Pondera County Conservation District
406 N. Main
Conrad, MT 59425
(406)278-7611 ext. 1048
Fax (406)278-7997
ponderacd@gmail.com

MINUTES for Tuesday, October 13 at 8:00 a.m. meeting of the Pondera County Conservation District Board of Supervisors, at the USDA Service Center in Conrad, Montana.

Attendees: Becky Kujava (MSU Extension), Koltin Christiaens (NRCS), Ramsey Offerdal Jr, Eric Gunderson, Kesler Martin, Paul Jones, Roger Paulsen, Darla Baliko

Absent: —

Call to Order - 8:27 AM

Approval of previous meeting minutes - Eric motioned to approve the previous months' minutes as written; Ramsey seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Financial report - Darla presented the financial report, with a Warrant Account balance of $154,419.65 and a Checking Account balance of $5008.07 as of 9/30/2026.

Public Comment - *Topics not on the agenda may be discussed, but if action is required, the topic must first be placed on the next meeting agenda.*

Reports:

- **NRCS-** Koltin presented the NRCS report. He said they are working on CSP certification currently. He said he completed the locally led proposal focused on stock water with 528 Grazing Management Plan as a requirement. He said that they have to do a 3-year plan and that next year, we will need to have a LWG meeting with PCCD helping with it. He said at that meeting, we can decide then on the next proposal. He thinks the next proposal can overlap with the current proposal, but he is not certain of that. He said so far he has received 10 EQIP and 8 CSP applications. He noted that last year Pondera had the most money obligated last year for contracts and was 4th in the area for the number of contracts issued (Lewistown had the most contracts at 42. Pondera County had around 14.) He said he thinks the number of applications is down slightly from last year.
- **MSCA-** No report was given.
- **PCCRC-** No one was present to report.
- **MSU Extension-** Becky Kujava gave the report from MSU Extension. She said they are getting a new Ag Agent, Hanna McClayland, who will start November 2nd. Becky will

have a key role in orienting McClayland to her new position and plans on making the PCCD a high priority/required responsibility. She said they are also in the process of hiring a new FCS Agent to replace Wendy Wedum who recently retired. Becky anticipates that, if all goes well, the FCS Agent would also start in November.

- **Pondera Weeds District-** No one was present to give a report.
- **Community Garden-** No one was present to give a report.
- **PCCD Admin-** Darla submitted a written report and highlighted the following:
    - Meeting in person with local partners (MSU Extension, FFA, etc.)
    - Waiting for the Docusign for the S-Canal Pipeline project for Paul to sign
    - Meeting with MACD staff and WWC in person while in Helena for her Grant Management workshop
    - Promoting seedling sales
    - Meeting with Andrea to do taxes and Quickbooks migration, noting that the migration to the Online version will save the district over $900 annually.
    - Darla said she had met several times over the past month with Pete and Fred from the community garden. She said they had discussed their needs (repairs, tools, etc.) and how PCCD can help. She also noted that the garden has over $2000 that has been donated over the past years through the Community Fund Drive, so she was wondering if the board thought she should pursue a small grant to help with tools or not. She also said she, Pete, and Fred had been discussing the need for a tractor and wondered if PCCD might be interested in getting a tractor to add to our rental equipment program. Kesler said he has had many people ask him if he has a small tractor they could use for small projects (windbreak cleanup, e.g.) (he doesn't) and indicated he thought we would have people interested in renting it if we were to get one. Paul also indicated he thought a small tractor that could pull a 3-point tree transplanter would be very useful, rather than the type of equipment that is needed now for our current tree planters. Additionally, Paul said he thinks one of the biggest needs for the community garden is the need for a vision. He thought that having a meeting of current volunteers to talk about the future of the garden would be very beneficial.

Old/Unfinished Business:

- **310 permit** - Paul summarized the site visit (completed by Paul, Darla, and Kesler) for Byron Bokma's application. Paul recommended we approve the 310 Permit. Ramsey motioned that the board approve the application and issue the permit. Kesler seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.
- **Update on Resolutions** - Paul gave an update about the Resolution we had intended to bring before the Area 3 members at the recent meeting. He said that we had missed the deadline, but he was still encouraged to share about it at the area meeting. He said he had a great conversation with the MACD VP from Wibaux who has a lot of experience with wind farm development in their county, and he encouraged Paul to attend commissioner meetings. Paul said he intends to do so, and Roger also offered to attend, noting that Paul is busy with his various responsibilities. Paul also mentioned talking with Steve Hertel, MACD President, and noted there was great interest by Steve and the others present at the meeting. He said it sounds like a work group might be created at the MACD convention to further discuss the issue. Paul also said that Fergus County is investigating developing a rural water system by tapping into the aquifer, checking flow quantity, quality, etc. He also is looking forward to giving a brief announcement about

Range Days at the state convention. He also encouraged Darla to look for a scholarship for herself and/or a board member for attending convention, and also asked her if she has reserved rooms yet. Darla confirmed that yes, she reserved rooms at Fairmont a few months ago, and that there are enough for her and every board member to go if they wish to. She said she thinks we have until about 72 hours prior to check-in to release rooms we aren't using.

New business:

- **Auction Item for MACD Convention** - Darla said the MACD is requesting auction items for the convention and that Toole County CD is coordinating neighboring districts putting their money together to buy a larger prize (2 paddleboards), rather than each CD getting a smaller prize. The cost to participate in this would be $60 for each CD. Ramsey motioned that we contribute to the paddleboard purchase. Kesler seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.
- **Policies and Procedures (requested by DNRC)** - Darla said that the DNRC has requested copies of all the CDs' adopted policies and procedures. Darla noted that while she assumes PCCD has formally adopted some policies over the years, she has been unable to locate adopted copies either online or in the file cabinets. Paul said that we probably need to revisit them anyway. Darla said the MACD has many model policies that they provide to CDs to use, modify as needed, and adopt. She said that she will bring some to future meetings so we can begin the process.
- **Monthly meeting schedule** - board members discussed the idea of changing the meeting time. Paul explained that a Resolution that will be brought before the state regarding what makes a "quorum" on boards with vacant positions or absent members makes it especially important to have board members present at the meetings. Ramsey motioned that we change the meeting time to 6:30 AM the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Kesler seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed.
- **Grant opportunities and ideas** - Darla already touched on this in her report. She also said she plans to apply for one or two mini-education grants in the next few months to help cover outdoor classroom materials and other outreach events.
- **Soil Health Symposium scholarship** - Darla said she is interested in attending the symposium taking place next February in Billings and wondered whether she should apply for a scholarship or if the CD's budgeted category for employee education/training could be used, noting that the scholarship application asks whether or not one's ability to attend depends on getting the scholarship. Paul said she should apply for the scholarship.

Closed Session - Darla gave a brief presentation to the board regarding where she sees herself in the process of learning her job. She likened her process to the television series *Alone*. She said she feels like the past 6 months have been focused on surveying the land, identifying tools, resources, etc. She also noted that the purpose of the CDA Grant received is to cover administrative costs such as salary, benefits, office supplies, etc. She is beginning to think more about how we can have a real *impact* on our natural resources and community. She closed by

presented her short-term *Plan* (connecting with partners, applying for 2 mini-ed grants, doing a couple of outreach/education events) and gave a *Proposal* (that the board spend the winter months working on the required changes to 310 local rules, work on policies and procedures, and revisit mission/vision, strategic plan, annual plan in order to accomplish the vision). She then stepped out of the room to allow the board a private discussion of her job performance.

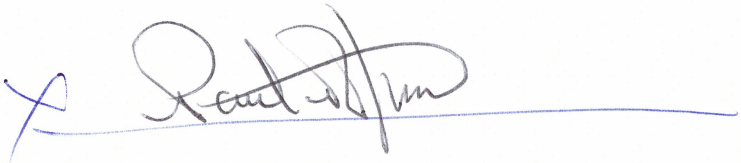
The board voted to increase Darla's pay by $1/hour to $20/hour. Ramsey motioned to make this pay raise. Kesler seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Correspondence - None was presented.

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 AM.

CALENDAR

- October ? - Registration opens for 2027 Soil Health Symposium (Feb 2-4 in Billings)
- Nov 4-5 - Montana Invasive Species Council (MISC) Summit (MT Heritage Center, Helena)
- Nov 5-6 - MSCA Summit (High Plains Outpost, Great Falls)
- Nov 10 - PCCD Board Meeting
- Nov 11 - Veterans' Day
- Nov 20-24 - Darla at wedding
- Nov 26 - Thanksgiving
- Nov 30 - MACD Pre-Convention Workshop with Ray Ledgerwood
- Dec 1-3 - MACD Annual Convention (Fairmont Hot Springs)



Administrator Report

Prepared by Darla Baliko for the

October 2026 Meeting

Developing/Strengthening Partnerships - This month, I reached out in person to MSU Extension, CHS's FFA/Ag teacher (Devin McClayland), Conrad Schools (Sondra Habets), and Cowboy Academy (Stephanie DeBruycker) to learn about opportunities to support their ag/conservation-related initiatives and partner with them in the future. I had face-to-face meetings with all of these, with the exception of Cowboy Academy (and now need to follow up with a different person there). I'll share more about this in the meeting. I am excited to see where these partnerships go! I also had several lengthy conversations with Pete and Fred about the direction and needs of the community garden. I'm sure as part of Pete's report we will discuss this in the meeting.

Area 3 Meeting - Paul and I rode together to the Area 3 Meeting in Chinook. It was great to learn what issues the Area 3 CDs are of concern. (Paul and I can share more about this during the board meeting for those who are interested.) And, even though the Natural Resource Permit Resolution PCCD had prepared didn't get a formal hearing during the meeting, Paul did an excellent job of presenting his/PCCD's ideas about getting CDs more involved in water management wherever it is found (not just surface water). There seemed to be great interest in this by a few others, and it was suggested that the conversation be continued at the MACD convention in December. (And, in case you need a reminder which counties are part of Area 3, here they are: *Glacier, Toole, Liberty, Hill, Blaine, Phillips, Fergus, Chouteau, Pondera, Teton, Cascade, Judith Basin.)*

PCCRC/PCCD Grants - As of the writing of this report (10/7/26), we are still waiting for the DocuSign from the state for the S-Canal Pipeline Conversion project. Per the agreement between PCCRC, WWC, and myself, I will be doing all the grant management for this project, including quarterly reporting, final reporting, and everything in between. While there is a lot to learn, and it is not something to be taken lightly (especially given the large amounts of money involved), I feel confident I can do it, especially since WWC has arranged with PCCRC to support me as needed through the learning process. In addition to meeting Matt and Amber from WWC in person (see below), Amber and I have had a few phone/zoom meetings, and she has been very helpful.

Grant Management Workshop - I attended a 2-day Grant Management Workshop in Helena this month. The workshop registration (over $500 value) was paid for with a scholarship provided by MACD. One of the main take-aways I had from the workshop is that there is *a lot to learn* about grant management! In fact, some of the people in the room had been managing grants for 20 years and still felt it necessary to attend. While in Helena, I stopped by the MACD office and spent time visiting with Madelin Larson (Madi), Associate Director. I also went to WWC Engineering (the engineering firm PCCRC has contracted with and who has handled the grant management in the past), as I hadn't met them in person.

Misc:

- **Tree/Seedling sales -** I attended a Conservation Nursery webinar on October 5th and am now beginning to really promote tree/seedling sales. I have placed a sign-up sheet on the front counter for people wishing to be contacted and in a matter of days have already had five people add their names to the list. I'll also be advertising it online and around town. I might even put an article in the newspaper (about PCCD in general, and highlighting a few things we do, including tree sales).
- • **I am meeting with Andrea from H&R Block on Monday, October 12th** to do two things:
    - Q3 taxes
    - Quickbooks migration from Desktop to Online. I found out today (10/7) that the price Andrea quoted me last month for the monthly subscription was low. I am waiting to hear back from her what the exact price will be but anticipate we will still be saving money by switching. Plus, the online version has other benefits (managing payroll, Andrea being able to access it remotely if needed, etc.

- **Email newsletter** - I'm using Mailchimp to create the quarterly (and as-needed) e-newsletter. I'm still working out a few kinks, including how to make a printer-friendly version so I can post a physical copy a few places around town. Also, please let me know if you did not receive the email, as sometimes mass-emails get flagged as Spam and routed to the Spam folder.
- **Policies and Procedures -** I mentioned the need to look at this during our last meeting, and coincidentally, *DNRC has requested copies of all CDs' policies and procedures.* Also, the Grant Management Workshop also highlighted for me the importance of policies and procedures in case we were ever audited. I can explain more in the meeting.
    - Do the board members remember having voted to formally adopt any official policies or procedures in the past? If so, where might I find them?
    - If we're unable to locate current adopted policies, the good news is that MACD provides lots and lots of "model policies" for CDs to use, modify, and adopt, so we won't have to start from scratch!
- **Looking ahead:** ***the rest of the year is going to fly by!*** I have an out of state wedding to go to in November (which will only cause me to miss one day of work), immediately followed by Thanksgiving… immediately followed by MACD Convention…before we know it, Christmas will be here.