



LOCAL COMMON SENSE CONSERVATION

18 Main Street
PO Box 669
Chester MT 59522
Phone: 406-759-5778, ext. 2262

The Liberty County Conservation District Public Meeting Minutes February 19, 2026

Present:

Lanny Jones	Megan Hedges	Rod Oraw	Geoff Osterman
Tyler Jones	Patty Bierma	Matti Osterman	Michael Nelson

Absent/Excused:

Robert Pugsley	Tyler Streit	Diane Roberts
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CALL TO ORDER: Lanny Jones called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

DISTRICT BUSINESS

Motion by Megan Hedges, seconded by Tyler Jones to approve the minutes of the January 2026 meeting.
Motion carried.

Motion by Megan Hedges, seconded by Kurt Matkin to file the Treasurer's Report for December 2025 and January 2026.
Motion carried.

Motion by Tyler Jones, seconded by Kurt Matkin, to pay January 2026 bills.
Motion carried.

Audit for July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 completed on February 9, 2026 by Megan Hedges, Tyler Jones, and Rod Oraw, No discrepancies found.

**Conservation District
Income
December 2025**

Date	Name	Memo	Account	Amount
▶ 12/15/2025	Liberty Co.	Special Assessment Nov 25	317350 · Special Assessment	12,399.93 ◀
12/15/2025	Liberty Co.	Permissive Health Nov 25	317351 · Permissive Health	5,312.87
12/15/2025	Liberty Co.	REqualr Assessment Nov 25	317352 · Regular Assessment	5,693.01
12/31/2025		Int Dec 25	371000 · Interest and Dividend Income	175.96
TOTAL				<u>23,581.77</u>

**Income
January 2026**

Date	Name	Memo	Account	Amount
▶ 01/20/2026	Liberty Co.	7350 Soil Conservation Special A...	317350 · Special Assessment	5,283.80 ◀
01/20/2026	Liberty Co.	7351 Soil Conservatin Permissiv...	317351 · Permissive Health	2,264.19
01/20/2026	Liberty Co.	7352 Soil Conservation Regular A...	317352 · Regular Assessment	2,425.91
01/26/2026	Dahinden, Steve	Dahinden Farms, Inc. 24 Amur M...	3417004 · Trees	648.00
01/30/2026		Interest Jan 2026	371000 · Interest and Dividend Income	223.88
TOTAL				<u>10,845.78</u>

**Payments
December 2025**

Date	Num	Name	Memo	Account	Paid Amount
12/02/2025		HSA Bank	Nov 25 HSA PRB	130.1 · LCCD contr...	34.58
12/02/2025		HSA Bank		130.2 · Permissive ...	529.42
12/04/2025		PERS	NOV 25 PERS Bierma	131 · Retirement	230.79
12/10/2025	ACH	Liberty County Cham...	2026 Chamber Dues	332 · Dues Expense	95.00
12/10/2025	ACH	Staples	Electric Stapler and staples	210 · Office Supplies	45.18
12/22/2025	Billpay	Rod Oraw	July to Dec 25 Mileage -26 m...	370 · Travel	17.42
12/22/2025	Billpay	Geoff Osterman	July to Dec 25 Mileage 13 ...	370 · Travel	17.42
12/22/2025	BILL...	Lanny Jones	July to Dec 25 Mileage 80 m...	370 · Travel	160.80
12/22/2025	BILL...	Tyler Streit	July to Dec 25 Mileage 30 m...	370 · Travel	20.10
12/31/2025		PERS	Dec 25 PERS Bierma	131 · Retirement	274.07
12/31/2025	279	Patricia A Raudensky...	Dec 25 Wages	Net Payroll	1,063.87
12/31/2025	280	United States Treasury	4th Qtr 941 taxes Oct to Dec...	141.1 · Federal	1,234.82
12/31/2025	ACH	U-I Contributions	4th Qtr UI Payment	141.3 · Unemploym...	11.26
12/31/2025		HSA Bank	Dec 25 HSA	130.1 · LCCD contr...	34.58
12/31/2025		HSA Bank	Dec 25 HSA	130.2 · Permissive ...	529.42
12/31/2025	ACH	Montana department ...	2025 Montana State Withhold...	141.2 · State	918.00
TOTAL					<u>6,065.25</u>

Payments
January 2026

Date	Num	Name	Memo	Account	Paid Amount
01/06/2026	ACH	Walmart	New Coffee Machine and filte...	210 · Office Supplies	42.96
01/15/2026	ACH	Chester Supermarket	Coffee - Binder Clips BOD	210 · Office Supplies	28.65
01/26/2026	281	Montana State Treasu...	Dahinden Farms Inc 24 Amu...	201.5 · Trees	648.00
01/27/2026	ACH	1st ST. MERCANTILE	CD Training - Raelyn from Ju...	382 · Training Expe...	54.00
01/28/2026		Montana State Fund	MT Small business group Pr...	140 · Workers Com...	455.08
01/30/2026	282	Patricia A Raudensky...	Payroll Jan 26	110 · Gross Payroll	930.20
TOTAL					2,158.89

NRCS Written Report – Matti Osterman – attachment provided for February 2026

February 19th, 2026

NRCS Report

Workload:

- NRCS is working on contract payments and modifications and planning EQIP applications.
- CSP has undergone big changes, there will be no more enhancements- only practices, and the payment rates for the CSP practices will be the same as the EQIP practices.
- The CSP payment cap was \$200,000/contract and is now \$300,000. Joint Ventures had \$400,000 caps and are now \$600,000. Existing Activity Payments were paid by the acre, but they will now be at a flat rate of \$4,000 per year. This will make reaching the contract cap more difficult for some.
- Montana NRCS WILL NOT pay for the same practices again if they have already been done on that acreage, even in the Great Falls Soil Health TIP. So, if they have had a disc drill a while and have used it on those fields, they won't get a payment for it unlike previous years.
- Area Staff are recommending postponing the peer-to-peer workshop for this year because of loss of staff and workloads. We can revisit it next year or host a similar workshop open to the public.

Funding:

- NRCS has 2018 Farm Bill funding through September 2026. A 2026 Farm Bill is in the works.
- EQIP, CSP, and RCPP application deadlines were January 15 th .
- The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture announced the Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP). 400 million will be invested in EQIP, and 300 million will be invested in CSP nationally. This is opening new options of funding for producers, especially in EQIP when they didn't fit a TIP.
- Gayle Barry, our State Conservationist, wants feedback from Conservation Districts about Montana Focus Conservation (MFC) and Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPs). What works? What doesn't work? What do you like? What don't you like? Would you rather have TIPs or not have TIPs?

Personnel:

- Misty Vermulm retired February 6th.
- NRCS is still only doing internal hiring, mostly 120 day details and transfers. No hiring expected this fiscal year.
- Matti Osterman has been hired for a 120 day detail as the new Supervisory District Conservationist over the Chester and Shelby work unit, based in Chester. This can transition to a permanent position.

Matti Osterman
Acting SDC Chester/Shelby Work Unit
and Resource Soil Scientist
NRCS Montana

Extension Report – Jesse Fulbright (not in attendance)

Hello!

As of January 1, 2026, there is a new category test requirement related to Non-Soil Fumigants for treating grain bins for insects or fields for rodent control. This is a free test that gets added to your existing private pesticide applicator license and which expires at the same time as your current pesticide applicator license. For our region, that would be the end of 2030. In order to obtain your category certification, a grower would need to take the open-book, 50 question multiple choice test and pass with a 70%. There is no fee for taking this test and you only need to obtain 3 credits for that category, in addition to your 6 credits for your private applicator license. Quite often meetings could qualify for both credits.

I have set aside the morning of Monday, February 23 at 9 a.m. to give this newly required test. If you use Non-Soil Fumigants in your operation, please call and let me know if this time will work for you. Alternatively, you can call and schedule an appointment. The category book, which is free to growers, can be picked up beforehand or at the time you take the test.

Thank you.

Jesse Fulbright
MSU Liberty County Extension Agent
PO Box 607
Chester, MT 59522
Office-406-759-5625
Personal Cell-406-399-2092
Fax-406-759-5996
jlf@montana.edu

LCCD LOCAL ACTIVITY

- **Election/appointment of Officers** – Lanny Jones, Kurt Matkin, Rod Oraw -advised date to file is March 4, 2026. Provided Rod with form to fill out and have Davin notarize. Lanny has completed his.
- **Peer to Peer** – It was determined not to do Peer to Peer this year. Any other suggestions are welcome. Perhaps workshops, field Summer Tour?

- **Tree Sales** – MT Conservation Seedling Nursery 01/21/26 @ 8 am (406)-542-4244 <https://conservationseedlings.mtdnrc.gov> – **still have available**
- **Workshops** – Working on a Rain Barrell workshop (Toole County CD) -rain barrels will be available soon and this will be a summer workshop. Terrarium (?) Workshop – more details soon.
- **On January 27, 2026**, Judith Basin, Fergus, and Fort Benton CD Admins met in the Chester office to go over info for water reporting and other related information pertaining to CD's responsibilities.
- **Taxes** – all taxes reported to state and W-2's mailed per Ameilia Reed – Reed Accounting – W-2, W-3, and 1099 – **received tax bill for \$200/PAID**
- **Paid MCDEO dues for \$30.00 & NACD Dues for \$75.00**
- **Supervisors** – Lanny Jones, Rod Oraw, & Kurt Makin – positions up this year for election or reappointment. **REMINDER: Must file Feb 17 to March 4, 2026.**
- **Intermountain Infrastructure Group, LLC** – review doc provided. It was determined nothing needed to be reported concerning this.
- **Catey Bauer – Boundary Audit** – see attached. Board concurred with Catey's findings, nothing to report or include.
- **Envirothon – April 20-21, 2026** – CJI is sending one team of five students. Board approved to pay registration of \$150.00 and agreed to pay for up to 3 rooms for two nights for CJI, Sunday night and Monday night (19 & 20) **Motion by Megan Hedges, seconded by Rod Oraw, Motion carried.**

- **Pugsley Bridge Project**

From Nate Wyatt, PE - Principal Restoration Engineering Team Lead | Whitefish

TY was able to contact Dave Pugsley and discuss the available wood. Dave said that we would be hard-pressed to get the amount of wood that we need and mentioned that most of it is the downed, rotting cottonwood, which will not work. The campground that Luke mentioned is very far away, and transport would be well outside of TY's budget. My initial thought is to see whether FWP or LCCD can identify an alternative local source of free wood. If not, could you potentially pull TY's wood cost from his budget and add that into any other available funds to transport the campground wood through one of your agencies? To haul from that campground, you might be looking at 10k-20k.

Dave also said that the rock in his pit is mainly pit run. If it's a 8" minus and fairly clean that will be sufficient.

TY can run out to the site to look at materials, but the first step is to find some wood or coordinate a delivery. Let me know your thoughts.

We determined that our wood sources were not going to be available this spring, so I think we're pushing the project to the fall to give us more time to acquire materials.

Thanks, **Nate Wyatt, PE**

From Peter Brown PhD | Aquatic Habitat Coordinator Fisheries Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

I'll get in touch with some contacts I made last fall about medium sized wood. It would be good to have TY go up there to get eyes on it.

Thanks for keeping in touch,
 Peter

REGIONAL AND STATE

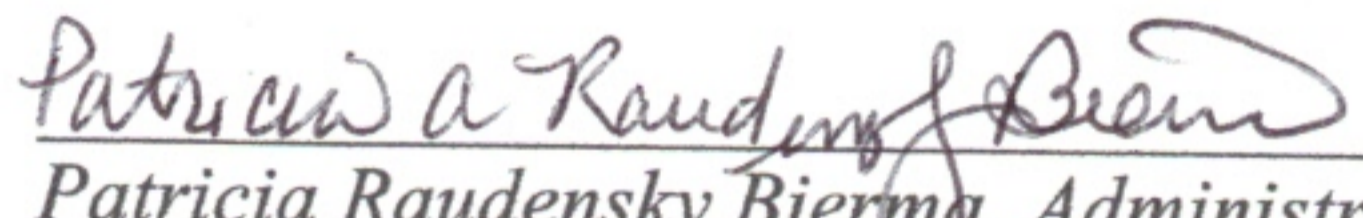
Handout was presented as an update from Catey Bauer for February 2026.

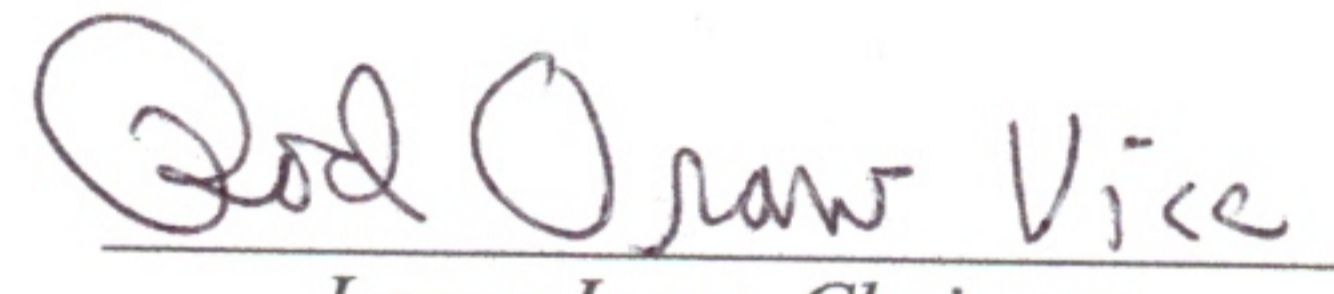
Next Meeting March 19, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT - 7:40 pm

CALENDAR:

- 26th Annual AMFM Conference – Greater Resistance: Navigating the Floodplain Future | Feb. 24-27, 2026 | Holiday Inn Great Falls Convention Center – Great Falls, MT
- Annual Invasive Grasses Workshop | March 11, 10 am to 4:30 pm | Community Center (PCCC) - 207 W Main St, Winnett, MT
- Invasive Annual Grasses in Montana | March 18, 4 to 5:30 pm | Montana Wild, 2668 Broadwater Ave., Helena, MT
- Lewis & Clark County Workgroup | March 18, 6 to 8 pm | Montana Wild, 2668 Broadwater Ave., Helena, MT
- 2026 Northwest Groundwater Conference | March 17 & 18, 2026 | Hilton Garden Inn – Boise ID
- Montana Envirothon | April 20-21, 2026 | Holiday Inn Great Falls – 1 team – Hotel rooms??
- Watershed Tour – MT Watershed Coordination Council | September 14 - 18, 2026 | Check back for details.


Patricia Raudensky Bierma, Administrator

 Vice Chairman
Lanny Jones, Chairman

District meetings are held on 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 soil 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