



BITTERROOT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(BCD)

**1709 NORTH FIRST STREET
HAMILTON, MONTANA 59840**

MINUTES

November 25, 2025

Board of Supervisors regular scheduled meeting, Tuesday the 25th of November 2025, called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Jeff Mark.

MEMBERS' PRESENT:

Tommy Dobberstein; Howard Eldredge; Mike Hansen; Joel Johnson; Dan Kerslake (by Zoom); Jeff Mark; Kent Myers; Todd Reagan; Paul Rosenberg; Chad Sutherlin.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Bob Nelson.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Marie Antonioli, Hamilton High School Envirothon Advisor; Christine Brissette, Trout Unlimited Bitterroot Project Manager (TU); Joyce Glick (General Public); Jason Lindstrom, MT Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP) (Zoom); Julie Ralston, BCD District Administrator; Kimberly Richardson, MSU Ravalli County Extension Resources/Horticulture Agent.

MINUTES

Rosenberg moved to approve the 28th of October 2025 minutes as sent. Myers seconded; motion carried.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD

1. Reviewed the Bitterroot Water Partnership's appreciation of BCD's sponsorship.
2. Marie Antonioli, Hamilton High School (HHS) Envirothon Advisor, thanked the BCD Board for its sponsorship of Hamilton High School's two Envirothon Teams. She reported that the 2026 State Envirothon Competition will be held the 20-21st of April 2026 in Great Falls. The 2026 topic is "Non-Point Source Pollution: It begins at home!" Mentors in Soils and Forestry have retired, so the HHS Envirothon Teams are looking for new mentors for these two topics. They are also looking for someone who can assist with non-point source pollution issues. Myers suggested Antonioli contact Hannah Riedl, Nonpoint Source Section Supervisor with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Mark suggested contacting the Water Pollution Advisory Council. Antonioli requested sponsorship for the registration of two teams and lodging. Mark moved to sponsor registration and lodging as per last year's sponsorship amount. Rosenberg seconded; motion carried.
3. Reviewed the Montana Governor's Office enforcement and compliance issues surrounding 310 permits. Myers asked if the BCD could move forward with amendments to its rules? The BCD Board stated it would like to wait until several issues have been resolved at the state level.
4. Reviewed Nick Koenig, PhD, Environmental Social Scientist University of Idaho, request for an interview regarding land management past, present, and future. The BCD Board agreed to contact Koenig and grant him an interview.

BCD COST-SHARE/EDUCATION/GRAANT PROGRAMS

1. Myers presented an update on the BCD Union Ditch Resource Improvement Grant. There are currently two phases to the Union Ditch upgrade project:
 - a. The Union Ditch Company applied for an Irrigation Development Grant that assists in the design for the Union Ditch upgrade. Union Ditch hired Morrison-Maierle for this part of the project and the BCD will contribute matching funds in the amount of \$10,500.00.
 - b. The BCD was awarded the RRGL grant that will only address the actual project construction. However, the funds will not be available until July 2026. These funds were awarded directly to the BCD. Therefore, the BCD will be responsible for soliciting bids for the work and oversite of construction. The funds awarded are \$125,000.00. The BCD Board discussed its funding concerns and the development of a memorandum of understanding between the Union Ditch Company and the BCD. The BCD will meet monthly with the Union Ditch and Morrison-Maierle to make sure things are moving along as it should.
2. Reviewed Teller Wildlife Refuge's request for reimbursement of its BCD cost-share agreement 002-2025, weed management, planting of forbs, and wildlife habitat improvement project. Rosenberg moved to approve reimbursement in the amount of \$9419.62 Myers seconded; motion carried.
3. Reviewed Sunset Irrigation District's letter of appreciation concerning BCD cost-share agreement 003-2026 irrigation delivery upgrade.
4. Reviewed Montana Technological University's letter of appreciation for Will Martin's BCD Steve Vogt Scholarship Award.
5. Christine Brissette, Trout Unlimited (TU) Bitterroot Project Manager, presented information concerning the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's "Healthy American Forests Initiative." The initiative offers up to \$800,000.00 in grant funds. Trout Unlimited is submitting a grant application for stream habitat improvements in the Upper Burnt Fork, Overwhich Creek, North Fork Willow Creek, Butterfly Creek and Bailey Creek. Brissette requested a letter of support from the BCD for TU's grant application. The BCD will act upon the request at its first meeting in December.

BCD COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Myers reported:
 - a. The Open Lands Board met on Thursday the 20th of November and reviewed the recently-submitted Chesebro Ranch LLC application. The property is located in the Willow Creek drainage and consists of approximately 252 acres. The Open Lands Board has scheduled a site visit for December 4th and will meet on the 18th of December to determine its recommendation.
 - b. KPAX covered a nice news article about the Bolin Ranch conservation easement. The Groff OLB application process should be completed by the end of the year. The Lippert and Lazy KD projects are moving forward through the easement process.
 - c. The Bitter Root Land Trust (BRLT) was impacted by the governmental shutdown and cutting of funding. However, it is moving forward with several new proposed conservation easements, in the Corvallis area.
2. Rosenberg gave a brief update on the resolutions reviewed and approved at the recent Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) meeting.

PARTNER REPORTS

1. Reviewed the November written report submitted by Catey Bauer, Conservation District Specialist Conservation Districts Bureau, CARDD.

3. Jason Lindstrom, Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP) reported:
 - a. He is currently in the process of data analysis entry.
 - b. There will be a public meeting on Monday the 1st of December concerning the proposed Sheep Creek mine. He encouraged the BCD Board to attend that meeting.
4. Rob Livesay, Ravalli County Planning and Floodplain Department, was not present.
5. Kimberly Richardson, MSU Ravalli County Extension Resources/Horticulture Agent, reported:
 - a. She is thankful the Farm Bill has been extended for a year. Not sure what things will look like in the future, but happy to move forward.
 - b. She will be working on several cold season articles.
 - c. The Bitterroot News & Brews outreach will start in January 2026.
6. No other partner reports.

NOTICES

The BCD Board reviewed:

1. Bitter Root Land Trust conservation appreciation party, Sunday, December 7, 2025, 4:00-6:30 pm, Wild Mare, Corvallis Montana.
2. Department of Environmental Quality request for public comment on draft water quality integrated report. Comment deadline date is January 13, 2026.
3. Department of Natural Resource Conservation (DNRC) Water Right Bureau notice of Peak Health Management Company LLC, surface water application Bitterroot River.
4. Montana Salinity Control groundwater summit December 9-10, 2025, High Plains Outpost, Great Falls, MT.
5. Ravalli County Floodplain notice of extension permit for Mike and Tracy Sass.
6. RCEDA Montana Organic Vegetable Expo December 9-11, 2025, Great Falls, MT.
7. Western Montana Grazing & Agriculture Conference Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center Missoula County Fair Grounds, Missoula, MT. January 29 & 30.

OLD BUSINESS

1. 310 Application BT033-2025 Michael David Stephenson/Bitterroot River-recreational dredging. Tabled until 2026.
2. 310 10-year Maintenance Application BT061-2025 Isis Laland TTEE, Willow Laland-Yeilding TTEE/North Burnt Fork-annual irrigation work to capture irrigation flow. Tabled.
3. 310 Application BT062-2025 Isis Laland TTEE, Willow Laland-Yeilding/North Burnt Fork-restore stream channel by removing excess material to capture irrigation flows. Tabled.

OTHER OLD BUSINESS

Reviewed:

1. Project completion 310 permit BT099-2024 NorthWestern Energy/Mitchell Slough-utility crossing.
2. Project completion 310 permit BT016-2025 Ivan Kralik/Churn Creek-irrigation headgate.
3. Project completion 310 permit BT047-2025 Roy Fenster/Mitchell Slough-stream channel restoration.
4. Project completion 310 permit BT056-2025 Bitterroot Water Partnership/North Burnt Fork Creek-streambank restoration.
5. Project completion 310 permit BT067-2025 Brian Langton/Big Creek-replace existing irrigation headgate.
6. Project completion 310 permit BT071-2025 Vicent Roth/Skalkaho Creek-fallen tree removal.

7. Project completion 310 permit BT078-2025 BCG Water Users/Sleeping Child Creek-fallen tree removal.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 310 Application BT079-2025 Rachel Feldman/Canyon Creek-removal of fallen tree and debris. Myers moved to approve with modification in that the tree will not be completely removed. Reagan seconded; motion carried.
2. 310 Application BT080-2025 Ian Northcott, Kott/Sleeping Child Creek-mitigation to remove debris and repair work done without a 310 permit. Tabled for inspection.
3. 310 Application BT081-2025 Dan Severson/North Swamp Creek-irrigation pumping station. Sutherlin moved to accept as a project. Kerslake seconded, motion carried.
4. 310 Application BT082-2025 Cooper Loop Water Rights LLC, Sherman Bennett/Lost Horse Creek-stabilize 75' of eroding bank to protect irrigation delivery system. Tabled
5. 310 Application BT083-2025 Ian Northcott, Jon & Donna Kott/Sleeping Child Creek-culvert crossing. Tabled.
6. 310 Emergency Notice BT084-2025 Paraic Neibergs, Mountain West Co./Grayhorse Creek-removed debris and sediment from existing culvert crossing. Sutherlin moved to approve the action taken. Kerslake seconded; motion carried.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS

1. Reviewed 310 Application BT085-2025 Kootenai Springs Ranch, Ryan Esch/Bitterroot River-repair existing bank stabilization.
2. Reviewed 310 Application BT086-2025 Bitterroot Water Partnership/North Burnt Fork Creek-stream restoration, riparian fencing, livestock water gap.

PUBLIC OPEN MIC

1. Eldredge stated his concerns for Tom Ruffatto and encouraged the BCD Board to visit him at the Springs Rehab Center in Missoula.
2. Rosenberg asked what the project is taking place on Lost Horse Creek. Lindstrom answered that it is a 124-permitted US Forest Service fish screen project.

DISTRICT BUSINESS

1. Rosenberg moved to approve BCD county checks 107177-107187. Myers seconded; motion carried.
2. Mark signed a memorandum of understanding between the BCD and the Montana Department of Administration, for a cooperative purchasing agreement.

The BCD Board reviewed its December calendar (out of order). Ralston reported she will be out of the office on the 26-28th of November. Mark reported he will be out of town for the BCD meeting on the 9th of December.

3. Mark temporarily closed the BCD meeting to discuss and review the two job applicants for the BCD administrative assistant job. Mark reopened the meeting and presented the BCD HR Committee recommendation for hire. Rosenberg moved to hire Timothy Puczkowskyj for the full-time administrative assistant position. Myers seconded; motion carried. Mark will call and offer him the position. If he accepts, the start date will be Monday, December 1st.

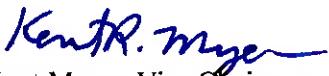
INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Available for review:

1. Bitter Root Land Trust Legacy Fall Newsletter.
2. Bitterroot Water Partnership "Rooted" Fall Newsletter.
3. Montana Watershed Council.
4. RCEDA November Food and AG Newsletter.
5. Uline.

Mark adjourned the meeting at 8:43 pm

The next BCD Board meeting will be held in person on Tuesday, the 9th of December 2025, at 7:00 p.m.


Kent Myers, Vice Chairman


Julie Ralston, District Administrator

Date: 12/9/25