

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Hybrid - Zoom
February 27, 2024

Members Present

Patrick Johnson, Chair
Diana Hammer
Ryan Leland
Ed Kerins, Vice Chair
Jeff Ryan
Jon Staldine

Staff

Jennifer McBroom
Laurel Riek
Kegan McClanahan
Dawn Sullivan
Natalie Emerson
Gary Burton

Members Absent

Brie MacLaurin
Comm. Candace Payne

Guests Present

Patrick Johnson, Chair, called the 274th meeting of the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District (WQPD) Board of Directors (Board) to order at 5:33 p.m. A quorum was established. Introductions of Board members and WQPD staff were made.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

There were no changes made to the agenda.

MINUTES

Revisions were requested for the January 23, 2024 minutes, and they will need to be amended and reviewed at the next board meeting.

WATER WATCHERS PRESENTATION

Mr. Burton presented an overview of the Water Watchers program. Water Watchers I piloted in 1994 and Water Watchers II piloted in 1995. Initially, there were two schools and approximately 120-125 children participating in the program. Currently, there are twelve schools across Helena and East Helena with approximately 1,500 children comprised of fourth and fifth graders participating. Teachers evaluate the program every five to seven years.

Water Watchers I occurs in the spring and works with the fourth graders. Teachers work with students on the classroom activities provided by Mr. Burton prior to a half day field trip on Prickly Pear Creek where he engages them in hands-on activities specific to water. Water Watchers II occurs in the fall and works with the fifth graders. Teachers work with students on the classroom activities provided by Mr. Burton prior to a full day field trip to Moose Creek Campground in Rimini where he engages them in hands-on activities specific to water. They also get a tour of either the City of Helena Tenmile Treatment Plant or the City of Helena Wastewater Treatment Plant. In the event of bad

weather, students will participate in both tours. Additionally, there are optional YouTube videos that teachers may utilize for instruction in the classroom.

The Water Watchers Program would be easy to expand to other areas of the county, for example Lincoln and Augusta, if the boundaries of the WQPD were expanded.

MT CONSERVATION ELDER YOUTH EXPOSE

Mr. Ryan shared with the board that this event would be April 13th at the Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds from 10am to 3pm. There will be over thirty organizations, including the WQPD, present. The event is for youths aged seven to seventeen to rotate through conservation related booths. When they have rotated through at least twelve displays, they may enter for a chance to win a summer camp.

BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION

Mr. Ryan mentioned a Lake Helena restoration project in early April. There will be a willow cut at the 7-mile Creek bridge on March 16th.

Mr. Leland mentioned that reviews of exempt wells should be put on hold because of Judge McMahon's Broadwater County court order regarding the 71 Ranch. He stated that no one knows the ramifications of the ruling and that it could take a couple years to get a final ruling. It will be taken to the Supreme Court. Ms. McBroom met with county attorneys and planners regarding this issue as it concerns subdivisions and will approach County Planning Director Greg McNally to come speak with the board in the near future.

Mr. Leland updated the board on the City of Helena Water Reservation, stating that ten test wells had been drilled. Four at the Missouri River Treatment Plant were going into production, the rest were not worth putting into production. More exploration needs to be done. The wells need to be perfected by December 31, 2025.

Ms. Hammer mentioned water harvesting and rain barrel workshops this spring at Garden Werks, one is scheduled for April 25th. She will send updates on other workshops by community organizations as they come up.

Ms. Hammer spoke about a National Climate Assessment webinar that she listened to. The webinar focused on climate change and its implications for the Northern Great Plains, including water. Ms. Hammer sent the link for the webinar out to board members the day before the board meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Next meeting will be March 26, 2024, at 5:30pm

There being no public comment, the meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.