



Lewis and Clark Conservation District

790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601 406.502.8591 <https://lewisandclarkcd.org>

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 10, 2025 10 am

Helena USDA Service Center Conference Room
790 Colleen Street, Helena MT and via Zoom

Call to Order—The meeting was called to order by chair Jeff Ryan at 10 am. In attendance were Jeff Ryan, Stan Frasier, Karl Christians, John Baucus, *Sarah Howe-Cobb*, and *Jeanette Nordahl*. Also in attendance were Elena Frederick, Joe Kremer-Herman, Tracy Wendt, Andrew Kretschmer, Tom Wolff from FWP and Chris Evans.

Introductions were made.

Governance Calendar Review—reviewed and noted

Minutes—Motion by Ryan to approve the minutes as sent, second by Christians; motion carried.

Financial Statement—Nordahl prepared a financial report for the board. Motion by Christians to approve the financial statement and pay the bills, second from Frasier; motion carried.

Update on CDs—Evans updated the board that she had the bank do 3 Certificates of Deposit: a 90 day, a 6 month and a 13 month. They were offering a much better rate on the 13 month so that will throw off the quarterly maturation date. She will get a 12 month done in March to make the 4th. Each was for \$15,000.

Supervisor Absences—No absences.

Correspondence—For the Subdivision Notices, please note weeds, especially cheatgrass, on big subdivision concerns, well/septic concerns. Baucus brought up the Montana Outdoors magazine, he liked the article, but there's a graphic in there showing a "bad" stream with a road and a farmer next to the stream, giving the impression that farming is bad.

Public Comment—No comment

Reports

NRCS—Andrew Kretschmer was present to do the report. CSP for the work unit they had 16 applications with 7 preapproved. 3 were for Lewis and Clark. Most of the Not Preapproved were in Lewis and Clark. EQIP had 5 preapproved for Lewis and Clark County. CRP offers are going out with some accepted, no real information on those yet. The NRCS has a bunch of active contracts, mostly they're working on weed treatment and fuels projects. FSA is keeping the Helena office open Monday and Thursday. There's no word on permanent staff for them yet. NRCS in Helena has been staffing the Whitehall office on Mondays and Tuesdays. They're working on some direct mailings to potential landowners for the existing TIPs.

DNRC—written report from Catey Bauer, our new CDB Specialist.

SRWG—Tracy was present to give the Sun River Watershed Group report. Madison is at a fish barrier training today and will probably continue to come to the Lewis and Clark CD meetings.

Madison is finished with her probation with the watershed group and isn't planning on going anywhere. They're in hoot owl restrictions and the irrigation districts will be shutting off water fairly soon. Water is a real issue this year. Weed Whacker Rodeo is this Saturday. Joe will be going to that. Tracy has been doing some extra outreach to groups this year. Muddy Creek will have a 90% design meeting soon and then permitting and contracting. They'll be working on about 3 miles and 3.2 million dollars with this project. Mike Sanctuary with Confluence Consulting emphasized floodplain reconnection wherever possible.

The other main project they are working on is an RFQ for watershed scale planning and she'd like to run it by someone from the Conservation District before sending it out. It's basically creating a master plan and incorporating all of their reports and other technical information to come up with priority projects for applying for funding. Bashin' Trash is the next priority. Tracy said that Madison will be in touch with the CD about that.

MRCDC—There's a written report in the packet. The St. Mary's project is running. It took 9 or 10 days to get the water back into Montana. They'll be shutting it down in August to redo another siphon along the way. The River Rendezvous is in August.

WQPD—Ryan passed around the letter from the board thanking Jeff for his time. They'll be touring the Grizzly Gulch project.

LHWG—Joe said that the Watershed Festival is August 23 at Women's Park.

Helena CORE—Joe did the summer walk but couldn't use the trailer due to the wind. They talked about the wetland area, Lake Helena and such. Joe is running CORE until September when Corie gets back from maternity leave.

Weed District—Written report from Christian Lehnert.

MACD—letter about the move of the legal counsel contract from DNRC to MACD.

Supervisor Reports

Jeff Ryan—Fishing activities mostly. He's noticed Eurasian Water Milfoil coming though.

Karl Christians—They're been haying. It has been a really bad weed year across the whole valley.

Stan Frasier—Stan's biggest news is that the Jericho Fire is out.

John Baucus—Very dry. They actually had to haul water to livestock for the first time in the ranch's history. They're planning to drill wells with solar pumps in advance of the need.

Sarah Howe-Cobb—She said that Madison ran a good show at the Nilan. They have had little fires in the area. Some of the smaller landowners won't even be haying this year, saving what they have for grazing. Nilan Reservoir is about empty.

Jeanette Nordahl—Not much going on in the Lincoln area, just trying to stay cool.

Elena Frederick—She has been teaching summer school.

Staff Reports

Chris provided a written report and presented highlights.

Joe is having surgery later in July and will be out for a week and on limited duty for a while.

Old Business

Supervisory Residency Area Resolution & map—Evans detailed the resolution and the map. There have been no comments to the CD as of yet. The resolution and draft map is posted on our

website and on the office door. This is the first meeting to be "read into the record" and we'll look at it again in August, assuming we have a quorum. Jeff Ryan asked when it can be considered effective. Evans said that once it's approved at 2 board meetings, it has to go to DNRC for final approval. Motion by Ryan to approve at this meeting, second by Christians; motion carried.

New Business

Request for landowner contact information-Montana Mesonet Project-While everyone feels like it's not very likely to be welcome by two of the areas, Christians will talk to Mark Diehl and Baucus will talk to the Chevallier Ranch.

FWP-Boat Check Station-Tom Wolff from FWP was present to discuss the possibility of the AIS watercraft inspection station needs. Since Tom started in his job 8 years ago he's worked with a number of Conservation Districts on the project. The partnership between the state and the Conservation Districts is going really well. It's not a great fit for all districts, he realizes.

The station on Hwy 12 West is currently managed by FWP. They have 5 in the state that are still managed by FWP because they haven't found a good fit for districts to manage them yet. FWP will cover all of the costs, including hiring a manager. They help with training and quality control, but it's primarily a district managed operation. On top of the costs of operation, the CD gets 10% above and beyond any costs related to the project. Contracts are set as reimbursements, with the CD providing an invoice for payment. Christians asked how FWP is on reimbursement speed, and Tom said that right now they're turning around payments in 2 weeks. In the agreement, they are allowed to provide up front funding for districts to bill to in order to get ahead of things if needed. FWP would like the Conservation District to consider taking over management of the Hwy 12 West station, at the bottom of Macdonald Pass. This particular station is mid to low-level activity, but he didn't have the specific data with him, probably 50-60 boats per day. Hours are daylight hours (dawn to dusk) up to 16 hours. The site shuts down in October and starts up in April/May and runs 7 days a week. 6 employees per station with 2 on-call positions, with an additional person if a manager were hired. Baucus asked what a typical budget would look like-Tom said it's \$180,000 for McCone (not to exceed). There's a lot of latitude within the contract for other expenses and districts can "load" the expenses to cover any required costs. Baucus asked about turnover-Tom said that with increased pay rates, they've seen pretty good retention rates. There is currently staff at the station that could transition. Average pay is about 20-25/hour. Evans gave some cautions about the health benefit costs and PERS contributions.

Baucus asked when FWP would like an answer. Tom said there's not a rush, the station is currently operating, this would be for the 2026 season. Baucus asked for a list of districts who are doing the work so we could find out what works well, what to consider and those kinds of things, and Tom indicated that they would be happy to provide that information. Ryan asked where their budget comes from. Tom said that the bulk comes from the hydroelectric power generation, fishing licenses, boat prevention passes for out of state boats and is matched 50/50 with Army Corps of Engineers funding. **Tom said November would be best for an answer so that contracting could be taken care of.** He asked the district to reach out to him if there is interest.

Tom would like to provide whatever support he can to find a way for Conservation Districts to figure out how to get HR support.

310 Permit Applications

Question on Park Creek-definitely jurisdictional

LC-03-25 Trettin-weed plan has been submitted by Mike Wirth. Joe will get that from the applicant or weed district. Motion by Christians to approve the application, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-09-25 Barton-Applicant wants to put in a 16 foot long, 24 inch culvert. FWP was okay with this application with the move of the culvert upstream and rip rap sized appropriately. Motion by Christians to approve, waiving the 15 day waiting period and making it a 2 year permit, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-13-25 Bryan-Landowner wanted a side by side culvert, but is willing to increase it to a 48 inch culvert. Motion by Baucus to approve with the recommended modifications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-14-25 Hofstad-motion by Ryan to approve as designed, second by Frasier; motion carried. Buffalo berry, sage, and Golden Currant would be great alternatives.

LC-15-25 Sherrill-Established fords with estimated crossing at each 50 to 75 without the DNRC contract, more with the contract. No site visit was requested. The rockier of the 2 crossings looks adequate to Baucus, the one more grassed needs more work. Motion to approve the more established ford as proposed, using silt fence; approve the more grassed area one with a temporary culvert with silt fence; or if banks are manipulated (no culvert), it will need to be reseeded with native species and restored with a follow up visit, with silt fence (concrete corduroy if the bottom is mushy).

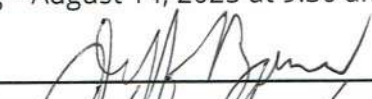
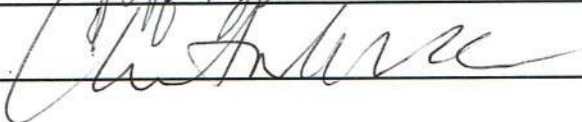
LC-16-25 BNSF-Motion by Frasier to approve as proposed, second by NOT WAIVING 15 DAY, second by Christians; motion carried. Evans will request a formal letter from the County Commission.

Other Business—no other business

The meeting adjourned at 1:01 pm.

Announcements

Next meeting—August 14, 2025 at 9:30 am, Lambkins in Lincoln MT, location to be determined.

Approved by  Date 8/15/25
Recorded by  Date 8/14/25