

YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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**YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Board Meeting Minutes**

April 21, 2026

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

1:00 pm

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Brad Kraft - Vice-Chair

NON-BOARD PRESENT: LaVerne Ivie - YCD; Mike Waters & Chris White- Yellowstone Co. Commissioners;
Steve Williams - Yellowstone Co. Attorney; Keri Bilbo, Seanna Torske & Zoe Craft - NRCS;
Crystal White - PF/NRCS; Joe Lockwood - Weed District; Demi Blythe - FWP;
Carolyn Siever, YRPA; Ronni Tallerico, Yellowstone Co. Floodplain
310 applicants: Joy Stevens
Virtually: Veronica Wolf, DNRC; Peter Taylor, Attorney for Joy Stevens
Public: Don Sasse

Chair Sedgwick called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm

Roll Call - After the introductions, 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: Addition of Mill Creek Farm Yellowstone River water reservation application

Minutes: Gabel made a motion to approve March 17, 2026, Minutes as written and reviewed, second by Robinson, motion passed.

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

310's

- **Applications, Emergencies, Complaints & Violations:**
 - **YE-15-26 - Century Link/Lumen** horizontal direction drill fiber optics line adjacent and under Highway 87 which shows on the map as a dry creek bed. Robinson made a motion to declare a non-project because it does not impact a perennial flowing stream, second by Mothershead, motion passed.
 - **YE-16-26 Joy Stevens, Alkali Creek** - application presented to remedy violation status of ongoing project. The goal of this project is to reestablish an in-stream pond for irrigation as the existing pond had silted in. Due to collapse of the south bank, a retaining wall will be installed with rip rap placed in the pond to prevent erosion. **Board decision:** Gabel made a motion to approve the application as designed by engineers, second by Haaland, motion passed.
- **Other 310 Issues & Projects**
 - **310 Model Rule changes:** A virtual informational meeting relating to the changes will be held in May hosted by DNRC. YCD personnel will attend the meeting to better understand the changes. Gabel motion to table discussion until the June meeting, second by Haaland, motion passed.
 - **Yellowstone River CD Council** - Gabel: the Exxon Oil spill fine money is still being distributed for worthy projects on the Yellowstone River. The Council was successful in getting a Common Buckthorn survey funded.

The next YR CDC meeting will be held in Miles City on May 28th. The YR tour is scheduled for July and YCD wrote a letter of support for the grant that was submitted to DNRC to help fund the tour.

- **Old Business**

- **Personnel Committee** - convened and soft interviewed a prospective part time employee. Another meeting will be scheduled and the results reported at the May board meeting.
- **YCD/PF contract** - A contract termination letter was presented to the board for approval. Mothershead made a motion to accept the letter as written and send to Pheasants Forever main office, second by Haaland, motion passed.
- **Local Work Group** - Craft provided an overview of the top priority issues discussed at the March meeting. Robinson made a motion to accept the results from the LWG meeting as YCD & NRCS priorities for FY27, second by Mothershead, motion passed.
 - 1. **Urban** - Water-wise education; River health & Tributaries education and mapping inventory
 - 2. **Agriculture** - Invasive species - grass, forbs and woody species; funding and education; Irrigation efficiency; Soil Health

- **New Business**

- **YE-03-26 - Mill Creek Yellowstone River Water Reservation application:** New irrigation on 145 acres requiring 300 acre feet of water, source Yellowstone River, method of irrigation: pump, pipeline to pivots. Gabel made a motion to accept and forward the application to DNRC for review, second by Robinson, motion passed.

- **Treasurer's Report**

- **T-Report:** Mothershead made a motion to accept March's Treasurer's report as submitted and reviewed, second by Haaland, motion passed.
- **Dues & Donations requests:**
 - **Woody Invasive Group Yellowstone River tour** - Gabel made a motion to donate \$200 towards the cost of the YR tour, second by Robinson, motion passed.
- **Travel & Meetings:**
 - Governor's Soil Health Week reception - Ivie attended the reception on behalf of the YCD. Robinson made a motion to approve travel after-the-fact for lodging and mileage for \$451.56, second by Mothershead, motion passed.
 - Sedgwick was unable to attend the Environmental Quality Council meeting March 24-25, 2026 in Helena

Standing Committee Reports

- **Arbor Day April 24, 2026** - 443 trees have been ordered for distribution; 10+ agency people have committed to help; Extension will staff a table with tree planting demonstrations and will have educational materials about tree varieties and pollinator requirements; Huntley Project and Lockwood FFA students will help with parking and tree handout; the weed district will man their weed education trailer.
 - Signage: Two (2) feather flags were ordered and received. Supervisors will assemble after today's meeting.
- **Fly Creek Close-out Meeting** - The landowner meeting was scheduled for May 20th, but the main presenter cannot attend on that date. The group will reschedule for a day in June.
- **Pollinator Fair status** - Haaland, White & Ivie - The pollinator fair is on track for June 20th at Pioneer Park.
- **YR Water Reservation applications:**
 - Double L Ranch - Differences are being resolved for this application, and it is slowly moving forward.
 - Wade Keller and Brandon Keller - DNRC's contracted engineer contacted YCD and has begun review of the applications. If completed in time, the public hearing can be scheduled for the May YCD board meeting.
- **Westend Reservoirs** - Robinson reported the south reservoir will be developed as a conservation area with the area dedicated to a lake rather than a reservoir. There is quite a bit of momentum on the city's part for the conservation and amenities portions of the area.
 - Bill presented for \$60 from Selby's for color plots. Haaland made a motion to pay the invoice out of the DNRC grant, second by Gabel, motion passed.

Partner/Agency Reports

- **YCD Administrator Report** - sent to Supervisors prior to the meeting.
- **Partner Biologist Report** - White provided a pollinator fair written report and participated throughout the meeting.
- **Army Corps of Engineers** - unable to attend meeting
- **Beartooth RC&D** - Mothershead attended the last meeting and reported on a few of the programs and loans the RC&D is currently working on.
- **DNRC** - CDB report emailed to supervisors and Wolf provided input throughout the meeting when asked.
- **Fish, Wildlife & Parks** - Demi Blythe - Duck Creek Bridge construction is moving forward. If high water becomes an issue, construction will need to take a break until flows recede.
- **NRCS** - Zoe Craft presented obligation documents for board signatures and gave an overview of practices, locations in the county and amounts associated with the contracts.
 - **Keri Bilbo, NRCS Area Conservationist** - reported that more funding for conservation programs may be coming Montana's way. The state has applications waiting to be funded. The new State Conservationist has Montana roots with an agricultural background. All NRCS personnel are always available if needed at the local level.
 - **Seanna** - is coordinating with the NRCS Hydrologist to present Fly Creek results; local FSA office will be hiring for local positions.
- **Yellowstone County**
 - **Yellowstone County Commissioner** - Commissioners Chris White and Mike Waters were present for the entire meeting and contributed comment when appropriate.
 - **Yellowstone Co. Extension** - Sammartano is coordinating Extension's role in the Arbor Day event.
 - **Yellowstone Co. Floodplain** - Ronni Tallerico reported the Clark's Fork River landowner dispute is continuing but as of now, she does not have jurisdiction in the complaint.
 - Hruska cleaned up most of the debris on his property downstream of the I90 bridge but now has brought in dirt and placed adjacent to and on the road.
 - **Yellowstone Co. Weed Department** - Joe Lockwood - Landowners are applying for chemical cost share; all summer positions are filled for spray crews; weed district name change to Invasive Plant Division has been temporarily tabled pending further discussion.
 - **Yellowstone River Parks Association** - Carolyn Siever discussed the channel modification project at Dover Park. The adjacent landowner is objecting to the project, so they are trying to work through that. A 310 application will be submitted for a multi-year maintenance plan at the Blue Creek fishing access site boat ramp.
- **Unscheduled Matters:** none
- **Public comments** - none
- **Next YCD Board Meeting** - May 20, 2026, at 1:00 pm (later changed to May 26th @ 1:00 pm)
- Robinson motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:25 pm