



Lewis and Clark Conservation District

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

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

January 8, 2026, 1 pm

USDA Service Center Conference, 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT
And Zoom conferencing

Call to Order—The meeting was called to order by chair Jeff Ryan at 1 pm. In attendance were Jeff Ryan, Karl Christians, Sarah Howe-Cobb, *Stan Frasier*, *Jeanette Nordahl* and Elena Frederick. Also in attendance were Jerry Strong, Dave Morgan, Becky Ayre, Andrew Kretschmer, Madison Colyer, Ed Cairns (SP, Chairman of the WQPD board), Bayley Sbaradellati, the new BSWC for SRWG, Joe Kremer-Herman and Chris Evans. (Italics denote Zoom attendance).

Introductions—Introductions were made.

Review Governance Calendar for January/February—The bulk of the Governance Calendar for January is year-beginning topics including officer elections etc.

Election of Officers for 2026—Motion by Karl Christians to nominate Jeff Ryan as Chair, second by Howe-Cobb; Motion by Sarah Howe-Cobb to nominate Karl Christians as vice chair, second by Elena Frederick; Motion by Jeff Ryan to nominate Jeanette Nordahl as Treasurer, second by Howe-Cobb; Motions all carried.

Review/Approval of Plans and Budget for 2026—motion by Ryan to approve as sent to the board, second by Howe-Cobb; with the COLA effective in the current pay period; motion carried.

Review/Approval of District Policies Manual—motion by Ryan to table the review until February, second by Howe-Cobb—motion.

Statement for Minutes about Bank Accounts—Signature updates—Jeff Ryan, Karl Christians, Chris Evans will be on the signature card, Howe-Cobb, Christians; carried.

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

Financial Statement—December 2025—Evans would like to hold off due to a need to update interest added back to Certificates of Deposit; motion as such by Howe-Cobb, second by Elena Frederick to table to February; motion carried.

Outstanding Bills—motion by Ryan to approve payment of the outstanding bills, second by Christians; motion carried.

Supervisor absences—John was gone due to vehicle issues, excused.

Correspondence

EQC meeting

State Technical Committee Meeting

Drought Report

Cheatgrass issue-There was some discussion about the difficulties with fighting cheatgrass, the cost of chemical suppression and the need for education for the public on the issue. Public awareness will be a part of the discussion and Elena recommended getting the information out on social media etc.

Public Comment—Some of the Ten Mile group was present to find out the current status of the complaint. The rock diversion dam was completely removed with the rock piled on the bank outside of the high water mark. Likely, that rock is where it is until they get a permit in place to re-work the diversion structure in the spring. Jerry Strong is angry that the CD isn't doing anything about the ranch taking water before his water right. He was reminded, again, that the CD doesn't get involved in water rights. The board indicated that they will review any applications from the RV Ranch for the new diversion structure(s).

There was no other public comment.

Reports

NRCS—Andrew provided a written report to the board. In addition to the written report, NWE has been setting up a camera network, mostly on their powerline towers. It's a public facing platform and anyone can go on and look at the feed. Lewis and Clark, Jefferson and Broadwater counties are going to get several of these cameras. Primarily they are for monitoring power lines. They have some AI capability for determining if there are smoke plumes near the lines. This information will be verified by a person in order to make sure that it's accurate. Private property is blurred out however.

Andrew said that some of the other agencies will be lapsing in funding at the end of the month if the budget isn't dealt with. NRCS is funded through the end of the fiscal year.

Andrew and Chris have discussed rescheduling the annual grass workshop that we had planned for last year which didn't happen due to bad weather. On the agenda will be medusahead, ventanata and cheatgrass. Evans will coordinate meeting space and Andrew will work with Jane Mangold to set a date. The current plan is to have it sometime in March and combine it with the Local Work Group Meeting.

DNRC—Written report-clarification that the grant we put in for under the project grants was resubmitted under the Education Grants program instead.

SRWG—Madison was present to do the SRWG update. They are fully in their office and someone will be there Monday through Thursday. The Muddy Creek bid will be going out soon. The Rural Homeowners and Realtors workshop is on the 29th at 9 am in Fairfield. Karl Christians asked if they have any swag or counter card materials from MRCD for that event. Madison will ask Tracy about that. The irrigation efficiency workshop is the 26th in Choteau at the Stage Stop. This is a follow up on the MSU groundwater study and updates on exempt wells. They'll be doing their Rain Barrel workshop on May 9th, just before Mother's Day. No location determined yet. Upcoming events: the library series is happening at the Great Falls Public Library. Madison also had an events flyer for their events.

Sarah Howe-Cobb noted that this would be a really neat type of event for the CD to put on.

MRCDC—Written report. Karl Christians said that they bought a drone so Molly is working on her pilot's license to get certified to fly the drone, so if we have something we'd like flown they can help us out.

LHWG—Joe said their annual meeting is March 12th and will probably be at the Ten Mile Brewery again.

Helena CORE—There's a lot of action right now except for snow programs. Their next newsletter will be out next month.

WQPD—Ed is the chair for the board and wanted to chat with the CD board. They're working on some structural stuff for their board to make things more efficient, taking care of specific business throughout the month. They have a seat on the board open for someone from the CD if anyone is interested.

Weed District—no report.

MACD—Evans met up with Rayelynn Brandl and Madi Larson from MACD recently and discussed the possibility of them working with the Contractor's Association on 310 education. There were discussions about training potential for employees and supervisors and how to make the education efforts more effective for both. MACD lost their big blue spruce tree at the office during the wind storm and would like to partner with Lewis and Clark with xeriscaping efforts including planting pollinators. We could devote some of our pollinator seed to the effort. They would like to put up signage about the importance of pollinating species.

Supervisor Reports

Jeff Ryan—Jeff said that he's waiting for winter to come.

Stan Frasier—He said it was up to 60 in Arizona.

Elena Frederick—Elena said that she was probably the only one in her subdivision that didn't have to deal with a broken fence after the huge windstorm.

Karl Christians—Karl said they were without power for a few hours due to that storm. He said it does make you think about having a generator.

Jeanette Nordahl—Jeanette said that there is still about 6 inches of snow on the ground in the yard. She found bear scat in the yard a few days ago.

Sarah Howe-Cobb—Sarah said that things are just dry and windy. Andrew from the LF ranch called about some program about "cleaning the forest". Andrew said that they have been working with folks at Big Sky Management, and they are thinking about the RCPP program, possibly in partnership with the Nature's Conservancy. TIPs may be going away, but there are some other options. Andrew had submitted that area as a TIP the last time around, but it wasn't funded.

Staff Reports

Evans—Written report

Kremer-Herman—Joe is working on the Brushy Toe education grant application. He has to fill out a form for the Montana Historical Society. Apparently there is something historic in the area. Jeff said that someplace in that area there was a site found where arrow tips were made. Joe is also working on the 404 and 124 permit applications. Jeff asked if Joe had a chance to talk to Northwestern Energy about the Gehring project.

Old Business

Evans said that the operation plan 4th quarter report is in the supervisor packets.

New Business

Evans had a draft copy of the CD Accountability Assessment for the board to review in advance of February's meeting. She will email that out to the board. A reminder that the type in blue is typically a "hot link" to more information on that topic.

310 Permit Applications

There were no applications to review at today's meeting.

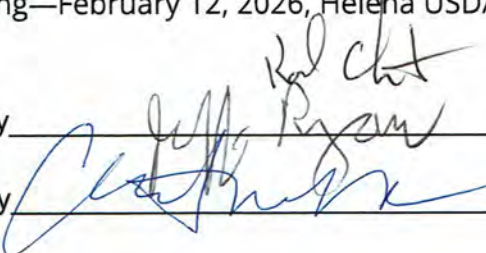
Other Business

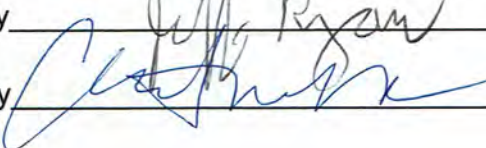
Follow up from the Ten Mile situation: There was some discussion about what's next with that issue. Evans and Christians will attend the water court hearing. Joe said that at the last LHWG it was noted that one of the landowner's wells tested high for arsenic.

Having no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:36 pm.

Announcements

Next meeting—February 12, 2026, Helena USDA Service Center Field Office, Helena Montana, 1 pm.

Approved by  Date 2/12/26

Recorded by  Date 2/11/2026