



Flathead Conservation District
133 Interstate Lane, Kalispell, MT 59901
www.flatheadcd.org 406-752-4220

CALL TO ORDER & ATTENDANCE

Chair Ronald Buentemeier called the February 25, 2019, Business meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. in the conference room.

Board members present:

Ronald Buentemeier, Chair; Pete Woll, Vice Chair; Dean Sirucek, Secretary/Treasurer; John Ellis, Supervisor; Verdell Jackson, Supervisor; Lori Curtis, Supervisor, being a quorum of the Board.

Also, in attendance were Valerie Kurth, Hailey Graf and Ginger Kauffman, FCD staff; Donna Pridmore; Samantha Tappenbeck, Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDM).

MINUTES: Lori Curtis motioned “to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2019, 310-Stream Permit meeting as presented.” Verdell Jackson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Email: National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) publications *eResource, Conservation Clips*
2. Email: Petroleum County Conservation District newsletter *District Dirt* www.petroleumcd.com
3. Email: Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Montana (SWCDM) announces a mini-grant to fund local education and outreach efforts in Montana to address water quality issues resulting from nonpoint source pollution. The application and program information are available on the SWCDM website <https://swcdm.org> Deadline March 27, 2019 by 5 p.m. Submit questions or completed applications to Jessica Makus jessica@macdnet.org.
4. Email: Whitefish Planning Board meetings, February 21, 2019, 6:00 P.M., followed by Work Session at 7:00 P.M., and March 19, 2019, 6:00 P.M., Whitefish City Council Chambers <http://www.cityofwhitefish.org>
5. Email: Broadwater Conservation District Annual Ag Appreciation Dinner, Saturday, February 23, 5:00 P.M., Watson Event Center. Contact Josie Reynolds, 406-266-3146 Ext 104 Josie.Reynolds@mt.nacdnet.net
6. Email: The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Reclamation and Development Grants (RDG) Program offers state-funded grants for the prevention and control of aquatic invasive species (AIS). Applications due Thursday,



March 28, 2019, by 5:00 P.M. Contact Heidi Anderson Fohnagy 406-444-6691
hfohnagy@mt.gov

7. Email: Information Exchange Summit, How to Successfully Work with Oil & Gas Companies, March 5, 2019, 1:00 - 5:00 P.M., Billings Hotel and Convention Center, (406) 248-7151, 1223 Mallowney Lane, Billings, MT.
Contact Linda Brander, DNRC, 406-444-0520
8. Email: Envirothon will be held April 29-30 in Lewistown. CD employees are asked to contact Shonny Nordlund, Fergus CD, 406-538-7401 Ext. 3001 fcd@midrivers.com if you can help.
9. Email: SWCDM February 21, 2019 issue of *The Montana Conservationist*
www.swcdm.org
10. Email: Montana Watershed Coordination Council February 21, 2019 issue of *Watershed News* <https://mtwatersheds.org>
11. Email: Montana Urban & Community Forestry Association (MUCFA) and On Tree Planted have partnered up to help Montana raise awareness about trees, celebrate Arbor Day & Earth Day, and plant trees at the same time. \$500 grants are available to help Montana communities or organizations (Conservation Districts, 4H Clubs, Tree Boards, Nature centers) celebrate Arbor Day & Earth Day and plant trees. Submit applications to montanaurbanforestry@gmail.com by February 22nd, 2019.
Contact Fred Bicha, Parks Superintendent Kalispell Parks and Recreation, (406) 758-7716
12. Email: Judith Basin Conservation District will host *Putting the Pieces of the Puzzle Together – Livestock Genetic Management & Grazing*, May 29th - 30th, at Bos Terra, 342 Sale Barn Drive, Hobson, MT. Johann Zietsman, world renowned speaker, will be sharing proven concepts for selecting and utilizing the best adapted genetics with ultra-high-density grazing resulting in much higher profitability per acre while greatly improving the land. For information call 406-566-2311 Ext. 107.
13. Email: Montana Range Days, Inc. (June 17-19, 2019) is an annual event that celebrates the importance of range and provides opportunities for learning about range and range management. To encourage young people to continue with education and careers in Range Science and related fields, three scholarships are offered through Montana Range Days. Scholarships are available to graduating seniors in high school or college students who are continuing their education. Applications are due April 30th. Contact 406-683-3802. <https://www.montanarangedays.org>

FINANCIAL

The following bills were reviewed:

1. CenturyLink \$331.81
2. Insty Prints \$90.65
3. MACD \$17,000.00
4. MontanaSky Networks \$10.00
5. Mountain States Leasing \$1599.73
6. SWCDM \$25.00

John Ellis motioned “to approve the bills as presented.” Lori Curtis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.



PUBLIC COMMENT

No one was present to comment on items not listed on the agenda.

310

Nielsen, FL2017036, Stillwater River, culvert: Valerie Kurth explained that during the last meeting, Kenny Breidinger asked the board to review some 310 Follow-Up Inspection photos which showed a screen over the culvert. The board discussed Kenny's concern, which was that the screen could cause plugging from catching debris and grasses. Verdell explained that he had spoken with the landowner, who had added the screen to keep the culvert from getting plugged, and Kenny, who was worried about that the screen would actually make plugging more problematic.

Lori Curtis motioned "to send a letter stating that in the Follow-Up inspection we noticed a screen over the culvert that was not listed in the permit. The landowner either needs to remove the screen or submit a request to amend the permit, stating a reason for why it is there." Pete Woll seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

SWCDM 319 Septic Proposal: Samantha Tappenbeck explained that DEQ has done an interim call for applications to the non-point source (NPS) 319 funding program. SWCDM has put together a proposal which they intend to submit to develop an incentive-based program to assist landowners in addressing non-point source pollution from septic leachate in the Flathead Basin. The grant would also fund and support Samantha's time as the developer and coordinator for the program. The program would include cost-sharing with landowners of up to 50% to help cover the cost of inspections and regular maintenance on their septic systems (pumping). SWCDM is researching options to include funding for upgrades to old/outdated high-risk septic systems, and, where appropriate, linking into existing waste water treatment facility systems. They want to include technical assistance to the landowners, including a site assessment and review of existing septic conditions. Then they will work with landowners to come up with the best course of action. The program would be administered through SWCDM; however, they want to partner with the local conservation districts (Flathead and Lake) to increase effectiveness of their outreach.

Priority watersheds and target waterbodies where the program would first be implemented were identified by consulting TMDL documents, watershed restoration plans, and published water quality reports, as well as consultation with watershed groups and local organizations. The watersheds identified were Ashley Creek (Ashley Lake, Upper/Middle/Lower Ashley Creek, Spring Creek), Lake Mary Ronan (Lake Mary Ronan, Ronan Creek, Dayton Creek, Flathead Lake - west shore), Lower Swan River (Swan Lake), and Whitefish River (Whitefish Lake). Samantha stated she wanted to bring this to the attention of the board, and she requested both their input and questions. She asked if the district would be interested in providing a letter of support. Valerie Kurth provided a draft letter for the board's consideration.

Verdell Jackson asked if areas around Flathead Lake would be targeted. Samantha stated Whitefish Lake and Swan Lake will definitely be included. Regarding Flathead Lake, they



want to begin in the areas that have already been identified as high-risk, which is the west shore. Verdell asked if they have investigated Ashley Creek. Samantha replied yes, over 3000 septic systems were identified in the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Ashley Creek, including the Spring Creek drainage, and there are potentially some very old septic systems in those areas. There is a lot of potential in that area as some outreach has already occurred with Ashley Creek landowners.

Ronald Buentemeier asked if they have reviewed a report completed many years ago by Flathead and Lake Counties on wastewater management. Samantha stated she could only find the maps, and they were very helpful, but did not find the report. Lori Curtis explained that the report is difficult to find but offered to supply Samantha with her copy.

John Ellis asked how much money they anticipate receiving to provide landowners with financial assistance. Samantha replied they are asking for \$100,000 from the DEQ NPS 319-grant program. \$50,000 of that will be used for the cost-share program, but they have other ideas for future expansion and partnerships if this project is successful. She added that the Flathead County Health Dept. is interested in submitting a letter of support, and she also wants to take it to Lake County Commissioners and their Dept. of Environmental Health.

Dean Sirucek expressed questions about the proposal based on his previous work on TMDLs, especially on Ashley Lake. He felt that the TMDL models were too simplistic because they did not account for soil types and made assumptions about efficiency. Samantha agreed. Dean also thought it would not be difficult to identify very specific high-risk areas to target. He also felt that the landowners' financial need should somehow be considered.

Lori provided background on WLI's septic project on Whitefish Lake and why it has not moved beyond the research and planning stages. She thought Samantha's proposal would help people who lack the funds to maintain their septic systems. Dean asked about the progress of the septic leachate study bill, which is currently in the legislature, and he suggested the SWCDM program coordinate with the study. Samantha responded that she envisions their program as a pilot project to see how viable an incentive-based program would be. It will hopefully lead to more permanent state-funded programs.

Verdell asked about septic problems related to the small lot size on Flathead Lake. Dean explained changes in the laws regulating septic systems over time. Early regulations did not account for how leachate would move through a particular soil. The TMDL modeling on Ashley Creek did not account for the subsoils and how well they could absorb nutrient contaminants. Samantha noted they will be working on the finer details of the grant application and program over the next couple of weeks and are looking for letters of support as the application is due March 15th.

Lori Curtis motioned "to have Ronald Buentemeier sign the February 25, 2019, letter to DEQ to support this program." Verdell Jackson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The board continued to discuss the history of septic laws and septic system efficiency in Montana. Lori explained how even though modern systems are very efficient and last a long time, there are times when drain fields are placed above fractured bedrock, which makes the



system futile. Upgrading the system will not help in these situations, so hooking into a waste water treatment facility is the best solution. Unfortunately, it takes a lot of infrastructure and funding. Samantha reiterated that her proposed program will not fix all the issues, but it will be a good first step towards changes.

Associate Supervisor Appointment: Valerie Kurth stated Donna Pridmore has expressed interest and enthusiasm about joining the Flathead CD board as an Associate Supervisor. Valerie explained that Donna has an extensive professional background in hydrology, and she felt Donna would be an asset to the board. Lori Curtis asked how Donna found out about the district position. Donna stated she is on the Flathead River Commission, and Valerie noted that Mark Siderius encouraged her to contact Donna after he left the board.

Verdell Jackson motioned “to approve Donna Pridmore as an Associate Supervisor.” Lori Curtis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

NW Montana Fair Agreement: Hailey Graf stated we are planning for the fair, and the paperwork is due March 31st. Everything is the same as last year and the cost is \$350. Verdell Jackson asked about insurance. Hailey responded that the district is covered by our own insurance. The booth will again be located in the Search & Rescue building, and Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest will share the space with us, similar to previous years.

John Ellis motioned “to approve the 2019 NW Montana Fair Agreement”. Verdell Jackson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Earth Day Registration: Hailey Graf reported that the Earth Day celebration is a free public event that will be held on April 27th in Whitefish. The event’s purpose is to provide learning opportunities and inspire conservation practices in the local community. A variety of conservation groups will host booths and are each encouraged to have hands-on activity. The theme for this year’s event is: Grow It, Fix It, Save It, and Live It. Hailey will have a pollinator-themed children’s activity at the booth along with information about Flathead CD’s landowner assistance programs and education programs. Registration cost for hosting a booth is \$25. Registration deadline is April 5th. The event will be held at the Whitefish Middle School.

John Ellis motioned “to approve \$25 for registration for the booth at the Whitefish Middle School Earth Day event.” Lori Curtis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

SWCDM Mini-Grant: Hailey Graf reported she recently discussed an idea for an educational nonpoint source pollution project with Casey Lewis, the Environmental Specialist with Kalispell Public Works. They would like to develop an educational program about rain gardens that would incorporate our demonstration garden. Hailey talked to Jessica Macus about the SWCDM grant opportunity, and Jessica thought it was a good fit. Jessica recommended doing a joint application. Casey will write the grant, and funds will be split between rain garden construction and development of educational materials. Grants are awarded for up to \$3000.



Lori Curtis motioned “for Hailey Graf to co-apply for the SWCDM mini-grant.” Dean Sirucek seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

End of Month Budget Report (January): The January 2019 End of Month Budget Report was reviewed with the board. John Ellis motioned “to approve the January 2019 End of Month Budget Report.” Verdell Jackson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Personnel: Pete Woll stated the board wanted to discuss Valerie Kurth’s performance review. Valerie asked that the meeting be closed. The meeting was closed, and Hailey Graf, Ginger Kauffman, Samantha Tappenbeck and Donna Pridmore left the room. After discussion, the meeting was reopened. Pete Woll motioned “to give Valerie Kurth a pay raise to a Grade 9 Step 8 beginning the next pay period (#6).” Lori Curtis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

Flathead CD Staff: Valerie Kurth and Hailey Graf reported:

District Office and Outreach

1. Advertisements: Flathead Beacon – Camp sponsorship, 310 ad with example projects & QR code
2. Hailey and Valerie participated in the River Steward meeting with SWCDM, R2L, and FWP
3. Hailey attended the Flathead Conservation Roundtable meeting (February 13th), a watershed curriculum meeting (February 12th), a Forestry Expo planning meeting (February 20th), the UC³ quarterly meeting (February 20th)
4. Hailey met with Kalispell Public Works Environmental Specialist, Casey Lewis, to discuss developing a NPSP community outreach program.
5. Valerie and Hailey attended the hearing for the Joint Appropriations Long-Range Planning Subcommittee on January 30th in Helena to offer public comment on the Renewable Resource Grant and Loan program. Valerie gave testimony for two grant applications sponsored by FCD: Trumbull Creek Restoration and Aquifer Protection and Krause Creek Restoration.
6. Valerie communicated with the DNRC 310 Permit Coordinator to add explanatory language to their stream permitting webpage. It now states that the graphic is intended to be a guide and applicants are advised to review individual information for each permit.
7. Valerie continues to monitor legislative activities and coordinate communication among MACD, DNRC, and FCD.
8. Valerie attended the Haskill Basin Watershed Council meeting on February 13th.
9. Hailey submitted a grant application to the MT Native Plant Society for the pollinator garden on January 31st and continued to work on design with Forestoration and general planning.

On-the-Ground Projects

Cow Creek – Valerie worked with Samantha Tappenbeck on the final design, and she continues to manage communications with DEQ.



Landowner Programs

Seedling Program – Valerie and Hailey have processed eleven seedling orders and helped numerous people select appropriate conservation seedlings. Hailey also provided information about the program to interested participants of the Small Acreage Landowner Workshop. Valerie met with representatives from the Montana DNRC Conservation Nursery on February 13th to learn about their program updates.

Cost-Share Program – Valerie identified several issues and possible solutions with our current cost-share program, and she is working on program revisions.

Education and Outreach

Kalispell After-Care Program – On January 31st, Hailey led an education program for approximately 30 students, grades K-5 and led them through the water cycle game.

Small Acreage Landowner Seminar – Valerie gave a presentation on soil fundamentals and health on February 6th, and Hailey presented information on water quality and riparian areas during the February 13th seminar. Feedback on the series has been very positive.

Website/social media - Blog post topics for February included: soil health, well water, and rangeland management. Over the last 30 days, the website had 428 users. Facebook page-reach was 475 users for the last 30 days.

Discussion held. Ronald Buentemeier asked about the number of people attending the seminar. Valerie replied approximately 25. Ronald asked if visitors are allowed. Valerie stated yes. John Ellis asked if website and Facebook traffic are up. Hailey stated this month the website is up, and Facebook is down. This may just be seasonal as last month Facebook traffic was really high.

Samantha Tappenbeck, Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Montana (SWCDM) reported:

Update on recent work:

- Cow Creek Restoration Project (DEQ-319):
 - Working with Valerie on final design

Available Programs:

- **Ranching for Rivers:** Cost-share program (50%)
 - Financial assistance available for labor and materials to construct fences, hardened crossings, water gaps, offsite watering tanks, pipeline, etc.
 - Assistance available from certified grazing plan developer
 - Projects must be located in an area with a DEQ-accepted Watershed Restoration Plan (assistance is available to help determine if you qualify)
 - OPEN ENROLLMENT
- **SWCDM Water Quality Mini-Grants**
 - Funding for education and outreach to address water quality issues resulting from nonpoint source pollution
 - \$3,000 available per project
 - Deadline to apply: March 27, 2019 at 5PM
 - Program moving to one call for applications per year



- Next call: Spring 2020

Samantha noted that she is also providing assistance to USDA to get information out regarding the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which provides long-term conservation benefits for improving soil health, water quality, forest stand improvement, and enhancing wildlife habitat. It is available to private landowners. If they implement these practices, they receive an annual rent payment and 10-15 years of cost-share assistance through the program. It is administered by the Farm Service Agency, and NRCS provides technical assistance to private landowners to develop projects. There are handouts/flyers/practice sheets for nine different forestry practices which are available here through the CRP program. Any follow-up would be with Farm Service Agency.

Natural Resources & Conservation Service (NRCS): Sean Johnson was unable to attend, but provided the following report:

➤ **Programs**

- EQIP
 - 8 Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPS) were approved across the state for funding for FY19 as part of the transition to the new Montana Focused Conservation (MFC) plan. Flathead County did not get an approved plan but will still operate under standard funding processes this year. Eureka did get a TIP approved, staff time could get shifted to help Eureka handle workload.

➤ **Review Items**

- Meeting with River Stewards looking at projects for 2019 and where help is needed
- Helped teach soils class at FVCC with Heather Estrada on Feb 7th

➤ **Upcoming Items**

- New EQIP sign-up will be taking place March 1-30th but only for the 8 new TIPS that were funded this year.

➤ **Miscellaneous**

- Work unit between Kalispell/Eureka officially stood up on February 4th
- MT water supply outlook – as of Feb 1st
 - Flathead Basin – 83% of normal

Sub basins range from 81% to 84% of normal

Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD): Pete Woll reported the MACD Executive Board call this morning included legislative issues. Legislators have commented on the high number of people testifying on behalf of the districts. Lori Curtis concurred and stated when she has been in Helena, it has been really impressive to see how well the conservation districts are represented. Pete stated funds from the Coal Tax Trust Fund have been appropriated to the DNRC budget specified for conservation districts. However, even if money is appropriated, they can only spend what is available, so it depends on the amount of revenue received by the fund. Pete also stated that HB 383 regarding changing arbitration from 15 to 30 days passed out of committee, but HB 399 regarding the definition of a stream was tabled.



Flathead County Planning Board (FCPB): Dean Sirucek reported the meeting included several zone changes, and all but one went forward with a positive recommendation to the commissioners. The zone change that did not receive a positive recommendation was a request on Wheeler Lane in Whitefish on two parcels containing 14 acres. The request was to go from Suburban Residential to Resort Residential, and it would change the number of home units from 20 to 160. Valerie asked what the issues were. Dean replied that density and drainage were both problems, but in addition they would have to be on the City of Whitefish water & sewer, which the City did not support. The vote was mixed, so it will go to the Commissioners without a recommendation.

A request for a Major Lakeshore Variance to do rehabilitation to a 300-ft “Modified Dynamic Equilibrium Beach” on the north shore of Flathead Lake went forward with a positive recommendation to the commissioners with the caveat that Mark Lorang would be asked to recommend any changes to the design because several board members were concerned about the small size of the gravel being proposed. Pete Woll asked what was failing on the beach. Dean explained that the gravels have washed away, so they want to place about 350 yards of gravel as maintenance. Dean noted that this may be due to the FERC changes which allow the water to be held at a higher level for an extended period in the fall. The highwater level, combined with the increasing frequency of storms in late fall, have made the waves bigger and contributed to the beach erosion. Donna asked where the site is located. Dean replied it is on Holt Drive just west of the post office.

Whitefish City Planning Board (WCPB): John Ellis reported one subdivision was voted against as they failed to submit a final plat at the time of the meeting; however, they will submit the plat at the next meeting. John also noted that hearings for the Whitefish Legacy Homes Program, which refers to inclusionary zoning/affordable housing, are coming up. Any subdivision would be required to have 20% of the lots affordable. The first public hearing will be March 19th, but it will probably be extended to the April meeting. John noted Whitefish wants affordable housing, and the commissioners want to make that happen.

Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC3): Lori Curtis reported:

LEGISLATIVE

UC3 activities have tracked with the legislative session into January. I just returned from Helena where on Friday 2/22, I provided support for a UC³ specific bill brought forth by Senator Cuffe and the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) funding bill (HB411) brought forth by Representative Curdy. The UC³ bill passed unanimously; the funding bill went to a working group for further deliberation.

MEETINGS

The AIS Early Detection & Monitoring Workshop, co-sponsored by FW&P and UC3, was held Tuesday, February 12th at MFW&P Region 1 office in Kalispell. The workshop was very-well attended, and participants included UC³ members, partners from federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, the National Park Service, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, the Blackfeet Tribe, and others. We discussed and solidified plans for protocols, training, data management, and research regarding early detection monitoring for AIS. The UC³ held its regular meeting on Wednesday, February 13th in the same location.



This was a general business meeting during which we also voted to support the Cuffe UC3 bill. The next UC³ meeting will likely be held in June.

CITY OF WHITEFISH

Included a "Construction on the River" article and diagram in their *Stumptown Scoop* newsletter. Progress!

Discussion held. Ronald Buentemeier asked if the diagram was the one Hailey did for the district website. Hailey replied yes, but the wording that was included in the Stumptown Scoop newsletter was not hers. Lori noted that the wording came out of the meeting Flathead CD and FW&P had with the City of Whitefish.

Dean asked about the bill for funding AIS prevention programs in regard to the power companies. Lori stated she testified in support of a bill sponsored by Representative Curdy, which reincludes hydroelectric facility fees. The bill is supported by electric coops, so Lori was optimistic about it.

Haskill Basin Watershed Council (HBWC): Valerie Kurth reported the council met on February 13th. The City of Whitefish is still exploring the possibility of utilizing ground water south of Whitefish. Regarding the culvert on Haskill Basin Road, the upstream landowners still refuse to support it, and there is no way to do the project without their support. Lastly, Chester Powell is retiring from Big Mountain, but he knows someone else at the Mountain who is interested in joining the HBWC.

Flathead Basin Commission (FBC): The next meeting is scheduled for March 20th in Kalispell.

Flathead River Commission (FRC): Donna Pridmore stated at the last meeting the group decided to table future meetings until they have an issue to discuss. They will see if coordination continues among the stakeholders to keep Flathead Lake levels low enough to handle the spring runoff.

Clark Fork & Kootenai River Basins Council (CFKRBC): Verdell Jackson reported the CFKRBC meeting included planning for the annual meeting, which will be held in Kalispell or Whitefish in late April or early May. Verdell also gave an update on SB 47, which is a law to revise laws related to river basin councils



MATTERS OF THE BOARD/STAFF

Vehicle Purchase: Valerie Kurth asked for the board’s input on purchasing a new vehicle this year or waiting a year. The District has been setting aside funds in a Capital Improvement fund for 5 years. Discussion held about trading it in now vs. waiting another year.

Family Forestry Expo: Hailey Graf noted that the Family Forestry Expo will be held May 6-10, and she will have the sign-up sheet at the next meeting.

The next 310-Stream Permit meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 11, 2019, 7:00 P.M. in the conference room of the USDA building at 133 Interstate Lane, Kalispell, MT.

Adjournment: Lori Curtis motioned “to adjourn.” Dean Sirucek seconded. Motion carried unanimously. As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:54 P.M.

Submitted By:

Ginger Kauffman
Administrator

Valerie Kurth, Ph.D.
Resource Conservationist

Minutes approved by FCD Board motion made on:

<u>3/11/2019</u>	<u>Ronald Buentemeier</u>	<u>Chair</u>
(Date)	(Signature)	(Title – Chair etc.)

