

YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Board Meeting Minutes

August 19, 2025

1670 48th St. West Suite #2, Billings MT 59106

9:00 a.m.

**** Note:** Personnel committee met prior to board meeting to develop YCD/PF Work Plan

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chad Sedgwick - Chair; Jackie Haaland, Leroy Gabel, Bryan Mothershead, Stacey Robinson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Brad Kraft - Vice-Chair

NON-BOARD PRESENT: LaVerne Ivie - YCD; Crystal White, YCD/PF; Zoe Craft, Shane Burton - NRCS; Demi Blythe, Shannon Blackburn - FWP; Ronni Tallerico - Yellowstone Co. Public Works; Michelle Yeager - DNRC; Don Sasse - MBMG; Joe Lockwood - Yellowstone Co. Weed District
Virtually: Colton Shimmer - ACOE; Veronica Grigaltchik - DNRC
310 applicants: Gene Klamert (via speaker phone)

Chair Sedgwick called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Agenda Changes: None

Roll Call

After the introductions, Chair Sedgwick informed attendees: All issues will be addressed to the Chair; public comments are always welcome but ask that you wait until the issue is addressed on the agenda, ask to be recognized by the chair, and then limit comments to 3 minutes; no action will be taken on any item, not on the agenda. Attendees were reminded to sign the attendance sheet.

Chair Sedgwick also announced that YCD is resuming all presenters will have a seat at the board table when it is their turn to do a presentation. It was modified during COVID but now it is returning to normal procedure.

Minutes: Gabel made a motion to approve July 22, 2025, Minutes as written and reviewed, second by Mothershead, motion passed.

Board member absences: Mothershead made a motion to approve Brad Kraft's absence from today's meeting, second by Haaland, motion passed.

310's

- **Applications, Emergencies, Complaints & Violations:**

- **YE-01-26 - Bob Castleberry, Yellowstone River:** Description on application ' Tie into existing riprap that was originally part of a project constructed in 1991 by the previous landowner. The project would involve 50 feet of bank stabilization. At the end of the 50 feet, a trench would be dug inland for 150 feet and material would be placed in the trench and buried to act as a anchor point. Willows will be incorporated throughout the 50 feet of bank stabilization.' **Inspection date & team:** July 29th, Kraft, Mothershead, Castleberry, Ivie, Blackburn, Tallerico, Yeager, DNRC engineer. **Team report:** The team discussed Castleberry's proposal to trench and backfill a section of riverbank to protect his house but expressed concerns about the plan's effectiveness and potential impact on neighboring properties. The team agreed that while a small section of riprap maintenance might be permissible, they would recommend denial of the permit application until a clear engineering plan is provided. **Discussion:** Floodplain has denied the project because no engineering plans were included in the application; ACOE has approved the riprap maintenance but may need further information on how the trench will be incorporated into the project. FWP agrees with the Team Member report. **Board decision:** Mothershead made a motion to deny YE-01-25 as submitted and request Castleberry to submit a properly designed plan to

incorporate all activities under one design. The board will then evaluate the proposed new plan and decide based on a design that follows stream permitting specifications, second to the motion by Haaland, motion passed.

- **PARMT – Yellowstone River annual dredging notification.** Dredging will take place at the refinery inlet towards the middle/end of August.

YE-02-25 – Gene Klamert, Yellowstone River – initially, Klamert requested a time extension for permit #YE-27-22 but the board determined an updated application, and another onsite inspection was needed due to the time lapse. Also, due to several projects that are currently taking place in the vicinity of the proposed continuation of riprap. **Inspection team & date:** July 29th, Kraft, Mothershead, Klamert, Ivie, Blackburn, Tallerico, Yeager, DNRC engineer. Team inspection as reported by Mothershead: very little has changed over the course of 3 years. The riprap is needed so that the existing riprap on Klamert's property is not jeopardized due to erosion. Shimmer reported that the Corps would likely permit but would require reverification if plans change since the permit was issued with special conditions, and any changes would need to be processed through their office.

Klamert called into the meeting and provided an update on his buy/sell agreement for the property he sold to the City of Billings directly upstream of where he wants to place 550 LF of rock riprap. Klamert confirmed that he spoke with the city and they assure him they would honor their portion of the riprap installation promised in the previous sale agreement. As part of the agreement, the City will rip rap their property thus protecting Klamert's bank from being undercut and destroyed. Leaving this section unprotected will lead to property loss at Klamert's Feedlot and could threaten Duck Creek Road should the channel continue its inland migration. Jean noted that while the project could be completed this fall, it might be better to do it in the spring when conditions are moister.

Board decision: Haaland made a motion to approve the project design as proposed by Klamert's engineer and as discussed today, second by Mothershead, motion passed.

Other 310 Issues & Projects

- **310 Yellowstone River boat tour** was cancelled because one of the boats could not be fixed in time for the tour plus water levels were getting too low to go on the river at a later date.
- **Yellowstone River CD Council** – Gabel reported that the Northern Ag network will broadcast the State Invasive Weed Committee's news release in which Gabel is the featured speaker.
- **Gilly 310 application program** – Ivie is working with the developers of the program and will have intensive training later this week. The application link has been placed on the YCD website. A demonstration of the program will be given at a future YCD board meeting.

Partner/Agency Reports

- **YCD Administrator Report** – was received prior to meeting. No questions or concerns raised by Supervisors.
- **Partner Biologist Report** in addition to what was provided prior to meeting:
 - White, Robinson and Ivie developed a draft work plan which includes current, short term and long term projects and goals.
 - White reported that the Beaver Dam Analog (BDA) on Stoltz Fly Creek property is working well, noting significant vegetation growth and successful plantings. Minor repairs that were needed to the structure were completed. The group also addressed changes to a project scope due to deeper scouring than initially anticipated
- **Army Corps of Engineers** – Shimmer attended virtually and contributed during 310 discussions on the agenda. He also reported that they are waiting to issue a permit for the repair for the Duck Creek Bridge project.
- **Beartooth RC&D** – no current report
- **DNRC** – CDB report was emailed to board prior to meeting. Yeager did not have anything to add from State Lands.
- **Fish, Wildlife & Parks** – Blackburn and Blythe
 - A 124 permit will be issued next week for the Duck Creek Bridge repair. Scour at the piers is deeper than the engineers anticipated making a temporary gravel road not an option; rather a temporary work bridge will be built.
 - The office is busy doing fish monitoring
- **NRCS** – Shane Burton highlighted a couple of points on the report Zoe Craft provided to the board prior to the meeting:

- New Administration and Updates - All obligations for any new IRA applications and some modifications for current CSP-IRA and EQIP-IRA contracts are paused. The pause on payments for existing CSP-IRA and EQIP-IRA contracts has been lifted. We are currently under a hiring freeze, and this has affected MT NRCS' ability to get a new State Conservationist hired. Until that occurs, we will be under an acting STC. Gayle Berry is our current acting State Conservationist. We are under a continuing resolution that goes through September 30th, 2025.
- FY25 Program Applications- All the FY25 EQIP applications have been assessed, ranked, and have cost estimates. We have obligated 1 CSP contract and 8 EQIP contracts in the Billings office so far for FY25. Waiting to hear from the state office on any remaining approved applications for FY25 funding.
- FY26 Program Applications- We are accepting applications for FY26 funding and completing field visits for applicants. Batching period is anticipated to be the end of October; no official date has been set at this time.
- EQIP Contracts - Projects are consistently going in, especially stockwater, fencing, and irrigation projects.
- July 24th, 2025 - Zoe Craft hosted Soil Your Undies event with Northern Plains Resource Council as part of the library's summer reading program
- July 31st, 2025 - Zoe Craft & Crystal White attended Invasive Species Workshop in Pryor, MT.
- August 14th, 2025 - Zoe Craft attended the CCA Training at SARC. Many great presenters from MSU Extension and SARC.
- **Yellowstone County**
 - **Yellowstone County Commissioner** - no representative at today's meeting
 - Yellowstone Co. Extension** - Sammartano provided the following update for his office:
 - Working with Joe Lockwood/weed district to clear another 8 acres of woody invasive species from Two Moon Park with heavy machinery
 - Received \$6,000 in grant money from the Noxious Weed Trust Fund to revegetate the 8 acres
 - Seed Saving Workshop August 20th, 5:30pm, Billings Public Library (free class, open to the public)
 - Participating in Yellowstone River Cleanup Sept 13th
 - **Yellowstone Co. Floodplain** - Ronni Tallerico
 - Participated in the 310 discussions
 - Still working on the Hruschka violation
 - **Yellowstone Co. Weed Department** - Joe Lockwood reported:
 - This weed season has been very busy with an explosion of weeds not seen in years. His office has issued numerous non-compliance letters with some currently in the court system.
 - He tackled weed spraying differently this year by having all three spray trucks operating in the same county zone at the same time.
 - A \$60,000 Salt Cedar grant was awarded through the Noxious Weed Trust Fund
 - He provided a jet board tour for the Noxious Weed Trust Fund board to view the successful salt cedar spraying program on the Yellowstone River sprayed thus far. They were quite impressed with the results as they compared sprayed areas to areas yet to be sprayed.
 - Working on mastication of Russian Olive and Buckthorn at 2 Moon Park in Billings.
 - Next emphasis will be on the large infestation of Scotch Thistle in the Alkali Creek drainage
 - Began working with Burlington RR on leafy spurge infestations along the railway.

BUSINESS MEETING

- **Old Business**
 - **FY26 Annual Plan of Operations** - Mothershead made a motion to approve the final FYAPO (found on last pages of these Minutes), second by Gabel, motion passed.
 - **Future Land Use Map meeting** hosted by the City of Billings - Gabel and Robinson were unable to attend. Torske did attend and provided Minutes which will be forwarded to the board.
- **New Business**
 - Prioritize and determine dates for tours of:
 - Westend Reservoirs - Robinson will contact the engineering firm and schedule a tour asap
 - METRA Agriculture plots; Dover's Park; Fly Creek/Stoltz BDA project - Ivie will work with White and Craft to determine dates
 - Plant Materials Center - will tour late spring '26
 - Sedgwick greenhouse -when plants are ready to harvest

- **Legal Services** available for CD's - DNRC is no longer able to provide legal services to conservation districts due to the potential for conflicts of interest between the Department and a district or districts. This determination was made by DNRC's leadership following consultation with legal counsel. MACD applied for a DNRC grant to provide necessary legal services to all conservation districts. That grant application was approved, and the agreement was finalized. They anticipate little to no interruption in legal support during this transition. Additional information will be forthcoming but, in the meantime, districts are advised to direct legal requests to Stephanie Criswell, DNRC.
- **T-Report**
 - **July T-Report:** Gabel made a motion to accept July's Treasurer's Report as written and reviewed, second by Robinson, motion passed.
 - **FY26 Budget** - Robinson made a motion to approve YCD's FY26 budget in the amount of \$179,527.00, second by Mothershead, motion passed.
 - **Dues & Donations requests:**
 - Rocky Mountain College annual Yellowstone River cleanup - Gabel made a motion for YCD to contribute \$500 towards the 2025 cleanup efforts, second by Robinson, motion passed.
 - **Travel & Meetings:**
 - Area 4 meeting in Harlowton Sept. 22nd - board reviewed the invitation and will individually decide whether they want to attend or not. Craft will be attending and offered to take notes.
- **Standing Committee Reports**
 - **Westend Reservoirs** - Robinson will work with the City and engineering firm for an overview tour of the area for the YCD Board. Significant dirt work is happening now, and the tour will help YCD focus on what is achievable with the remaining grant money.
 - **Fly Creek** - Big Horn CD was notified that DNRC is ending the contract after 3 years of the 5-year approved grant to take water samples. Big Horn CD asked if YCD would be willing to help fund the water samples for the next 2 years. YCD Board asked that White supply the latest sample results, compare them to previous testing to aid in the board decision whether to continue sampling. It will be dependent upon the results showing significant changes substantiating more sampling. Decision will be made at a future YCD board meeting.
 - **YR Water Reservations:** Double L Ranch has reevaluated what is financially feasible in their water reservation application and has scaled the request back. The contractor and applicant will attend either the September or October board meeting to present the final application to the board.
- **Unscheduled Matters:**
 - Gabel mentioned he will be out of town and unavailable until the middle of October. He may be able to call in if he has internet service.
 - Robinson will contact the assistant METRA manager and ask for a September presentation to the YCD board.
- **Public comments** - none
- **Next YCD Board Meeting** - The next YCD meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 23, 2025.
- Gabel motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:24 a.m.


Chad Sedgwick, Chair


LaVerne Ivie, YCD Administrator