

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Hybrid - Zoom
February 28, 2023

Members Present

Diana Hammer
Patrick Johnson, Chair
Lisa Kaufman
Edward Kerins
David Nimick
Comm. Tom Rolfe
Jeff Ryan

Staff

Jennifer McBroom
Madeline McKeefry
Kathy Moore
Dawn Sullivan
Angelique Frier, BSWC

Members Absent

Judy Leland
Ryan Leland

Guests Present

Bridget Williams, EPA
Mark Walker, Hydrometrics
Karen Filipovich

Patrick Johnson, Chair, called the 266th meeting of the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District (WQPD) Board of Directors (Board) to order at 5:32 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

Mr. Johnson request a change to the January 24, 2023 minutes. Under the heading Conservation District Funding, he requested that “These have largely been funded through the mill” be changed to “...funded through the mil.” Ms. Hammer moved to accept the minutes as amended. Mr. Nimick seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

EAST HELENA RESIDENTIAL WELLS

Mark Walker of Hydrometrics, Inc. presented information regarding the East Helena residential wells and the former ASARCO smelter plant contamination monitoring. Hydrometrics, who monitors on behalf of the Montana Environmental Trust Group (METG), has been studying whether the elevated arsenic concentrations is a result of background geologic conditions in the area or continued contamination from the smelter. MT DNRC established an East Valley Controlled Groundwater Area in 2016 with two zones. Zone one is approximately 1200 acres, zone two is approximately 730 additional acres surrounding the arsenic and selenium plumes, with institutional controls regarding wells.

The former smelter is located on alluvial sediments. Adjacent to the smelter is the tertiary material derived from weathered volcanic deposits. Many of the wells with elevated arsenic are in tertiary

sediments. There appears to be no hydrologic connection between the elevated arsenic levels in the wells to the west and the arsenic at the plant site. The groundwater flows are upgradient away from the wells, toward the plant. Geochemically, the signatures of the groundwater of the west wells are different from the water at the plant site. West residential wells have shown stable arsenic concentrations over 30+ years, whereas concentrations in wells close to the former plant have responded to remedial measures, suggesting that the arsenic in these wells is from background geologic conditions.

UPDATED WQPD BY-LAWS

The Board finalized their review of the by-laws. The suggested changes that had been discussed at the January meeting were presented in written format and were further reviewed. All the amendments were accepted. Mr. Nimick moved to accept the amended by-laws as written. Mr. Kerins seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Ryan discussed HB321 regarding the distribution of coal severance tax funds was tabled and will be reconsidered mid-March. This bill could affect long-term conservation district funding. Mr. Ryan also talked about SB 28 regarding the distribution of marijuana tax funds was coming to the floor on March 1st. This bill would provide supplemental funding for conservation districts.

Mr. Kerins mentioned SB 642 regarding the DNRC prioritizing irrigation.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Karen Filipovich began the strategic planning sessions for the Water Quality Protection District. She began with an overview of the process. Ms. Filipovich discussed the results of the pre-survey that the board and the staff answered regarding water quality and quantity, education and outreach, policy, and staffing, and their successes and priorities.

BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION

There was no additional Board member discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Next meeting will be March 28, 2023, at 5:30pm

There being no public comment, the meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.