



LOCAL COMMON SENSE CONSERVATION

18 Main Street
 PO Box 669
 Chester MT 59531
 Phone: 406-759-5778, ext. 102

The Liberty County Conservation District Board of Supervisors met March 16, 2023

Present:

Lanny Jones
 Megan Hedges
 Diane Roberts

Rod Oraw
 Misty Vermulm
 Kurt Matkin

Tyler Jones

Absent/Excused:

Robert Pugsley
 Ray Morkrid

Rodney Svenson
 Mike Nelson

Tyler Streit

CALL TO ORDER: Lanny Jones, called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

DISTRICT BUSINESS

Motion by Megan Hedges, seconded by Tyler Jones to approve the minutes of the January meeting. Motion carried.

Motion by Rod Oraw, seconded by Kurt Matkin to file the Treasurer's Report January and February. Motion carried.

Motion by Megan Hedges, seconded by Kurt Matkin to pay January and February bills. Motion carried.

**'15/23
 sh Basis**

**Payments
 January 2023**

Date	Num	Name	Memo	Account	Paid Am...
01/13/2023	138	Montana Association...	Montana Conservation Emp...	332 · Dues Expense	30.00
01/18/2023	DBT	Walmart	Food New Technologies W...	381 · Workshop Ex...	36.68
01/18/2023	139	Cicon & Associates	Wall Maps	201.1 · Maps	50.00
01/26/2023	140	NACD	2023 dues	332 · Dues Expense	50.00
01/26/2023	141	Liberty County Cham...	2023 Chamber dues	332 · Dues Expense	95.00
01/26/2023	debt	Walmart	Coffee for office	210 · Office Supplies	11.97
01/26/2023	DEBT	Walmart	Supplies for New Technolog...	381 · Workshop Ex...	19.92
01/26/2023	142	Jeff Mattson	Honorarium for New Techno...	381 · Workshop Ex...	100.00
01/26/2023	143	Cody Ramberg	Honorarium for New Techno...	381 · Workshop Ex...	100.00
01/26/2023	144	Ivan Van Dessel	Honorarium for New Techno...	381 · Workshop Ex...	100.00
01/27/2023	DBT	PERS	Pers contribution January	131 · Retirement	162.93
01/27/2023	145	Diane M Roberts	January Net Payroll	Net Payroll	1,087.08
01/27/2023	146	HSA Bank	HSA payment January	130.2 · Permissive ...	375.42
01/30/2023		Walmart	Food New Technologies W...	381 · Workshop Ex...	23.34
TOTAL					<u>2,709.26</u>

03/15/23

Cash Basis

Payments
February 2023

Date	Num	Name	Memo	Account	Paid Amo...
02/01/2023	147	Cicon & Associates	2023 Map Books	201.1 · Maps	153.00
02/08/2023	148	HSA Bank	LCCD contribution for Dian...	130.1 · LCCD contr...	335.04
02/17/2023	DBT	Amazon	Pollinator seeds and hone...	380 · Education Exp...	30.98
02/27/2023	DBT	PERS	Pers Contribution Diane R...	131 · Retirement	207.85
02/27/2023	149	Diane M Roberts	February Payroll	Net Payroll	943.42
02/27/2023	150	HSA Bank	HSA Contribution LCCD	130.1 · LCCD contr...	34.58
02/27/2023	150	HSA Bank	HSA Contribution Permiss...	130.2 · Permissive ...	468.40
TOTAL					<u>2,173.27</u>

PERMISSIVE LEVY BENEFIT, GAIL CICON: The LCCD board received a letter from Gail Cicon that she did not receive her HSA benefit for 18 months during Covid. The letter states:

“During the time of Covid, because of reduced occupancy required by the Federal Government, employees in the NRCS had to take turns working in the office. I started doing the bookkeeping from my home. I neglected to bring my file on the Health Savings amount that I was paid each month from the Permissive Levy. I forgot to pay myself for 18 months (2021-1/2 of 2022.). I realized this as I was preparing my taxes. The LCCD was still receiving this money from the county. I was receiving \$479.56/month in 2020. I am requesting this amount from the conservation District.” (479.56 x 18 = \$8632.08)

A Motion was made by Megan Hedges, seconded by Kurt Matkin to pay \$8632.08 to Gail Cicon for her HSA. Motion carried.

2024 ADMINISTRATIVE GRANT APPLICATION: Diane presented the Administrative Grant application to the board for approval. Filling out the grant application with 2023 expenses and budgeted expenses for 2024 the budget shortfall is \$14, 470. It was requested by the board that Diane submit the request to the DNRC through submittable and see if we qualify for any funds from the administrative grant.

A Motion was made by Megan Hedges, seconded by Rod Oraw to submit the Administrative Grant to the DNRC for approval. Motion carried.

NRCS Report – Misty Vermulm, DC, Shelby Office

March 16, 2023

- NRCS Report – Liberty County Conservation District
NRCS staff are working on EQIP applications that have been Preapproved for the Liberty County Soil Health TIP. These are being funded with EQIP dollars as well as Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds.
- EQIP TIP 2024 proposals will be presented the end of this month to the State office to determine if they go forward. There are 3 affecting Liberty County: the Marias River TIP developing off-site livestock water below the dam; the Gone with the Wind Erosion TIP which is for addressing soil erosion along roadways, and a third TIP is for keeping expired CRP in grass with water or fence help, which can now include boundary fences.
- A Peer to Peer meeting for producers in the Soil Health TIPs was held March 3, and there were 13 producers in attendance there. Based on feedback from attendees, this type of workshop

is appreciated as a way to collaborate ideas.

- Personnel: There was an internal Hire Now announcement for the Chester DC, but there were no candidates for this location. NRCS will try again to fill this position. In the meantime, Jenna Brown is an experienced Soil Conservationist in Fort Benton, is coming to Chester a couple days a week to help train newer staff and keep up with workload. The Administrative Position was advertised and there were a lot of applicants (statewide over 200) so it will take time to get an applicant panel. This is a shared position between Shelby and Chester and will be located in Shelby.
- CRP signup began Feb 27 through April 7th. No longer mandatory renovation if over 50% smooth brome or crested wheatgrass. May need to renovate stands to qualify for the offer that was bid.
- Each year, NRCS and CD are to review USDA Civil Rights requirements with Partners. LCCD did this in June, but it is typically done in January or February, so we'll get closer to that schedule and review at the March meeting.

Upcoming Dates:

June 19-21 Montana Range Days

Respectfully submitted by Misty Vermulm

Extension Report – Jesse Fulbright (not in attendance)

District Business

LOCAL ACTIVITY

LWG Survey results for 2023: A survey was sent out to local producers in November to gather information for LCCD and the NRCS. It was also posted on the NRCS website and at the New Technologies workshop in January. The results are listed below.

- The top 5 most important natural issues were Soil quality/soil health, Ag sustainability, Soil erosion, Ag productivity, and Pesticide management.
- The top 5 customer groups the LCCD should make the most intense effort to reach with information, products, and services were full time farmers, agribusiness, parttime farmers, state and local politicians, business community.
- The top 5 most important products, programs or services the LCCD should provide were cost share programs, conservation planning, soil survey and soil information, educational programs, and erosion and sediment control.

The results were sent to the NRCS to help in the planning of TIP/EQIP programs through the NRCS and also the Long Term Plans for the LCCD. There will be an in person LWG meeting in 2024 to further develop these plans.

310 MODEL RULE:

A public meeting was held on March 16th at 7:00 p.m. at the USDA office for the purpose of addressing any concerns about making changes to the 310 natural stream permitting model rule in response to the 2019 legislative session changes. No comments were made from the public.

Changes include:

RULE 10. DECISION.

- (6) The applicant must notify the supervisors in writing within 30 days of receipt of the permit if the applicant wishes to proceed with the project in accordance with the permit. No work may begin on a project before the end of the fifteen-day waiting period unless all team members and the district give written permission.

RULE 13. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

- (2) The applicant may request arbitration as the method to resolve disputes by signing an arbitration agreement either before the application review process or within 30 days of receipt of the supervisors' decision.
- (3) The applicant may request judicial review of the supervisors' decision by filing a petition in district court within 30 days of receipt of the supervisors' decision.

A Motion was made by Megan Hedges and seconded by Tyler Jones to approve the resolution updating the 310 Model Rule to be in compliance with the 2019 Legislative session changes. Motion carried.

310 STREAM CROSSING PERMIT: Triangle Communications submitted an application for a **310 stream crossing permit** for the purpose of installing fiber optic telecommunications cables and to replace existing copper cables that are nearing end-of-life, to provide service where none currently exists, in order to provide telephone and high-speed internet service to customers. This is a one-time permit with construction scheduled to begin Spring of 2023 and be completed by Fall 2023.

Motion was made by Megan Hedges and seconded by Tyler Jones to approve Triangle Communications 310 Stream Crossing permit with no changes. Motion carried.

2023 CD FUNDING SURVEY:

The MACD is working diligently to secure increased and sustainable funding to support and advance Conservation Districts. A survey was sent out to all districts to complete along with an increased budget should funding be increased. The LCCD board completed the survey listing the top 3 priorities as expanding soil health programs, increase education for adults, and conservation subject matter training. Diane will return the survey and the projected budget to Kasydi Lucas at the MACD.

INSURANCE QUOTE from Montana Farmers Union Insurance Agency: In November of 2023, MACo Insurance sent out a letter to all Montana Special Districts that they would no longer be providing liability insurance to Conservation Districts effective 7/1/2023. Diane has been working with local insurance companies and other conservation districts to find new liability insurance. Glatfelter seems to be the best option for liability insurance currently. Megan Hedges has assisted Diane in completing all the paperwork needed to get a quote for new insurance. Megan presented the insurance to the LCCD to discuss coverage. The quote for insurance through Glatfelter is \$2667. After discussion it was agreed that LCCD would purchase liability insurance through Montana Farmers Union Insurance Agency/Glatfelter effective 7/1/2023.

Motion was made by Tyler Jones and seconded by Rod Oraw to approve the purchase of liability insurance through Montana Farmers Union Insurance Agency/Glatfelter effective 7/1/2023. Motion carried.

REGIONAL AND STATE

Two handouts were presented as an update from Mary Hendrix.

Next Meeting –April 20, 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Diane Roberts, Administrator

Lanny Jones, Chairman

Diane Roberts

Lanny Jones

District meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of each month at the USDA Service Center, Chester, 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise noticed.

MISSION: TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS BY PROVIDING LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAMS TO CONSERVE, IMPROVE AND SUSTAIN OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT.

VISION: Having a community that is economically stable with the natural resources conserved by:

1. providing education and encouraging control of nuisance weeds and eradication of noxious weeds
2. having no soils blowing above their tolerance level—ideally no soil or water erosion
3. sustaining and improving water quality, with rivers and streams running clear.
4. encouraging tree planting for shelterbelts and wildlife
5. encouraging recycling
6. working jointly with all other agencies/organizations to enhance conservation practices within the District
7. improving the public perception of the Conservation District