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# Yellowstone River *Conservation District* Council

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## Meeting Minutes – January 5, 2018 MT FWP Region 5 Headquarters Billings, MT

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

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

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, YRCDC Technical Advisor; Laurie Zeller, Sara Meloy and Mark Ellison, DNRC; Burt Williams, Technical Advisor; Karin Boyd, Applied Geomorphology; Wendy Weaver, MARS; Mike Backes, MT FWP; Tom Hedt and Keri Bilbo, NRCS; Ken Frazer and Barb Beck, FWP; Alicia Stickney, MT NRDP; Tom Parker, Guem Consulting; Chris Mehus, YRCDC Consultant; David Pratt, IWM work group; Molly Bell, Senator Tester's office; Sharon Flemetis, Stillwater CD Administrator; Dan Rostad, Coordinator, and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

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Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:05am on January 5, 2018. Introductions were made.

Chairman's Report: Don Youngbauer stated that he was happy the study part of the CES was over and we are able to get to work on projects.

Coordinator's Report: Dan reported that he has been working to get Aaron Kolb our Big Sky Watershed Corps member placed in Miles City. Aaron made a site visit to Miles City in early December at which time he got acquainted with folks he will be working with in the CD and NRCS field and area offices. Aaron and Dan attended a training program from December 17 thru 19 in Bozeman.

Dan is planning to attend the upcoming MRRIC meeting in Omaha in March. He mentioned that in order to keep our seat at the table he or his alternate Burt Williams cannot miss two meetings in a row.

Dan continues to assist with the working group development in collaboration with Chris Mehus, Sara Meloy and David Pratt. He is also continuing funding raising efforts and seeking grants that could be used for Council and work group development, marketing and fundraising.

Dan will work with Warren and John Moorhouse to go through all of the boxes of stuff that were stored when the Council's office was closed at the DNRC building on Rimtop Drive. Everything needs to be gone through and determined what to keep and what to throw or recycle in order to make more room for other store room users.

He updated the Council on website activity. In the past month 134 visitors used the website and in the past three months 368 visitors logged onto the Council's website. Overall the website had more than 1500 visitors in the past year.

Business meeting: Minutes for the July 14, 2017 meeting were approved with Shawn Conradsen making the motion; Rick Herman the second, motion carried by voice vote. Notes from the September 29 meeting where there was no quorum were also approved with Walter Rolf making the motion, John Moorhouse the second, motion carried by voice vote.

Carol handed out the financial reports from July 12 to September 27, 2017 and the reports from September 28 through December 29, 2017. The Council reviewed the reports, no questions were asked. John Moorhouse made a motion to accept the reports, Shawn Conradsen seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

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Review of standing rules: It was hoped that McKenzie County CD would have a representative at the table to discuss their future plans for being involved with the Council. Standing rules could be changed in the event they chose not to participate but no action was taken at this time.

Natural Resource Damage program: Alicia Stickney, NRDP was on hand to inform the Council of the progress their program has made. Karin Boyd, Applied Geomorphology supplied the facts and showcased the project area. Tom Parker, Guem Consulting explained how the projects were ranked.

Update on Working Groups: David Pratt, IWM work group gave a brief explanation of how the working groups came about. The purpose of the steering groups is to identify projects and implement them. He stated there had been a luncheon in Miles City to welcome Aaron Kolb, BSWC member to the area. Aaron has found housing, a computer has been ordered for him and he will arrive in Miles City to begin his time there on January 8, 2018. Aaron will assist David Pratt with the Irrigation Water Management workgroup by making surveys of irrigation needs and building maps. Aaron will also help Chris Mehus of the Woody Invasive Plant work group.

David Pratt and Sara Meloy provided an update of the Irrigation Water Management (IWM) working group activities. David gave a brief overview of the working groups and their objectives. Objectives include prioritizing projects, generating an information and outreach strategy, and updating specific recommended practices as needed. David also reviewed the outreach work the IWM group has done so far and the individuals who have committed to participating in the IWM work group – all of whom are from Billings and lower downstream. Sara met with Park and Stillwater Conservation District boards in November to discuss potential projects and work group members. Both David and Sara emphasized the need to follow up with individual conservation districts after initial outreach. There is also a need for work group members from the Upper Yellowstone above Billings.

Chris Mehus, Invasive Woody Plant Control Chairman reported that he attended a workshop in Great Falls for the statewide Russian olive/salt cedar working committee, a work plan was written with the primary players being the MT Audubon Society, Missouri River CD Council, YRCDC and Cascade CD. Chris also attended a MT Invasive Species Council meeting in Helena and will continue to follow up with this group to develop funding opportunities in the future that would benefit YRCDC projects.

Concerning the Mission Creek Russian olive demonstration project Chris said approximately 65 acres of Russian olive (three landowners) will be returned to a cottonwood dominated site with an understudy of shrubs and other herbaceous species. Treatment includes plucking trees with a large excavator, piling/burning, leveling/cultivating, re-vegetation, herbicide application and fencing. Funded by DNRC 223 grant program, YRCDC, and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Partners include Park CD and Park County Cooperative Weed Management Area.

YRCDC work group development plan will follow the Irrigation Water Management group model once it is clearly established with little overlap; an upper and lower river subcommittee structure will be most effective and functional. Several potential committee members have been identified and initial interest gained.

Work items for Aaron, BSWC member will be to gather Russian olive research, management, best practice resources and assist with initial outreach and education strategies. Aaron will help with mapping and monitoring strategies, assist with administration of the Mission Creek project and facilitate development of YRCDC working committee.

Susan Gilbertz, MSU gave the Council an update on the cultural inventory she will be doing this summer. Participants of the last inventory will be interviewed again and new ones added. The ACOE is encouraging this project to be done. Warren Kellogg commented that the YRCDC should support this program. John Moorhouse made a motion to support this effort, Phil Fox seconded and the motion passed by voice vote.

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Montana Watershed Coordination Council: Erin Farris Olson gave a presentation on a proposal that the Montana Watershed Coordination Council has developed to encourage the establishment of regional river councils in the state with the goals of insuring greater funding opportunities. The Council discussed this thoroughly and no action was taken.

Montana Aquatic Resources Services: Wendy Weaver, Executive Director of MARS made a presentation about how MARS can assist people/entities who have projects that will unavoidably impact river banks and /or wetlands. She focused on the Yellowstone River. MARS can assist when a Corps of Engineers permit for a project requires mitigation. For more information about MARS contact Wendy at: [info@montanaaquaticresources.org](mailto:info@montanaaquaticresources.org)

Discussion of having a joint Missouri River Conservation Districts Council and Yellowstone River Conservation District Council meeting in eastern Montana next fall ended with the Council agreeing that it would be better to meet during the MACD convention.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm. The next meeting will be in April at Miles City, MT. Date and place to be announced.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

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