

# MACD General Assembly Meeting December 17, 2009

## Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

### Meeting Minutes

The 2009 MACD General Assembly meeting was called to order by Mike Lawless, MACD President, at 8:50 a.m. on Thursday, December 17, 2009.

The December 11, 2008, General Assembly Minutes were reviewed. Motion by Genesee, support by Missaukee to approve the minutes of the 2008 General Assembly meeting. *Motion – CARRIED.*

### 2009 Financial Report and 2010 Budget

#### FY 2009 MACD Financial Report

Mike Taylor, MACD Treasurer provided a financial report for 2009. To counter the tightening financial situation, MACD did not send anyone to NACD national meeting this year. MACD employees number 1 full time person and 3 'very' part-time persons. The summer meeting was canceled, instead opting to offer less expensive webinars for training purposes. Motion by Taylor, supported by Eaton and Livingston to accept the 2009 financial report. *Motion – CARRIED.*

#### Envirothon 2009 Financial Report and Proposed FY 2010 Budget

Taylor reviewed the Michigan Envirothon Proposed Budget. Taylor reported that the Envirothon has held many successful fundraisers including the Envirothon Stoup Competition and the Bowl-a-thon fundraiser held on December 16<sup>th</sup>. The program has also received grant monies to support program activities. It's expected that the Michigan Envirothon will continue to receive scholarships to help sustain its operations. Motion by Saginaw, supported by Delta to approve the Envirothon Proposed FY 2010 Budget. *Motion – CARRIED.*

#### FY 2010 MACD Budget

Taylor reviewed the proposed FY 2010 MACD Budget. Taylor pointed out that dues are down from last year and it is hard to predict how much income to expect from dues. Fundraising efforts (like the annual raffle) and the NRCS contract will help supplement the budget, but MACD will have to continue to look for ways to keep costs down. Motion by Taylor, supported by Saginaw and Delta to approve the FY 2010 MACD Budget. *Motion – CARRIED.*

Taylor initiated a discussion on the Endowment. The Endowment is money put aside to help run the association. In 2008, \$12,421.18 was invested in a 24 month Certificate of Deposit due in 2011. Interest earned is up; the goal of the Endowment is to eventually live off the interest.

### MACD State Council Elections

President Lawless read the bylaws regarding the election of officers. According to the bylaws, regional council elections are held for even number regions in odd numbered years. Also, candidates for the State Council must be from Districts whose District dues are paid in full for fiscal year 2009 or have a dues payment plan in place.

Ballots were distributed, votes cast by secret ballot.

## Consideration of Resolutions

### Resolution #1 - 2009

*To establish a MACD Legislative Advisory Council, submitted by MACD State Council.*

**Whereas**, the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts is an organized body representing the 79 Conservation Districts that represent all 83 counties in Michigan, and

**Whereas**, Michigan Conservation Districts are special purpose units of state government that provide natural resource management services to Michigan citizens to encourage private land management for a cleaner, healthier, economically stronger Michigan, and

**Whereas**, Michigan Conservation Districts work closely with state and federal government agencies concerned with natural resource conservation and the management and development of renewable resources, and provide the delivery of agency programs to the citizens of Michigan, and

**Whereas**, the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts and Michigan Conservation Districts are the main advocates for Michigan Conservation District financial and programmatic support with state legislators, agencies and the administration, and

**Therefore be it resolved** that the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts establish a seven member Legislative Advisory Council to provide the Association and member Conservation Districts with legislative process input and guidance at the state level, and

**Therefore be it further resolved** that the Legislative Advisory Council be appointed by the MACD president and consist of one State Council member, at least one Conservation District board or staff member, and up to five individuals outside of the Association who independently support the role and purpose of Conservation Districts, and/or are employed by organizations that support the role and purpose of Conservation Districts, and

**Therefore be it further resolved** that the Legislative Advisory Council act in an advisory capacity to the State Council and Public Funding Committee, reporting to the State Council and Public Funding Committee on a semi-annual basis.

Motion by Randy Thompson, MACD Vice President, supported by Delta and Saginaw to adopt this resolution.

Discussion/Request to amend:

Motion by Saginaw, supported by Alcona to add language "and approved by the State Council."

Motion by Saginaw, supported by Alcona to adopt the amendment.

Vote on the amendment. *MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.*

Further discussion on original motion:

Motion by Delta and supported by Saginaw to change "7 member" from "up to" to "at least 7 member" and again at the bottom of the amendment to "at least" five individuals.

Vote to accept resolution as amended. One opposition. *MOTION CARRIED.*

### Resolution #2 - 2009

*To establish a Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Technical Advisory Council, submitted by the MACD State Council*

**Whereas**, the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts is an organized body representing the 79 Conservation Districts representing 83 counties in Michigan, and

**Whereas**, Michigan Conservation Districts are special purpose units of state government that provide natural resource management services including technical and financial assistance, educational activities, information and referral services to Michigan citizens, and

**Whereas**, Michigan Conservation Districts work closely with state and federal government agencies and nongovernmental organizations concerned with natural resource conservation and the management and development of renewable resources, and provide the delivery of natural resource programs to the citizens of Michigan,

**Therefore be it resolved** that the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts establish a seven member Technical Advisory Council to provide the Association and member Conservation Districts with technical and programmatic input and guidance to better position Michigan Conservation Districts to deliver federal, state and nongovernmental natural resource programs to Michigan citizens, and

**Therefore be it further resolved** that the Technical Advisory Council be appointed by the MACD president and consist of one State Council member, at least one Conservation District board or staff member, and up to five individuals from federal and state governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations that provide natural resource, agriculture, forestry, environmental and other technical and program assistance to the citizens of Michigan, and

**Therefore be it further resolved** that the Technical Advisory Council act in an advisory capacity to the State Council, reporting to the State Council on a semi-annual basis.

Motion by Randy Thompson, supported by Alcona and Livingston to adopt this resolution.

Discussion/Request to amend:

Motion by Livingston, supported by Delta to amend and change "up to" to "at least" and read similar to the first resolution

Vote on amendment. *MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.*

No further discussion on original resolution.

Vote to accept resolution as amended. One opposition. *MOTION CARRIED.*

#### Resolution #3 - 2009

*To direct NACD to address the Great Lakes as a Region of National Significance, submitted by Manistee Conservation District.*

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes ecosystem encompasses the largest freshwater system on Earth, one-tenth of the population of the United States and one-quarter of the population of Canada, and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes ecosystem has obtained national significance and commitment as reflected through the May 2004 Presidential Executive Order recognizing the Great Lakes as a national treasure and calling for the creation of a "Regional Collaboration of National Significance," and a cabinet-level federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, and

**Whereas**, Federally, a significant five year initiative titled the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been codified in law as an interagency initiative led by the Environmental Protection Agency that targets the most significant resource concerns in the region, including invasive aquatic species, non-point source pollution, and contaminated sediment, and

**Whereas**, the National Association of Conservation Districts provides leadership and a nationally unified voice to represent local conservation districts as their advocate on conservation issues which have been identified and are yet to be identified, and

**Whereas**, the National Association of Conservation Districts works with the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies to build partnerships that address local district priorities and programs that positively impact our nation's natural resources.

**Therefore be it resolved** that the National Association of Conservation Districts will provide effort and focus for the Great Lakes ecosystem as a region of national significance, and provide active advocacy in national efforts to address Great Lakes ecosystem issues, like and including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and

**Therefore be it further resolved** that the National Association of Conservation Districts will work to further partnerships with the Environmental Protection Agency, other federal and state agencies, and organizations in order to promote the utilization of local conservation districts within the Great Lakes Ecosystem in the delivery of programs and initiatives through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and like programs.

Motion by Ionia, supported by Manistee to adopt this resolution.

Discussion:

Art Pelon, Ionia CD, gave background on this resolution.

"A few years ago, NACD did away with their regional focus, including the Great Lakes. [This resolution] would help us suggest to NACD that we live in a special place and we think the Great Lakes need to be looked at [by NACD] in a special manner."

Vote to accept the resolution. *MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.*

#### Resolution #4 - 2009

*To direct NACD to support CRP general sign up, submitted by Ionia Conservation District.*

**Whereas**, the Conservation Reserve Program is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources providing significant water quality improvements, quality wildlife habitat and the protection of millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion, and

**Whereas**, the Conservation Reserve Program is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency, with technical support functions provided by USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service and local conservation districts, and

**Whereas**, the National Association of Conservation Districts provides leadership and a unified voice to represent conservation districts as their national voice on conservation issues,

**Therefore be it resolved**, that the National Association of Conservation Districts provide effort and focus to encourage the USDA Farm Service Agency to focus future general CRP sign ups on national Conservation Reserve Program priority areas, and

**Therefore be it further resolved**, that the National Association of Conservation Districts will work to further the partnership with the Farm Service Agency in order to promote the utilization of conservation districts as a local partner in the outreach and delivery of the Conservation Reserve Program.

Motion by Delta, supported by Manistee to adopt the resolution.

Discussion:

Art Pelon explained that this resolution would encourage NACD to work with FSA to focus on priority areas and better utilized CDs for outreach and delivery of FSA programs.

Discussion/Request to amend:

Motion by Muskegon, supported by Delta to amend the resolution and add language that would strengthen it. They moved to amend the last paragraph to read "in order to make C.D.s an integral and mandatory local partner."

Delta suggested that the word mandatory was too strong. Others concurred. Muskegon agreed to change the language to read "by utilizing Conservation Districts." Muskegon and Delta agreed to change their motion to amend by striking "mandatory" and adding "by utilizing Conservation Districts."

Livingston requested adding "active" local partner. This was agreeable to Muskegon and Delta.

Vote to accept amendment. One opposition. *MOTION CARRIED.*

No further discussion on original resolution.

Vote to accept resolution as amended. *MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.*

## MACD Reports

### Raffle Fundraiser – Art Pelon

MACD will sponsor a raffle fundraiser again this year, similar to the one held two years ago. Proceeds will be divided between MACD and the Conservation Districts.

Tickets with instructions will be mailed around the first of next year to Districts who sold them before. All others will be contacted to see if they're interested in selling them. If not, they will not be sent. **All unsold raffle tickets must be returned to MACD.**

Cost: Tickets will be sold at \$5 each or \$20 for 5 tickets. The drawing will be held Dec. 16, 2010.

Prizes:

First prize - Choice of John Deere lawnmower or a Gator 4x4

Second prize – Chainsaw

Third prize - Trimmer

"This is a good way for your District to make a few hundred dollars without much effort," said Art. He cautioned not to pass the money through District's regular financial books, but to keep it separate.

### Election Results – for State Council 2010

Eighteen (18) votes cast

For President – Mike Lawless; Vice President – Randy Thompson, Secretary/Treasurer – Betsy Koehnlein

### MACD President's Report - Mike Lawless

#### *Legislature*

Mike detailed all the work that MACD did with the Michigan legislature. He and MACD Executive Director, Lori Phalen, spent a lot of time strategizing and planning and meeting with partners and legislative contacts in Lansing. We did all this work and ended in the same place, he said, but eventually there's going to be a change.

This upcoming year is an election year – 30 out of 38 senators are termed out, and there are many representatives whose term is up, too. Mike encouraged MACD members to meet with candidates running in their areas and talk to them about the great work Conservation Districts do. It will be more difficult to make an appointment to see them once they're elected, Mike said.

#### *2010 Legislative Day*

Governor Granholm's term is up this year as well. MACD is thinking about inviting candidates who are running for governor to attend MACD's 2010 Legislative Day. It's a great opportunity to talk to the potential new governor about MACD and the value of Conservation Districts to the state.

#### *Partners*

Mike mentioned that in the past year, Lori Phalen has built many relationships with partners and other groups and finally gotten MACD "a seat at the table."

"If you plant a seed, it will grow," said Mike. "We now have the opportunity to nurture these relationships." But relying on Lori is not enough, he continued. "We as an association cannot depend on that work being finished in Lansing. It is finished at the local level, with relationships C.D. directors build with the people in your community."

Mike encouraged all directors to invite legislatures and candidates to district meetings and tell them their story. "We've all got a story to tell," he said. "We don't have to create it. We're accomplishing great things in our communities every day. We just have to let people know what we're doing."

As an example, Mike mentioned how as Eaton Conservation District's co-chair, he put together a general letter to all county commissioners telling them all the things that the C.D. did that benefitted in Eaton County. He said that Eaton received several phone calls from the

commissioners thanking him for letting them know about the positive impact the C.D. has. "The right people don't know enough about what's going on," Mike said. "When they know, they're behind us 100 percent."

### MACD Executive Director Report - Lori Phalen

#### *Joint effort required – Both State and Local*

"It takes everyone to make a difference. MACD is making inroads at the State Capitol and I need Conservation District board members to continue to forge relationships at the local level."

Lori reflected that the legislature is beginning to see Conservation Districts as integral delivery system at the local level. And with budget cuts and the consolidation of the DNR and DEQ, it's important that the legislature understand that C.D.s are needed more than ever.

She has made significant strides with the legislature in developing relationships. "It's an ongoing, nonstop process," she said. "There is a lot of relationship building left to do at the state level."

Lori will continue her efforts throughout 2010. However, that's only one step. "That has an impact, but C.D.s also make a significant impact at home, with the relationships you build at the local level," she said.

She encouraged directors to develop relationships with legislators themselves. "You have more impact than staff," she said, because you are publicly elected officials. "Don't leave it up to your staff member to be your voice at the local level."

#### *Relationships developing*

In 2009, MACD has developed relationships with the following associations and groups (and more). Resolutions to support Conservation Districts have been passed with all of them.

- MUCC
- Michigan Association of Counties
- Land Improvement Contractors Association

#### *Wetlands Program*

MACD's Wetlands and Forestry Program concepts provided a significant level of interest within the legislature. Work in 2010 will include bringing a working group together to further discuss and develop methods to incorporate Conservation Districts as the delivery mechanism for Michigan's private lands programs.

Senate Bill 785 (Public Act 120) was signed by the Governor on October 15, 2009. The bill included the establishment of a wetland permitting assistance pilot and a Wetlands Advisory Council to oversee the pilots and permitting activities in Michigan. Jeff Auch from Muskegon C.D. will represent MACD on that Council.

Conservation Districts are included in the Wetlands pilot program – With Muskegon, Delta and Calhoun participating. This pilot provides an outstanding opportunity to show the DEQ how C.D.s can assist them at the local level. Information on this program is posted on the DEQ website.

#### *Operations Manual*

In 2009, MACD completed the revision of a C.D. Directors and Operations Manual. The document is located on the MACD Web site and it offers helpful tools and comprehensive information.

#### *Training*

A Resolution passed at last year's annual meeting recommended that MACD put in place a stronger training program. In 2009, a training program for directors was completed and will be delivered in 2010.

MACD also developed a quarterly Director's newsletter that is distributed in hard copy or email depending on whether MACD has an email on record. It is less costly to email the newsletter and directors are encouraged to contact MACD office with current email address.

#### *Looking ahead*

Goals for 2010 include:

- Increasing legislative activity
- Ongoing meetings with the State of Michigan transition team members during the restructuring of the DEQ and DNR.

*Closing remarks*

In closing, Lori posed this question: "Is MACD in trouble?"

The answer? "I guess that's up to you because MACD is you. And the future of this Association and of Districts will be whatever you want it to be. We've got opportunity, we have a process that works, we have you working at the local level and I look forward to working with all of you in the next year to make it happen."

Anyone who has questions or needs assistance is encouraged to contact Lori directly by phone or email.

Michigan Envirothon Report – Benjamin Wickerham

Michigan Envirothon is currently in process of recruiting teams and confirming resource professionals for the 2010 competition season. The program provides an excellent opportunity to inspire our high schoolers to get involved, especially at the regional level.

Partner Reports

Reports were heard from:

- Chris White, State Director, Farm Service Agency
- Steve Shine, Michigan Department of Agriculture
- Carla Gregory, Assistant State Conservationist, Natural Resource Conservation Service

Other Business

1. Saginaw moved, Ionia supported motion to destroy the ballots. *MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.*

2. Discussion about dues:

Lapeer County suggested looking at the dues structure and talking about instituting a sliding scale.

Discussion arose from the observation that the 2010 MACD Budget shows that MACD can expect only 39 districts to pay dues – down from 60 Districts who paid last year.

For this meeting, 28 districts were eligible to vote –with 18 districts casting votes.

Mike announced that at yesterday's MACD State Council meeting, the Council voted to accept partial payments of Districts for hardship reasons. The Council wants participation even if Districts are struggling, said Mike. If a District feels that they are unable to pay the full amount they were invoiced, they should write a letter to MACD stating how much they can pay at this time.

Randy Thompson will write a letter on behalf of the State Council to all Districts and explaining the dues process and acceptance of partial dues during this difficult economic time.

The 67<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

These minutes are subject to approval by the General Assembly at the 2010 MACD Convention.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Lori Phalen,  
MACD Executive Director