



Yellowstone River *Conservation District* Council

Meeting Minutes – July 14, 2017 Rib & Chop Miles City, MT.

Members Present: – Walter Rolf, Custer – Don Youngbauer, Rosebud/MACD – Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass – Phil Fox, Treasure – Leroy Gabel, Yellowstone – Rick Herman, Prairie – Kenny Nemitz, Dawson – Shawn Conradsen, Richland – Daryl Stutterheim, Park - John Moorhouse, At Large.

Not in attendance: Stillwater CD, McKenzie ND CD and Craig Wagner, At Large.

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, Technical Advisor; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Burt Williams, Technical Advisor; Mike Backes, MT FWP; Ryan Colloton, BOR; David Pratt, IWM work group; John Heyneman, Plank Stewardship Initiative; Dan Rostad, Coordinator, and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:05am on July 14, 2017. Introductions were made.

Business meeting: The minutes from the March 24 meeting were approved with John Moorhouse making the motion, Paul Gilbert the second. Motion carried by voice vote. Carol Watts handed out the financial reports. She explained all of the activity in the account since the last meeting. The grant statement shows where we are with each of the grants. Shawn Conradsen made a motion to approve the treasurer's report, Rick Herman seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

2017-2018 Budget: A review of the YRCD budget was needed because of the across-the-board cuts made by the Montana Legislature earlier this year. Carol explained each line item with the help of Laurie Zeller and Dan Rostad. There was concern that the funds for the working groups had been cut but Laurie and Carol explained they could be funded from other sources for the short-term. John Moorhouse made a motion to approve the budget, Walter Rolf seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Chairman's Report: Don Youngbauer said he was feeling encouraged because the structure of the Council has come together with the transition from the cumulative effects study to developing working groups. He thinks we are on solid ground and headed where we are supposed to go.

Coordinator's Report: Dan Rostad reported that Yellowstone CD had informed him that Bob Hector had resigned and Leroy Gabel would be his replacement, Jerry Williams will continue as the YRD alternate. Dan asked Leroy to explain the tribute that is being planned for Bob Hector. Leroy said that the Huntley Project Irrigation diversion dam fish passage has a trail going around it that the YCD would like to dedicate to Bob Hector. Leroy Gabel made a motion to approve spending up to \$1500 out of this year's budget on the trail improvement and signage, Paul Gilbert made the second and the motion carried by voice vote. Cards were passed out for the members to sign which Carol will send to Bob Hector.

Dan handed out copies of the YRCD 2017 Annual Report minus the financial sheet which will be added after the end of the month. No action was taken at this time.

Don Youngbauer, Laurie Zeller, and Dan Rostad met with Lisa Coverdale, NRCS State Conservationist in Bozeman to thank NRCS for their help in completing the study. The MOU with them is no longer valid since the study has been completed. Lisa Coverdale has given David Pratt the task of drafting a new agreement between the Council, NRCS and DNRC in order to coordinate the implementation of the YRRP and assist the Council with future priorities.

Dan Rostad asked Burt Williams to report on the Upper Yellowstone River Symposium that he attended. Burt said the symposium was a grass roots effort in response to the fish kill that happened last year. The issues they are concerned about are: floodplain isolation, drought water quality (temperature), conflict of user groups, irrigation and fisheries. There have been two meetings since the Symposium and Burt questioned whether or not the Council wanted to stay

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involved. After some discussion it was decided that Dan Rostad should attend some of the meetings because the Yellowstone River Recommended Practices may tie in with their priorities. Agriculture needs to be better represented in this group.

A Watershed Management grant was applied for a couple weeks ago that would fund a Big Sky Watershed Corp member to help get the YRCDC working groups up and going. This person may be stationed in Miles City and the grant would cover half of the expenses. Dan asked for a motion to support the hiring of a Big Sky Watershed member at \$5,000 and to provide equipment up to \$2000 that they might need. Paul Gilbert made a motion to that effect, Walter Rolf seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Update on approval of CEA and Errata Sheet additions: This is a sheet that identifies corrections in the report. The Council disagrees with the part that concerns tribal outreach Section 9.2. Warren Kellogg made a recommendation that a statement should be made in the minutes. The Council agreed by consensus.

The YRCDC reviewed and discussed the Army Corps errata sheet that accompanied their final approval of the Yellowstone River Cumulative Effects Analysis (CEA). The Council was not given the opportunity to review and comment on the errata sheet before they made it part of the document. Upon review by the Council, there are no major concerns with the errata sheet content except for the narrative regarding tribal communications. The errata sheet states under Section 9.2 that the "YRCDC took the lead on Tribal communication." This is not correct. There was an attempt by the Council to include tribal representation on their RAC. They also sent a staff person to a few Corps-Tribal meetings. But, the responsibility for tribal coordination and consultation laid solely with the Corps of Engineers as outlined in the CEA Project Management Plan. Following the review and discussion of the Corps errata sheet, the Council decided it was not worth raising the issue to correct the errata sheet, but they do want it clearly stated in these meeting minutes that the Corps, not the Council, was the responsible party for tribal coordination and consultation throughout the CEA process.

Concerning the distribution of copies of the CEA report Tiffany had stated at the February 19, 2016 meeting that the COE had the money to print the copies needed for distribution. The COE now say they do not have the funds. Libraries may want hard copies. Digital copies may be an option. We will investigate how many are needed and what the cost will be. Carol will get an estimate for printing 50 copies at the print shop in Miles City.

Plank Stewardship Initiative: John Heyneman, Chairman of this organization was in attendance to inform the Council of the services that can be provided by this group. John is interested in partnering with conservation districts and other groups. There are programs for financial assistance, estate planning, riparian restoration and bank stabilization.

Natural Resource Damage program: Dan informed the Council that terrestrial and riverine projects have been started and the Council has not been asked to comment at this time. Warren Kellogg suggested that because the YRCDC has so much experience in both the technical and social aspects of the river the role the Council could play would be to review the scopes of work to be sure they are using CEA data correctly and not duplicating work that has already been done.

Website Update: Dan reported that the Council's newly updated website is up and running. The website is much simpler and easier to navigate and includes quick links that take users to all information contained on the Yellowstone River Clearinghouse. The YRRP's are also easily accessible on the new website. Local CD's are encouraged to send us their news and events to be added to the website notices page.

Update on Working Groups: David Pratt spoke on the progress that he and Sara Meloy have made on getting the Irrigation Water Management working group up and running. He emphasized the potential benefits of working with the larger irrigation districts that could result in water efficiency and infrastructure improvement projects.

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The IWM working group has been tasked with two initial objectives including:

- Information and Outreach: The Work Group will communicate and collaborate with Conservation Districts, Cooperative Extension Service, DNRC, federal agencies, irrigators, and non-profit organizations throughout the Yellowstone River Basin to identify outreach and project opportunities regarding the efficient use of irrigation water. This information component of this strategy will identify topics, approaches, venues, partners, and funding sources to most effectively convey the efficient application of irrigation water along the Yellowstone River corridor
- Project Identification and Prioritization: Irrigation water management projects along the Yellowstone River corridor will be identified and prioritized in collaboration with agencies, organizations, irrigation districts, and other interested groups. Potential projects will be listed in a long-term project priority plan. The project priorities will be based upon the results from the Yellowstone River Cumulative Effects Study (2016). Project identification and prioritization will incorporate 2015 Montana State Water Plan recommendations where applicable. Potential sponsors and funding sources will be included in the plan.

David Pratt and Sara Meloy are currently meeting with local Conservation Districts and NRCS District Conservationists, to seek their local guidance on project ideas and outreach strategies.

John Moorhouse stated that common buckthorn is becoming a problem. He passed out information about this invasive species, and asked Council members to make their districts aware of it.

Dan Rostad, YRCDC Coordinator asked if he could recommend working group chairs and members. The Council gave him permission to do so. David Pratt and Sarah Meloy co-chair the Irrigation Water Management group and a chairman will soon be named to the Invasive Woody Plant Work Group.

Steering committee additions: Working group chairs were added to the YRCDC Steering Committee. Don Youngbauer commented that any Council member or interested person is welcome to join in. It was also noted that districts should be encouraged to name an alternate to attend meetings when Council members can't.

Election of Officers: Paul Gilbert made a motion for Don Youngbauer to continue as chairman, Rick Herman seconded and the motion carried by voice vote. Walter Rolf made a motion to nominate by acclamation John Moorhouse as Vice Chairman, Rick Herman seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm. The next meeting will be September 22, 2017 in Billings, MT.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

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