income for the landowner. It was also noted that cattle and their presence on the land are more of a social issue than an environmental issue, because the science doesn’t prove that cattle are only detrimental to the environment. Paul also noted that the next Council meeting at the Winter Fair will be provide a great opportunity to meet other farmers and ranchers, enjoy the Fair, and earn pesticide applicator credits at the Fergus County Weed Seminar.
3. Reservoir Reach – Diane Ahlgren asked if they could appoint an associate supervisor as a member of the Council and the Council responded that they definitely could. A supervisor or associate supervisor could be a voting member of the Council.
4. Lower Reach – all updates were previously discussed.
5. MACD – Jeff noted that the Convention has consumed much of his time recently. He also noted that MACD is planning the legislative social for January 30th at the Montana Club in Helena.
6. NRCS – no report.
7. Other business – Paul noted that he had some hats made up for the Council. Vicki noted that the Cascade County CD budgeted \$1000 as a partner contribution to the Council and that money could be used to pay for the hats, but the DNRC money could not. Curt moved to pay for the hats out of the CCCD partner contribution, Rick seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

With no other business coming before the Council, Curt moved to adjourn the meeting, John seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Submitted by:

Approved by unanimous vote on Jan. 23rd, 2009:

Vicki Marquis, Coordinator

Jim Beck, Chairman