



Minutes from the February 21, 2023, Board Meeting

The regular monthly board meeting of the Wadena Soil and Water Conservation District was held at 7:30 a.m. in person at the Sheriff's Building at the fairgrounds.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bruce Juntunen at 7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Chair: Bruce Juntunen
Vice Chair: Tom Schulz
Secretary: Ken Berg
Public Relations: Jerry Kern

Members Absent: Treasurer: Brett Dailey

Others Present: County Commissioner: Murlyn Kreklau
NRCS District Conservationist: Ivan Reinke
FSA Director: Kayla Mattson
District Manager: Darren Newville
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
Admin, Education & Outreach Assistant: Kristi Rorah
BWSR: Pete Waller

Adopt Agenda: Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Tom Schulz to adopt the agenda with additions. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Approve Board Meeting Minutes: Motion made by Tom Schulz, seconded by Ken Berg to approve the last month's Board Meeting Minutes. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made by Tom Schulz, seconded by Ken Berg to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Bills Paid and Bills Payable: Motion made by Ken Berg, seconded by Tom Schulz to approve the Bills Paid and Bills Payable as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

SOIL HEALTH GRANT

P23-2744-01; Joseph & Lynette Schmitz/Derek Harrison; Orton Township, section 30; is requesting approval of cost share assistance contract for a windbreak. The total estimated cost of the project is \$1,000 with cost sharing of \$750.00 or 75% whichever is less. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Tom Schulz to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

District Manager's Report: Presented by Darren Newville.

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NRCS District Conservationist's Report: Presented by Ivan Reinke

- 3 EQIP applications pre-approved, reminder letters going out to current contracts.
- 5 RCPP applications pre-approved
- CSP applications screened, will be working on ones that screened high
- Inflation Reduction Act to provide additional funding for programs.

FSA Report: Presented by Kayla Mattson

- General CRP signup begins Feb 27, currently have 96 contracts with 2 expiring this year.
- Changes in office: Bonnie Hintzman is retiring.
- Two new programs: emergency relief program for crop losses due to last year's drought and pandemic assistance revenue program for other losses – both signups end June 2, 2023

County Commissioner's Report: Presented by Murlyn Kreklau

- Discussed conservation land, county ownership versus DNR ownership.
- Discussed Hwy 10 project, there will be additional cost for the county as well.

*Merlyn Kreklau left the meeting at 8:15 a.m.

Other Agency Reports: BWSR Report presented by Pete Waller

Forestry Update: Tom handed out the Farmers' Guide to Carbon Market Contracts in Minnesota and The Farmers' Guide to Solar and Wind Energy

Water Plan Update: two items to vote on

- Comprehensive Water Plan Resolution: Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve the comprehensive water plan resolution. Opposed: none, motion carried.
- Long Prairie Watershed Agreement Amendment: Motion made by Jerry Kern, second by Ken Berg to approve signing the Long Prairie watershed agreement amendment. Opposed: none, motion carried.

TSA 8 Report: Equipment owned by the TSA is available for districts to bid on. Meeting in March.

Meetings/Trainings:

- Carbon Sequestration Meeting March 3 in Walker
Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Jerry Kern to approve staff and/or supervisors attending the March 3 carbon sequestration meeting. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Letter of Support Request:

- Request for a letter of support received from an applicant for the MDA Soil Health Equipment Grant
- Discussed if we should write letters of support for grant applicants if requested.
- Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Jerry Kern to approve writing a generic letter of support for applicants if requested or a more detailed letter of support if we have a history of working with the producer. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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AIS – Always There Staffing Agreement:

- Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Jerry Kern to approve the signing of the Always There Staffing Agreement. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Area 8 Envirothon donation request:

- Area 8 Envirothon is requesting a donation of \$300 from area SWCDs.
- Motion made by Jerry Kern, second by Ken Berg to approve the donation of \$300.00 to Area 8 Envirothon. Opposed: none, motion carried.

MASWCD's SWCD Aid Legislative Proposal HF735/SF526:

- Legislative appointments for March 8: two set, still setting up an appointment with Senator Utke

Public Comments:

- Discussion regarding AgBMP lenders.
- Further discussion regarding Wadena roundabout.

Meeting Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 8:57 a.m.

District Managers Report
February 2023
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – We have taken over 300 tree orders so far in 2023 and have sold over 42,000 trees. We still have about 8,500 left on our inventory. There are several species that we have sold out. Staff in both offices continue to work with landowners to get plans and cost estimates for tree planting projects. Tanner currently has 8 custom tree planting projects scheduled for 2023.
- **Forest Stewardship** – We had representation at the SWCD Forestry Association meeting on January 19th. Staff also attended a meeting to discuss the Minnesota Forest Resource Council (MFRC) West Central Landscape Committee and revitalizing and reorganizing it. Anne attended a Forest Health Workshop where she received information on forest insects and disease, and the impacts of our changing climate.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** –Tanner continues working with landowners on plans and ordering seed for 2023.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue to work on RIM easement workload. Staff attended a virtual training focused on the potential for easement funding for our 1W1Ps. They also attend a RIM Wild Rice Lake Easement committee meeting to discuss funding. That committee has recommended that the EOT SWCD application for an easement on Mud Lake be recommended for approval by BWSR. There will be no new funding for this program until after July 1, 2024.
- **MAWQCP** – Jim has asked for and been approved for an unpaid leave of absence. Other SWCD staff are working with MDA staff to continue the work of the MAWQCP certification process. Brian Ingmire, MDA, is working closely with the other staff assisting with the program. There are 3 to 4 farms that should be certified soon, and we took in 3 new applications last week. Alyson, Pete, Nicole, and Nate are providing assistance on this program. Nathan made a presentation on the program at the Forage Council Meeting last week. There were 48 people in attendance. Staff mailed information on the MDA Soil Health Equipment Grant to the MAWQCP mailing list. Nicole & Alyson fielded calls and email from producers interested in the program. We submitted the quarterly report and invoice.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – Nathan mailed out 50 letters to property owners in the Perham Wellhead area notifying them of the change to a level II status and what that means. He has also had discussion with Ryan Perish, MDA, about amending or developing an additional Joint Power Agreement to continue this work. We submitted the quarterly report and invoice.

- **Irrigation RCPP** – We are continuing to work with the leadership committee on any RCPP work. I gathered and compiled reports and invoices from partnering SWCDs and submitted the quarterly report and invoice to MDA. We are still waiting to hear about the results of the most recent signup. We hope to have the information in the next few weeks. I provided an update on the program at the Central Minnesota Irrigators (CMI) meeting on Jan 19th. I have also been asked to sit on a panel at the Minnesota Irrigators Association (MIA) meeting on Feb. 16th to give perspective on why we applied for the RCPP grant and what it means for local producers.
- **MDH Groundwater Grant** – We continue to follow the workplan for this grant.
- **Red Eye Watershed** – I received and signed the MPCA 319 grant agreement. This will bring \$291,965 in additional federal funding to address e coli and bacteria related issues in the Redeye River Watershed. After about a year and a half of getting this put together, we can now start work in the project area.

Staff continue to work on projects that use the WBIF and are working with Mitch Brinks to develop a story map for projects completed.

- **LCCMR Forestry Pilot Program** – Staff attended a meeting in Brainerd or remotely on January 26. We discussed the draft DNR cost share docket, received an update on the prototype tree planter, what site equipment is needed, landowner outreach, working with consultant foresters, and webapp tools created by Mitch Brinks. We will have a more focused effort with this project in 2023.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** –The plan was approved by the full BWSR board on January 24th. The next Policy Committee met on Jan 26th and approved the proposed budget. Don Submitted the WBIF budget request to BWSR on Feb 8th and he will develop the eLINK work plan as soon as it is approved by BWSR. We are also working on developing the agreements for services contracts with partnering LGUs as a basis for distributing the WBIF funds.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – All of the LGU partners have approved and submitted signed MOAs for the planning process. Hubbard SWCD is working through the BWSR process to get the work plan and grant agreements in place. Don will be assisting Hubbard SWCD staff in the process, and we will be able to be reimbursed for that effort through the planning grants. I am hopeful that the planning process will start in earnest in the next few months.
- **Long Prairie Watershed** – Progress continues to be made to request the WBIF grant dollars for this watershed. The group is working on procedures for distributing funds to each partner and cost-share procedures. The next TAC meeting is March 3rd, and the next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for March 16th if needed.

- **Other Watersheds** –Don continues to be involved with the Chippewa, Pomme de Terre, Buffalo-Red, and Mustinka/Bois de Sioux Watersheds.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – The 2023 Winter Irrigation and Nutrient Management producer workshop is scheduled for March 2nd and will be held in New York Mills. Staff are in the process of promoting the event.
- **Shoreland Program** –Liz and Pete continue to work on project designs and cost-estimates. Staff are working with property owners on both Big and Little Pine Lakes with some larger bluff stabilization projects. We are also working to keep the Lake Associations and the LID informed as they may provide additional funding for the projects. Liz will be presenting on native gardens/and shorelines at the EOT Horticulture Days. This event is on Saturday March 18th. Staff attended a Shoreland Workshop in Stearns County.
- **Cover Crop Grant** – Nathan gave a presentation on our cover crop grant at the Forage Council meeting last week. Staff are in the initial stages of planning for a Soil Health Field Day this coming summer. Nathan is working on lining up a location.
- **Wetland Conservation Act** – Staff are working on year-end reports.
- **Feedlots** – Mitch submitted the year-end report and is waiting for MPCA staff to schedule the annual review.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Liz, Alyson, Nicole, and Pete attended the annual County Ag Inspector training in St. Paul. This training focuses on staff that are new to the County Ag Inspecting Program. Staff continue to work with the Townships to get their annual reports and will be working on scheduling our annual spring Township Ag Inspector meetings. We applied for MDA Noxious Weed Grants in the amount of \$4,500 for each of the SWCDs. The intent is to use the funding for cost-share for both private landowners and Townships to help cover the costs of herbicide application.
- **A.I.S.** – Alyson registered for an AIS management course through the U of M. We continue to work on the contract for our annual boat inspectors in Wadena County.
- **Education and Outreach** – We continue to post on our social media accounts including promoting our local Facebook photo contests. Several staff are working on story maps for specific projects. Staff are also working on the 2022 year-in-review, and we are shooting to have those printed by the end of February. Staff conducted the Nitrate testing presentation for the Perham 6th graders.
- **Otter Tail River Dam Modification Projects** – The contractor has supplied us with an updated timeline for the projects. The contractor has proposed completing the project over the summer months and early fall which falls within the scope of the contract. We held a

meeting to update the project partners on that timeline and discussed concerns and potential issues with the timeline. We will need to amend the USF&WS agreement to give us a time extension.

- **CRP Contribution Agreement** – We received the payment to the EOT SWCD for our work on CRP in 2022. I worked with the NRCS staff to provide numbers to MASWCD for the potential CRP Contribution Agreement work in 2023.
- **Administration** – On top of the normal day to day administrative tasks, Chantal submitted our payroll audits to MCIT, processed and mailed the W-2's and 1099's, and provided the financial information we needed for eLINK and project reports and invoices. Kristi, Anne, and I worked to get our eLINK reporting done by Feb 1st. This process was made easier with the efforts of updating eLINK monthly.
- **Training and Meetings** – Staff have attended many meetings and training through the last month and have many more scheduled in the next month.
- **Staff/Focus Teams** – The staff focus teams have all met at least once. These teams are focused on specific work items for the SWCD and are led by a more senior staff member. These focus teams include a cost-share team led by Nathan, a workplan team lead by Don, an education & outreach team led by Liz, an administration team led by Chantal, and a leadership team led by me. The intent of these meetings are to make these work items more efficient and effective by focusing on them at regularly scheduled meetings. While this process seems a little messy for some of the staff, I am already seeing benefits from it.