MACD membership:

The following are questions brought forward in the discussion of the proposed merger of MACD and SWCDM followed by an SWCDM’s response and clarification. Some of these questions may have also been responded to in the table of questions and answers provided by MACD:

1. **Is there an SWCDM Board and who are they accountable to?**
   The SWCDM Board is currently made up of 7 District Supervisors. 4 of these members are also on the MACD Board and the other 3 are appointed by the MACD board.

2. **Who currently sits on the SWCDM Board?**
   As of Jan 1st, 2020: Mike Hansen (Chair & MACD Board member), Jeff Wivholm (Vice Chair & MACD Board Member), Dean Rogge (MACD Board member), Roddy Rost (MACD Board Member), Gene Evans (Treasure), Roger Hybner, and John Anderson.

3. **Do CDs appoint the SWCDM board members?**
   SWCDM Board members are appointed by the MACD Board.

4. **Our board is concerned with what special interest groups SWCDM accepts money from, and what strings are attached.**
   All funding is scrutinized, as to its source, to be consistent with the goals and mission of MACD in supporting collective Conservation District’s effort to put conservation on the land.

   That said, the vast majority of SWCDM’s funding is Federal, coming from NRCS partnership agreements or competitive grants such as DEQ’s 319 funding. NRCS funding is broken into categories such as “Soil Health”, “Pollinators”, and “Conservation Story Telling” which we are then able to sub-award Conservation Districts for projects relating to these topics or to fund Big Sky Watershed Corps members. Soil Health funding has also been used to help host Workshops and our 2020 Soil Health Symposium.

   Very small amounts (~$7,500/year) of funding come from other NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund and Ducks Unlimited - these funds are directly applied in support of the Sage Grouse Initiative Program which employees 4 people who work with NRCS and local CDs to provide technical assistance to landowners.

   We may solicit sponsorship funds from private companies to help host our annual Soil Health Workshops and Symposia.

   Our funding is all dedicated to increasing capacity, providing education and outreach, and implementing conservation for soil and water resources. SWCDM does not partake in any lobbying activities.
5. **SWCDM is not represented by agricultural interests.** Supervisors cited that the advertisement for an SWCDM executive director said applicants should have a strong background in natural resources and proven experience working for or with non-profits. There was no mention of having an agricultural background at all.

The key role of the SWCDM Director, (not executive director) is to provide program leadership and build and maintain relationships with the wide variety of critical conservation partnership organizations MACD and SWCDM consistently work with. Regardless whether the job announcement specifically required an agriculture background, it was definitely part of the evaluation criteria. Having overly specific criteria in an announcement can severely limit applicants, especially in today’s job market.

That said, SWCDM is focused on natural resource conservation issues which include, but not limited to those related to agriculture, lakeshore development, urban, recreational land uses and wildlife. MACD and SWCDM’s boards have a wealth of agricultural experience in support of this effort. SWCDM also works to involve and partner with individual agricultural producers along with the myriad of dedicated agriculture and conservation organizations. The current SWCDM Director shares experience working directly with Conservation Districts as well as agricultural producers on implementing locally-lead conservation initiatives.

6. **SWCDM is not accountable to the Conservation Districts**

SWCDM is not directly accountable to the Conservation Districts, but the board does consist of mainly MACD Board members and is appointed by the full MACD board, who are representatives of and accountable to the Districts. Our board was designed this way so that SWCDM stays closely aligned with MACD’s goals and mission.

7. **SWCDM generates substantial revenue through the programs it currently runs and the partnership it has with NRCS (2.5 million dollars a year).** We would request that once the merge is complete, the fees and operating costs generated through these partnerships, could be used to offset the dues that districts pay to the organization and are used to directly benefit the districts of Montana.

SWCDM received a partnership agreement with NRCS that included $2.5 million over the course of 3 years, or a bit over $800K/year. There is no guarantee of this agreement being renewed in the future. SWCDM also does not dictate the spending of this agreement and acts as an oversite/pass-through entity for these funds, all spending is approved by NRCS Leadership. $1.6 million of this agreement has already been encumbered to fund our Sage Grouse Employees, a Soil Health research position with Little Beaver CD, and Pheasants Forever Wildlife Biologists. Of these agreement funds, SWCDM receives but a small portion of this funding to complete administrative support tasks. This agreement funding is likely not eligible for offsetting dues-based funding.

*On a separate note, a melding of MACD and SWCDM into a 501c3 would make MACD eligible for other funding opportunities that could well serve to reduce dues.*

8. **We would like to see current and future partnerships and programs managed by conservation districts.**

SWCDM works to include and provide opportunities to Directs to help implement our programs and the majority of our programs are sub-awards provided to Conservation Districts. The Benefit of SWCDM is our ability to cast a wide-net across the state to disperse these funds whereas the
benefit of a local Conservation District is working to implement programs at a local scale. SWCDM is focused on and is making strides in this effort.

9. As contracts end with the current programs, instead of renewing or going after these opportunities, ACD should reach out to the districts that would be willing and able to manage these programs. (See response above)

10. We would also like to see the bookkeeping and the website done by a conservation district employee who has the expertise already and would like the benefit of more hours or higher pay. SWCDM & MACD appropriately have staff employed for these activities. The benefit being that they are central to our office and have the ability to solely focus on SWCDM & MACD activities which require a full-time position and a high level of involvement with the Boards. Fragmenting this role would introduce unwarranted inefficiencies.

11. We feel that the SWCDM employees will have a huge part in the success of this transition and there is no reason they can’t fit into the MACD. They may argue that the partners may not be willing to partner with MACD if the organizations merge. We hope that the committee goes out to the partners and visits with them directly. SWCDM is not concerned that partners would "Not want to partner with a merged MACD". It's more that many ongoing SWCDM programs require the ability to "cast a wide net" (i.e. our Education and Outreach grant is open to all CDs, watershed groups, NGOs focused on conservation, tribal, etc.). We believe there are solutions that can be incorporated into the merged organization to help retain these programs and will be addressed in further discussions of the possibilities with MACD and the Reorganization Committee.

SWCDM is committed to working with MACD to find solutions that both benefit the MACD membership as well as enhance the effectiveness and reach of our highly effective programs.

Best Regards,

Stephanie Adams, SWCDM Director

&

Mike Hansen, SWCDM Chair & MACD Board Member