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PHILLIPS CONSERVATION DISTRICT MINUTES

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

7:00 p.m.

RSA Building

PRESENT: Chairman Cliff Merriman, Supervisor McCall Lammerding, Matt Simonson, Paul Mortenson, Pat Anderson, Gary Knudsen and Corey Jones (Zoom). Associate Supervisors Craig French and Shane Lammerding. District Administrator Cora Gray.

NRCS: Absent due to federal shutdown. WWF: Caitlin Gillespie. RSA: Martin Townsend

ABSENT: Associate Supervisors Marilyn Black and Brian Kindle

GUESTS:

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

GOVERNANCE CALENDAR:

1. THIS MONTH:

- a. **ACTION ITEM: Officer, Committee and New Supervisor Support.**
Elect two supervisors to lead organization for officer and committee appointments/elections and orientation of new supervisors.
- b. **ACTION ITEM:** Review and discuss all resolutions that passed at the Area meeting and vote on your district's stance for the MACD meeting.
- c. **ACTION ITEM:** Designate a supervisor to represent your district during the MACD Convention.

2. LOOKING FORWARD:

- a. **ACTION ITEM: Succession and Transition of Officers and New Supervisors.** Designate board members to take lead on organizing officer/committee elections and new supervisor orientation (if not already done).

CONSENT AGENDA:

- **No concerns, discussion, or comments on items in the consent agenda.**
Items were approved and adopted as a slate.

REPORTS:

- NRCS – None
- MACD – Pat Anderson
 - Scott Brown was elected to finish out Pat's term on the MACD board. It is a one year term. Scott is the head of MT Salinity Control and a very common sense person.
- FSA

- Craig French stated that it looks like CRP Grasslands payments will be lower this year
- Cora reported that Rhonda has left the office at the start of the week to take a position at a different office closer to her grandchildren.
- MRCD/ MRWA – Shane Lammerding
 - Shane reported that Greg Jorgenson is the new president of MRWA and Jeff Pattison is the vice president. There has been an emphasis on the Fort Peck test flows and the Vandalia Dam. There is a communication gap between Fort Peck and irrigators as to when the test flows are occurring and equipment has been getting damaged. Vandalia Dam is in desperate need of repair, but funding opportunities are limited because it is not for flood control or a municipality. There has been some push for removal to assist in the recruitment of pallid sturgeon. There was some hope from the Valley County Irrigation District that the Big Beautiful Bill may have some funding available to work on fixing the dam so that it is no longer the safety hazard to employees that it is currently.
- RSA – Martin Townsend
 - Government shutdown has now affected grants again. 600 thousand dollars are frozen for the second time. Grace Herberg's position has been removed completely and will not return unless a second source of funding can be procured. They were reimbursed for previous expenses as of Monday, but that funding is once again frozen.
 - Maida will be hosting a mapping seminar in January and RSA is hosting Sara Keogh on Saturday for a gut health workshop.
- WWF – Caitilin Gillespie
 - The CPP grant that we are using for the conservation technician position is currently frozen. She cautions bringing on Barry until after the funding is unfrozen.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Conservation Technician
 - Funding is frozen as of Oct. 1st with no guarantee that it will be turned back on post government shutdown.
 - The board agreed that the district should wait to hire Barry until we know the status of funding.
 - The question was brought forward about the possibility of the position taking a different direction. Cora brought forth the job description and the NFWF proposal along with the WWF grant proposal to ensure that the board was all on the same page as to what the district was committing to and had committed to since the project began. There was lots of discussion about housing the technician and if the district would like to do that or if it should be something that WWF does and contracts with the NRCS. The NRCS will need some sort of input in supervision to be on board with the position and without NRCS support, WWF will not support the position. After all the discussion, **Pat Anderson moved to hire Barry Southard and house the job and to hire him immediately once funding is unfrozen. Gary Knudsen seconded the motion. There was discussion that clarified the term "housing" as the position is paid through the district and is a district employee. Motion passed.**

- Cora asked for input on what to put in an email to Barry updating him on the status. The board suggested to let him know that the funding status is unknown, but that the board is very eager to have him in the position and that when/if funding is unfrozen, the board would like to hire him.
- **Maternity Leave**
 - Cora will be going on maternity leave the 17th of November, if the baby is not early.
 - She hopes to have Conni come in the week before to review things and go over the notes she has created.
 - **Gary Knusedn moved to rehire Conni at \$20 per hour for the approximate 3 months of maternity leave. Matt Simonson seconded. Motion passed with no discussion.**
- **Operational Plan Update**
 - Cora reviewed the status of the FY26 operational plan for the first quarter. Most of what was aimed for during Q1 was achieved except for the hiring of the conservation technician due to funding freezes.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Tree Ordering status**
 - Cora brought forward a proposal to change the way the district does tree orders. She would like to do a large bulk order from the nurseries based off of the last few years of order data and a survey that she sent out earlier in the year, the create her own catalog for people to order from. Similar to how stores operate with wholesale orders.
 - **Pat Anderson moved to approve the change in the process and McCall seconded the motion. Motion passed with no discussion.**
- **New Supervisor Onboarding**
 - The election chart was misunderstood by Cora and it was shown that there will be no new supervisors coming on at the start of 2026, unless Pat steps down and the board appoints someone in her place.
 - Pat said she would have to think about finishing out her term in full, or stepping down at the end of the year.
- **Financial Policy**
 - Cora presented the financial policy she created based on the DNRC model polices. She sent it to the finance committee to review and received no feedback or changes.
 - **Matt Simonson moved to approve the finance policy as presented. McCall seconded. Motion passed with one nay from Gary Knudsen with no reason given.**
- **MACD Convention**
 - Registration should be opening soon. Cora reviewed the schedule of events. A supervisor needs to attend to represent PCD during the business meeting and the resolution process. Pat may be attending. Cliff would check his calendar.
 - Review and voting on resolutions will be finalized at the November meeting.

PERMITS:**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

McCall moved to adjourn the meeting. Pat Anderson seconded. Board meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm

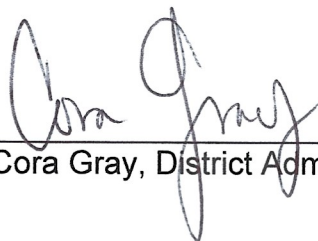
UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Area 3 Meeting September 25th 9am – 4pm Big Sandy, MT
- RSA Gut Check: How Soil Shapes Human Health October 11th, 2025 Malta Readiness Center
- MACD Convention November 18th – 20th Billings, MT

The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 4th at 5pm in the USDA Building. is scheduled to bring treats.



Cliff Merriman, Chairman



Cora Gray, District Administrator

*This meeting was recorded to facilitate accurate minutes.
Recording will be destroyed upon approval of these minutes.