

YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Board Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2025
1670 48th St. West Suite #2, Billings MT 59106
1:00 pm

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

NON-BOARD PRESENT: LaVerne Ivie - YCD; Steve Williams - Yellowstone Co. Attorney; Crystal White - YCD/PF; Don Sasse; Seanna Torske, Zoe Craft - NRCS; Ronni Tallerico - Yellowstone Co. Floodplain; Demi Blythe - FWP; Mary Hendricks, Veronica Grigalchik - DNRC; Joe Lockwood - Yellowstone Co. Weed District

Chair Sedgwick called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and immediately convened a closed session to discuss legal strategy with Steve Williams, Yellowstone Co. Attorney.

Chair Sedgwick opened the meeting to the public at 1:20 pm

Roll Call - After the introductions, Chair Sedgwick informed attendees: All issues will be addressed to the Chair; public comments are always welcome but 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.

Agenda Changes: None

Minutes: Kraft made a motion to approve October 21, 2025, Minutes as written and reviewed, second by Mothershead, motion passed.

Board member absences: None

310's

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

- **YE-04-26 - Tri-County Telephone, Blue Creek Horizontal Direction Drill (HDD) project** - The project will provide high speed internet to the residents along Blue Creek Road with only one (1) site boring under Blue Creek. Bore pits will be placed outside the floodplain boundaries and the bore depth will be kept at a minimum of 5' below the creek bed for the length of the bore to allow for lateral migration of the creek. **Board decision:** Mothershead made a motion to waive the onsite inspection and approve the HDD project as proposed and issue a 310 permit for YE-04-26; second by Haaland, motion passed.
- **Joy Stevens, Alkali Creek violation** - During the closed session, the board conferred with Counsel, Steve Williams on the next steps to take relative to the violation status. **Board decision:** Robinson made a motion for Williams to send a letter to counsel representing Stevens outlining the requirements going forward with a 310 application, second by Gabel, motion passed.

Other 310 Issues & Projects

- **Yellowstone River CD Council** - Gabel attended the Nov. 13th Council meeting which was held in Miles City. Highlights of the meeting included: Sara Ricketts is finding producers that want help with eradicating Russian Olive infestations. Conflicting opinions within the Council whether to designate Russian Olives as a noxious weed or not. The decision was not to pursue the designation. A discussion took place on ways the railroad derailment fine money will be utilized to restore side channel functions of the Yellowstone River. Also discussed was how to control 'water stealing plants' which Salt Cedar would be included in that effort.

BUSINESS MEETING

- **Old Business** - none
- **New Business** - none
- **T-Report**
 - **October T-Report:** Robinson made a motion to accept the October treasurer's report as submitted and reviewed, second by Mothershead, motion passed.
 - **Dues & Donations requests:** NILE's new dues structure was described by Kraft where a significant portion of dues goes directly to the NILE Foundation's scholarship fund. For example, a Business Partner membership is available for \$550, which includes six memberships with \$450 going directly to the scholarship fund. Gabel made a motion for YCD to purchase a Business Partner membership in the amount of \$550, second by Robinson, motion passed.
 - **Travel & Meetings:** none presented
 - **Office Expenses** - New blinds and installation cost for the office amounts to \$859.00. Kraft made a motion for YCD to pay the landlord for the new blinds, second by Mothershead, motion passed with Robinson abstaining.

Standing Committee Reports

- **Westend Reservoirs** - Robinson attended a meeting with Billings Parks acting director and head project engineer with Public Works and FWP. Everyone seems to be on the same page as to what the final project should entail but there is still the issue of how to fund it. The acting Parks Director will be invited to the next YCD Board meeting for a presentation of the City's expectations.
- **Fly Creek** - White reported that she conducted the last round of water sampling April 26 - May 2, 2025. Overall findings confirm that most of the test results indicate no significant changes during the years of sampling. Unfortunately, DNRC has cancelled Big Horn CD's grant to conduct the study in the 2-county area, and any further testing must be funded from CD resources. Torske mentioned to get a true indication of water quality, several years of testing must be conducted to establish a base. Supervisor consensus to 'pull the plug' on the project because very little variation in the test results has appeared.
- **Pollinator Fair grant applications** - Haaland and White reported that an application was submitted to Friends of NACD districts grant program today for \$2500. If unsuccessful in obtaining a grant from that source, a DNRC Pollinator Grant will be applied for. The June 20, 2026, event will be held in Pioneer Park in coordination with Billings Park and Recreation department. Discussion: Board encouraged White to proceed with plans as outlined today.
- **Yellowstone River CD Water Reservations application:** Double LL Ranch, LLC pre-application meeting is scheduled for Dec. 2, 2025.
- **Yellowstone River CD Water Reservation 10-yr review:** Supervisors began the process and were unclear on how to complete certain portions. Ivie was directed to contact DNRC to get guidance, and present at the next board meeting for edits and approval.

Partner/Agency Reports

- **YCD Administrator Report** - was received prior to meeting.
- **Partner Biologist Report** - White participated throughout the meeting.
- **Army Corps of Engineers** - unable to attend meeting
- **Beartooth RC&D** - no current report
- **DNRC - CDB report emailed to supervisors**
- **Fish, Wildlife & Parks** - Demi Blythe reported:
 - Issued a 124 to the City of Billings for riprap work below East Bridge
 - FWP has been participating in the Westend Reservoirs meetings
- **NRCS - Zoe Craft**
 - The tentative batching period deadline for financial program applications is January 15th, 2026 as the previous deadline was during the government shutdown.
 - USDA is funded through a CR through September 30th, 2026, we are waiting on the appropriation for NRCS specifically otherwise the CR goes to Jan 30th, 2026.
 - We have a new State Conservationist! Gayle Berry, who has been serving as our Acting State Conservationist, has accepted the position.
 - Gayle will be representation for NRCS at the MACD Annual Meeting in Billings.
 - Years of service awards from MACD provided to Brad (5 year) & Chad (15 year)
 - North 40 Grow & Tell Day forage production timing results available

- **Yellowstone County**
 - **Yellowstone County Commissioner** - unable to attend meeting
 - **Yellowstone Co. Extension** - unable to attend meeting
 - **Yellowstone Co. Floodplain** - Ronni Tallerico
 - Still working on getting the Hruschka violation cleaned up
 - **Yellowstone Co. Weed Department** - Joe Lockwood provided an update on the weed districts activities:
 - 2025 Salt Cedar YR spraying project was finished on 11-14-25. Cleanup was limited to the north side of the river due to widespread thick infestation. It was quite labor intensive with backpack spraying only. Most of the grant was used on labor, leaving quite a bit of chemical left over for the 2026 program. Joe will share the final report with the board next month.
- **Unscheduled Matters:** **Mary Hendricks** gave a quick overview of a new program entitled MT CD Water Reservations Explorer. A geospatial information system database to view publicly noticed project areas that shape each conservation district water reservation boundary.
- **Public comments** - none
- **Next YCD Board Meeting** - Due to the YCD Administrator going in for surgery in December, it was decided to hold the next board meeting the 2nd or 3rd week in January.
- **Gabel motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 pm**

Chad Sedgwick, Chair

LaVerne Ivie, YCD Administrator