



MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 16, 2023, BOARD MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lyle Dittmann at 7:30 a.m.

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

Others Present: MN Representative: Tom Murphy
County Commissioner: Dan Bucholz
NRCS District Conservationist: Troy Baumgart
District Manager: Darren Newville
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
Education, Outreach & Admin Asst: Kristi Rorah

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

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

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

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

REDEYE 1W1P

C21-3238-20; Stephen Lutes; Leaf Lake township, Section 27; is requesting a final cost share payment for his tree planting/critical area planting. The total cost of the practice was \$3,497.22 with a cost share amount of \$2,622.92. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

C21-3238-21; Randy Curtis; Newton township, Section 1; is requesting a final cost share payment for his cover crop practice. The total cost of the practice was \$906.66 with a cost share amount of \$680.00. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

C21-3238-26; Keith Eckhoff; Henning township, Section 3; is requesting cost share assistance for an ag waste pit closure. The total estimated project cost is \$14,500.00, with cost sharing of \$10,875.00. This was approved at the July board meeting, needed final signature.



OTTER TAIL 1W1P

6-C23-4546-01; Joseph Franklin; Candor township, Section 11; is requesting a final cost share payment for his forest stewardship plan. The total cost of the plan was \$1,157.00 with a cost share amount of \$867.44. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-04; Karl and Karen Brandstaetter; Ottertail township, Section 3; is requesting cost share assistance for a well sealing. The total estimated project cost is \$525.00, with cost sharing of \$262.50. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-05; Craig Gode; Gorman township, Section 25; is requesting cost share assistance for an ag waste pit closure. The total estimated project cost is \$26,000.00, with cost sharing of \$15,000.00. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

COVER CROP

C20-8413-20; Ronald Sakry; Deer Creek township, section 15; is requesting a final flat rate cost share payment for his cover crop demonstration plot. Total cost share amount is \$3,500.00. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

PRIORITY LAKES

PL12/LP; Dan Knight; Gorman township, section 25; is requesting a final cost share payment for his conservation cover practice. The total cost of the project was \$7,679.70 with a cost share amount of \$5,759.78. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

PL19/BP; Robert and Katie Vanguilder; Pine Lake township, section 22; are requesting a final cost share payment for their shoreline protection practice. The total cost of the practice was \$39,600.00 with a cost share amount of \$24,000.00. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

COST SHARE

P23-5804-01; Jason Haman; Pine Lake township, section 4; is requesting a final cost share payment for his well sealing. The total cost of the practice was \$1,065.00 with a cost share amount of \$500.00. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

P21-2734-01; William McKinney; Dead Lake township, section 12; is requesting a final cost share payment for his shoreline protection practice. The total cost of the practice was \$21,511.08 with a cost share amount of \$16,133.31. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Hough - Big Pine Dam billing; Discussion of progress of Big Pine dam project.



District Manager's Report: Presented by Darren Newville.

- There was a short additional discussion of staffing and pay scale.

District Conservationist's Report: Presented by Troy Baumgart

- CSP – Letters sent out requesting documentation, due September 30.
- EQIP – Continuing to certify prior year projects. Application deadline for 2024-1 is October 6, 2023.
- EQIP-CIC potentially for 2024: open to applicants in the Otter Tail Watershed, 5 yr. contracts, practices 329, 340, 449, 528
- CRP – SU60 – General: All plans were written and turned in by the August 9 deadline. Continuing to complete prior year practice certifications and beginning status reviews.
- RCPP – Producers are completing projects. We are in the process of certifying variable rate, soil moisture sensors, and low-pressure conversions. Some issues with soil moisture sensors not being installed, push off to 2024.
- Mitch Neitge's last day is today.

County Commissioner's Report: Presented by Dan Bucholz

- Highway 60 & Highway 10 intersection is scheduled to be done next year.
- Ambulance services are facing financial issues, operating in the red.
- Marijuana ordinance issues faced by county and municipalities.

Other Agency Reports: update by MN Representative Tom Murphy

- Discussed over-reach of some large government agencies, importance of keeping decision making local.
- Discussed government mandates and business climate in Minnesota.

Old Business

TSA Update: Budget passed at last meeting and things continue to work well.

New Business

Meetings/Trainings: County bus tour will be September 11, 2023.

Esser Maintenance Plan: Cost of yearly maintenance plan increased for the next year. Provides twice/year maintenance for HVAC systems. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Public Comments: none

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m.

District Managers Report
August 2023
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – Staff continue to meet with landowners to provide technical assistance with potential projects for next year. We will be putting together our 2024 tree order numbers in the next month.
- **Forest Stewardship Planning:** Anne completed site inventories on two sites. She is working on cost share applications and has received phone calls from landowners to set up times in August to meet. Anne has also been working with Kylee Berger from DNR on setting a location and date for our initial kick off meeting for the rejuvenated West Central Landscape Committee in New York Mills on August 22.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** – The drill was rented to 3 landowners in July.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue working on the CRP contribution agreement writing plans, doing site inspections, and certifying projects. Staff are also working with landowners on RIM applications at the various stages of the process and doing the required site inspections on easements that need them.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work with producers on the MAWQCP assessment, certifications, endorsements, and cost-share. Both SWCDs have been promoting the program on our social media accounts. Alyson is working with certified producers to present them with their signs and take pictures. We completed the quarterly report and invoice.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** –Staff assisted MDA with the Perham LAT meeting held on August 20th. Nathan and I attended the meeting. With MDA expanding the weather network we will likely turn over the maintenance of our weather stations to them sometime in the next year. We completed and submitted the quarterly report and invoice.
- **MDA Central Sands** – After receiving the invoice from RMB Anne worked with Chantal to create and submit the invoice and report to MDA.
- **AgBMP Loan Program** – Both offices continue to take calls, answer questions, and aid landowners requesting information or loans.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We continue to work with the partners on this project. The technical training session on July 17-18 was held at the CLC Staples campus. There was a good turnout with 41 people registered. Some of the projects are starting to get completed and need to be. We continue to work with MDA and NRCS to refine the reporting.
- **MDH Groundwater Grant** – Five nitrate testing clinics were held in July: WOT Fair on 7/20 (44 wells tested), EOT Fair on 7/21 (11 wells), Wadena SWCD on 7/25 (16 wells), Becker County Fair on 7/27 (18 wells) and Ottertail City on 7/31 (61 wells) for a total of 150 wells.
- **Red Eye Watershed** – There was no July TAC meeting. Staff began work on a culvert inventory, with MPCA grant funds, in the watershed and have developed outreach letters to promote conservation practices in the watershed. The letters will be mailed out in early to

mid-August. Staff also continue to organize a grazing workshop to target landowners in the Bluff/Oak watersheds. The next TAC met on August 8th and discussed distribution of funds not encumbered at this time.

- **SWAG** (Surface Water Assessment Grant) Don and Alyson have completed 5 rounds of water sampling at 8 locations in the Redeye River Watershed. Samples collected are analyzed for temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity, total suspended solids, and e coli bacteria. Lab reports from RMB show elevated e coli levels this spring at various locations.
- **LCCMR Tree Planting Pilot Program** Our local forestry team met on July 27th. Don presented a service provider directory and the capacity assessment to the group. This information will document what forestry work is getting done in the watersheds and help us plan for future needs. BWSR and DNR continue to work on education and outreach materials. The project partners will be working on sending out public outreach letters shortly. The next meeting will be held on October 26th. The EOT SWCD purchased the rototiller, and it has arrived. Tanner has done some experimenting with it.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – There was no July meeting. Staff have been working on developing outreach letters to promote conservation practices. The letters will be mailed out in early to mid-August. Discussions have also been taking place to explore the possibility of developing a GIS tool to help identify and manage impervious surfaces around priority lakes to help us reduce phosphorus loading. The TAC met on August 7th.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – A tour of the Crow Wing River Watershed was held on July 26th with approximately 25 Policy Committee and Technical Advisory Committee Members attending. A draft copy of the issue statements was distributed to both committees during the tour. A TAC meeting was held on August 9th and the Policy committee will meet on August 23rd.
- **Long Prairie Watershed** – The Steering Committee met on July 7th. The partners reviewed the implementation tracking spreadsheet, planning grant budget, and project requests. They also met on August 4th.

The Policy Committee met on July 20th. Topics discussed included project updates and an update on Nelson Lake. The policy committee did not take an official position on the project and made a motion recommending that Otter Tail County work directly with local partners as the project develops.

- **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 continue to run weekly routes. Tanner and Pete have stepped in to assist as Nathan and Nicole are moving on to other positions. We will be pulling rain gauges and finishing up on the small grain fields with edible beans to follow.
- **Shoreland Program** – Staff installed 5 sites across Otter Tail County with the help of the CCM crew. They installed over 5,820 square feet of native grasses and forbs on 5 different lakes. They helped Otter Tail County install a native planting outside their office building. Liz & Pete have been making site visits to potential sites and will be starting on cost share site inspections in July. Liz is working with Chantal to finish the billing for the last few projects. Staff have also been involved in the monitoring of the construction of a few rip rap projects.
- **Cover Crop Grant** – The soil health field day was held on August 8th at the Ron Sakry Farm. We had about 65-70 people in. Staff did a great job organizing the event and making it happen. There were 4 different strip-till machines demonstrated at the event. This i
- **Feedlots** – Mitch has sent Inspection letters out. He is hoping to get all the inspections done in August. He has also been working with a TSP to wrap up Todd Meech's MMP and construction application so we can keep making progress so he can get his new building built.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Staff are responding to complaints about weeds. We will continue to work with the township weed inspector and county Hwy Depts on these complaints. Alyson proctored two pesticide tests.
- **Engineering Assistance** – Our joint engineering staff continue to help support us with projects needing engineering assistance. They put on a training on Ag waste pit closures on August 14th. Most of our technical staff attended the training.
- **Extension Educator Position** – After making an offer and several discussions with Sarah Chur our #1 candidate declined the offer. Sarah & I agreed that the other candidates that we interviewed did not have the background for the position, so it was decided to start the search over again. Sarah has been on vacation and will be contacting us soon with more details on the process for moving forward.
- **Education and Outreach** – Staff have started planning the Wadena SWCD Conservation Days. This event was put on hold for the COVID years, and we are working to reestablish it. We are working on putting together the sites for the September 11th tour for the EOT and WOT SWCD Boards, the County Board, and State Legislators. The EOT Breakfast on the Farm was held on August 5th, there were just shy of 1,200 people served. Liz and Pete will be presenting at the Stewart Lake Association meeting on August 12th. I will be presenting at the COLA meeting on August 17th. Liz and Pete are working with the COLA to put on a shoreland project tour that will be held on September 16th. Staff are also working on some target mailings for several different aspects of the 1W1Ps. We continue to use our social media accounts for effective outreach.
- **The Otter's Tail** –Chris LeClair, OTC, and I facilitated meetings for this group of citizens on July 6th, 20th and 27th. The last meeting focused on coming to a group consensus on which

potential solutions they should further explore. I felt that this was a good process and hopefully the different groups can come together for the common interest of all parties.

- **Otter Tail Dam Modifications:** They are still working on the Big Pine dam project. I would say they are over halfway done at this point. Getting enough rock to the site in a timely fashion seems to be holding them up a little. Otherwise, the project is coming together nicely. The Perham paper did a story on it the week of August 9th.
- **Administration** – Staff continue to do the day-to-day tasks needed to keep the SWCDs running smoothly. Chantal and Kristi continue to work on the process of tracking all our grants and agreement financial information. Kristi is inputting project information into eLINK. Audits for both SWCDs were completed on July 24th. We submitted our annual county budget requests for both SWCDs.
- **Training and Meetings** – Staff continue to take training courses as needed to develop their JAA. Training attended includes the following topics: Irrigation, Plant Identification, Grazing for Wildlife, County Ag Inspector Short Course, Forage Production, & Ag Waste Pit Closures.
- **Staffing** – Nathan and Nicole have both moved on to new opportunities. Mitch Janson has been selected to replace Nathan as the Irrigation and Nutrient Management Specialist. We have posted Mitch’s position. Mitch will be maintaining his workload in Wadena through the transition. After discussions with the technical staff and personnel committee members we feel it is best to hold off for a few months and reevaluate our needs before posting Nicole’s position. I wish Nathan and Nicole the greatest success in their new roles and thank them for their time and efforts here.