



MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 21, 2024, BOARD MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lyle Dittmann at 7:31 a.m.

Members Present: Chairperson: Lyle Dittmann
Vice Chairperson: Steve Inwards
Secretary: Terry Greenwaldt
Public Relations: Wayne Enger (via Teams) *
Treasurer: Bruce Albright

Others Present: NRCS Team Lead: Bob Guetter
NRCS District Conservationist: Troy Baumgart
District Manager: Darren Newville
Administrative Assistant: Chantal Tougas

**Wayne Enger abstained from voting at this meeting as he was not present in person.*

Agenda: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to adopt the agenda as presented.
Opposed: none, motion carried.

Approve Board Meeting Minutes: Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Steve Inwards to approve the Board Meeting Minutes as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, seconded by Steve Inwards, to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented, subject to audit. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Bills Paid & Bills Payable: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt, to approve the Bills Paid and Bills Payable as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

OTTER TAIL WBIF – C23-4546

6-C23-4546-14; Bruce and Pam Hoekstra; Edna Township, Section 14; is requesting cost share assistance for a shoreline Critical Area Planting. The total estimated cost of the project is \$ 1,910.00 with cost sharing of \$ 1,432.50 or 75%, whichever is less. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Bruce Albright to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-15; Larry Huwe; Butler & Corliss Townships, Section 29; is requesting cost share assistance for a Cover Crop planting on 122 acres. This is a one-year flat rate/acre contract with a payment of \$35.00/acre; total maximum payment of \$4,270.00. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-16; Eric Dryer; Otto Township, Section 32; is requesting cost share assistance for a Cover Crop planting on 116 acres. This is a three-year multi species flat rate/acre project of \$41.00/acre; total maximum



annual payment of \$4,756.00 year, with a total maximum payment of \$14,268.00 over the three-year contract. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

REDEYE 1W1P – C21-3238 & C22-7830

C21-3238-30; Mark Christensen; Girard Township, Section 12; is requesting cost share assistance for an Ag Waste Pit Closure. The total estimated cost of the project is \$ 18,000 with cost sharing of \$ 13,500 or 75%, whichever is less.

\$11,671 from C21-3238- \$1,829 from P22-6134 (Local Capacity) Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

C21-3238-31; Larry Huwe; Butler Township, Section 19; is requesting cost share assistance for a Cover Crop planting on 105 acres. This is a one-year flat rate/acre contract with a payment of \$35.00/acre; total maximum payment of \$3,675.00. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

C21-3238-32; Steve Inwards; Eastern Township, Section 18; is requesting cost share assistance for a Cover Crop planting on 260 acres. This is a three-year multi species flat rate/acre project of \$41.00/acre; total maximum annual payment of \$10,660/year, with a total maximum payment of \$31,980.00 over the three-year contract. \$10,660 from C21-3238 - \$21,320 from C22-7830. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Bruce Albright to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried. *Steve Inwards abstained from voting.*

C21-3238-33; Jessica Hintzman; Homestead Township, Section 16; is requesting cost share assistance for a Cover Crop planting on 14 acres. This is a three-year multi species flat rate/acre project of \$41.00/acre; total maximum annual payment of \$574.00/year, with a total maximum payment of \$1,722.00 over the three-year contract. \$574 from C21-3238 - \$1,148 from C22-7830. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C22-7830-01; Evan Welter; Newton Township, Section 17; is requesting cost share assistance for a forest stewardship plan. The total estimated cost is \$400.00 with cost sharing of \$300.00 or 75%, whichever is less. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

District Manager's Report: Presented by Darren Newville.

District Conservationist's Report:

- CSP – 27 applications to assess/rank, currently about half have completed the inventory.
- EQIP – FY24 round 1 application preapproved. 9 applications preapproved or partially pre-approved. (3) high tunnels, (1) energy efficient equipment upgrade (maple syrup), (1) grazing contract, (1) CIC contract, and (1) wildlife contract.
- CRP – SU61 has been opened for CCRP. Implementing batching periods which end on March 15, 2024.
- RCPP – (1) AWQCP application pre-approved for funding.
- Other – February 28, 2024, meeting for beginning farmers (assisting FSA), March 5, 2024, Irrigation Clinic at Thumper Pond, LWG is February 27, 2024, in Breckenridge, and March 29, 2024, shop talk group with Mitch Janson, SWCD.



County Commissioner's Report: not present

Other Agency Reports: none

Old Business

TSA Update: The next meeting is February 29, 2024.

Meetings/Trainings: The Ottortail River Watershed Policy Committee meeting has been changed from February 22, 2024, to March 28, 2024.

Otter Tail WBIF: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve Darren to sign the FY23/24 Grant Agreement for Supplemental Funding. Opposed: none, motion carried. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve Darren to submit and sign the FY25/26 WBIF Workplan and Budget and sign the grant agreement. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Red Eye WBIF: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve Darren to submit and sign the FY25/26 WBIF Workplan and Budget and sign the grant agreement. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Conservation Cooperative: Motion made by Bruce Albright, seconded by Steve Inwards to approve the submittal of the Conservation Cooperative for Work Lands Grant Application. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Irrigation RCPP Application/Renewal: Motion made by Steve Inwards, seconded by Terry Greenwald to submit a letter of commitment. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Staffing Update: Interviews for the open positions will be held this Friday, February 23, 2024.

Peterson Engagement Letter: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Bruce Albright to accept the letter of engagement for the 2023 Audit of \$4,500.00. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Public Comments: none

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

District Managers Report
February 2024
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – We continue to take orders for the conservation tree program. As of the morning of 2/13 we had received 360 orders for over 52,500 trees. A lot of species are sold out. We have about 5,700 trees and shrubs still available. Staff in both offices continue to work with landowners to get plans and cost estimates for tree planting projects.
- **Forest Stewardship** –Anne is working with landowners to set up appointments to deliver plans that were completed in 2023. We have also met with Deana Malone to discuss the Conservation Fund Lands and had Mitch Brinks create some maps for her. Anne also attended the Cooperative Forestry and SWCD Forestry Association meetings. Anne is assisting with the planning for a MFRC West Central Landscape Committee meeting in March.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** –Tanner continues working with landowners on plans and ordering seed for 2024.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue to work on RIM easement workload. The Nolte easement has been paid. Tanner continues to work on the process for the Manske easement and Anne is still waiting to hear if the Martin Easement was funded.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work with several producers on the process of completing assessments to get farms certified. MAWQCP staff assisted with promoting the U of M Minnesota Irrigation Program. We submitted the quarterly report and invoice for this agreement.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – Mitch continues to support MDA on these projects. The quarterly report and invoice was submitted.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We held an all-partners meeting on February 6th to discuss a future application. There was strong support for submitting another application for future funding, with several new potential partners in attendance. We will all need to provide new letters of commitment for the project applications. Mitchell is working with the SWCD that have state funding commitments to see how it is going and we will be looking at how to get the rest of the funding allocated. We are up to date on the quarterly reporting and invoicing. In total we have requested reimbursement for \$12,553 for EOT and \$7,619 for Wadena from MDA/NRCS for the technical assistance we provided for this project.
- **MDA Groundwater Grant** – We continue to follow the workplan for this grant. We submitted the quarterly report and invoice for the work completed on this grant.

- **Red Eye Watershed** – Partnering LGU’s continue to work on implementing the work plan. We submitted the semi-annual reporting in eLINK and requested the second 40% of the funding. We are working with BWSR on the reconciliation process to make that happen. We have no idea what that timeline will be.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on February 13th to discuss the budget for the next WBIF application that will be submitted this spring. There will be a Policy Committee meeting on March 11th. Nicole has been working on inputting completed project information into the plan tacking tool that was developed by HEI. We have asked HEI to make some minor changes to the tracking tool and are currently waiting to hear back from them.

- **Red Eye LCCMR Forestry Pilot** – We have agreements in place with the DNR and have ordered the new tree planters for each of the SWCDs. We continue to coordinate and complete the work identified in the work plan. We submitted the annual report in eLINK and requested payment for the work completed so far.
- **Oak and Bluff Creek 319** – Staff continue to discuss potential projects with landowners in the targeted sub-watersheds. We completed and submitted the semi-annual report and invoice for the work on this project to MPCA.
- **Red Eye Watershed WRAPS inventory** – With the crazy warm, snowless winter, staff have been able to continue the culvert inventory work and will continue to do so as weather conditions allow. We completed and submitted the semi-annual report and invoice for the work on this project to MPCA.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – Partnering LGU’s continue to work on implementing the work plan. We submitted the semi-annual report. The watershed did receive some of the supplemental funding that we requested. The TAC had a short remote meeting to discuss how to allocate those funds. We will be working with BWSR on an adjustment to the work plan with a 1-year extension. We will have to approve and sign a grant agreement amendment.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on February 8th to discuss the work plan and budget for the next WBIF application that will be submitted this spring. We have a Policy Committee meeting planned for March 28th which will be held in Ottertail. Nicole has been working on inputting completed project information into the plan tacking tool that was developed by HEI. We have also asked HEI to make some minor changes to this tracking tool and are currently waiting to hear back from them.

- **Otter Tail Dam Modification Project** – I worked with DNR to get a \$20,000 budget amendment for these projects to cover all the costs associated with it. This will likely close out later this spring after the projects have been inspected and any minor site work needed is completed.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – We continue participating in the 1W1P planning process for the Crow Wing Watershed. Things are going smoothly. The Policy Committee met on January 24th and approved the draft Land & Water Resources Narrative, & Priority Issue sections of the plan. The TAC met on February 7th and discussed measurable goals for the watershed. There will be a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) in late March. The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for March 27th.
- **Long Prairie Watershed** – Partnering LGU's continue to work on implementing the work plan.
- **Other Watersheds** –Nicole continues to be involved with the Chippewa, Pomme de Terre, Buffalo-Red, and Mustinka/Bois de Sioux Watersheds.
- **WBIF Local Efforts** – The local staff have been meeting and focusing on education and outreach efforts for the priority areas identified in the plans. We will be hosting two small Café style meetings in March to promote soil health and non-structural land management, and groundwater protection projects (Parkers Prairie, Wadena). Staff are also making one-to-one contacts with producers to encourage them to sign up for project funding. Additional Ed & Outreach efforts will be planned for later this year for plan focus areas. We have discussed the amount of funding available for the various activities for each of the watersheds for each of the SWCDs.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – The 2024 Winter Irrigation and Nutrient Management producer workshop is scheduled for March 5th. It will be held at Thumper Pond in Ottertail. Invitation post cards have been mailed out, flyers have been distributed, and radio ads will start about two weeks before the event. U of M extension is also offering their Minnesota Irrigation Program (MIP) in Staples this year. This is a three-day training program on all thing's irrigation. We have provided support by promoting the program and will be assisting with some of the presentation and lining up producers to sit on discussion panels. Staff attended the CMI and IAM annual meetings.
- **Shoreland Program** – Pete continues to meet with landowners and has delivered 4 shoreland restoration plans to the interested landowners and discuss cost-share options with them. We received and forwarded 4 plans from the shared engineering staff on potential rip rap projects that were surveyed last fall. Pete will be discussing implementation options with each of these landowners.
- **Wetland Conservation Act** –We continue to get a few calls on WCA issues in each office.

- **Feedlots** – Staff completed the 2023 reporting and are waiting to hear from MPCA on a time and date for the annual review.
- **County Ag Inspector** – We continue to receive the 2023 Township and City Annual Reports returned to our offices. Staff have the 2024 Annual Local Weed inspector meetings planned for both counties and invitation letters will be sent out soon.
- **Education and Outreach** – We continue to post on our social media accounts. Staff are working on finalizing the 2023 year in review documents for each SWCD. Staff presented to the Perham 6th graders on our programs and groundwater issues and conducted the annual Nitrate testing for each student. I presented to the MARL Class IIX group on the work we do at our SWCDs and our unique collaborations.
- **Partner Meetings** – I attended a managers’ meeting for the shared engineering staff agreement and chaired the MASWCD Legislative Committee meeting in January.
- **Administration** – We continue to work on the important day to day administration and management of the SWCDs. January was a very busy month with the year-end reporting, quarterly reports, eLINK reporting, and setting up everything for a successful 2024.