

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE PLAN	1
LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY	2
HISTORY	3
DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENTS	3
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	3
PROGRAM AREAS OF NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION	5
WATER RESOURCES	5
CONSERVATION FORESTRY - TREE PROGRAM	6
EDUCATION PROGRAMS	6
PRIVATE, STATE, AND FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT	7
WILDLIFE PROGRAMS	7
MEDICINE BOW CONSERVATION DISTRICT NATURAL RESOURCES LAND USE PLAN - POLICY	9
SIGNATURE - ADOPTION BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS	13

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**PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE PLAN**

*This Natural Resource and Land Use plan was developed with local participation from district residents. The process chosen by the Medicine Bow Conservation District in developing this plan consisted of surveys that were mailed to all district residents seeking input regarding conservation issues. Through these surveys, we were able to identify priority areas of conservation. The district then conducted in-depth interviews with individuals representing all sectors of our district. They were asked to identify the most important natural resource issues the district currently faces, and what we can do to address these concerns. Those interviewed were then asked to address topics within the following areas:*

**Water Resources**

**Conservation Forestry**

**Private-State-Federal Lands**

**Education**

**Wildlife**

Appendix to this document include:

*Exhibit A – Public Survey Results*

*Exhibit B – Interviews*

*Exhibit C – Results*

Copies of the Non-Point Task Force Best Management Practices (BMP's) that are referenced within the Medicine Bow Conservation District Natural Resource and Land Use Plan may be obtained from the District office. Request may be made via phone, US Mail, email, or in person.

Office information:

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## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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### Legislative Authority

In March 1941 the State Legislature passed an enabling act, which established conservation districts in Wyoming. Conservation districts were established to implement natural resource programs for the protection of Wyoming's natural resources. Wyoming now has 34 districts in 23 counties.

The Medicine Bow Conservation District is guided by the legislative declarations and policy of the Wyoming State Legislature with the following charge:

W.S. 11-16-103

### Legislative Declarations and Policy

(a) It is hereby declared that the farm and grazing lands of Wyoming are among the basic assets of the state; that improper land use practices cause and contribute to serious erosion of these lands by wind and water; that among the consequences which would result from such conditions are the deterioration of soil and its fertility and the silting and sedimentation of stream channels, reservoirs, dams and ditches; that to conserve soil, and soil and water resources, and prevent and control soil erosion, it is necessary that land use practices contributing to soil erosion be discouraged and that appropriate soil conserving land use practices be adopted.

(b) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of the soil, and soil and water resources of this state, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, and thereby to stabilize ranching and farming operations, to preserve natural resources, protect the tax base, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state.

Legislation has given conservation districts the right to pursue a 1-mill conservation tax for the continuation of conservation projects. In 1998, voters of the Medicine Bow Conservation District voted to continue the 1-mill conservation tax for their district. This has enabled the district to undertake several major conservation projects for the communities, both urban and rural, within the district. The district has a cooperative working agreement with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to provide technical support to cooperators within the district boundaries.

*OUR MISSION is to provide the citizens of the Medicine Bow Conservation District with information and technical assistance to contribute to natural resource conservation as well as to improve the quality of life for all our residents.....*

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## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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### **History**

During the 1930's, the Dust Bowl made the need to conserve natural resources, particularly soil, very clear. Agencies ranging from Land Grant Universities to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration researched and implemented conservation practices throughout the nation. Eventually, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was created under the Soil Act of 1935, to develop and implement soil erosion control programs.

The State of Wyoming authorized the establishment of conservation districts in 1941. Districts are a subdivision of state government under the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. There are currently 34 districts in the state. Each district is governed by a board of 5 locally elected supervisors who serve 4-year terms on a voluntary basis without pay. By law, three supervisors are rural, one is urban, and one is at large. These supervisors are elected every four years during the general election.

The Medicine Bow Conservation District was organized in 1954 and includes lands in Eastern Carbon County. The municipalities that lay within the district boundary are Hanna, Medicine Bow, and Elk Mountain. There are also lands in the rural areas of Arlington, McFadden, Leo, and Shirley Basin. The estimated area of the district is 1,494,240 acres, with 536,280 acres of BLM land. The United States Forest Service land mass totals 87,340 acres bringing the total federally owned land in the district to 623,620 acres or 42 percent of the total district area. The State of Wyoming owns 119,520 acres or 8 percent of the district. Private individuals own the remaining 50 percent or 751,100 acres.

### **Descriptive Elements**

The Medicine Bow Conservation District lies within the eastern half of Carbon County in south central Wyoming. The land consists of riparian habitat, forests, upland sagebrush, grassland, desert and high mountains. The elevation varies from 6,000 feet to 11,156 feet above sea level. The major watersheds located in the district are the Medicine Bow River, Little Medicine Bow River, and Rock Creek. These three tributaries flow into the North Platte River. The region receives anywhere from 10 to 30 inches of precipitation per year depending on elevation and there are approximately 60 to 90 frost-free days per year. The region experiences winter lows from 30°F below zero to summer highs of 90°F above zero.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

*To create a demographic profile of our district we have to look at Carbon County as a whole. Separate demographical information for our district is not available.*

According to the U.S. Census of 2000 the total population of the county is 15,639. 53.6 percent or 8,376 of the residents are male. 46.4 percent or 7,263 of the population are female. The median age of the county is 38.9 years. The population of the county that is 16 years of age or older is 12,392. 62.5 percent or 7,744 are currently in the labor force. 37.5 percent or 4,648 are not in the labor force. 59.2 percent or 7,335 residents are employed. 3.3 percent are unemployed.

**MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN**

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The following demonstrates the industry classification, number and percentage of employed residents over 16 years of age:

INDUSTRY	NUMBER	PERCENT
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	885	12.1
Construction	732	10.0
Manufacturing	483	6.6
Wholesale Trade	98	1.3
Retail Trade	759	10.3
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	625	8.5
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	237	3.2
Professional, scientific, management, administrative	350	4.8
Education, health and social services	1255	17.1
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	764	10.4
Other services (except public admin.)	240	3.3
Public Administration	788	10.7
Information Services	119	1.6
Total	7335	100.0

Households in Carbon County total 6,159. The median household income is \$36,060.00. Related families in the county total 4,180 with a median family income of \$41,991.00. 730 households are below \$10,000.00 per year of total income. 60 households bring in \$200,000.00 or more. Families under \$10,000.00 per year total 258 and 30 families make \$200,000.00 or more per year. Per capita income in the county is \$18,375.00.

The counties tax base is supported by agriculture, coal mining, natural gas and oil production, hydroelectric and wind power generation, timber production, and tourism including hunting, fishing and camping. The leading economic contributor within the district is currently agriculture.

The counties classifications of workers are as follows:

Private wage and salary workers: 4,182 or 65.6 percent

Government workers: 1,828 or 24.9 percent

Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business: 645 or 8.8 percent

Unpaid family workers: 49 or 0.7 percent.

**PROGRAM AREAS OF NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

**WATER RESOURCES**

*The Medicine Bow Conservation District is charged with the protection of our water resources as defined in Wyoming State Statute 11-16-103 Legislative declarations and policy.*

**Water Quality –Quantity**

*Our goal is to adequately monitor and analyze the surface waters within the district using the most accurate credible water quality data available. We will work with the residents within our district to educate them on the importance of a healthy, properly functioning water cycle within our watersheds and to see that the available water resources are put to best beneficial use to maintain a viable agricultural community through sound management of irrigation practices, to maintain healthy riparian areas that provide excellent fisheries and habitat for domestic and wildlife species and provide for adequate domestic water supplies of the highest possible quality.*

The objectives we will implement to achieve our overall goal are as follows:

- Complete the analysis and interpretation of the data collected since 1999.
- Complete a final water quality report for all three of our watersheds.
- Develop a maintenance water quality sampling and analysis program that will address any target areas identified and ensure water quality is sufficient to achieve the designated and beneficial uses assigned to those waters.
- Ensure the streams within our watersheds are classified correctly according to Chapter 1 of Wyoming Water Quality Rules and Regulations.
- Address new standards regarding water quality.
- Educate and inform landowners regarding existing and proposed AFO/CAFO regulations.
- Assist in reducing the occurrence of non-point source pollution within the district boundaries.
- Promote Best Management Practices (BMP's) to reduce non-point source pollution by promoting irrigation water management, water erosion control, pesticide and fertilizer management, riparian management and other conservation practices.
- Work to see that all water rights are being utilized to their fullest extent.
- Educate and inform cooperators regarding Wyoming Water Laws.
- Work with cooperators and local, state and federal agencies on watershed-based water quality and quantity programs.
- Seek additional water storage as per the North Platte Decree as allowed.
- Promote projects that create water energy development within the district.
- Support and promote any and all waste cleanup programs and projects.
- Provide our residents with the informational resources regarding proper sewage design and installation.

**CONSERVATION FORESTRY – TREE PROGRAMS**

*The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports, promotes and assists in the planning, selecting, planting and maintaining of trees both rural and urban. It is our goal to promote the use of trees to enhance and contribute to the conservation of all our natural resources. We will provide our patrons with the knowledge and technical assistance needed to ensure the survival rate of all plantings within our district boundaries. By promoting the planting of a diverse tree population in our district we will be able to provide for increased aesthetic values, additional wildlife habitats, and increased vegetation through proper installation of drip irrigation systems, and create resistance to disease by planting a variety of species.*

The objectives we will implement to achieve our overall goal are as follows:

- Make readily available tree supplies to ensure the survival of all species planted.
- Provide a quality, diverse selection of tree species to all eligible district residents through a non-competitive program.
- Provide technical assistance to all district residents and agencies as needed.
- Work to construct a WYDOT Living Snow Fence every second year.
- Work to construct a County Living Snow Fence every second year.
- We will cooperate with communities on tree beautification projects.
- Provide our residents and employees with tree education programs as available.
- Provide education and assistance regarding fire, insect and disease control.

**EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

*The Medicine Bow Conservation District is dedicated to providing our residents with sufficient resources, educational opportunities and materials to educate both adults and youth in all areas of natural resource conservation. We will provide a vast network of resources that encompass federal, state, and local government agencies. We will support, promote, and contribute to all educational efforts made by our patrons and staff.*

The objectives we will implement to achieve our overall goal are as follows:

- Support and contribute to Project Learning Tree.
- Support the efforts of district wide Range Land Judging Teams.
- Support and contribute to Ag in the Classroom.
- Support and contribute to local area school Conservation Camps.
- Continue to produce “Conservation Crossroads” newsletter on a bi-monthly basis.
- Participate in the stewardship program offered through the NACD each year.
- Educate our patrons regarding all areas of natural resource management.
- Educate our staff in all areas of natural resource management so that they may provide our district patrons with excellent service and special expertise.

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## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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### **PRIVATE, STATE, & FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT**

*It is the goal of the Medicine Bow Conservation District to strive to enhance the natural condition of our rangeland on all Private, State, and Federal Lands within our district. We will promote Best Management Practices, sound grazing techniques, and range monitoring to maintain healthy vegetation and a clean water source in order to sustain our wildlife population and maintain domestic livestock grazing. We promote commerce through agriculture and through the utilization of energy reserves, both renewable and non-renewable. We believe that we can achieve this economic stability with multiple use, and as multiple use progresses, we will focus on protecting our soil, water, and vegetative resources throughout our district.*

The objectives we will implement to achieve our overall goal are as follows:

- We will continue to seek cooperating agency status regarding all Federal Land Use Management Planning and their revision where we have jurisdiction or special expertise as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- We will build upon a consistent rangeland monitoring technique.
- We will provide our patrons with integrated weed management solutions for noxious weeds and assist them with the establishment of weed control groups.
- We will obtain tire tanks for stock and wildlife water development.
- We will encourage the maintenance and enhancement of any/all disturbed lands within our district by any practice which is economically viable.
- We will continue to encourage all qualifying district residents to participate in Farm Bill Programs.
- We will continue our program of equipment rental to enhance and improve both rural and urban lands within our district.
- We will promote the use of Best Management Practices to ensure the land acreages within our district remain healthy and viable for future generations.
- We will keep district patrons informed of changes to Federal and State policies regarding land uses within the district, state, and region.
- The Medicine Bow Conservation District will cooperate and consult with cooperators and residents of the district, and all public institutions and government agencies in the conservation of the water, soil, plants and wildlife resources in the district, within budgetary limitations.

### **WILDLIFE PROGRAMS**

*The Medicine Bow Conservation District will support the maintenance and enhancement of wildlife habitat on all Private, State, and Federal lands within our district. We believe that by utilizing sound land management techniques, sound science, and common sense an economically sustainable balance can be achieved between our wildlife and the multiple use demands placed upon the lands within our district.*

The objectives we will implement to achieve our overall goal is as follows:

- Seek out and secure long term sources of funding to implement Wildlife Programs.

## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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- We will serve as a link between landowners and the USFWS Partners for Wildlife Program.
- Support Best Management Practices to protect wildlife habitat, and maintain riparian upland habitat based on current land use practices.
- Continue efforts in living shelterbelt plantings that are beneficial to wildlife.
- Support Best Management Practices to protect wildlife habitat for consumptive and non-consumptive species.
- Remain up-to-date regarding the Endangered Species Act so that we may inform landowners on proposed listings and habitat management projects.
- Continue working with the Wyoming Game and Fish on achieving game animal herd objectives.
- Continue to support the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).
- Continue to educate our district residents regarding wildlife management and wildlife habitat improvement.

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## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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### **MEDICINE BOW CONSERVATION DISTRICT NATURAL RESOURCE LAND USE PLAN – POLICY**

*The Medicine Bow Conservation District Board of Supervisors have adopted the following policies to assist in the implementation of the above described goals and action in each of the Medicine Bow Conservation District Program Areas.*

It shall hereby be the policy of the Medicine Bow Conservation District:

#### **A. Water Quality and Quantity**

1. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports the on-going development and adoption of an overall water resources policy for Wyoming. Note: A water policy was developed by the “Wyoming Water Coalition”, consisting of several organizations representing local government, water users and industry, in February 1998 and adopted by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts (WACD). Please refer to WACD website link to Water Resources for complete copy of the policy or contact the WACD.
2. The Medicine Bow Conservation District will only recognize the collection of chemical, physical, biological, and historical constituents as credible scientific data in regards to water quality.
3. The Medicine Bow Conservation District is opposed to any federal governmental control over individual water rights within the boundaries of the district and within the boundaries of the State of Wyoming. Furthermore, the State of Wyoming shall maintain control of all waters within the State of Wyoming.
4. The Medicine Bow Conservation District shall see that all water storage is fulfilled as per the North Platte Agreement as allowed, and further more will not support any action that results in a net loss of irrigated lands within our district.
5. The Medicine Bow Conservation District recognizes the importance of energy development in Wyoming. The District will work to protect the soils and water resources, evaluating any discharged waters from the production of Coal Bed Methane (CBM) or other oil and gas development or mining operation to ensure they will only enhance domestic uses, not degrade the existing quality of water used for domestic, recreation, and irrigation uses.

#### **B. Conservation Forestry**

6. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports the sustainable management of forested areas within the district to improve overall health and productivity while maintaining the economic viability of landowners, industry, and communities that depend on those forested lands.
7. The Medicine Bow Conservation District recognizes the current fuel loads on forested properties pose and imminent threat to the lives, property and economic stability of Wyoming citizens. We will support local, state and federal land managers in proper management of forest and other public lands through Best Management Practices (BMP's) including, but not limited to, timbering, select cutting, and fire management and managed grazing practices for the prevention of catastrophic wildfires.

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## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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8. The Medicine Bow Conservation District will take the following actions to assist in ensuring healthy and sustainable Wyoming forests:
  - a. The Medicine Bow Conservation District will be actively involved in multi-jurisdictional/county level coordinating committees such as those formed under the National Fire Plan, or where these committees do not currently exist, initiate committee formation to address forest management concerns;
  - b. The Medicine Bow Conservation District shall provide review and comments to pre-planning project implementation, Environmental Assessments, and Environmental Impact Statements, document development;
  - c. The Medicine Bow Conservation District will seek cooperating agency status, where appropriate and capacity within the district exists, either as an independent appointment or under the State of Wyoming umbrella, to facilitate input into planning and management for Federal lands within District boundaries..

### **C. Private-State-Federal Lands**

9. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports private property rights that protect the natural resource base.
10. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports the no net loss of private lands.
11. The Medicine Bow Conservation District reserves the right to review and make recommendations on all subdivision plans within the boundaries of the district to the Carbon County Commissioners and the Carbon County Planning and Zoning Board. (W.S. 11-16-103 and W.S. 16-1-101)
12. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports the “Multiple Use” concept of management of state and federal lands, through Best Management Practices (BMP’s), within the boundaries of the district. Multiple uses shall include but are not limited to the follow:
  - a. Timber Harvesting / Thinning
  - b. Grazing
  - c. Recreation
  - d. Oil and Gas Development
  - e. Mineral Development
  - f. Wind Power Development
  - g. Hydro-Electric Development
13. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports livestock grazing as a tool for the sound management of private, state and federal lands.
14. The Medicine Bow Conservation District will not support any action that results in a net loss of Animal Unit Months (AUM’s) of livestock on any allotment, permit or lease on lands owned or managed by the State of Wyoming or the United States Government.

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## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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15. The Medicine Bow Conservation District shall oppose any Federal Resource Management Plan or Natural Resource Land Use Plan that will have a negative effect on the historical customs and cultures of the residents of the district.
16. The Medicine Bow Conservation District recognizes the distinction between the land use management requirements for the Section 15 and Section 3 lands (Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, as amended). The district will strive to provide assistance to the cooperators of the district in their continued historical use and management of the Section 15 lands within the jurisdictional boundary of the Medicine Bow Conservation District.
17. The Medicine Bow Conservation District urges that appropriations and resources for range improvement on federal lands be adequate to properly fund the federal share of those range improvements.
18. The Medicine Bow Conservation District encourages the administration and public land managers to continue to support, provide authority and funding to coordinated planning and range stewardship programs at a higher priority.
19. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports and strongly encourages the control of noxious weeds and pests by owners, managers and users of all lands including easements, rights-of-way's, and municipalities. The Medicine Bow Conservation District urges the Administration and land managers to increase funding, support, and coordinate noxious weed control efforts.
20. The Medicine Bow Conservation District recommends that no additional areas within the district be designated as wilderness or wilderness study areas and furthermore that congress should consider the conversion of present wilderness study areas back to non-wilderness status so that the American people can benefit from the multiple uses of those lands.
21. The Medicine Bow Conservation District does not support the use of State or public funds for the purchase of real property by non-profit organizations.

### **D. Education**

22. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports expanded research on grazing systems and condition trends to develop improved pasture and forage management practices to reduce adverse impact on range resources while improving production efficiency.
23. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports broadened plant material research to develop plant materials that optimize uses of soil and water resources for warm and cool season production, and improve stand establishment techniques.
24. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports actions that may contribute scientific knowledge or result in the identification and enhancement of techniques for the sequestration of carbon on agricultural and forestry; as well as, lend support to the Carbon Sequestration Advisory Committee and their efforts to promote field research that can advance knowledge of carbon sequestration.

### **E. Wildlife**

25. The Medicine Bow Conservation District will only recognize threatened and endangered species that are listed based on clear, convincing, peer reviewed, scientific data. The

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## MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN

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financial burden imposed upon private landowners by the listing of threatened or endangered species and the associated critical habitat designations shall be the responsibility of the Federal Government.

26. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports amendments to the Endangered Species Act that would require that species listings be based upon clear and convincing peer reviewed scientific data.

### **F. Operations**

27. The Medicine Bow Conservation District Board of Supervisors reserves the right to appeal local, state, and federal decisions that adversely affect the Medicine Bow Conservation District Natural Resource and Land Use Plan.
28. The Medicine Bow Conservation District agrees to cooperate, encourage and provide assistance in the cooperative planning of surface management of natural resources where impact from energy development will be or has occurred.
29. The Medicine Bow Conservation District requires only certified weed-free hay or straw to be used as mulch on any reclamation projects including but not limited to, private lands, municipalities, state and federal lands, county road, state or federal highway project, pipeline, transmission or communication line, Abandoned Mine Lands.
30. The Medicine Bow Conservation District requires that all owners of easements and or rights-of-way for power lines, above or below ground transmission lines, road ways, oil and gas exploration, pipeline and development sites, wind farms and mineral exploration and extraction sites shall be solely responsible for the control of noxious weeds for the life of the easement and/or rights-of-way. The owner of said easement or rights-of-way shall be responsible for all noxious weed control until full establishment of perennial grass cover is established meeting the satisfaction of the private landowner, lessee or federal land manager.
31. The Medicine Bow Conservation District supports local, state and federal agencies in requiring proper construction, maintenance and reclamation of transportation corridors including but not limited to, access roads, pipelines, and transmission lines to prevent resource degradation.
32. The Medicine Bow Conservation District will review, study, and comment when possible on all local, state, and federal legislation, rule making and regulations promulgated or revised by any local, state or federal agency that may have an effect on the Medicine Bow Conservation District and its Cooperators.

**MBCD RESOURCE AND LAND USE PLAN**

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**ADOPTED:**

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**CHAIRMAN, JOHN JOHNSON**

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**DATE**

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**VICE - CHAIRMAN, KEN BESEL**

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**DATE**

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**TREASURER, OLIN SIMS**

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**DATE**

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**MEMBER, RALPH BROKAW**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

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**MEMBER, BRIAN NESVIK**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

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**DISTRICT MANAGER, BRAD HOLLIDAY**

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**DATE**