



Lewis and Clark Conservation District

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

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 12, 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, John Baucus, and *Stan Frasier*. Also in attendance were Becky Ayre, Andrew Kretschmer, Pat Keim, Fred Sargeson, Joe Kremer-Herman, and Chris Evans. (Italics denote Zoom attendance).

Introductions-Introductions were made.

Adoption of Public Participation Guidelines-Based on recent issues at board meetings, the district conferred with the Local Government section at MSU and put together draft Public Participation Guidelines to keep the meetings moving appropriately. Motion by Baucus to adopt, second by Christians; discussion by Ryan that there is still flexibility to have an informal format but in general it's 3 minutes for items not on the agenda/under board jurisdiction, and 5 minutes for items that are on the agenda. Motion carried.

Adoption of policy manual-Based on the DNRC model policy book, Chris Evans incorporated the District's existing policies and completed some additional policies. The manual has been reviewed by several supervisors. Motion by Ryan to adopt the manual, second by Christians; Baucus asked about a formal amount of time for reviewing the document. Evans said there was no direction from DNRC, but that it should probably be reviewed for additions/changes annually, perhaps placed on the December Governance Calendar. Motion carried.

Public Comment-no additional comment outside of 310 permit section.

310 Permit Applications

LC-02-25 Fortune-extension request-This permit was on Hauser Reservoirs and was for step-like rock for bank armor. The permit expires soon and the landowner would like a renewal of his permit. Motion by Christians to extend, second by Baucus; motion carried.

LC-01-26 Rickman-North Fork of Little Prickly Pear Creek. The landowner would like to remove the existing bridge and replace it with a culvert, since the propane company won't cross it due to safety concerns. The applicant is not opposed to a bridge if they can get the stringers from FWP. The application is for a 36 inch culvert, which is not considered to be large enough; bankfull would call for a 12 foot culvert. Motion by Ryan to deny and ask for an application for a bridge with a minimum span of 7 feet and a recommendation for a 2 foot height above adjacent bank height; second by Christians; motion carried.

LC-02-26 Northwestern Energy-Application is for horizontal boring under Park and Threemile Creeks; the next 3 phases will happen over the next few years. The distance back from the banks should be about 50 feet. Motion by Ryan to approve all of the NWE permit applications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-03-26 Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited-Site visit was done on Tuesday; there is a tailings pile that they're planning to move out of the floodplain area. FWP asked that the applicant let them know when the work will be done so that they can do some fish related work. Ryan asked if a consultant is doing the work. RDG is the firm doing the project. Motion by Ryan to approve as submitted, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-04-26 Northwestern Energy-Application is for horizontal boring under Park and Threemile Creeks; the next 3 phases will happen over the next few years. The distance back from the banks should be about 50 feet. Motion by Ryan to approve all of the NWE permit applications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-05-26 Northwestern Energy-Application is for horizontal boring under Park and Threemile Creeks; the next 3 phases will happen over the next few years. The distance back from the banks should be about 50 feet. Motion by Ryan to approve all of the NWE permit applications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-06-26 Northwestern Energy-Application is for horizontal boring under Park and Threemile Creeks; the next 3 phases will happen over the next few years. The distance back from the banks should be about 50 feet. Motion by Ryan to approve all of the NWE permit applications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-07-26 Northwestern Energy-Application is for horizontal boring under Park and Threemile Creeks; the next 3 phases will happen over the next few years. The distance back from the banks should be about 50 feet. Motion by Ryan to approve all of the NWE permit applications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-08-26 Northwestern Energy-Application is for horizontal boring under Park and Threemile Creeks; the next 3 phases will happen over the next few years. The distance back from the banks should be about 50 feet. Motion by Ryan to approve all of the NWE permit applications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

LC-09-26 O'Connell/RV Ranch-Joe Kremer-Herman gave some background on the permit application. There is no headgate change noted in the application, but this is the diversion site upstream from the Rimini Road bridge. The applicant wants to basically have the same dam that they created in 2025. Ryan asked where the top of the dam will be, relative to the headgate. The design indicates that the rock will be 2 feet high, with the top of the rock about a foot below the top of the headgate. The application is also for an annual maintenance permit. There was discussion about long-term, using concrete diversion blocks as a temporary diversion that would be removed at the end of the water use period. The onsite visit is scheduled for the 25th, and this will be reviewed at the March board meeting. Stan Frasier said that he'd like to see large rock, staggered across the stream with gaps that would naturally raise the level while allowing easy fish passage. Evans indicated that the CD has permitted staggered rock particularly in Elk Creek downstream from Augusta for Mike Mord and Pat Troy. The rock had to be put back quite often, so they had annual maintenance permits.

LC-10-26 Jorgensen-This proposed project is on Keep Cool Creek and there were some blown down trees that ended up in the creek. They're going to use a Cat to drag the trees out of the stream and they're planning to cut them up. FWP asked the landowner to salvage all the root wads to maintain bank stability. Motion by Christians to approve with FWP request, second by Ryan; motion carried.

LC-11-26 Corbally-Missouri River-Boat lift and bigger dock application; no inspection request by FWP; motion by Christians to approve as proposed, second by Baucus; motion carried.

LC-12-26 Northwestern Energy-Application is for horizontal boring under Park and Threemile Creeks; the next 3 phases will happen over the next few years. The distance back from the banks should be about 50 feet. Motion by Ryan to approve all of the NWE permit applications, second by Frasier; motion carried.

General discussion about acceptance of permit applications—In the LCCD rules, the board can delegate the formal acceptance of a project to staff, but if the staff is uncomfortable with that, they can request that the supervisor in the area, or one of the at-large supervisors, to consider the applications and make that decision. Joe and Chris would like to know which supervisors would like to review the applications first before they are formally accepted as projects. The time-clock starts on the date of acceptance of the applications.

Review Governance Calendar for February/March—The February/March Governance Calendars were reviewed. These two months tend to be pretty low-key, other than that the Supervisor nominations for re-election are due by March 4th.

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

Financial Statement & Outstanding Bills—Motion by Baucus to approve the financial statements for December and for January and pay the outstanding bills, second by Ryan; motion carried.

Supervisor absences—Jeanette was in Missoula, Sarah Howe-Cobb was home sick, Elena Frederick is recovering from knee surgery.

Correspondence

The office received the election calendar and blank nomination forms for supervisors to fill out for re-election.

Evans put the monthly weed post from Jane Mangold in the meeting packets.

Evans shared the basin conditions and snow report information for the board. Things aren't good. Jerry Strong had put in a request for information, but didn't supply enough details, so Evans mailed him the form for a formal request with information on costs etc. The office has not heard back from him as of yet.

Ian Robertson and his spouse are applying to the county to put in a shop on their property and have requested a letter of support from the Conservation District, specifying their track record of considering the natural resources on and near their property, particularly the bald eagles that nest there. Motion by Ryan to have Evans put together a support letter, second by Baucus; motion carried.

Reports

NRCS—Andrew provided a written report. Lots of changes this year, so stay tuned and they

appreciate patience as things continue to change. Becky said that in their all employee call this morning, when the NRCS staff are reviewing and updating their practice standard, they're looking for farmer and rancher input, which has been left out the last few years. In the next several weeks, the states are going to start getting groups of the practices and they'll only have 4 or 5 weeks to do producer roundtables for discussion. Becky wanted the board to be aware of that since she thinks feedback from the district would be good. Andrew said that next week the Tri County Fire Safe Working Group is having a movie night.

DNRC—written report

SRWG—written report

MRCDC—written report. Karl Christians said that he made the last meeting. The finance person has resigned so they're looking for a new one.

LHWG—Annual meeting is on March 12 at the Tenmile Brewery.

Helena CORE—Helena CORE last newsletter came out earlier this month.

WQPD—Fred Sargeson said that the WQPD is going through their 3 year plan and are starting the process to create their 3 year strategic plan. They're participating in the Conservation Elders event in April. The staff is investigating high nitrates in the area above Head Lane.

Weed District—no report.

MACD—They just helped co-host the Soil Health Symposium. Karl said that Tom Beck is the new NACD rep for MACD.

Supervisor Reports

Jeff Ryan—Jeff said he upgraded his generator after the wind storm.

Karl Christians—They got about a half inch of rain at his place. Cheat grass is looking good. He said that he doesn't have crested wheat grass coming yet.

Stan Frasier—Stan said that he's going for a bicycle ride this afternoon, and his orange crop isn't ready yet. They've been in the mid-70's.

John Baucus—John has been hauling hay. Sheep are doing well at the valley farm, getting ready for shearing. Jeff Ryan asked about how they get the sheep in there. John said that they need to get a sheriff's escort now.

Staff Reports

Evans—provided a written report.

Kremer-Herman—Civil penalty meeting with MACD; Some options were discussed, bonds, mathematical algorithms, etc. Joe's contribution was that they should consider a mechanism to account for inflation. Jeff mentioned the DEQ penalty options. Joe is still on the Sun River Board, their realtor workshop went well. They had about 20 people in attendance. The Army Corps has approved the permit for the Brushy Toe project on Little Prickly Pear Creek.

Old Business

Water court—Evans, Ryan and Christians all were at the water court on January 29. It was a fairly quick session and will hopefully promote a better working relationship between all the parties.

Planning Board—Updates to the planning board—the board has to split up (city/county into city and separate county) boards.

Accountability Assessment review-Evans had done a draft version of the Accountability Assessment for the board to review and make any changes to. The final version was signed by Jeff Ryan and will be submitted to DNRC with the CDA grant application.

New Business

Evans will bring in some of the negatives/slides and other records lists for the board to take a look at.

Other Business

Karl reminded the board about when PPLT asked for the letter of support for the RV ranch on Birdseye, and we asked them to keep it in ag. They now won't allow surrounding landowners to use the area to move cattle through or anything. He'll keep us posted on the status.

Having no further business the meeting adjourned at motion to adjourn by Ryan, second by Baucus; 3.21

Announcements

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

Approved by Jeff Ryan Date 3/12/26
Recorded by [Signature] Date 3/11/2026