



MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 21, 2023, BOARD MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lyle Dittmann at 7:29 a.m.

Members Present: Chairperson: Lyle Dittmann
Secretary: Terry Greenwaldt
Public Relations: Wayne Enger
Treasurer: Bruce Albright

Others Present: MN Rep. Tom Murphy
County Commissioner: Dan Bucholz
OTC Land & Resource: Chris LeClair
NRCS District Conservationist: Troy Baumgart
NRCS Rangeland Mgmt Specialist: Lawrence Mettler
District Manager: Darren Newville
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
Education, Outreach & Admin Asst: Kristi Rorah
Wadena SWCD Board Liaison: Bruce Juntunen

Members Absent: Vice Chairperson: Steve Inwards

Agenda: Soil Health Summit added to item 12. Meetings and Trainings. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger, to adopt the agenda with addition. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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

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

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

Cost Share:

REDEYE 1W1P

C21-3238-08 CT Farms, LLC; Woodside Township, Section 31; is requesting a final cost share payment for an irrigation sprinkler system. The total cost of the project was \$29,800.00 with the cost share amount of \$15,120.00. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.



IRRIGATION TECH/NITRATE GRANT

C21-9235-07; Leaderbrand Brothers; Newton Township, Section 36; is requesting a partial cost share payment for soil moisture sensors. The total cost of the practice to date is \$3,000.00 with the cost share amount of \$2,250.00. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

COST SHARE

P23-5804-01; Jason Haman; Pine Lake Township, Section 4; is requesting cost share assistance for a well sealing. The estimated cost of the project is \$1,100.00 with cost sharing of \$500.00 which is the maximum allowable. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

District Manager's Report: Presented by Darren Newville.

* 7:55 a.m. Rep. Tom Murphy joined the meeting

District Conservationist's Report: Presented by Troy Baumgart

- CSP – classic signup, 3 pre-approvals, working on practice certifications
- EQIP – \$750,500 obligated by EOT projects, 8 total contracts (4 grazing, 1 ag waste, 1 forestry, 1 wildlife, 1 cropland)
- CRP – all but one offer accepted and letters have been sent out, continuous offers have a July 15 deadline for technical plan and paperwork to be completed, working on practice certifications and status reviews
- Introduced Lawrence Mettler, NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist for Perham office, started May 21.
- New AED for the office installed
- Mitch Neitge has received a tentative job offer with the Grand Rapids NRCS office

County Commissioner's Report: Presented by Dan Bucholz

- Property values increased significantly around several lakes because of a few high dollar sales.
- County has run into issues with the film recycling program.
- Still dealing with several ditch issues.
- DNR will be doing a fish study on Little Pine lake.

Other Agency Reports:

OTC Land & Resource – Presented by Chris LeClair

- Working on catching up now that field staff are returning from their leaves.
- Discussed remonumenting grant (to re-survey section lines, locate monuments)

MN Legislature – Presented by Rep. Tom Murphy

- Discussed transportation and energy legislation
- Funds were allocated for MN nursing homes



Old Business

TSA Update: none

New Business

Meetings/Trainings:

- CAI Short Course, \$420.00 total cost/person: Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Bruce Albright to approve staff attending the CAI Short Course. Opposed: none, motion carried.
- NACD summer meeting, July 15-19, \$375/person: Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve attendance for staff/supervisors who are interested in attending. Opposed: none, motion carried.
- Irrigation Technical Training will be July 17-18 in Staples, no cost for attendance
- MASWCD Leadership Training: Liz Wiese, cost is \$5800/person: Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve staff attending the MASWCD Leadership Training. Opposed: none, motion carried.
- Soil Health Summit: scholarships for producers to cover registration have been provided in the past. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve five scholarships for producers for the Soil Health Summit. Opposed: none, motion carried.

* 8:45 a.m. Lawrence Mettler left the meeting

Lakes Country Service Cooperative:

Service Renewal Agreement: Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve signing of the service agreement. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Joint EOT/WOT SWCD County Tour:

Tour will be September 11, 2023. EOT SWCD is planning the tour this year.

MASWCD Resolutions:

Discussed which resolutions passed and which did not.

2023 Legislative Update Overview:

- SWCD Aid was passed, future funding will come directly from the Dept. of Revenue/general fund rather than the Clean Water fund
- Natural Resources Block Grant was increased

Personnel Committee:

Nathan Wiese has submitted his letter of resignation, accepted position with CLC and Aug. 11, 2023 is last day. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to accept Nathan's letter of resignation. Opposed: none, motion carried.

* 9:12 a.m. Chris LeClair left the meeting



Public Comments:

Wadena SWCD board report by Bruce Juntunen: Area 8 meeting is this Friday, June 23. Wadena County is also having property valuation issues.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

District Managers Report
June 19, 2023
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – The 2023 Tree Program wrapped up in May. We sold over 51,000 trees with 380 orders. Staff planted around 23,000 trees for 14 landowners and laid 1,100 ft of tree fabric.
- **Forest Stewardship** – Anne has been delivering binders to landowners. She and Tom attend the Forestry Assoc. meeting in McGregor. She has also had conversations with the Conservation Fund Committee and the Northern Waters Land Trust on the development of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund Application.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** – Tanner worked with 27 landowners to place seed orders for around 200 acres. He also started seeding in late May and is wrapping the seeding up this week. The rental drill has been very busy. Staff continue to do maintenance on the equipment. There have been a few issues with the tractor again. We will be having an equipment committee meeting later this summer to discuss options.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – The Eagle Point Partnership Easement document was signed and is being recorded. Now that the spring busy season is coming to an end staff will be focusing on the work for our CRP contribution agreement.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work on the MAWQCP assessment, certifications, endorsements, and cost-share. Jim, Alyson, Ken Berg, and I attended the certification celebration event at R.D. Offutt’s Twin Rivers Seed Farm in Staples. The Commissioner of Ag and several state legislators were in attendance. Jim has taken time to meet with all the staff and MDA staff to be brought back up to speed after his extended leave. Alyson has written and sent off two news releases on certified farms.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – We have signed the agreement amendment to provide more funding and time. Nathan has worked with 6 producers and three agronomists to get 6 NMI plots installed.
- **MDA Central Sands** – Kits were mailed out to participants the first week of May with a deadline to return to RMB Lab by May 31. Anne continues to keep in contact with the lab.
- **AgBMP Loan Program** – Both offices are answering questions from landowners and lenders on the program and application process.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We continue to work with the partners on this project. There are some frustrations with NRCS and changing requirements. The committee has planned and scheduled a technical training session on July 17-18 to be held at the CLC Staples campus.
- **MDH Groundwater Grant** – Our grant application for an additional \$50,000 in funding for staff time and nitrate clinics was approved. Don is working on planning Nitrate Testing Clinics.
- **Red Eye Watershed** – Staff continue to work with landowners to plan and install projects, plan for the culvert and feedlot inventory and plan for an education and outreach effort for

livestock producers in the Bluff/Oak Creek 319 project area. Don and Alyson are also conducting the SWAG monitoring as scheduled.

We will be reviewing the WBIF funding at the next Technical Advisory Committee meeting and will likely be asking BWSR for a budget amendment and a 1-year extension.

LCCMR Forestry Pilot Program – The local forestry team members in Long Prairie and Redeye discussed workplan activities. Don has completed a service provider directory and I think there has been a forest plan writer workshop scheduled.

- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – The initial planning grant expires on June 30th, and we are working to wrap that up. Houston Engineering has developed an Implementation Tracking spreadsheet that will help us track our progress. Partners are encumbering the WBIF grant funds for projects in the watershed.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – The first Policy and Technical Advisory Committee meetings have been held. There will be public kickoff/input meetings held in Nisswa on June 27th and Park Rapids on June 28th. If you have ideas on potential citizen advisory committee members, please let us know. The group also held the 1st of a few Forest Landscape Stewardship Plan technical meetings.
- **Long Prairie Watershed** – They are also working with Houston Engineering on a tracking tool, and they continue to review project requests.
- **Other Watersheds** – Don continues to be involved with the Chippewa, Pomme de Terre, Buffalo-Red, and Mustinka/Bois de Sioux Watersheds, discussing quarterly work and implementation.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – Staff have the rain gauges out and have been running routes for about three weeks covering 72 fields.
- **Shoreland Program** – Liz and Pete continue to do designs and work with landowners interested in projects. They had the Conservation Corps crew here last week to help with installations. Joint engineering staff assisted with construction of a project on Little Pine Lake.
- **Cover Crop Grant** – Staff continue planning for the Soil Health Field Day that will be held August 8 near Deer Creek. A flyer has been distributed to our local Coops as they have agreed to send them out with their monthly statement mailings. Staff visited some cover crop sites to see how they fared during the winter and took photos. These photos were provided to the U of MN. Drone footage was filmed on some sites.
- **Buffer Law** – Both SWCDs are working on their annual buffer compliance reviews. Seven letters of non-compliance have been sent in EOT. 3 of the 7 have already contacted the office and will be getting back into compliance. Staff assist with flagging two sites with the landowners. Wadena staff did site visits on 5 sites of concern, and all were found to be complying.

- **Wetland Conservation Act** – Staff continue to take calls and make site visits as needed. There is one potential violation in SE Otter Tail County that needs more investigation.
- **Feedlots** – Mitch is continuing to work with a Wadena County producer and MPCA to increase the number of animal units on the site. He is waiting for a manure management plan.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Alyson proctored 3 pesticide tests. We are starting to take and respond to complaints about weeds, mostly for leafy spurge. We will continue to work with the township weed inspector and county Hwy Depts on these complaints.
- **Engineering Assistance** – Our joint engineering staff have visited sites in both SWCDs over the past month to do inventory and evaluation as well as some surveying. They are also providing support for construction inspections as needed.
- **Extension Educator Position** – All the agreements and approvals are in place and the position has been posted. Anne and I will be serving on the search committee along with reps from Otter Tail County and the U of M. We hope to have someone in the position by the end of July or early August.
- **Education and Outreach** – Staff assisted with the State Envirothon event. We also met with Dain Erickson, Red Canoe Cre8tive, to see what he has already created and discuss outreach ideas. We have also been focusing on getting more photos and videos for use for our education and outreach efforts. I presented to the Perham Lions Club what SWCDs are and what we do.
- **The Otter's Tail** – Darren assisted Chris LeClair, OTC, with facilitating a group discussion about the perceived issues landowners are having with the channel. This will be an ongoing discussion with 3 more meetings planned over the summer. The main issues identified at the meeting were the issue of boat navigation during low water, boar navigation issues due to weed growth and a perceived water quality issue in the late summer when flow is reduced. There were also a lot of questions about the dam modifications. I provided an impromptu presentation for those that were interested at the end of the meeting.
- **Administration** – We continue to work on the process of tracking all our grants and agreement financial information. Kristi is inputting project information into eLINK.
- **Training and Meetings** – Staff continue to take training courses as needed to develop their JAA. There will be more training on the calendar in the next few months.
- **Staff/Focus Teams** – The staff focus teams continue to meet and we have implemented some of those suggestions coming from these teams.