MRCDC
PO Box 118
Winnett, MT 59087

Missouri River Conservation Districts Council

Phone: (406) 454-0056
mrcdc@macdnet.org
www.missouririvercouncil.info

August 23, 2022

Montana Environmental Quality Council
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Re: HJ 27 Study of Financing Conservation Districts draft Bill.

Dear Chairman Lang and the Environmental Quality Council,

The Missouri River Conservation Districts Council (MRCDC) writes in support of the draft bill entitled, "An Act Transferring Revenue From Marijuana Sales To The Department Of Natural Resources And Conservation For Grants To Conservation Districts; Providing For An Inflation Adjusted Increase; Amending Sections 16-12-111 And 76-15-1016, MCA; And Providing An Effective Date."

MRCDC is a coalition of the fifteen conservation districts along the Missouri River in Montana. Spanning 725 miles of Missouri River corridor from its headwaters in Gallatin County to Richland County at the North Dakota border, MRCDC seeks to be the united voice for conservation of the Missouri River, its tributaries, and its associated uplands.

The projects MRCDC supports tie directly to the work of local conservation districts, but usually on a larger scale benefiting multiple districts. Having strong relationships with each conservation district is important to further our mission and purpose conducting on the ground projects.

With the turnover that has been happening in many of the conservation districts, it is hard for MRCDC to build and continue the strong relationships that are crucial for project success, such as the Montana Saltcedar Team and the CMR National Wildlife Refuge Community Working Group that MRCDC is the leading stakeholder in. Instead of continuing from past conversations, the Council is having to re-educate about what MRCDC does and its projects, such as these, which causes discontinuity or a slow progression of them and the work Council does.

If the funding is secured at $6 million as the draft bill states, this will have a huge impact on employee retention, helping solve this problem. A full-time, livable wage will help keep personnel on board with districts. This will not only benefit the Council, but all partner organizations, and the conservation work the local districts are doing themselves.

Please record Missouri River Conservation Districts Council's support for this draft bill.

Thank you,

Laura L Kiehl

Laura Kiehl, Chairman
Missouri River Conservation Districts Council

From: Emma Korntheuer
To: Kolman, Joe
Subject: [EXTERNAL] HJ27 CD Funding
Date: Tuesday, August 23, 2022 8:41:03 AM

Letter of Support for HJ27 CD Funding

Legislature of the Great State of Montana,

Since arriving in Hill County I've received countless stories, reminiscing from community and board members telling me what our conservation district used to do. Educational and community events, river cleanups, nature trail infrastructure, water testing, range improvements and so much more. Once upon a time the conservation district office was able to attract and keep motivated administrators, but now it can't even offer a singular employee a living wage at three quarters time. The lack of full time hours and non-competitive wage has resulted in incredibly high turnover and periods of this post being completely unstaffed, unable to fulfill their duties to our community.

Our sparsely populated county is lower income and historically underserved. Our producers toil for the proud mission of feeding our country, but often feel forgotten and left behind even by their own state. Higher income counties are able to provide their residents with a wide variety of programs and services while our abilities are greatly limited even though our area is in high need. North-central Montana is gripped by drought, our soils crusted or blown away, our bad years far outweighing the good, our herds, our very investments, sold off because there's nothing for them to eat.

While better conservation district funding cannot summon the rains we so desperately need, it can help us support our producers, our community. The capacity for stock water development and cost shares for sustainable practices would go a long way. Stable staffing would allow for us to fix the infrastructure leading to our public spaces, and update our educational materials.

Sincerely,

Emma Korntheuer

From: chris@lewisandclarkcd.org
To: Kolman, Joe
Subject: [EXTERNAL] EQC-Conservation District Funding Bill
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 2:41:33 PM
Attachments: EQC letter of comment.pdf

Good afternoon!

I'm attaching a letter of comment from my Conservation District regarding the above reference bill. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Chris Evans (she, her)
District Administrator
Lewis & Clark Conservation District
790 Colleen Street
Helena MT 59601
406-449-5000 ext. 3884
https://lewisandclarkcd.org

LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

790 Colleen Street • Helena, Montana 59601 • 406-449-5000 ext. 5

August 24, 2022

Environmental Quality Council

RE: Conservation District Funding Bill

Dear Committee Members:

The Lewis and Clark Conservation District would like to support your efforts on behalf of Conservation Districts (CDs) across the State of Montana. While our mill levy budget is on the larger end of the CD measuring stick, and we would likely not see a lot of direct benefit if this bill were approved, we would like to see all of the "boats" of the CD world floated higher.

Providing CDs across Montana the opportunity to access better and more consistent day-to-day funding will allow them to not only continue the great work that they do, but they'd be able to do more, and would have the capacity to tell more of their story on a regular basis. CD employees wear many hats within their organizations and there's usually not enough time in the day to get it all done. Getting it all done with only a part time employee is impossible. This bill would make it possible for CDs to have that necessary improved capacity.

In addition, I would like to make you all aware that the Lewis and Clark CD will be hosting an event for legislators on November 30th at the Lewis and Clark Brewery. Please let our administrator know if you'd like to attend.

If you have further questions, please contact our administrator at 406-389-3884 or via email at chris@lewisandclarkcd.org.

Sincerely,
LEWIS AND CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Jeff Ryan
Chair

From:	Rebecca Boslough-King
To:	Kolman, Joe
Subject:	[EXTERNAL] Updated CD funding proposal, District comments, & CDAC
Date:	Thursday, August 25, 2022 10:39:00 AM
Attachments:	CD Funding Proposal_8.24.2022_.pdf

Hi Joe,

We are cutting it a bit close, but MACD had a meeting yesterday regarding some updates to the CD funding proposal that would make it better align with the proposed funding amount. Primarily - if $6 million is allocated, what is not used for operational funding would go to district projects and river councils. I have updated the budget to reflect this. I also added detail under the new funding item in chart 2 - line 23, based on feedback.

If it's not too late, would it be possible to send this out with the packets? I can also print copies and convey these changes to the EQC during the meeting. Either way - I wanted to make sure you had the updated version ahead of time.

Additionally, I wanted to let you know that we have at least one or two districts that are planning to give their comments on the draft bill via zoom or in-person. Stillwater and Carbon CDs have been slammed with flood recovery, and they are planning to either zoom in and comment, or I will convey information from them. The Conservation District Advisory Council (CDAC) to DNRC is meeting on Sept. 7th, so several members from that group will also plan to attend and comment at EQC as well.

Thank you,
Becca
--
Rebecca Boslough-King
Executive Director
Montana Association of Conservation Districts
MACD Website [macdnet.org]
Office: (406)443-5711 Ext.2
Cell: (406)671-5049

MONTANA ASSOCIATION of CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

CONTACT
(406) 443-5711
mail@macdnet.org

OFFICE ADDRESS
1101 11th Ave
Helena, MT 59601

MACD Proposed Budget for Conservation Districts

Updated August 24, 2022

Please contact Rebecca Boslough (rebecca@macdnet.org) with any questions.

Chart 1: Conservation District Mill Levy Funds and Operational Funds Needed

This chart shows the 2021 Mill Levy dollars received by each district. This sheet also includes calculations of how much money would be needed for each district to have a base operational budget of $40k, $80k, or $100k each. Please see the bottom of the chart for total funds needed. Currently, districts with low amounts of funding are only able to access a total of up to $36,000 in operational funding through a combination of Mill Levy and DNRC grants.

#	Conservation District	2021 (Jan- Dec) Mill Value	Funds needed for $40k Operational Budget (NOT enough)	Funds needed for $80k Operational Budget	Funds needed for $100k Operational Budget
1	Beaverhead	$39,743.00	$257	$40,257	$60,257
2	Bighorn	$24,355.08	$15,645	$55,645	$75,645
3	Big Sandy	$20,724.18	$19,276	$59,276	$79,276
4	Bitterroot	$173,792.40	$0	$0	$0
5	Blaine	$21,862.36	$18,138	$58,138	$78,138
6	Broadwater	$18,038.04	$21,962	$61,962	$81,962
7	Carbon	$55,481.60	$0	$24,518	$44,518
8	Carter	$6,319.15	$33,681	$73,681	$93,681
9	Cascade	$173,984.61	$0	$0	$0
10	Chouteau	$37,109.63	$2,890	$42,890	$62,890
11	Custer	$17,146.83	$22,853	$62,853	$82,853
12	Daniels	$11,045.31	$28,955	$68,955	$88,955
13	Dawson	$26,384.95	$13,615	$53,615	$73,615
14	Deer Lodge	$17,598.51	$22,401	$62,401	$82,401
15	Eastern Sanders	$15,183.34	$24,817	$64,817	$84,817
16	Fergus	$33,517.36	$6,483	$46,483	$66,483

17	Flathead	$428,633.20	$0	$0	$0
18	Gallatin	$241,992.51	$0	$0	$0
19	Garfield	$7,957.65	$32,042	$72,042	$92,042
20	Glacier	$16,367.01	$23,633	$63,633	$83,633
21	Granite	$19,342.23	$20,658	$60,658	$80,658
22	Green Mountain	$35,317.80	$4,682	$44,682	$64,682
23	Hill	$41,529.76	$0	$38,470	$58,470
24	Jefferson	$39,001.17	$999	$40,999	$60,999
25	Judith Basin	$11,071.95	$28,928	$68,928	$88,928
26	Lake	$80,547.68	$0	$0	$19,452
27	Lewis and Clark	$149,006.63	$0	$0	$0
28	Liberty	$32,615.68	$7,384	$47,384	$67,384
29	Lincoln	$71,858.23	$0	$8,142	$28,142
30	Little Beaver	$13,313.76	$26,686	$66,686	$86,686
31	Lower Musselshell	$16,107.81	$23,892	$63,892	$83,892
32	Madison	$150,097.11	$0	$0	$0
33	McCone	$10,865.88	$29,134	$69,134	$89,134
34	Meagher	$10,077.98	$29,922	$69,922	$89,922
35	Mile High	$48,285.39	$0	$31,715	$51,715
36	Mineral	$12,907.40	$27,093	$67,093	$87,093
37	Missoula	$344,297.44	$0	$0	$0
38	Northern Powell	$17,199.35	$22,801	$62,801	$82,801
39	Park	$86,959.79	$0	$0	$13,040
40	Petroleum	$2,260.33	$37,740	$77,740	$97,740
41	Phillips	$16,112.81	$23,887	$63,887	$83,887
42	Pondera	$25,881.24	$14,119	$54,119	$74,119
43	Powder River	$5,564.75	$34,435	$74,435	$94,435
44	Prairie	$19,513.33	$20,487	$60,487	$80,487
45	Richland	$44,570.17	$0	$35,430	$55,430
46	Roosevelt	$19,132.02	$20,868	$60,868	$80,868
47	Rosebud	$77,010.84	$0	$2,989	$22,989
48	Ruby Valley	$18,809.01	$21,191	$61,191	$81,191
49	Sheridan	$18,693.26	$21,307	$61,307	$81,307

50	Stillwater	$29,613.82	$10,386	$50,386	$70,386
51	Sweet Grass	$10,490.00	$29,510	$69,510	$89,510
52	Teton	$19,398.63	$20,601	$60,601	$80,601
53	Toole	$2,001.76	$37,998	$77,998	$97,998
54	Treasure	$11,936.00	$28,064	$68,064	$88,064
55	Upper Musselshell	$16,311.00	$23,689	$63,689	$83,689
56	Valley	$23,745.29	$16,255	$56,255	$76,255
57	Wibaux	$3,136.88	$36,863	$76,863	$96,863
58	Yellowstone	$121,849.99	$0	$0	$0
59					
60		**TOTAL FUNDS NEEDED**	**$906,226**	**$2,727,490**	**$3,719,983**
61					
62		***Current budget*** **(FY2022) for CD Operational Funds (Admin Grants Account #3019)**	**$548,000**	**$548,000**	**$548,000**
63					
64		**Funding Gap (Additional funds needed) (= Total funds needed - current funding)**	**$358,226**	**$2,179,490**	**$3,171,983**
65		Conservation districts base operational budget	$40k	$80k	$100k

Note on information from *Chart 1* (above) included in *Chart 2* (below):

The total funds needed for increased conservation district operational funding shown above in *(Chart 1 - Line 60)* were then included in the budget line for Conservation District Operational Funding shown below in *(Chart 2 - Line 10).*

Chart 2: Conservation District Account Budget and Proposed increases

This chart shows the current budget for the Conservation District Account within DNRC alongside proposals for increased CD operational funding to an $80k operational budget and $100k operational budget for districts with varying levels of project, coordination, and river council funding.

Line	Expenditure		Current CD Account Budget	$80k Budget	$100k Budget
1	10XX	Director's Office-Financial Services	16,893	16,893	16,893
2	3003	CDB Operations*	670,697	670,697	670,697
3	3003	CDB Operations (RST)	25,589	25,589	25,589
4	3005	DNRC Conservation Dist Project Grants	162,869	635,000	400,000
5	3007	DNRC Envirothon	35,000	35,000	35,000
6	3010C	DNRC 310 Projects-Technical Assistance	10,000	10,000	10,000
7	3010G	DNRC 310 Projects-Grants	250,000	250,000	250,000
8	3015	DNRC Saline Seep-MT Salinity Control Assoc.	273,000	273,000	273,000
9	3018	Federal Match	5,000	5,000	5,000
10	3019	DNRC Cons. Dist. Operational Funding	548,000	2,727,490	3,698,000
11	3021	DNRC Pollinator Grant	50,000	50,000	50,000
12	3030	CD Additional Grants	200,000	200,000	200,000
13	3044	Milk River Watershed	35,000	35,000	35,000
14	3045	Grass Conservation Commission	30,616	30,616	30,616
15	3046	DNRC Sheridan CCD (Groundwater)	33,000	33,000	33,000
16	3047	DNRC Yellowstone Council*	110,400	150,000	150,000
17	3048	DNRC Missouri River Council*	110,400	150,000	150,000
18	3201	CARDD Administration	149,755	149,755	149,755
19	3202	CARDD Finance	187,678	187,678	187,678
20	3203	Admin Unallocated	44,483	44,483	44,483
21	3205F	Admin Fixed Costs	115,115	115,115	115,115
22	3403	DNRC Renewable Resources CD Grant Admin. (RST)	23,572	23,572	23,572
23	New	Statewide coordination & direct services**	N/A	200,000	200,000
24		**Total Expenditures**	**$3,070,174**	**$6,000,995**	**$6,736,505**

*Consideration should be given to using some of the proposed funding increases for the CD River Councils and DNRC Staff to support increased district activity. **This would provide funding for statewide coordination and direct services for conservation districts (grant writing and program development support, increased event support and coordination, etc. provided through MACD).

Any remaining funds can be used for special projects, such as increased conservation district capacity to assist with natural disasters *(For Example, conservation districts have been assisting with 2022 flood recovery by supporting landowners and sponsoring federal grants; Conservation districts helped coordinate restoration efforts following the 2017 fires in Eastern MT, etc.)*

From: Marcus Strange
To: Kolman, Joe
Subject: [EXTERNAL] HJ27 CD Funding
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 3:57:11 PM
Attachments: August 2022 EQC Comments - CD Funding Bill Draft.pdf

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Mr. Kolman,

Please find comments from MWF on the HJ CD Funding. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Cheers!

Marcus Strange (He/Him)
Director of State Policy and Government Relations
Montana Wildlife Federation

(406) 916-2585
mstrange@mtwf.org
www.montanawildlife.org [montanawildlife.org]
PO Box 1175, Helena, MT, 59624

[facebook.com] [linkedin.com] [instagram.com]

Become a Wildlife Advocate

[montanawildlife.org]

I gratefully acknowledge I live, work, hunt, fish, and grow in the homeland of the Niitsítpiis-stahkoii and Salish Kootenai. Visit https://native-land.ca/ [native-land.ca] to learn more about the Indigenous land where you live.

MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Protecting Montana's wildlife, land, waters, and hunting & fishing heritage for future generations.

24 August 2022

Montana Wildlife Federation
40 West Lawrence Street
PO Box 1175
Helena, MT 59624

Montana Environmental Quality Council
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Re: HJ 27 Conservation District Funding

Chair Lang and council members,

The Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) is the state's largest hunter and angler advocacy organization consisting of thousands of Montanans who value sound fish and wildlife management and Montana's storied hunting and outdoor legacy. Together with our nineteen (19) affiliated clubs, we ensure that wildlife conservation dollars and efforts are efficiently spent on wildlife-related activities, promote the best available science in managing our state's public resources, and work to safeguard our hunting, angling, and outdoor heritage. Our mountains, forests, prairies, plains, rivers, and streams are some of the most cherished outdoor resources in Montana. For this reason, we are grateful to be able to comment on **HJ 27 Conservation District Funding**.

Conservation Districts have been one of our best conservation programs for decades. Made up of 58 districts, these districts have the ability to do critical conservation work of soil, water, wildlife, and public and private lands, improve the tax base, and serve the best interests of the Montanans in the designated area. Sadly, these districts are continually underfunded, and the current coal severance funding continues to shrink yearly. We need to look to the future and find new and innovative methods to sustainably fund Conservation Districts into the future.

With a robust revenue from the recreational sales tax of cannabis, we have an excellent opportunity to fully fund these districts without impacting other conservation funding sources that are stretched thin. MWF supports the allocation of tax revenue from the sales tax of cannabis to fund Conservation Districts, provided that it is taken from the cannabis tax revenue surplus and does not impact other previously established allocations as outlined in HB 701.

We are grateful for the proactive approach the Council is taking to fund one of our best conservation tools. This is a unique opportunity before us to be visionary in managing our public resources. MWF strongly recommends the Council move forward with the draft you currently have before you. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,

Marcus Strange
Director of State Policy and Government Relations
Montana Wildlife Federation

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 6:34:25 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 24th August 2022 18:34

First Name:
Meagher County

Last Name:
Conservation District

Email Address:
meaghercocd@mtintouch.net

Subject:
Conservation District Funding

Comment:
Meagher County Conservation District fully supports the draft bill to increase funding in the Conservation District account to $6 million. Currently our District operates on income from County mills (about $9,000) and an administrative grant through DNRC (amount varies by year). Together these almost make up enough funds for one part time employee. Operational funding outside of our county mills amount is an absolute necessity for basic district operations. Additional funding would allow our District to better serve our county with more opportunities for on the ground conservation projects and educational events. We are aware the funding shortage from the Coal Severance Tax is being supplemented by the General Fund, which is not a permanent solution. A long term/permanent funding solution would greatly benefit our Conservation District. Thank you for your time in working on this issue.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 4:34:43 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 24th August 2022 16:34

First Name:
Julie

Last Name:
Goss

Email Address:
richlandcd@gmail.com

Subject:
Increased funding for Conservation Districts

Comment:
Richland County Conservation District Supports the draft bill to increase funding for conservation districts to $6 Million dollars. This funding would allow our district to monitor an aquifer in our county that has shown great potential for irrigation. Development of the aquifer has rapidly occurred and finding the funding to continually monitor it is a huge burden for our district. Conservation Districts need a stable, long-term funding so projects can be completed timely and efficiently. Not piece together using whatever funding or program that can be found to limp the project along. We serve as the local hub for conservation. We are usually the first in line when a disaster hits, or an issue arises. We are mandated by state law to handle specific duties, that we may not be able to adequately do because of lake of funding. Every conservation district is its own unique entity, usually a one person office trying to do the best job we can on a limited budget. An increase in funding would help stabilize the constant turn over in staff, assist districts with the means to fund projects or additional staff to help complete projects, build community capacity and assist when the need arises not months or years later when funding is secured or becomes available. Although our district has moderate income for a conservation district at about $45,000 per year, I would challenge other government entities to conduct business with that mere amount of income. Our administrator has over 20 years experience her wages do not reflect the years of commitment to conservation that a state employee would be receiving for less experience. If a supervisor is on a special board, River Council, Rural water Representative, etc travel is sometimes at their own expense. Conservation districts have always been the best bang for your buck in conservation, but with the increased cost of just doing normal business and the demands on the districts, conservation districts need this increase in funding to continue to do the good work they are known to achieve for Montana's natural resources. We support this draft bill to increase funds for conservation districts to continue their mission now and into the future for

the state of Montana.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 4:34:39 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 24th August 2022 16:34

First Name:
Gary

Last Name:
Giem

Email Address:
giem@3rivers.net

Subject:
Increased funding for Conservation Districts

Comment:
I am Chairman for the Ruby Valley Conservation District. our District supports the draft bill to increase funding for Conservation Districts to Six million dollars. Our district as well many others in the state struggle to fund our operations. Funding employee's wages is getting more difficult as payroll costs increased. Conservation Districts provide ground up conservation as well as administering the 310 law. A stable source of revenue will make it easier for the districts to plan and develop new conservation projects.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 11:35:53 AM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 24th August 2022 11:35

First Name:
Becky

Last Name:
Clements

Email Address:
becky@gallatincd.org

Subject:
HJ27

Comment:
My name is Becky Clements and I am the District Administrator for Gallatin Conservation District. Gallatin CD was actually invited to present to the EQC committee relating to this matter. I believe we were invited so to showcase the way a CD could function, if they had adequate funding available. Our slideshow presentation is linked in the funding bill draft. During the presentation, we highlighted our facilities (office spaces, educational gardens center, meeting space), as well as showcased some of the programs we facilitate, our community involvement, our 310 administration efforts, grant assistance we provide to landowners, and our adult and youth educational workshops. We also highlighted our staff that manages it all and makes it possible to accomplish these things for the residents of Gallatin County that we serve. We are fortunate in Gallatin County to have a large tax base from which we obtain our Mill Levy Revenue. Most CDs in the state do not have that benefit. There are many CDs that don't receive enough revenue from their mill levies to even staff their CD with an administrator on a part-time basis. Most CDs don't have their own office spaces, computers, printers, telephones, etc... Many CDs have to pursue grant funding to even be able to pay one employee to answer the phones and perform board meeting tasks. Having to rely on grant funding is unpredictable and capricious at best, as we are now seeing with the decline of the coal severance tax, from which many CDs throughout the state were receiving grant revenue for administration. Here at Gallatin CD, we are proud of the work we do and the services we provide for the protection of our natural resources. We are in support of this draft bill to provide better funding to CDs throughout the state so that they can all have adequate funding to serve their counties and have the best possible impact for the natural resources in our state. CDs across the state are all tasked with the protection of our state's natural resources, and the EQC committee agreed that the work we do is very important and beneficial. This funding bill would provide increased and more stable funding so that all CDs can have the best potential to

carry out our important mission and not be hampered by financial constraints. It is exciting to imagine the benefit to Montana's natural resources if this bill were to pass and adequate funding is provided to all Conservation Districts statewide! On behalf of Gallatin Conservation District, thank you for your consideration. Becky Clements Gallatin Conservation District District Administrator 406-282-4350

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Monday, August 22, 2022 8:47:35 AM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 22nd August 2022 08:47

First Name:
Elliot

Last Name:
Merja

Email Address:
emerja@3riversdbs.net

Subject:
PD15

Comment:
Cascade Conservation District (CCD) would like to go on record supporting PD15 the proposed conservation district funding bill. This proposal if passed by the legislature will certainly give less affluent districts the ability to recruit and keep quality staff which will build capacity, reignite boards, and get conservation on the ground. It is important that all conservation districts across the state be strongly funded since resource concerns and conservation needs vary widely and change rapidly. CCD would encourage the EQC Committee to make sure PD15 includes language to clarify that all 58 conservation districts are eligible for funding. Thank you for your consideration of our comments and the work you do to address Montana's Elliot Merja, Chair Cascade Conservation District

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Friday, August 19, 2022 4:35:40 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 19th August 2022 16:35

First Name:
Martin

Last Name:
Greenwood

Email Address:
megalon00@yahoo.com

Subject:
Bacterialogical spraying

Comment:
There has been a wave of illness ,sweeping throughout the Flathead community and from what I can see through general observation, most of the US. I believe MT and several other key states are being targeted, using decommissioned commercial aircraft to spray aerosolized particulate containing bacterialogicals (viruses) on to our communities. It has also had major impacts on our weather. As they change the contents of the particulate often. Like experimentation. We have them on film, spraying us. Many are fed up and want it to stop, immediately. Reference: whitehouse.gov/HR2977 "chemtrails". Make it stop, now.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Friday, August 19, 2022 2:32:16 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 19th August 2022 14:32

First Name:
Zach

Last Name:
Owen

Email Address:
zach@beaverheadwatershed.org

Subject:
HJ 27 Conservation District Funding

Comment:
I support using recreational marijuana money to help fund Montana's Conservation Districts. Our CDs do great work with very little funding, and would be capable of far more with a more secure funding source.

Sent via www.leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Thursday, August 18, 2022 2:51:33 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 18th August 2022 14:51

First Name:
LaVerne

Last Name:
Ivie

Email Address:
livie@mt.gov

Subject:
PD15 - Proposed Conservation District Funding Bill

Comment:
Yellowstone Conservation District (YCD) would like to go on record supporting PD15 the proposed conservation district funding bill. Many conservation districts struggle to meet growing natural resource demands being placed on them because of limited budgets. Also being able to find and afford capable staff is a challenge for many districts. YCD believes the proposed funding in PD15 will go a long way to support districts with low budgets and hopefully funding will also be available to meet needs that all districts encounter from time to time. We'll use the unexpected flooding damage and cost that YCD experienced this year which created an immediate workload where additional funding would have been helpful. Of course, there are many other examples across the state such as this. It appears that EQC's intent is to provide funding to be available for all conservation districts. Perhaps added clarification on that would be helpful. YCD supports all 58 conservation districts and we want to play a role in seeing them be successful. Thank you for allowing YCD to submit comment and for your support for conservation districts. Respectfully submitted by Yellowstone Conservation District Board Members: Chad Sedgwick - Chair Clint Peck - Vice Chair Leroy Gabel Brad Kraft Stacey Robinson Barbara Wagner

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Tuesday, August 16, 2022 10:51:35 AM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 16th August 2022 10:51

First Name:
Cathy

Last Name:
Johnson

Email Address:
cathyj827@gmail.com

Subject:
HJ27 CD Funding

Comment:
I am in support of increasing the funding available to Montana conservation districts. Most CDs, especially those in more rural and less populated counties, are seriously underfunded which limits the amount of conservation services they can provide. Increased funding would allow for more educational programs, better assistance in natural resource use and and planning, and greater community involvement in conserving our natural resources.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Monday, August 8, 2022 9:57:02 AM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 8th August 2022 09:56

First Name:
LARINDA

Last Name:
SPENCER

Email Address:
broadwatercd@gmail.com

Subject:
Conservation District Administration

Comment:
I have been an administrator for Broadwater Conservation District for eight months. During this time it is more than obvious by the struggles that both myself and the supervisors have in funding this entity that assistance would be appreciated. There is always great deal of work juggling projects that are constantly changing and very demanding made by timelines and expertise. The funding distribution that is being talked about by the CD Funding Bill would help with every aspect of what we do from 310 permits to serving the public through education and mitigation expertise in all fields of conservation. Please vote to fund the CD's through this Bill. Thank you for your consideration. LaRinda

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 9:49:54 AM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 2nd August 2022 09:49

First Name:
Kathleen

Last Name:
Johnson

Email Address:
kjjohnson@interbel.net

Subject:
CD Funding

Comment:
I would encourage the CDB and MACD to exercise caution in looking to marijuana tax revenue as a funding source. Looking at documention such as this; https://www.theepochtimes.com/how-modern-marijuana-changes-the-brain_4618031.html?est=yAlT9gjHuQGMkL8TjpGuNja44GRq%2F9ecafTa%2B88O5ZhdbNtKyDS%2Bi%2BSWT36QmyEybozRmivL should give us pause. Do we really wish to be linked in any way to a potential health crisis such as this? We have got to look to revitilizing our Coal Severence Funding, and wise use Natural Resource extraction funding in general, as an intelligent means to continue to fund CDs in Montana. Further, gifting private land to CDs takes the property off County tax roles, further exacerbating limited funds in Counties currently experiencing low income and/or large numbers of non-taxable acres managed by Federal and other non-taxable or low tax category type entities (Conservation Easements) Thank you.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Monday, July 25, 2022 9:40:27 AM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 25th July 2022 09:40

First Name:
Amanda

Last Name:
Cooley

Email Address:
acooley@powellcountymt.gov

Subject:
CD Funding Bill

Comment:
As a county planning director, I am in support of supplementing CV funding with marijuana tax. The Conservation Districts serve a very important role in the community and we want to continue to see them have the resources they need.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Saturday, July 23, 2022 5:16:11 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 23rd July 2022 17:16

First Name:
Robert

Last Name:
Jeffrey

Email Address:
robertkjeffrey@msn.com

Subject:
Draft Conservation Funding Bill using Marijuana Tax Dollars

Comment:
None of the marijuana tax dollars should be used by any conservation district(s) that are wholly or partially located in any MT county that did not vote to approve the sale of recreational marijuana. If those counties are opposed to the sale of 'pot for fun' then they should NOT benefit from the tax dollars collected on the sale of recreational marijuana in other MT counties.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Friday, July 22, 2022 2:57:17 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 22nd July 2022 14:57

First Name:
Sydney

Last Name:
Lyons

Email Address:
sydlyons59@gmail.com

Subject:
Conservation District funding

Comment:
I support the bill to provide Conservation Districts with increased funding. The work that districts put in around Montana is crucial and valuable. More funding would increase opportunities and enhance the environment through efforts from CDs.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Friday, July 22, 2022 1:49:42 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 22nd July 2022 13:49

First Name:
Damien

Last Name:
Pitman

Email Address:
damien.pitman@gmail.com

Subject:
EQC BILL DRAFT

Comment:
I am in favor of using tax revenues from the sale of recreational marijuana to fund conservation districts, as indicated in the EQC Bill Draft.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Tuesday, July 19, 2022 11:14:38 AM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 19th July 2022 11:14

First Name:
Mike

Last Name:
Fantasia

Email Address:
mikefantasia1@mac.com

Subject:
DEQ Opencut Regs

Comment:
My comments on revisions to HB 599, based upon its implementation in the past year in Lincoln County are as follows: -DEQ must comply with the Montana Environmental Policy Act on each permit application. MEPA provides the public the opportunity to know what is being proposed and to participate in the process. Anything less than full MEPA compliance is unlawful. -The Act needs to differentiate between "high and dry" applications and applications in rural residential areas. Both must be specifically defined. -The language that provides a property right to the opencut operator at the time of permit application or a pre-application meeting must be eliminated for rural residential proposals. it's a violation of MEPA to allow permits to be granted with simply a perfunctory review. This provision should only provide that property right to the developer AFTER the permit is approved. -DEQ's obligation to protect water quality must be reinstated. IOf not them, WHO should be responsible for this. Same with limit hours of operation, limit noise and dust, and controlling runoff on neighboring property. Neighbors deserve to know what's going on and be able to meaningfully participate prior to the state making a decision on whether or not to grant a permit. -The definition of "occupied dwelling unit" throughout the bill must be deleted. It prevents notification and participation from those with land, second homes, seasonally occupied dwellings, mobile homes, and homes using cisterns. Just because someone doesn't live in a house does not mean they won't some day, that they don't care if their property rights are diminished or that they might build on a lot in the future. -Public notification and participation times are too short for proposals in rural residential area for all proposed gravel operation permits. -The DEQ's bonding authority should be reinstated. -DEQ must be required to accept and incorporate public comment before determining whether a mine site will occur in an ephemeral, intermittent or perennial stream or area or areas where the operation may intercept surface or groundwater. DEQ must provide an opportunity for those landowners to provide that

information in a meaningful way before the permitting process can be completed. The Montana Constitution guarantees the public the right to know about opencut mines that government is permitting, to participate in those permitting processes in a meaningful way, and to a clean and healthful environment. The current law eliminates these rights and should be changed.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/

From: donotreply@mt.gov
To: LEG Cmte-EQCcomment
Subject: Public Comment for EQC
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2022 8:01:28 PM

Public Comments for the Environmental Quality Council

Date: 24th August 2022 20:01

First Name:
John

Last Name:
Brown

Email Address:
roomsforpeace@gmail.com

Subject:
Conservation District Funding comment

Comment:
Thank you for taking my comment. As Chair of Northern Plains Resource Council Soil Taskforce, I acknowledge and appreciate the significant role Conservation Districts play in assisting ranchers and farmers to design and implement practices that conserve and enhance the quality of the soil upon which their life and living depend. And as the statewide soil outreach initiative report is being finalized, we are watching comparable conditions (walls of dust, walls of smoke, walls of water rapidly taking our precious soil "away") to those experienced when the Conservation Districts were formed, the urgent need to increase support and effectiveness of MACD is blatantly evident. This is no time to back off in our dedication to funding on the ground Conservation! Farmers and Ranchers, and indeed all Montanans need this support. Coal tax revenue is declining. Soil, water, air conservation must not suffer because of this decline. Perhaps the Cannabis fund is a good place to supplement this decline and add to the funding. We do not know how stable that money is, so I encourage EQC to make provisions in the rules that other sources are allowed. Expanding ability to tax urban property as a source of Conservation funding would be a useful consideration. Thank you for advocating for Montanans' ability to grow food and fiber through healthy soils. John D Brown Helena

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/eqc/public-comments-eqc/