

Stillwater Conservation District
Po Box 48 * 334 North 9th Street Columbus MT 59019

March 3, 2026 SCD Monthly Meeting Minutes

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

Meeting called to order by: Bob Van Oosten at 6:04pm

Supervisors: Robert (Bob) Van Oosten (Chairman), Butch Behrent (Treasurer), Dorothy Gallagher (Supervisor), Lynda Grande (Secretary), and Darryl Thompson (Associate Member)

Supervisors Approved Absent: Noel Keogh (Vice Chairman), Steve Story (Supervisor); 1 vacant seat

Staff/Guest/Public: Sharon Flemetis (District Admin), Garrett Larson (NRCS)

Public Comment

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

None

REPORTS

Bob Van Oosten – No Report

Butch Behrent

- Watershed meeting on the 18th. Planning summer activities and 3W's workshop. Details not yet finalized.

Dorothy Gallagher – No Report

Lynda Grande – No Report

Noel Keogh – Absent

Steve Story – Absent

Darryl Thompson – No Report

Garrett Larson – NRCS

- Working on ranking applications for NRCS programs. Federal government information coming in slowly — each new update requires redoing prior work. Frustrating process for all.
- EQIP emphasis this year: continuing existing funding proposals (Countryman Creek, Yellowstone Estates, fuel mitigation). New regenerative ag pilot program introduced, covering forestry, cropland, and potentially pivot irrigation.
- Local working group meeting: Funding proposal model (3–5 year commitments) makes it difficult to change course based on local priorities. DNRC has communicated to some districts that they are not meeting MOU obligations. Garrett noted the system inadvertently limits flexibility. Board acknowledged; no action taken.

Sharon Flemetis

- DNRC CD Boundary Audit: DNRC requested research on water reservations and CD boundary maps, specifically to confirm exclusions of Beartooth Heights and Two Rivers subdivisions. Sharon responded that her capacity is currently limited due to ongoing legal matters and audit compliance. Deadline from DNRC is the 31st of this month. Board supported her response and suggested DNRC contact the county directly for maps.

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Minutes of the previous meeting December 2nd, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Dorothy Gallagher **Seconded:** Butch Behrent **Discussion:** None **Vote:** Tabled

Minutes of the previous meeting January 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Dorothy Gallagher **Seconded:** Butch Behrent **Discussion:** None **Vote:** Tabled

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Grant Updates

- Forestry progress reports current through current reporting period.
- ARPA grant fully closed; final payment expected this week.

Financial Reports – Monthly reports provided: profit/loss, balance sheet, account balances.

Motion: Butch Behrent **Seconded:** Dorothy Gallagher **Discussion:** Discussed account reports from new software. Standard profit and loss for fiscal year to date, including checks for signature. Balance sheet shows account totals after checks. Warrants report shows

deposits and withdrawals since last meeting (no February meeting held). Board noted \$50,638 owed to attorney and \$9,000 for nursery trees (not yet payable until trees received). District making payments on attorney balance as funds allow. Professional fees of \$33,000 on P&L are for audit; invoice not yet received. Board discussed audit adjustment process (cash-to-accrual) — all state and federal reporting complete; remaining cleanup is internal between Sharon and auditors. **Vote:** Approved

Monthly Warrants

Motion: Bob Van Oosten **Seconded:** Butch Behrent **Discussion:** Reviewed and accepted. Checks signed at meeting. **Vote:** Approved

2026–2027 Draft Budget

Motion: Lynda Grande **Seconded:** Butch Behrent **Discussion:** Budget in progress. Needs to be approved by May 31st and submitted to DNRC; to the county by June 19th. New accounting, coding, and auditor requirements making process more complex this cycle. Sharon will send draft to board for review prior to next meeting. **Vote:** Tabled to April meeting

2026–2027 Admin Grant Application

Motion: Lynda Grande **Seconded:** Dorothy Gallagher **Discussion:** None **Vote:** Tabled

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

Carbon Conservation District vs. Stillwater Conservation District

- Bob Van Oosten and Darryl Thompson attended a meeting hosted by ERLA for the Forest Service and engineer to present the EWP project to Carbon CD. Carbon CD chair, vice chair, and administrator were present.
- Forest Service provided project background; engineer presented technical details including weir system on Forest Service land to redirect Armstrong Creek to its historic channel. In a 100-year+ flood event, water would overflow in a controlled manner. Engineering by Hydro Solutions using a nationally recognized alluvial fan expert.
- Carbon CD board members asked negative technical questions and appeared to be seeking reasons to oppose the project rather than engage constructively. Board did not appear to fully understand project scope, funding source, or litigation implications.
- Bob reminded Carbon CD: the district does not design the project — changes must come from the Forest Service. Funding allocation was a federal decision. Contract is not assignable.
- Second portion of meeting (discussion toward resolution) did not occur due to time. Scheduled for Carbon CD meeting on March 11th.
- Plan for March 11th: Present path forward — opportunity to do something positive together. Proposal involves SCD continuing to fulfill contractual obligations by hiring RC&D (Joliet) to perform on-the-ground work; Sharon would administer the RC&D contract; Bob remains on-site lead. Forest Service would reimburse SCD for RC&D costs. If Carbon CD agrees in principle, attorneys would finalize paperwork to lift injunction.

310 APPLICATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

Appl. #	Name	Stream	Project	Received	Decision
26-002	Project Telephone	See application (multiple streams, Stillwater County)	Directional boring utilities (fiber) under streams along Hwy 78 corridor	2/5/26	Motion: Lynda Grande Seconded: Butch Behrent Discussion: Application revised twice to remove Carbon County streams and ditches. Approved for Stillwater County streams only; ditches excluded (no jurisdiction). All other agency permits obtained. Some reclamation concerns noted from prior similar project. Vote: Approved with modification – Stillwater County streams only, ditches excluded
26-003r1	Leo McDonnell	Yellowstone River (below Hensley Creek)	Bank stabilization – buried rock revetment and riprap, ~300–500 ft of eroding riverbank	2/27/26	Motion: Bob Van Oosten Seconded: Dorothy Gallagher Discussion: Site inspected. River has migrated significantly toward field since 2017. Revetment trench dug below water/gravel level; filled with Class 2 and Class Angular 2-3 riprap. Revetment above high water mark needs no permit; riprap portion is the 310 project. Fish & Game recommended rock to cobble gravel line only with floodplain bench above. Board approved as proposed (rock to full bank height) with recommendation to plant willows at toe.

					Contractor: Paul Garrett. Vote: Approved as proposed with recommendation of willows
25-008ext	Project Telephone	See application (Hwy 78 area)	One-year permit extension – utilities boring	1/28/26	Motion: Butch Behrent Seconded: Dorothy Gallagher Discussion: Existing permit expires 4/16/26. Work not yet complete due to weather. Standard one-year extension. Vote: Approved – one-year extension granted
25-004ext	Jeff Ferster	E. Rosebud Creek	One-year extension – bridge replacement	2/20/26	Motion: Butch Behrent Seconded: Lynda Grande Discussion: Ferster proactively requested extension to avoid permit lapse; already working on bridge. Board commended applicant for being proactive. Vote: Approved – one-year extension granted

COMPLAINTS/VIOLATIONS

- #23-052V & 23-065V – Krone: Ongoing. See closed meeting.
- #25-006CV – Lincoln Ponds on Stillwater River side channel: Waiting on 310 Application.
- #25-014CV – Lincoln Powers – berm closing off a side channel: Waiting on 310 Application.

Motion to Temporarily Close Public Meeting: Dorothy Gallagher Seconded: Bob Van Oosten Meeting Approved to Close at 7:55pm

CLOSED MEETING

Executive Session – Purpose: Confidential Attorney-Client Communication & Legal Strategy and Matters of Individual Privacy MCA 2-3-203(3)

Motion to reopen the Public Meeting: Dorothy Gallagher Seconded: Bob Van Oosten Discussion: None Vote: Approved — public meeting reopened at 8:51pm

Motion: Dorothy Gallagher Seconded: Bob Van Oosten Discussion: Board authorized attorney Shane to file against the insurance agent for misrepresentation of coverage. Filing fee of approximately \$1,500 to be paid from savings account. **Vote:** Approved

SAVE THE DATES

April 7, 2026 Board Meeting	May 5, 2026 Board Meeting	June 2, 2026 Board Meeting	July 7, 2026 Board Meeting
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MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING: Dorothy Gallagher SECONDED: Lynda Grande MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 8:53pm

310 Applications must be received by 12pm seven days prior to the meeting or otherwise approved to come in late 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. Once approved the minutes will be available at stillwatercd.org and the County Clerk and Records Office.

All Meetings with SCD will be recorded and the recording is a tool to help the SCDBS or SCDA with the creation of meeting minutes, only. Audio recordings of any meeting with the SCD will be retained until after the minutes of that particular meeting have been adopted by the SCD Board. This will allow space for future audio recording.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Fletmetis

Minutes Approved on 5/5/2026 Signed by Bob Van Oosten 