



Montana Association of Conservation Districts

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Madam Chairperson & Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Sarah Carlson and I represent the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD). We are testifying in support of HB 482 because it returns the shared coal account to its previous level, thereby making additional funding available for important conservation district (CD) programs.

Conservation district programs currently slated to be funded from this source include:

- Salinity Control,
- Rangeland Resource, and
- Envirothon Youth Education;

which are funded in **full** by coal tax dollars.

In addition:

- The 223 Grant Program,
- CD Administrative Assistance,
- Watershed Planning and Assistance,
- Engineering & Legal Assistance, and
- 310 Administrative Assistance;

which are funded in **part** by coal tax dollars.

The shared coal tax account percentage was reduced previously in order to increase the amount of coal tax money going into the—at the time—ailing general fund. The general fund is now more robust and so we support the percentage being returned to its original level.

Many of you are familiar with the work of CDs in your area. Montana's 58 CDs are state-created political subdivisions whose boundaries usually follow the state's county lines and are governed by locally elected supervisors. They have a decades-long history of conserving our state's resources by helping local people match their needs with technical and financial resources, thereby getting good conservation practices on the ground to the benefit of all Montanans.

These eight programs funded by coal tax money are critical to the continued success of Montana CDs in utilizing their locally-led and largely voluntary approach to natural resources.

Montana's CDs fully support HB 482 and hope the committee will as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.