



Stillwater Conservation District

Po Box 48 * 334 North 9th Street Columbus MT

July 1, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Location: USDA Service Center Conference Room (334 N. 9th Street, Columbus, MT)

Meeting called to order by: **Bob** at **6:05pm**

Supervisors: *Robert Van Oosten (Chairman), Noel Keogh (Vice Chairman), Butch Behrent (Treasurer), Steve Story (Secretary), Darryl Thompson (Associate Member)*

Supervisors Approved Absent: *3 vacant seats*

Others Invited: *Sharon Flemetis (District Admin), Bryan Giordano (FWP), Garrett Larson (NRCS)*

Guests: *Online: Rochelle Ogan and Dustin Starr (Maurer Dressel); Scott Barnes (FJ & Associates)*

Public Comment

* 3 Minute Limit * The Public will conduct themselves in a professional manner or be asked to leave. *

REPORTS

Bob Van Oosten – *Planning Board meeting updates.*

Butch Behrent – *No Report*

Noel Keogh – *Noel expressed concern about the lack of scholarship applications from local students and the need for better outreach to encourage participation to Montana Range Days next year.*

Steve Story – *No Report*

Darryl Thompson – *No Report*

Sharon Flemetis – *Upcoming maturity of a CD from Montana Range Days, rest is in the financial reports.*

NRCS (Garrett Larson): *Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) program funding was unfrozen and will be rebranded for 2026; five new tree applications will be processed with "loose money" from previous allocations. Urban Ag not funded. Already shifted to summer inventory work due to funding uncertainty.*

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Meeting Minutes of previous meetings: *June 3, 2025 SCD Board Meeting Minutes*

Motion to approve: *Butch* **Seconded:** *Noel* **Discussion:** *None* **Vote:** *Approved*

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Grant Updates to the Board - *USFS, ARPA Progress reports were submitted*

Financial Reports – *Motion to approve Report and Close out accounts at First Interstate Bank, (Range Days Funds-restricted funds) and move funds to Yellowstone Bank: Noel Seconded: Steve Discussion: No unusual activity; one month remains in the fiscal year. Upcoming maturity of a CD from Montana Range Days, with Sharon recommending moving the funds to Yellowstone Bank for better interest rates. Vote: Approved*

Monthly Warrants - *Motion to approve as stated in the report: Noel Seconded: Butch Discussion: None Vote: Approved*

2025-2026 Budget sent to Stillwater County - *Motion to approve: Butch Seconded: Noel Discussion: Update to include request Permissive Levy amount Vote: Approved*

Single Audit Services Request for Proposal (RFP) - *Motion to approve Finance Committee's recommendation and engage FJ &*

Associates: Noel Seconded: Butch Discussion: Public noticed, and RFP process followed based on Department of Administration (DOA) guidance. Mandatory audits were triggered by exceeding the \$750,000 expenditure threshold for fiscal years 2023, 2024, 2025. Request for Proposals (RFP) for audit services sent out to 36 pre-approved firms on May 15, 2025; submissions were due June 16, 2025. Evaluation was weighted: Firm & Team Qualifications: 20%, Ability to Meet Timeline: 45%, Cost for Full Engagement (FY23–25): 35%. Evaluation template followed DOA procurement guidelines. The board thanked both firms for high-quality submissions and committee



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for work. Clarification on which fiscal years are included (FY23–25, as the threshold was not met in FY22). Provision in RFP to negotiate with the auditor for FY26/27 audits if required. **Vote: Approved**

Motion to authorize Chairman to sign contract with audit firm: **Noel** Seconded: **Butch** Discussion: **Vote: Approved**

NEW BUSINESS

Urban Supervisor Open Vacancy- Motion to recommend Lynda Grande to Town of Columbus: **Noel** Seconded: **Steve**
Discussion: *We've noted that the terms of previous Urban Supervisors have ended without the SCD being aware of the exact term dates. We still lack official records of Urban Supervisor term dates, including reappointments made by the City prior to 2022. To clarify this matter and move forward, I have formally requested public documents from the City back mid-April 2025 but have not yet received them. According to DNRC training documents: * Elected Supervisors serve a four-year term, starting in January and ending in December. * Urban Supervisors are appointed by the Municipality for a three-year term from the date of appointment.*
It was stated at a City meeting that the Urban Supervisor was appointed for a three-year term. However, we still don't have the requested minutes from that meeting. When an Urban Supervisor leaves before their term concludes, the newly appointed supervisor should begin their own three-year term rather than merely filling the remainder of the previous person's term for a few months. We hope this matter can be resolved and that there is a clear understanding of the Urban Supervisors' terms moving forward. **Vote: Approved**

OLD BUSINESS

POLICY: Recording of Board Meetings- Motion to approve: **Noel** Seconded: **Butch** Discussion: *for preparing meeting minutes* **Vote: Approved**

Public Document Request Fees – Motion to Table: **Butch** Seconded: **Noel** Discussion: *revisit in 1 year* **Vote: Approved**

310 APPLICATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

APPL. #	Name	Stream	Project	Accepted	Decision
25-012	Dave Ponto	Stillwater River	Bridge replacement	3/31/25	Motion <i>to deny application:</i> Butch Second: Steve Discussion: <i>The board decided to deny the current permit for the Dave Ponto bridge project due to the lack of required engineering and hydraulic analysis. The board emphasized that the applicant must submit a new application that includes the necessary studies and alternatives for bridge design, particularly regarding pier construction and elevation to meet floodplain regulations. This decision was based on guidance from the floodplain office, which required a full engineering assessment for compliance.</i> Vote: deny
25-018E	Noel Keogh	West Fork /Stillwater River	Tree removals	5/30/25	Motion: Bob Second: Butch Discussion: <i>Emergency work was approved by the board. The trees were cut down, but the root ball was left in place, which is consistent with best practices for stream management. The board acknowledged that the emergency work had been completed to their satisfaction, and no further action was needed.</i> Vote: Approved as is
25-019	Northern Fire LLC	Midnight Canyon Ck	Culvert	6/2/25	Motion: Bob Second: Steve Discussion: <i>The board discussed the Northern Fire LLC project, which involved the installation of a culvert in Midnight Canyon. The permit was approved with modifications, which included requirements for the culvert to be buried 10-20% as per standard practices and measures for erosion control to prevent</i>



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					increased turbidity during construction. Additionally, the contractor was advised to manage noxious weeds in the area. The project was deemed appropriate, and the board felt confident in their approval. Vote: Approved as Mod for the culvert to be buried 10-20% as per standard practices and measures for erosion control to prevent increased turbidity during construction.
25-020E	Lincoln Powers	E Rosebud	Open channel	6/13/25	Motion to Table: Noel Second: Butch Discussion: The Lincoln Powers open channel emergency application was discussed in relation to multiple violations concerning unpermitted work on ponds and stream modifications. The board determined that Lincoln Powers had conducted unauthorized work and that the situation required further action. They decided to refer the case to DNRC legal counsel for enforcement and resolution of the ongoing non-compliance issues. Additionally, the board tabled the application until a proper inspection could be conducted on the site to assess the extent of the modifications made without permits. Vote: Approved to Table
25-021	Dave Carse	Stillwater River	Bank Stabilization (Soft)	6/16/25	Motion: Bob Second: Noel Discussion: The board discussed Dave Carse application related to streambank stabilization and the construction of a soft approach on North Stillwater Road. Dave was cooperative and sought to do the work in compliance with regulations. The board approved his application with the modification that erosion control measures must be implemented at the bottom of the slope while vegetation is established. This was to ensure that the disturbed areas do not contribute to sedimentation in the stream. Vote: Approve with Mod to incorporate erosion control measures.
25-022E	Todd & Gina Gahagan	W. Rosebud Ck	Beaver Dam Removal	6/24/25	Motion to Table: Butch Second: Noel Discussion: The board did not inspect the beaver dam removal application submitted by Todd and Gina Gahagan due to the landowner not giving approval to access for an inspection. As a result, the board decided to table the application until an inspection could take place. If access is not granted by the next meeting, the board indicated they would consider denying the application. Additionally, the Gahagans were noted to be out of compliance for not submitting the emergency permit within the required timeframe. Vote: Approved to Table for inspection
24-018ext	North Western Energy	Stillwater River	Gas line relocated	Rec'd 5/22request	Motion: Noel Second: Butch Discussion: The board discussed the NorthWestern Energy extension request for a project related to gas line. The board approved the extension to allow the project to be completed by November 1, 2025. This decision was made to accommodate the necessary work and ensure compliance with relevant regulations. The extension gives NorthWestern Energy more time to complete their project without penalties. Vote: Approved for extension.

COMPLAINTS/VIOLATIONS



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#23- 052V & 23-065V Krone *no update- Matter is being handled with DNRC Attorney and the Court.*

#25-002CV –Shemer Ponds near Rocky Creek- *The discussion regarding the Shemer ponds near Rocky Creek involved concerns about the illegal status of the ponds and the potential impacts they have on the environment. The board noted that the ponds were being constructed without proper permits, which led to a recommendation to refer the situation to DNRC legal counsel for further action. The need for compliance with water rights and environmental regulations was emphasized, and the board decided to take necessary steps to ensure that the issues surrounding the ponds are addressed appropriately.*

Shemer application: Motion to Deny: Steve Second: Noel Discussion: *The board decided that the Shemer project should require a new application submitted that only includes the riprap for the stream. This decision was made to ensure that the focus remains on protecting the stream's integrity while addressing the current issues with the illegal ponds. The board emphasized that the riprap work could proceed while the status of the ponds is resolved, allowing for some level of project advancement without endorsing the unlawful aspects of the existing pond structures. Vote: Approved to Deny*

#25-006CV – Lincoln Ponds on Stillwater River side channel: *Concerning the Lincoln Ponds on the Stillwater River side channel has been a subject of ongoing violations due to unpermitted work. The board discussed the need to refer this case to DNRC legal counsel for enforcement actions regarding the modifications made without proper permits. The board emphasized the importance of compliance with environmental regulations and the need for proper inspections to assess the situation thoroughly. The board plans to continue monitoring this case and take necessary actions to ensure that the regulations are upheld.*

#25-014CV – Lincoln Powers- berm-closing off a side channel *Concerning Lincoln Powers involved issues related to the construction of berms that closed off a side channel. The board identified multiple violations associated with unauthorized modifications to the stream and surrounding areas. As a result, they decided to refer this case to DNRC legal counsel for further enforcement action. The board expressed concerns about the impact of these unpermitted changes on stream health and surrounding properties. They planned to take necessary steps to address the ongoing non-compliance issues and ensure regulatory compliance moving forward.*

SAVE THE DATES:

July 4, 2025 –4 th of July		
July 31, 2025 – Site Inspections		
August 5, 2025 – Monthly Board Meeting		

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING: Steve SECONDED: Noel MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 9:09pm

310 Applications must be received by 12pm seven days prior to the meeting and have been inspected to be reviewed. Agenda items must be submitted to the CD Office by Noon the Monday before the scheduled meeting. Agendas are available at the CD Office upon request and at stillwatercd.org once finalized. All meetings of the CD are open to the public. Meetings may be recorded by the district for note taking purposes and then will be destroyed once minutes are approved. Once approved the minutes will be available at stillwatercd.org and the County Clerk and Records Office.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Fletmetis

Minutes Approved on 9/9/25 Signed by Bob Van Oosten