

YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Board Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2026

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

1:00 pm

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chad Sedgwick - Chair, Brad Kraft - Vice-Chair, Leroy Gabel (virtually), Jackie Haaland, Bryan Mothershead

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Stacey Robinson

NON-BOARD PRESENT: LaVerne Ivie - YCD; Crystal White - YCD/PF/NRCS
Virtually: Anthony Sammantara - Extension; Zoe Craft - NRCS; Veronica Grigaltchik - DNRC;
Others: Carolyn Siever, YRPA; Don Sasse

Chair Sedgwick called the meeting to order at 1:00 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 January 15, 2026, Minutes as written and reviewed, second by Mothershead, motion passed.

Board member absences: Mothershead made a motion to approve Stacey Robinson's absence from today's meeting for personal reasons, second by Haaland, motion passed.

YCD Candidacy Petitions - YCD has two (2) supervisor positions whose terms expires Dec. 31, 2026. Gabel and Haaland indicated they have submitted their petitions to seek reelection.

310's

- **Applications, Emergencies, Complaints & Violations:**
 - **Joy Stevens, Alkali Creek Violation** - No new information from the County Attorney's office.

Other 310 Issues & Projects

- **Yellowstone River CD Council** - Gabel thanked YCD on behalf of the Council for drafting a letter of support to the Plank Stewardship Initiative Grant to fund a weed coordinator position. Chair Sedgwick read the draft and called for a motion to sign and send. Kraft made a motion to do so, second by Haaland, motion passed.
- **310 Model Rules Draft ARMS** - The board examined and discussed the proposed changes to the 310 Model Rules and how the changes may impact YCD in issuing 310 permits. Voicing their approval of the inclusion of 'no instream ponds' and not seeing problems with the other proposed wording and/or additions to the Rules, they instructed Ivie to continue to participate with the committee that is overseeing the rule changes.

BUSINESS MEETING

- **Old Business** - None
- **New Business**
 - **NRCS/YCD Local Work Group** - Zoe Craft developed a flyer and a questionnaire for this year's LWG meeting and distributed for YCD approval. The Board selected March 17, 2026, as the date to hold the LWG county meeting beginning an hour before the March YCD board meeting.

- **KULR8 TV interview** - Kraft participated in an interview with the local TV station to discuss impacts the dry weather has on irrigated crops and livestock. Kraft gave an upbeat report because currently soil moisture is in great shape. He provided a dryland farmer's contact information to discuss impacts on winter crops.
 - **Realtors Association** - request for YCD to conduct a presentation during a lunch and learn session on June 22, 2026. How irrigation affects the real estate industry is the main topic. Mothershead made a motion to plan the presentation and have YCD be an active participant, second by Haaland motion passed. Sedgwick and Ivie will inquire with a couple of presenters from the last workshop YCD hosted on irrigation to determine their willingness to participate again.
- **Treasurer's Report**
 - **January T-Report:** Kraft made a motion to accept January Treasurer's report as submitted and reviewed, second by Mothershead, motion passed.
 - **Revisit Supervisor Per Diem:** YCD's current policy that has been in effect over 25 years is to reimburse Supervisors for time spent outside of YCD board meetings. The current rate is: \$50 for 4 hrs. or less and \$100 for anything over 4 hrs. Discussion and justification for amending the current policy: Recognizing the Westend Reservoirs takes up a lot of time in addition to the monthly board meetings. Ivie has been keeping track of Supervisor time and paying according to the current policy (tracking dates and hours during the month). It is quite confusing for grant reporting, and a suggestion was made to amend the current policy to apply to the Westend Reservoirs only which is: Supervisor time will be reimbursed at \$50/hr. while conducting Westend Reservoir business outside of a regularly scheduled board meeting. **Board decision:** Kraft made a motion to pay \$50/hr. when YCD Supervisors are conducting business and working on behalf of the Westend Reservoirs, second by Haaland, motion passed unanimously.
 - **Dues & Donations requests:** none
 - **Travel & Meetings:** Haaland, Mothershead and Ivie reported on the Yellowstone County jail tour they along with Robinson attended - Feb. 11th. It was eye opening and illustrated Yellowstone County's need to expand the jail.

Standing Committee Reports

- **Westend Reservoirs** - no report
- **Pollinator Activities** - Haaland and White
 - **NACD grant** - The pollinator grant White submitted on behalf of the YCD was not chosen as a finalist so therefore not funded.
 - **Pollinator Fair** - June 20, 2026, location Pioneer Park in Billings - YCD is applying for a DNRC education grant and the group discussed what is considered fundable in the current presented budget and workplan with DNRC employee Grigaltchik. Fine tuning the grant to exclude certain elements and include employee salaries and administration would be allowed in grant application. White and Ivie will rework the application and submit it online.
 - YCD liability insurance does not meet Billings Parks & Rec requirements and must be increased to \$1.5 million. Haaland made a motion for YCD to pay an additional \$372 in insurance to meet Billings requirements, second by Kraft motion passed.
 - If YCD is unsuccessful in getting the DNRC grant, YCD will solicit businesses in Yellowstone County to help fund the project. Supervisors and employees will ask businesses for donations.
- **Pollinator planting at Descro Park**, located in the Billings Heights - White is working with Billings Parks and Rec to apply for a DNRC Pollinator grant to increase pollinator habitat in Billings, specifically Descro Park. A draft of the planting plan was presented for YCD review and edits. Edits will be incorporated, DNRC will assist with the overall grant application, and the final grant product will need to be voted on by the YCD board by March 15th. There is a considerable amount of detailed planning to be completed before the board can review the overall scope of the project. IF everything works out and the board approves the plan the grant may be considered in a special board conference call by the grant deadline of March 15th.
- **School activities:** White is participating in a week-long Stem program for students focusing on Monarch butterflies and Milk Weed plants. She also reached out to St. Francis School and offered to conduct stream table training.

Partner/Agency Reports

- **YCD Administrator Report** - sent to Supervisors prior to the 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** - unable to attend meeting
- **NRCS** - Zoe Craft provided the following report relative to NRCS Updates:
 - Going forward, Rhonda Mohar CED for Carbon County will be covering Yellowstone County. Stephane Cawley CED for FSA in Yellowstone County took another position with FSA in MA.
 - Local Working Group meeting scheduled for March 17th, 2026.
 - Shane Burton took over as chair for the Bozeman Area Soil Health team, looking to have some field days scheduled across Bozeman area, including Yellowstone County.
 - FY26 Program Applications- Working with applicants to finalize the projects they are applying to pursue. Getting some last-minute field visits completed for folks who signed up closer to the January 15th, 2026, deadline for FY26 funding. We are moving towards our first set of application reviews with our area office.
 - FY27 Program Applications- NRCS is accepting applications for FY27 funding, and starting to put together a list for field visits this Spring/Summer.
 - Regenerative Pilot Program -- Work with NRCS staff, partners, or technical service providers to conduct a whole farm assessment. Use at least one primary regenerative management practice (see list below); and Agree to perform soil health testing in the first and last year of the contract (at a minimum) to establish a starting baseline and to record the resulting changes. Primary practices include: Conservation Crop Rotation (328), Contour Farming (330), Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop (331), Cover Crop (340), Drainage Water Management (554), Forage Harvest Management (511), Forest Stand Improvement (666), Irrigation Water Management (449), Mulching (484), Nutrient Management (590), Pest Management Conservation System (595), Grazing Management (528), Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329), Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced (345), Strip cropping (585)
 - February 2nd-4th, 2026 - Soil Health Symposium - huge success with over 400 attendees
- **Yellowstone County**
 - **Yellowstone County Commissioner** - unable to attend meeting
 - **Yellowstone Co. Extension** - Sammartano reported he is currently receiving lots of questions about how to best care for trees during this warm dry winter. His office is suggesting folks' water on days that reach greater than 40 degrees. He provided Extensions "Winter Injury Guide" for reference and tree care instructions. He will bring copies to YCD's Arbor Day tree giveaway. He also provided a document that has all of the regions upcoming horticulture related classes and workshops (including the YCD's Arbor Day Tree Giveaway) .
 - **Yellowstone Co. Floodplain** - Ronni Tallerico unable to attend meeting
 - **Yellowstone Co. Weed Department** - Joe Lockwood unable to attend meeting but sent the follow report: Yellowstone Co. Weed District will present the Salt Cedar grant to the Noxious Weed Trust Fund next month. He plans to sign a contract with a local company to do targeted drone monitoring on the project.
- **Unscheduled Matters:**
 - **Stage Coach Trail** - YCD received a draft of the three (3) proposed routes being considered for the pedestrian/bike trail that is scheduled to be constructed adjacent to the Zimmerman Trail. Supervisors reviewed but offered no official comments.
- **Public comments** - Carolyn Siever, mentioned YRPA is planning to install a shelterbelt patterning after YCD's Living Snow Fence on Highway 3. She will work with YCD and others to develop a plan.
- **Next YCD Board Meeting** - March 17th following the LWG meeting at 1:00 pm
- Kraft motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:40 pm