



ANATOMY OF WORDPRESS

YOUR WEBSITE AND THE MACD MULTISITE NETWORK

Learn the basics of Wordpress and what it means to have a website on the MACD multisite network.

This guide will cover the basic anatomy of a Wordpress website such as posts, pages, menus and more. While this guide stays largely out of the “nitty-gritty” details, each section has links to additional resources if you’d like to learn more about a topic.

Filed Under

Guides / Websites / Wordpress

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Overview

This guide is for conservation districts that have a Wordpress website or want to learn more about what having a Wordpress website might look like. While this guide is aimed at conservation districts that have a website within the MACD multisite network (more on what that means later), it would also be useful for those who administer an independent Wordpress website as well.

The goal of this guide is to equip you with a well rounded and practical understanding of how a wordpress website functions. With those basics down, you can feel confident making changes on your own and even looking into some of the more advanced features that the platform has to offer.

Wordpress Overview

WordPress is a content management system (CMS) that it has thousands of plugins, widgets, and themes. It is the most widely used software of its kind. WordPress began as a simple blogging system in 2003, but has since evolved into a system

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The Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) also offers 1:1 technical assistance to districts to help them get started with Wordpress. To reach out for assistance just contact MACD Communications staff. We’d love to hear from you!

As of October 2021, the best point of contact is MACD Communications Specialist, Eric Rannestad. You can reach him at eric@macdnet.org.

that can facilitate any kind of website its user wants to build.

While Wordpress can come off as a slightly complicated platform, it also offers its users a lot of freedom. It sounds corny, but if you can dream it, you can do it in Wordpress. Gaining your literacy on the platform may be overwhelming at first, but don't hang your head. There are loads of helpful tutorials out there to supplement this guide.

About the MACD Wordpress Multisite Network

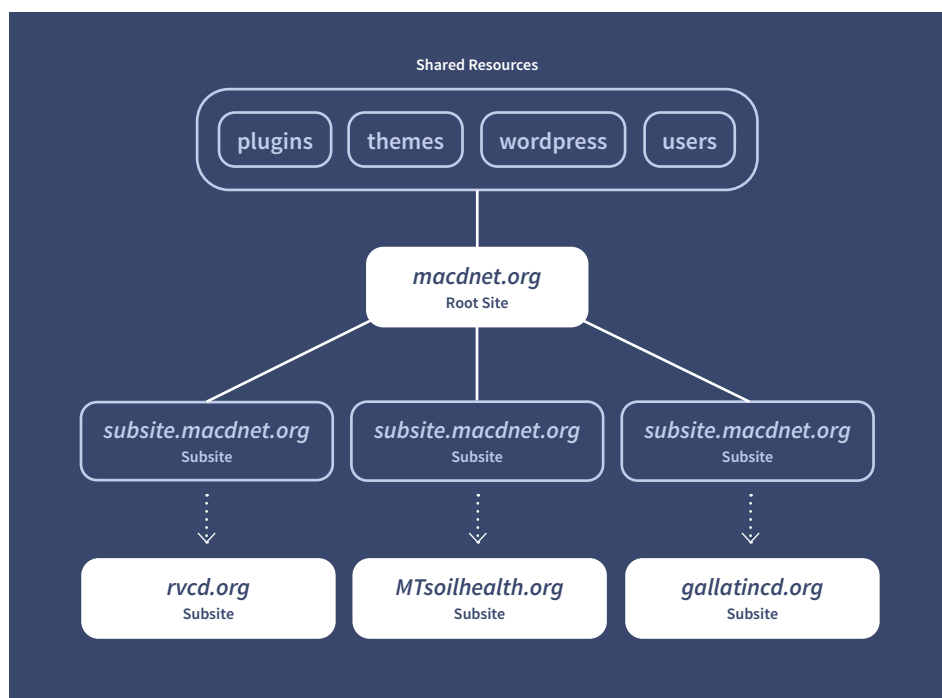
Network Overview

As a service to districts, MACD operates an installation of Wordpress called a *Wordpress Multisite Network*. This allows multiple sites to share website resources such as plugins, themes, and server space. By sharing resources between network sites, MACD is able to offer websites to Montana's conservation districts at a lower price.

When a district wants to make a new site on the network, they need to contact the network administrator to have the new website set up. They should be prepared to supply the following information at that time:

- Title of the website
- Any specific functionality they need in the website (calendars, booking systems, newsletter signups, etc...)
- Whether they would like to purchase and/or connect a custom domain.

Structure of the MACD Wordpress Multisite Network



The MACD multisite network is composed of a root site (*macdnet.org*) and subsites. Each site on the network shares server space, themes, core wordpress files, and users.

Limitations of the Wordpress Multisite

Due to the shared resources of the wordpress multisite, there are some limitations on websites within this network structure.

Security and Backups

Due to the interconnected nature of a website network, an inherent downside of such a structure is an interdependent security and backup system. Meaning that issues on one part of the network could impact other parts. MACD has precautionary security and backup features installed because of this.

Limited Permissions (see section: Users and User Roles)

Unlike normal wordpress installations, in a network installation, Site Administrators need to ask the Network Administrator to install plugins and themes for them. This is to limit the risk of someone unintentionally installing incompatible or malicious software to the network.

Plugin Incompatibility

Due to the unique structure of the wordpress network, not all plugins are compatible for this type of implementation.

Anatomy of a Wordpress Website

Users and the Admin Dashboard

Wordpress Admin Dashboard

The Wordpress Admin is part of the backend of the website. This is where you make changes to your content, manage access, and more. The Wordpress Frontend is what your users see. You can reach the Wordpress admin panel for your website by adding “/wp-admin” to your home url.

Users and User Roles

In order to login to the Wordpress Admin Dashboard, you need to be a registered user of the website. On the MACD Network, you need to email the network administrator (currently that is: eric@macdnet.org) to have a user account setup.

Once a network administrator has made you a user, you’ll receive an email with your username and a random password. You should login to Wordpress and change this random password to something you’ll remember.

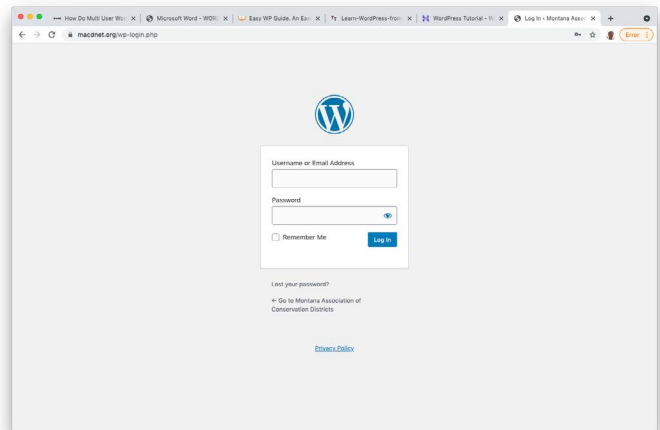
For help changing or resetting your password, check out this [video](#).

User Type	Permissions
Super (AKA “Network”) Administrator	Has administrator-level access to all sites on the network. They have the ability to add new sites and manage network-level settings. They also have the ability to control which plugins and themes are available to the network.
Administrator	Has access to all the administration features within a single site only. Administrators cannot upload or delete themes or plugins, and they cannot change user information, instead this authority rests with the super administrator.
Editor	Can publish and manage posts including the posts of other users.
Author	Can publish and manage their own posts.
Contributor	Can write and manage their own posts but cannot publish them.
Subscriber	A user that is registered with the site, but cannot view or change anything in the backend other than their profile.

If you are a site’s administrator and would like to make theme or plugin changes beyond what is already available, you need to contact the Network Administrator. Currently that is the MACD Communications Specialist, Eric Rannestad (eric@macdnet.org).

URL

mysite.com/wp-admin



Example of the Wordpress login screen

The MACD communications staff is the network administrator for all subsites on the MACD Network

By default, most CD staff are either Administrators or Editors of their conservation district’s website.

Posts and Pages

Posts and Pages are the main ways to add content to your website. More often than not, when you go to update information on your website, you are navigating to one of these two menu items.

Before adding content to your site, it's important to have a clear understanding of the difference between pages and posts. While there is a lot of crossover between the two forms, there are a couple key differences that are helpful to know so that search engines index your site properly (see: SEO) and, more importantly, it is as easy as possible for your visitors to find what they are looking for.

When to use Pages

Pages are usually those which have a static purpose. For example, an about page, or contact forms. They do not usually contain chronological information. Pages are generally defined so that they are always accessible from the front page. Some people build entire sites with just Pages – this is especially the case for sites with little need for dynamic (changing) content.

Another key distinction of the Page is that it is hierarchical. Meaning that pages can be nested within other pages. The hierarchical relationship between pages is referred to with “parent” and “child” terminology. For example, if you have a *Programs* page, you would list *310 Permitting*, *Livestock Fencing*, and *Youth Education* as children of the parent *Programs* page. This is useful for both your visitors and for SEO.

When to use Posts

Posts usually contain semantically and chronographically arranged information – for example, news reports, event results, and of course blog entries! The semantic structure is defined by categories and tags (see section *Categories and Tags*), and while making it easy for people to navigate your site, it will also help search engines to understand the content of your site and improve the relevance of search results.

In short: by default, Posts are most visible right after they are published and over time, they recede in visibility and relevance.

Finally, the last main reason to use a Post instead of a Page, is because Posts (by default) can be easily categorized with categories and tags. This is the main organization method for grouping posts together, whereas pages use a parent-child nesting structure.

In practice, that means you can group news releases within a category called “News Releases”. You can read more on categories and tags in the next section.

Page Editors

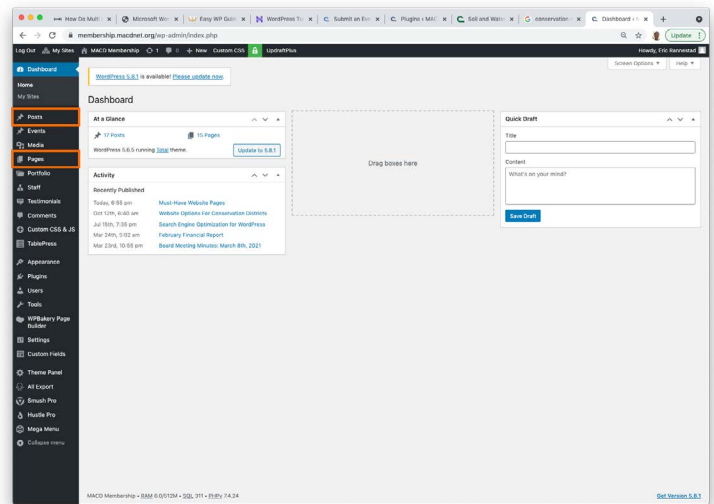
Page Editors are what allow you to add content to your posts and pages. Wordpress allows users to use many different kinds of page editors for adding content to their posts and pages. On the MACD wordpress network there are 3 different editors that

Examples of typical **Page** content:

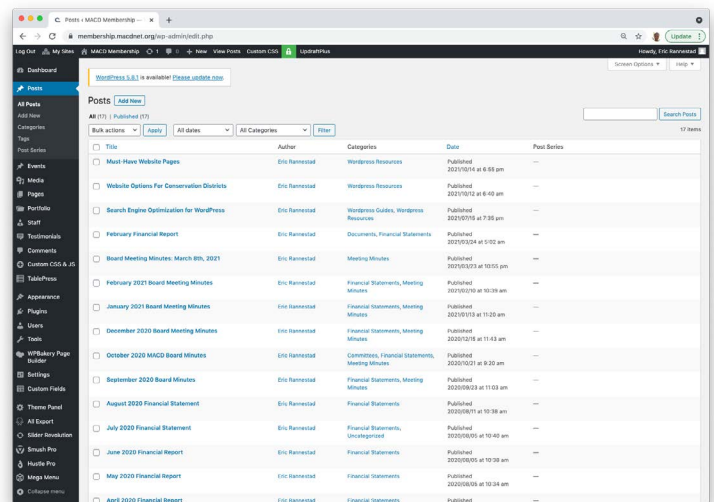
- General information about your conservation district
- Contact information
- A list of Conservation Programs
- Staff and Board Members

Examples of typical **Post** content:

- Meeting Minutes
- Newsletters or News Releases
- Blog posts: Event recaps, conservation success stories, new staff announcements



You can find the **Post** and **Pages** tab in the left menu of the admin dashboard.



Under each tab, you can view all of your posts or pages.

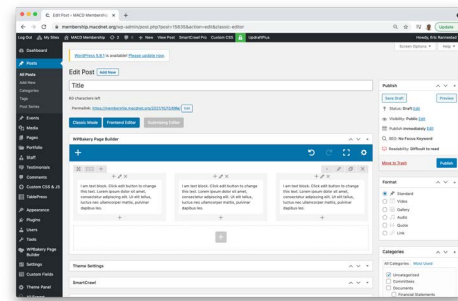
you can use: WP Bakery Page Builder, Gutenberg Editor, and The Classic Editor.

WP Bakery Page Builder

The WPBakery Page Builder lets you create complex layouts with a drag and drop builder.

→ [WP Bakery Page Builder for Beginners](#)

Video introduction to the WP Bakery page builder



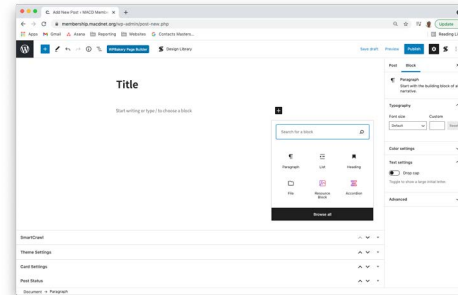
WP Bakery Editor

Gutenberg Editor

The WPBakery Page Builder lets you create complex layouts with a drag and drop builder.

→ [Wordpress Gutenberg Tutorial](#)

20 Minute video explaining how to get started with the Gutenberg Block Editor.



Gutenberg Editor

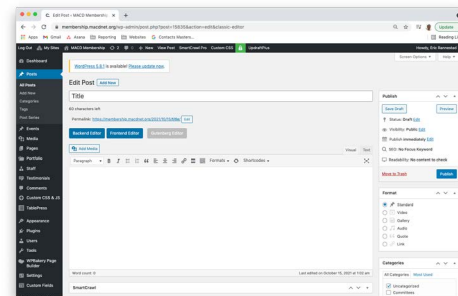
Classic Editor

This is the most basic editor in Wordpress. No funny business here, everything is driven by text. Sometimes simple is good!

To get access to the classic editor, your site needs to have a plugin installed, contact the network admin (eric@macdnet.org) for access.

→ [Wordpress Classic Editor](#)

Article from wordpress support on the different options available through the class editor.



Classic Editor

Categories and Tags

Categories and Tags in WordPress are something that you will always find in the right sidebar when writing or editing a post. But there's more to the topic than just that. Categories and tags have significance when it comes to the content organization on your site, as well as SEO.

Categories and Tags are the two primary ways to group content on a WordPress site. In simple terms, categories are general labels, while tags are more specific (describe your posts in more detail).

→ [Ultimate SEO guide for Beginners](#)

lens of optimizing your website's search results.

→ [Categories vs. Tags: SEO Best Practices](#)

Understanding the differences between categories and tags through the lens of optimizing your website's search results.

Examples of common **Categories**:

- Meeting Minutes
- Trainings
- Events

Examples of common **Tags**:

- Soil Health
- Broadwater County
- Montana Conservation

Categories

In short, categories are the most general method of grouping content on a WordPress site. A category symbolizes a topic or a group of topics that are connected to one another in some way.

Sometimes, a post can belong to many categories at the same time. However, it's perhaps not the best idea to assign more than 2-3 categories to one post. The point here is to have your

content neatly organized in a way that makes accessing it easier for the reader.

→ [How to add categories in Wordpress](#)

A good overview of the many ways to add categories to your wordpress website.

Tags

Tags are a great mechanism if you want to identify a piece of content by some specific keywords. Simply, pick a few words that describe a given post the best.

The main difference between categories and tags is the way you use them. In a way, categories are meant to indicate the genre of the post, so to speak. Tags, on the other hand, go much more in depth and indicate the individual things that the post talks about. Therefore, you can – or are even expected to – use multiple tags with a single blog post.

→ [Wordpress Tags Explained](#)

A good overview of the different ways that you can add tags to your wordpress website.

Menus

Wordpress Admin Dashboard

WordPress allows you to modify your menus and sub-menus. You can add links to your most important pages, categories or topics, blog posts, and even custom links such as your social media profile.

The exact location of your menu will depend on your WordPress theme (see section: *Themes*). The most popular theme available on the MACD network is the *Total Theme* which has numerous menu locations such as the Main Header Menu, Sidebar Menus, and Footer Menu location. However if you are not using the total theme, most other themes will have several options, so you can create menus that can be displayed in different places.

Most WordPress themes come with a primary menu that appears on the top, that is a good place to start.

→ [Wordpress Menus for Beginners](#)

This resource is a good starting point for understanding the menu interface, which can be a little confusing at first.

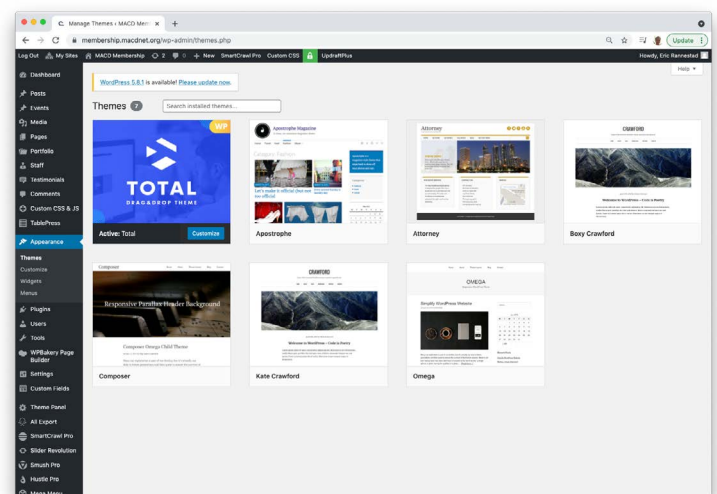
Themes

What is a Wordpress Theme?

Simply put, a Wordpress theme is the thing that orchestrates all of your content. Certain themes also give users certain features that are unique to that theme and not standard to Wordpress.

On the MACD Wordpress Multisite Network, you cannot install new themes, but you can choose from themes that MACD has already purchased.

If you'd like access to a specific theme outside of what is



The Wordpress Themes available on the MACD Multisite Network

already provided by the network, you can email the network administrator, Eric Rannestad (eric@macdnet.org).

The themes that are available under the MACD Multisite Network are: *Total*, *Apostrophe*, *Attorney*, *Boxy Crawford*, *Composer*, and *Omega*.

The most sophisticated and easy to use theme of these is the [*Total Theme*](#).