

**LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY  
WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING**

Hybrid – Zoom  
March 24, 2026

**Members Present:**

Ed Kerins, Adel Johnson, Sherri Ohs-Mosley, Patrick Johnson, Diana Hammer, Commissioner Payne, and Don Dahl

**Staff & Guests Present:**

Fred Sargeson, Kegan McClanahan, Kierstin LaRoche, Sandy Whittington, Gary Burton, Agnes Ng, Cameron Enright, and Andrew Mulder

Ms. Johnson, Vice-Chair, called the 290<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District (WQPD) Board of Directors (Board) to order at 4:00 p.m. A quorum was established. Introductions of Board members and WQPD staff were made.

**REVIEW OF AGENDA**

The agenda was reviewed and approved with no changes.

**MINUTES**

The Vice Chair, Adel Johnson, requested a review of the minutes, and no changes were requested.

**TENMILE CREEK FLOOD ZONE PROPOSAL**

Mr. McClanahan presented a project proposal focused on water quality monitoring and growth and development planning within the Tenmile Creek flood zone. He requested \$11,500 from the sampling budget to complete sampling in the Helena area prior to the end of the fiscal year.

The proposed work will assess flood zone conditions, reevaluate stream impairments identified in the 2006 TMDL study, and examine stormwater-related contaminants in support of future MS4 permit preparation. Sampling is planned for April–May and will include analysis of nutrients, total solids, sediment loads, and other contaminants in Tenmile Creek, Silver Creek, and select groundwater locations including private homeowners. Soils in the project area will also be sampled using the Public Health sanitarians' equipment that measures metals in the soil.

Mr. Johnson mentioned nitrates, septic systems and their mobility. Board discussed nitrate pollution in Helena Valley. Ms. Ohs-Mosley asked what prompted this study. Mr. McClanahan explained that the Tenmile flood zone hasn't been studied lately. The study and its results will help landowners understand why zoning came into effect. Ms. Johnson asked if DEQ will be using the results. Mr. McClanahan will check into this. Mr. McClanahan further explained that isotope analysis will be used to help identify potential nitrate sources. Mr. McClanahan explained that if elevated nitrate levels are detected, site-specific recommendations will be provided to homeowners, including potential treatment options such as reverse osmosis

systems. The Board ended the proposal discussion by talking about wastewater effluent vs. sludge and its application and treatment in the Helena and East Helena Valley.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING-REVIEW PROCESS**

Mr. Sargeson led the board discussions on preparations for the upcoming strategic planning session in April, focusing on reviewing mission, vision, and values statements. Mr. Kerins emphasized the importance of taking the strategic planning process seriously and says from the board's standpoint that it is a responsibility we have under our governance. Mr. Sargeson added the importance of the strategic plan as it will become the framework for the workplan for the Water Quality Protection District staff over the next three years. Ms. Hammer suggested including more emphasis on climate change impacts, particularly regarding drought, wildfire effects on water quality, and flooding risks in the strategic plan. The group also discussed ways to more effectively engage in early planning discussions and subdivision reviews to address growth-related water quality concerns.

### **WATERSHED UPDATE**

Mr. McClanahan presented an overview of the Sunny Vista complaint to the Board. The Board discussed ongoing investigations at Sunny Vista. Mr. Johnson asked if we had captured all the nitrate samples in the area. Mr. McClanahan explained how we currently receive those results and other residential samples.

Mr. Clanahan discussed presenting again to the HOA of Emerald Ridge subdivision. The concern is water availability issues. Mr. McClanahan stated that he discussed water conservation with them and collecting additional water levels in the area. He has also reached out to Fox View Estates to present to them as well.

Additionally, a DEQ Nonpoint Source grant application has been submitted to update the watershed restoration plan, which has not been revised since 2016.

### **BOARD MEMBER ROUND-ROBIN**

- LCC Commissioner Payne – noted she ran for County Commissioner because of the need for water availability protection.
- City of Helena - N/A
- City of East Helena - Mr. Dahl updated the board that Habitat for Humanity has started their engineering process for the water tower for their development. Prickly Pear Estates has submitted their preliminary plat for their first 5 phases of 366 homes.
- Board of Health – N/A
- HCC - N/A
- CD – Vacant -
- Public at large -Mr. Johnson shared insights from a meeting about data centers, where Upper Missouri Waterkeepers raised concerns about water usage, electricity demands, and the potential impact on local communities, and the legislative suggestions to protect Montana. The Board discussed the pros and cons of data center development in Montana, including job creation versus environmental and infrastructure challenges. Ms. Johnson asked if anyone attended the League of Women Voters, Keeping it Clean for People and Wildlife event last night.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

There being no public comment; the meeting was adjourned at 5:32.