

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

Hybrid – Zoom
May 26, 2026

Members Present:

Ed Kerins, Adel Johnson, Sherri Ohs-Mosley, Patrick Johnson, Diana Hammer, Ryan Leland, and Don Dahl.

Staff & Guests Present:

Fred Sargeson, Jennifer McBroom, Kegan McClanahan, and Sandy Whittington

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kerins, Chair, called the 292nd 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 Chair, Mr. Kerins requested a review of the minutes, and they were unanimously approved with the note that there is a sentence with a weird JW3 or JW4 after a name. The chair and board agreed that it was not relevant.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Ms. McBroom opened the discussion by outlining the criteria that will guide evaluation of strategic plan activities. These criteria include feasibility, required resources, realism, partnership dependencies, anticipated impact, and timeline considerations. She then presented the core focus areas for the strategic plan:

- Monitoring and sampling
- Outreach and education
- Board and organizational operations
- Restoration efforts
- Ms. McBroom initiated a review of prior strategic plan activities to help the Board determine which efforts should continue and to consider new suggestions submitted by board members.

Restoration and Monitoring - The Board reached consensus to broaden restoration efforts from a narrow focus on stream restoration to more comprehensive “general restoration” activities. This broader scope will allow inclusion of buffer zones, groundwater recharge areas, and other watershed-based approaches.

The board also agreed to continue monitoring and sampling efforts, including annual reassessments of:

- Groundwater & Surface water networks
- Collect groundwater & surface water data

Ms. Ohs-Mosely requested clarification on the geographic scope of testing completed to date. Mr. McClanahan provided a detailed explanation of the monitoring area, describing the 10-mile flood zone, which extends from the Williams Street Bridge (location of the USGS gage at the edge of the valley) through to Sierra Road and the Law Enforcement Academy. He also confirmed the inclusion of the Silver Creek watershed. He emphasized that this area has benefited from extensive past studies, providing a strong base of historical data.

Mr. McClanahan further outlined current sampling efforts by WQPD, including:

- Sampling of the D2 Drain (primary drainage system for much of the valley, including flood zones)
- Five surface water sampling sites across Silver Creek and Ten Mile
- Eight groundwater sampling locations, including monitoring wells and private residential wells
- Sampling also includes an upstream control site outside the flood zone to allow comparison and better identify water quality changes impacting residents.

Mr. McClanahan reported that during the upcoming summer, WQPD will process collected data and develop public-facing maps and graphs for publication on the website.

As the conversation shifted to rainwater sampling discussion, Ms. Ohs-Mosely inquired about rainwater sampling. Mr. McClanahan noted the existence of a WQPD-installed weather station in the North Hills (off Glass Drive) collects only meteorological data.

Ms. McBroom redirected discussion toward Outreach, Education, and Community Engagement and identifying outreach and partnership opportunities for the strategic plan. The board agreed to continue:

- Partner-supported public events
- Outreach materials and social media engagement
- Website maintenance and improvements
- Community water quality sampling kits
- Well and septic system workshops
- The Water Watchers Program, coordinated by Gary Burton, will remain a priority initiative, although transportation costs continue to present challenges.

Ms. McBroom introduced discussions on water conservation and planning. While existing efforts are in place, she emphasized the need for a more detailed and formalized plan if adopted. Activities discussed included rain barrel distribution events and irrigation efficiency workshops. The board agreed that the following should be included in future planning considerations:

- Development and implementation of a comprehensive water conservation plan
- Updates to quality assurance documentation
- Creation of improved data management systems

The board also discussed grant funding, specifically weighing the benefits and limitations of using grants to support staff salaries.

The board further agreed to continue:

- Staff training
- Board orientation and development
- Policy review and updates

Ms. McBroom reviewed the statutory framework guiding WQPD, referencing Title VII, Chapter 13, Part 45, and clarifying the organization's responsibilities and limitations. She also provided a brief overview of the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) role.

As Ms. McBroom moved the conversation once again to outreach and education, to include pollutants and education strategy, the board discussed pollutant reduction priorities, particularly:

- PFAS
- Phosphorus
- PCBs

While DEQ provides PFAS testing information online and regulatory requirements may evolve, the board determined that WQPD's most feasible role at this stage is to focus on:

- Public education
- Information dissemination, rather than direct testing initiatives.

Discussion turned to wastewater management. The Chair explained that although the city of Helena manages primary sewer infrastructure, improperly connected septic systems continue to result in unauthorized discharges. In response, the board discussed requesting a presentation from Environmental Health regarding:

- Septic system inspections
- Regulatory processes

The board also discussed:

- Public engagement strategies
- Development of a communication plan addressing stormwater and snowmelt runoff
- Preparation for upcoming MS4 sampling requirements

Ms. McBroom outlined early planning efforts for a multi-department stormwater program at the county level and confirmed WQPD's support.

Under the data collection and reporting category, it was proposed to establish a formal process for reporting well contamination, which would be supported by educational outreach to help residents interpret testing results by using:

- Chain-of-custody forms at testing laboratories

- Voluntary submission of water quality data
- Water Conservation Expansion

As the board moved to water conservation expansion, the Chair highlighted existing local initiatives such as gray water systems and recommended expanding efforts to include:

- Water reclamation
- Water reuse strategies as part of a comprehensive conservation plan.

The Chair commended Mr. McClanahan on the WQPD website, noting that it is now one of the strongest government websites in Montana and updated regularly. The board emphasized the need to ensure Mr. McClanahan has sufficient resources to maintain this level of quality.

Ms. McBroom guided the conversation to the next steps for strategic planning, and Ms. Hammer recommended delaying the vote on selecting initiatives until June to allow additional time for review. The board unanimously agreed. Ms. McBroom reminded the board that the plan covers a three-year period and must align with budget constraints and operational feasibility. Ms. McBroom agreed to organize proposed activities into categories and provide evaluation criteria for board review in preparation for the June meeting and voting.

Additional discussions regarding rainwater concerns were brought to the Boards attention by Ms. Ohs-Mosely. She expressed concerns about potential chemical exposure from atmospheric sources, specifically geo-engineering. Ms. McBroom clarified that WQPD currently does not conduct targeted contaminant testing of rainwater. Ms. Hammer suggested allowing board members time to research the scientific basis of these concerns before committing resources. The board agreed that further investigation could occur prior to any decisions.

The meeting discussions concluded with identification of several broader strategic priorities:

- Aquifer recharge management
- Development of environmental indicators
- Creation of an integrated clean water plan clarifying partner roles
- Evaluation of water quality funding strategies across jurisdictions
- Board Representation Concern
 - The board discussed the continued vacancy of the Conservation District representative seat, which has remained unfilled for nearly one year. Members expressed concern and emphasized the need for more proactive measures to resolve the issue.

BOARD MEMBER ROUND-ROBIN

- LCC Commissioner Payne: No report
- City of Helena: No report
- City of East Helena: No report
- Board of Health (Ms. Ohs-Mosely): BOH recently completed their strategic planning process and participated in community events to include a suicide awareness event at the Myrna Loy and Rodney Street block party.
- Helena Citizens Council (Ms. Hammer): The council is focusing on budget adoption scheduled for July and Ms. Hammer is on the Helena Forward land use zoning ordinance committee. She noted as they make updates, she will look for potential ways to improve water quality should they present themselves.
- Conservation District: The board discussed the continued vacancy of the Conservation District representative seat, which has remained unfilled for nearly one year. Members expressed concern and emphasized the need for more proactive measures to resolve the issue. While there was no WQPD board representative at the last CD meeting, the Chair submitted an update report to maintain communications between the two boards.
- Public at Large: No report

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

There being no public comment; the meeting was adjourned at 5:37pm.