

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

**May 5, 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 6:08pm

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

**Supervisors Approved Absent:** 2 vacant seats

**Staff/Guest/Public:** Sharon Flemetis (District Admin), Garrett Larson (NRCS), Bill Murphy, John Simmons, Marilyn Simmons, Bernie Kelly

**\*Public Comment\***

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

None

**REPORTS**

**Garrett Larson – NRCS** (presented first at Bob's request)

- NRCS funded nearly every conservation contract application received this season. Highlights: 15 Ventenata weed control contracts (10,633 acres); 33 tree thinning/fuel mitigation contracts (1,254 acres, year 3); 1 cropland contract (900 acres); 2 range contracts (550 acres) including one virtual fence collar pilot near Whitebird.
- Ventenata is mostly confined to southeast corridor of the county; being actively addressed where found elsewhere.

**Bob Van Oosten** – No planning board report; traveling.

**Butch Behrent**

- 3W's Workshop: June 18, 4–6pm, Fishtail City Hall.
- Summer Celebration: August 8 at The Ridge.

**Noel Keogh**

- Montana Range Days: June 22–24. District has ~\$6,000 scholarship funds available. Sharon to post application on Facebook/website and contact ag teachers.

**Steve Story** – No Report

**Lynda Grande** – Attended 310 site inspections with Noel.

**Darryl Thompson** – No Report

**Sharon Flemetis**

- Tree pre-sale: Record year — pre-orders only through April 15. Projected to exceed \$20,000. Garrett volunteered to help with tree pickup in Billings.
- Been working on GIS mapping tools- This will help in the future with comparisons of river channels and projects.

**UNAPPROVED MINUTES**

**January 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Butch Behrent **Seconded:** Noel Keogh **Discussion:** None **Vote:** Approved

**March 3, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Noel Keogh **Seconded:** Butch Behrent **Discussion:** None **Vote:** Approved

**April 7, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Steve Story **Seconded:** Butch Behrent **Discussion:** None **Vote:** Approved

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

**Financial Reports**

- YTD net: District is \$218,000 negative (July 2025–April 2026). Income: \$133,925; Expenses: \$351,936. Legal fees paid: ~\$128,000; balance owed: ~\$59,000. Legal fees consumed essentially all income; drawdown came from savings reserves.
- All payments electronic this period — no physical checks. Bob signed time sheet earlier in the day.
- Mileage/stipend: Board members may submit reimbursements or donate back as in-kind; Sharon will provide verification letters for tax purposes.

**Motion:** Butch Behrent **Seconded:** Noel Keogh **Discussion:** Reviewed P&L, balance sheet, bank register. **Vote:** Approved

### Monthly Warrants

**Motion:** Steve Story **Seconded:** Noel Keogh **Discussion:** All electronic payments reviewed and accepted. **Vote:** Approved

### 2026–2027 Preliminary Draft Budget

- Three-column budget: projected FY2026 actuals, FY2026 approved budget, proposed FY2027. Mill levy: ~\$38,631 annually. Mileage/stipend line items retained. Model rules update to be agendized separately.

**Motion:** Steve Story **Seconded:** Noel Keogh **Discussion:** FY2027 preliminary budget reviewed. **Vote:** Approved

### 2026–2027 Admin Grant Application

- Grant request: \$89,043 (\$82,143.00 budget shortfall; \$3,500 MACD dues; ~\$3,400 in 310 reimbursements). FY2027 Annual Work Plan included

**Motion:** Butch Behrent **Seconded:** Noel Keogh **Discussion:** Approve admin grant application for \$89,043; authorize Bob Van Oosten to sign and Approve FY2027 Annual Work Plan. **Vote:** Approved

## NEW BUSINESS

None

## OLD BUSINESS

### Complaints/Violations

- **#23-052V & 23-065V – Krone Settlement offer** (both parties walk away, all charges dropped) rejected by board. Attorneys directed to formally respond to lawsuit. Board discussed Billings Gazette article (Brett French) referencing EWP project and Sharon's compensation — no comment sought before publication. Board expressed confidence in Sharon and the district.
- **#25-006CV – Lincoln Ponds:** Violation letter over one year old; no progress. Lincoln misunderstood that Army Corps approval eliminates SCD 310 permit requirement — Army Corps corrected him. Lincoln installed gate blocking site access. Board directed Sharon to send formal letter requesting progress report.
- **#25-014CV – Lincoln Powers:** Board directed Sharon to send formal letter requesting progress report.
- **Carbon CD / EWP Project:** No new developments since March 11 Carbon CD meeting

## 310 APPLICATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

| Appl. # | Name                                              | Stream           | Project                                                   | Rec'd   | Decision                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 26-TBD  | Absarokee Town Ditch (Bill Murphy / Bernie Kelly) | W. Rosebud Creek | Retroactive permit — unpermitted stream plug at diversion | 5/5/26  | <b>Motion:</b> None. <b>Discussion:</b> Stream plug found during site visit with no existing 310 permit. Contractor believed 2022 permit covered it; it did not. No violation cited — good faith misunderstanding. Board directed applicant to submit retroactive 310 app and contact Cindy Grover (Floodplain) before separate head gate application. <b>Vote:</b> No vote — submit retroactive application at next meeting |
| 26-008  | John & Marilyn Simmons                            | E. Rosebud Creek | Bank stabilization — riprap under leaning trees           | 4/16/26 | <b>Motion:</b> Bob Van Oosten <b>Seconded:</b> Steve Story <b>Discussion:</b> Inspected by Noel and Lynda. Application too vague — missing dimensions, materials, location, slope. Army Corps cannot permit as written; floodplain review also required. Board cautioned overly broad permit could affect Agency Ditch water rights. <b>Vote:</b> Tabled — resubmit with full specifications                                 |
| 26-006c | Lonney White                                      | Stillwater River | Complaint — fallen tree debris                            | 4/03/26 | <b>Motion:</b> Steve Story <b>Seconded:</b> Noel Keogh <b>Discussion:</b> Tree fell naturally; not cut or placed. Small branches are beneficial fish habitat. Complaint by neighbor (prior 310 violator). <b>Vote:</b> No violation. Letter recommending voluntary removal of larger material without heavy equipment                                                                                                        |
| 26-007e | Bryan White                                       | Stillwater River | Emergency — debris cleanup, fallen tree                   | 4/15/26 | <b>Motion:</b> Noel Keogh <b>Seconded:</b> Lynda Grande <b>Discussion:</b> Emergency app for same fallen tree as 26-                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|         |                              |                  |                                           |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------|------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         |                              |                  |                                           |         | 006c. Does not meet definition of a 310 emergency. Vote: Not a project. Letter to be sent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 26-009e | Agency Ditch                 | E. Rosebud Creek | Emergency — maintenance near head gate    | 4/21/26 | Motion: Lynda Grande Seconded: Butch Behrent<br>Discussion: Work already completed; covered by existing maintenance permit (valid through 2028). Emergency app filed as precaution due to litigation. Vote: Not a project — covered by existing maintenance permit. Confirmation letter to be sent.                                      |
| 26-010  | Larry Arnold (Green Meadows) | Cow Creek        | Head gate repair — reinstall apron deeper | 4/27/26 | Motion: Noel Keogh Seconded: Butch Behrent<br>Discussion: Water undercut cement apron; gate cannot fully close. Fix: excavate and reinstall deeper. Fish & Game recommended river rock behind diversion for fish passage — recommendation only, not a condition. Vote: Approved with recommendation for fish passage rock (not required) |

### SAVE THE DATES

|                            |                            |                              |                                 |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| June 2, 2026 Board Meeting | July 3rd – Holiday         | August 4, 2026 Board Meeting | September 1, 2026 Board Meeting |
| June 19th – Holiday        | July 7, 2026 Board Meeting |                              |                                 |

**MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING: Noel Keogh SECONDED: Steve Story MEETING ADJOURNED AT: approx. 8:43pm**

*This meeting is recorded for minute preparation and internal use only. Recordings are not retained under SCD policy. 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 Flemetis**

Minutes Approved on 6-9-26

Signed by Bob Van Oosten

