

MWCC Board Meeting Minutes



March 18, 2021, 1:00pm – 4:00pm
Zoom

MWCC Leadership:

Chair: Zach Owen, zach@beaverheadwatershed.org
Co-Vice Chair: Michelle McGree, MMcGree@mt.gov
Treasurer: Wayne Gardella, wgardella2001@yahoo.com
Secretary: Tana Nulph, tnulph@bhwc.org

Attendees:

Board: Michelle McGree, Tana Nulph, Eric Trum, Barbara Chillcott, Sarah Bates, Zach Owen, Mike Koopal, Amy Seaman, Dusty Olson

Staff: Ethan Kunard, Terri Nichols, Emma DesLauriers (BSWC)

Welcome: Zach welcomed the Board and Staff to the meeting.

MWCC business:

- December Meeting Minutes:
 - Eric noted that Charles' term is ending in June – not renewing for new term but will stay on until blank date to keep us from falling under our required number of board members (#).
 - **with those edits, Mike moved to approve minutes; Michelle seconded; all in favor.**

ED updates (Ethan)

- Ethan put together an E.D. Report for board members to review, including financial information and activity updates.
 - *Discussion:*
 - *Board members appreciate the report – it is a major time saver and useful to prepare for board meetings.*
 - *We had talked about a reserve fund to potentially put away some money for future expenditures – is that included in this budget or something we need to work on in the future?*
 - *That's something we need to discuss. Looking at this balance sheet, we have – in theory - ~\$110K, some of which could go into a reserve fund for MWCC. The problem there is with the way some of our grants work on a pass-through basis, we would want to be careful that we also have a cushion to cover large reimbursements as well as the amount in the reserve account.*
 - *Mike says based on calculations, MWCC is sitting at a 6-month operating reserve right now. Our funding is in better shape than it has been in years. We are getting closer to creating a restricted fund. This would provide some*

interest in income and start separating money out into pots more easily understood by the BOD.

- *Have you heard anything about the tax penalty from 2019 that you had mentioned previously?*
 - *We haven't heard anything, but this could just be a result of the IRS being really far behind on everything due to COVID.*
- *Remind me again what fixed assets are (above total assets on balance sheet)?*
 - *That's assets that MWCC owns like computers.*
- *It would be a good thing for MWCC to have a profit/loss statement.*

Program Updates

- Fall Watershed Tour:
 - Dates set: Sept. 15-17, 2021
 - Rocky Mountain Front
 - Close to having options confirmed for lodging. Will spend first night in Choteau. Will then go to the Blackfeet Reservation and will stay at either Glacier Peaks Hotel/Casino or in Cut Bank.
 - Reached out to several partners within the Blackfeet Nation so have several project ideas to highlight, but if you have any suggestions, they are welcome.
 - Amy mentioned that Montana Audubon has staff working with Blackfeet Nation that may be able to provide support for the tour.
 - Looking at providing different tracks for the tour to accommodate varying interests and also plan for social distancing, potentially.
 - Discussion:
 - *These tours are a great way to showcase valuable things that people are doing on the ground. Also great for fundraising and for board member recruitment. Getting a more diverse board – in terms of interests/perspectives represented – could be accomplished through the tour, potentially through tour sponsorship. Guides in the Rocky Mountain Front? Think about this as you're talking about the event.*
 - *Engaging the tribe and bringing a tribal member onto the BOD has been a goal for many years.*
 - *The way that we arrive there is important – being aware of the impact of moving around a large crowd – potentially pay tour participants (project hosts not audience). Need to be really explicit about asking, in front of a group of people, how MWCC could best support the tribe? Not just put on a show for us – but we're here to listen and find out what we can do – to improve effectiveness into the future.*

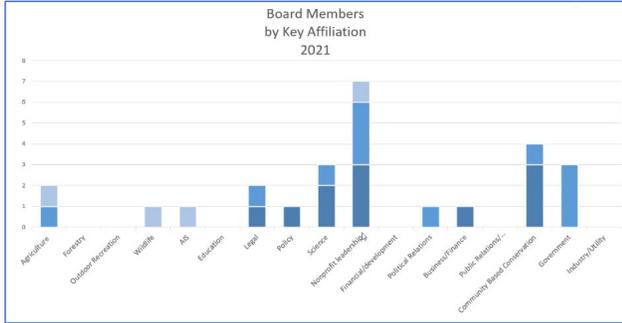
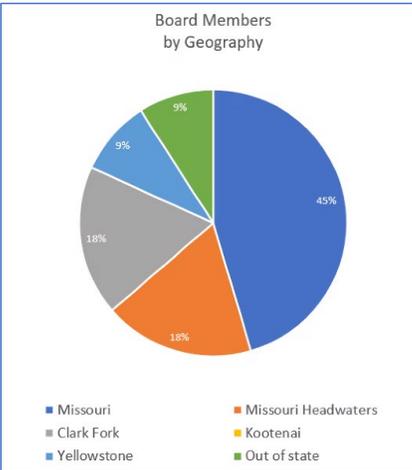
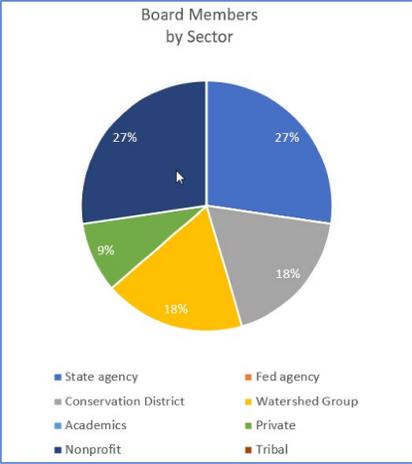
Board Governance

- AIS Update (Dusty):
 - Invasive moss balls in aquariums throughout the United States including Montana
 - USFWS took the charge on dealing with these.
 - Idaho caught their first mussel-fouled boats of the year. Many check stations aren't open yet and we already have a steady stream of visitors to our state, so it's good to be aware of that.
 - FWP's aquatic invasive species team is looking for ways to get in front of folks – of all ages/interests – to present on AIS.

- April 20th season planning meeting for inspection stations/planning groups – Dusty can provide info on this if anyone is interested in participating.
 - Painting clean/drain/dry on boat ramps.
 - MACD took a resolution to national association looking to secure a region-wide partnership so Montana can work with neighboring states on AIS.
 - FWP partners did 174,000 inspections last year, found 35 mussel-fouled boats. Have contracts with CDs.
 - Tiber Reservoir going into 5th year of intensive sampling early detection monitoring after finding a Zebra mussel villager (larval form) in 2017. Haven't found any since.
 - Getting more fossil snails in the state. Need to be conscious that AIS is not just Zebra or Quagga mussels.
 - Latest newcomer west of the Divide is New Zealand mud snail.
 - Discussion:
 - *The number of boats that have been found at each check station, especially in Beaverhead County, has been pretty high. The Lima/Dell check station was 2nd highest in the state due to I-15 coming in from Idaho. How many boats were not caught?*
 - *Ethan and Michelle met with Tom Woolf (FWP) and he was really interested in integrating AIS into everything FWP does.*
 - *Flathead Lake Bio-Station working on creating some short AIS videos for the public – maybe MWCC could partner on that.*
 - *MWCC considering what the cost of NOT investing in AIS is.*
 - *Big Sky Watershed Corps members are receiving AIS training this year.*
 - *Are there check stations along the Rocky Mountain Front that we could visit on our tour?*
 - *Yes, the Blackfeet Nation has some (3 maybe).*
- Executive/Finance Committee (Zach):
 - The Executive Committee working on getting up-to-date on Financials/Budget. Recognized this as a need. MNA Financial Training should help.
 - Governance Committee looking for new board member with experience in budgets.
 - A short-term fundraising work group may be in our future. /

Commented [TN1]: Pretty sure this should be “faucet snails,” but ask Dusty to be sure.

- Governance Committee (Eric):
 - Created spreadsheet of key strengths/affiliations of board members.
 - Barbara and Charles' terms expiring soon.
 - Governance committee talking about bringing board members on at one time each year so terms aren't so staggered.
 - 10 is our minimum number of board members (bylaws)
 - Need to fill several seats that will become open over 2021/2022. (Barbara, Charles, Eric, and Amy). (Mike and Sarah also done with first terms at the end of this year – whether or not they stay on for another term will remain to be seen.)
 - Governance/Executive committees will meet to discuss some potential new board member candidates. Have already spoken to some of the candidates.
 - In the past, we've had a balance between government personnel and nonprofit staff. It's important to keep these entities engaged, but also necessary to think outside of these two perspectives.
 - If anyone is interested in participating with the governance committee (in terms of reaching out to prospective members) get in touch with Eric.
 - Become more deliberate with selection, which is consistent with best practices for nonprofit management. Not just going to our friends.
 - When Barbara and Eric leave, it will be our first time in history not having agency representation on our board. We should think about what to do about this. Keri Bilbo is our government liaison, maybe we should



revisit this mechanism to see if we could formalize our relationship with government entities in some way.

- Discussion:
 - Water committee has several agencies involved. This is a good way to keep them invested with MWCC.
 - So, you are talking to 5 people now and the goal would be to bring on at least 1 by the end of

the year?

- We need to bring on at least 3 new people by the end of the year to stay within our bylaws.
- It would be nice to not see so much board member turnover at the same time.
- Do we want to consider updating the minimum number of board members (10) in our bylaws?
 - Possibly, we should review these documents regardless.

• Water Committee (Ethan):

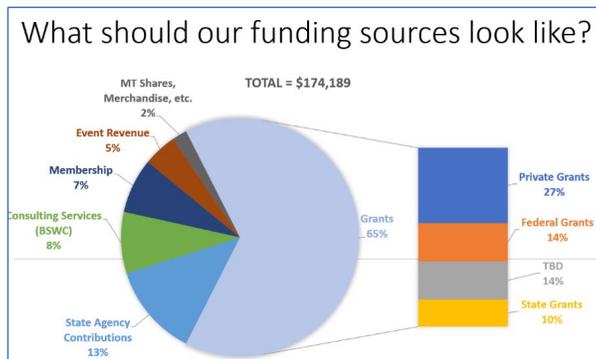
- Adam has agreed to stay on as chair of Water Committee even though he is no longer on the MWCC board.
- Working to see how the Water Committee could be brought in/utilized more. They've been providing support with BLM Low-Tech Process Based 5-year agreement and have been serving as reviewers for Watershed Fund project and BSWC-project grants.
- Spring trainings?
 - Our trainings have recently centered on organizational capacity, financial management, etc. more than technical trainings.
 - Talking with FutureWest/High Divide Collaborative about partnering on a workshop to provide capacity support to watershed groups.

Break – 10 minutes

• Financial Updates (Zach):

- What should our funding sources look like?
- Many board members took recent MNA trainings. Takeaway lessons:

- Each board meeting should include fiduciary, generative, and strategic components.
- Generative is especially important – this is not just answering questions but coming up with questions. Bigger picture thinking.



• Fundraising (Zach):

- We already have a finance committee that can start taking on finances.
- Need a fundraising committee or work group to help us develop a fundraising strategy to get us away from our dependence on grants.
- Currently, we are funding a lot of projects rather than capacity, because that's what our grant funders prefer to fund. If our money came from other sources, we could decide how we use it.
- Discussion:
 - A mentor to help us figure this type of thing out may be helpful.

- *Jennifer Schoonen has volunteered to help out with a fundraising committee/work group.*
- *We have a lot of intelligence on our board – not being an “expert” shouldn’t scare anyone away from tackling some of these issues.*
- *Idea: rather than forming a standing committee, may be better to create a targeted work group with a set task to accomplish within a certain timeframe.*
- *It would be a good idea to include someone like Autumn Coleman on a fundraising committee to help us figure out how to leverage agency funding.*
- *What happened to the idea of getting an appropriation (for the WMG program/CARRD)?*
 - *It didn’t make it through the budget.*
 - *CARRD is really struggling right now due to revenue being down from oil/gas.*
- *There are a lot of ways to fundraise besides just applying for grants or asking people for money – like the Legislature.*
- *MACD has been really actively engaged in having conversations with the Legislature to find ways to work with CARRD and others to secure funding for conservation. MWCC needs to get involved with this effort in the 2023 Legislature.*
- *This seems like the time to create an idea for how to secure funding for MWCC/watershed groups. Let’s not wait for the issue to come up.*
- *Need to start drafting our wish list for projects/activities we would take on if we suddenly had all the funding we could use.*
- *I-90 funding?*
- *Need to start by creating fundraising strategy.*
- *MNA putting on fundraising symposium in April – MWCC could pay for the whole organization if any board members are interested in participating.*
- *Fundraising Strategy (Ethan):*
 - *Ideas and Questions to Consider:*
 - *What are our fundraising goals?*
 - *Current goals: cover operating expenses and raise funds for the Watershed Fund*
 - *Goals to consider:*
 - *Increased investments from larger donors*
 - *For reference, our average contribution from Supporting Members in 2020 (individuals, nonprofits, watershed groups, and for-profit) was \$110*
 - *Staff time to manage the membership program cost an average of \$50/contribution.*
 - *Sustained and consistent funding from agency partners*
 - *Increased unrestricted funding from foundations*
 - *Create a balanced and diverse portfolio of revenue streams*
 - *Make a profit from events?*
 - *What else? What goals do we want to set?*
 - *What are our fundraising strategies?*
 - *Current strategy: Opportunistically cover our operating expenses and put money into the Watershed Fund by whatever means available. Tail wagging the dog?*

- What kind of strategy do we want to develop?
- Strategies to consider:
 - Create a fundraising campaign aimed at an audience outside our existing partner network.
 - Improve political stature to create funding opportunities government administration and MT Legislature
 - Not just for MWCC, but for watershed groups across the state
 - Develop a visionary list of programs and projects so we can be prepared for future funding windfalls
 - Improve outreach and communications so existing and prospective donors can see our impact
- What does our funding makeup look like? n
 - What do we want it to look like?
- Who are we engaging?
 - Who do we need to be engaging?
- Are we on a sustainable trajectory?
 - How do we ensure we put ourselves on a sustainable trajectory?
- How does the board fulfill fundraising needs?
 - How do we want the board to fulfill fundraising needs?
- *Discussion:*
 - *Advocating for MWCC is a major role of board members.*
 - *We need to do this in the right order: start with our strategic plan, look at where we need to go and what it will take to get there. Having a fundraising goal of covering current operating cost is not very ambitious and doesn't take into account where we are trying to go.*
 - *Think more about where we want to go, not how we will ask for money. Start with our strategic goal and vision.*
 - *Theory of Change plan that we developed could be a useful tool for this process.*
 - *Sometimes it's hard to articulate in what way MWCC is a leader, but I think we all agree that MWCC is a leader. Part of being a leader is having all of your ducks in a row, and figuring all of this out is a part of that. Knowing where we want to go is a huge part of fundraising.*
 - *What are the next steps? Do we need to take board action to create a work group?*
 - *Maybe, currently trying to get a sense of our needs.*
 - *It seems that we agree that there is a need to tackle fundraising. We need to decrease our dependence on grants and increase membership and other revenue. Need to come up with a strategy to become sustainable.*
 - *Want to move forward but unclear how that would look.*
- **Mike moved to create fundraising work group to include 3-5 members, to report back to MWCC BOD by the end of the year. Amy seconded, all in favor.**
 - Group will include Ethan and at least 2 more members.
 - Bringing in non-board members is a good idea.
 - Volunteers to be on work group?
 - Amy

- Michelle
 - Sarah
 - Mike? (a maybe – needs to consider how many committees/work groups he’s serving on)
- Suggested member: Jennifer Schoonen?
- Name: Development Working Group?
- Individual Board Member Evaluations:
 - Self-evaluations, not a way to make sure board members are doing what they’re supposed to.
 - Governance committee sent out a survey that could inform this process – more of an evaluation of expertise and gaps we would like to fill.
- Board culture:
 - Do we need to define it?
 - Board culture is the way that we all work together. Not necessarily formalized.
 - Would be nice to define and be more intentional about it though, as bringing in new board members could shift our board culture.
 - Need to have protocol for when/if things ever get ugly.

Next Steps/Upcoming Events

- Ethan will reach out to volunteers for fundraising work group.
 - Work group will convene to start making plans, assessing next steps.
- MNA fundraising symposium: April 19-23, half-day sessions
- Executive/Finance committee will meet with Governance committee to talk about new board members.
- June meeting – possible in-person component?
- September meeting is scheduled for the 16th – aligns with Watershed Tour – do we want to keep it that way?
- Ethan will send a gift/put together a card for Barbara as this was her last MWCC board meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm.