



## MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 20, 2023, BOARD MEETING

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

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

**Others Present:** MN House of Representatives: Rep. Murphy  
County Commissioner: Dan Bucholz  
NRCS District Conservationist: Troy Baumgart  
District Manager: Darren Newville  
Ass't Manager: Anne Oldakowski  
Administrative Secretary: Chantal Tougas  
Watershed Coordinator: Nicole Lundeen  
UofM Extension: Olivia Olson

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

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

**Treasurer's Report:** Motion made by Wayne Enger, 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 Terry Greenwaldt, second by Steve Inwards, to approve the Bills Paid and Bills Payable as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

### **Cost Share**

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#### **REDEYE 1W1P – C21-3238**

**C21-3238-24;** Jared Huwe; Paddock Township, Section 31; is requesting a partial payment for his Irrigation Water Management contract. The total approved was \$1,500.00 for a 3-year contract with the first-year payment of \$500.00. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**C21-3238-19;** Penrose Farms; Parkers Prairie Township, Section 11 & 13; is requesting a final payment for his Irrigation Sprinkler System and Pumping Plant. The total cost estimated was \$77,055.00 with a final payment requested of \$24,040.00. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.



**C21-3238-10**; Steve Flanigan; Bluffton Township, Section 14; is requesting a cancellation of contract C21-3238-10. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**C21-3238-28**; Steve Flanigan; Bluffton Township, Section 14; is requesting approval of cost share assistance contract for prescribed grazing. The total estimated cost of the project is \$ 27,032.00, with cost sharing of \$20,274.00 or 75% whichever is less. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**C21-3238-29**; Scott Dunagan; Oak Valley Township, Section 22; is requesting approval of a cost share assistance contract for his buffer/tree & shrub establishment practice. The total estimated cost is \$5,149.15 with cost sharing of \$3,861.86 or 75% whichever is less. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

### OTTER TAIL 1W1P – C23-4546

**6-C23-4546-06**; Bruce Christianson; Star Lake Township, Section 1; is requesting a contract amendment for his Well Sealing contract. The estimated project cost of \$675.00 changed to \$800.00, with the new amended total amount to be authorized would be \$400.00. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**6-C23-4546-06**; Bruce Christianson; Star Lake Township, Section 1; is requesting a final payment for his Well Sealing. Project cost was \$800.00, with a final payment of \$400.00. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**6-C23-4546-12**; Jared Lotzer; Hobart Township, Section 29; is requesting approval of a cost share assistance contract for his shoreline critical area planting practice. The total estimated cost is \$2,962.08 with cost sharing of \$2,221.56 or 75% whichever is less. Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

### IRRIGATION TECH – C21-9235

**C21-9235-04**; Silver Dust Farm LLC; Rush Lake Township, Section 33 (Ottetail Watershed); is requesting final payment for his Irrigation Water Management contract. The total amount authorized was \$2,500.00 with a previous payment of \$2,212.50 and a final payment requested of \$175.00. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**C21-9235-05**; Todd & Melissa Larson; Perham Township, Section 28 & 33 (Ottetail Watershed); are requesting final payment for their Irrigation Water Management contract. The total amount authorized was \$2,500.00 with a previous payment of \$2,212.50 and a final payment requested of \$175.00. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**C21-9235-15**; Andrew Schock; Wing River Township, Section 28 (Redeye Watershed); is requesting final payment for his Irrigation Water Management contract. The total amount authorized was \$2,500.00 with a previous payment of \$1,538.54 and a final payment requested of \$961.46. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.



**C21-9235-11;** Steve Inwards; Eastern Township, Section 18 (Redeye Watershed); is requesting final payment for his Irrigation Water Management contract. The total amount authorized was \$2,500.00 with a previous payment of \$1,436.25 and a final payment requested of \$1,063.75. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried. *Note: Steve abstained from voting.*

## SOIL HEALTH – P23-2716

**P23-2716-02;** Daren Myren; Folden Township, Section 35 (Redeye Watershed); is requesting approval of a cost share assistance contract for his windbreak/shelterbelt establishment practice. The total estimated cost is \$1,312.50 with cost sharing of \$984.38 or 75% whichever is less. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**District Manager's Report:** Presented by Darren Newville.

**District Conservationist's Report:** Presented by Troy Baumgart

**County Commissioner's Report:** Presented by Dan Bucholz

- A new county garage is in the planning process.
- There will be a meeting regarding Main Street Perham reconstruction. The city wants to increase the width of the sidewalks which in turn will reduce the width of the street.
- Scamming and hacking are on the rise so please be aware.
- EMS in Otter Tail County is hurting financially.

**Other Agency Reports:** MN House of Representatives in attendance.

- The Metro area EMS does not have any financial issues, this is a rural problem.
- The \$2.3 million surplus will be deficit spending by the end of 2024.
- There have been quite a few meetings regarding wolves lately.
- Property taxes continue to be huge issues.
- The new flag design is very close to the Somalia flag.
- These are troubling times for education in rural areas.

### **Old Business**

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**TSA Update:** The next meeting is in February. So far, everything is going smoothly with the engineering.

### **New Business**

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**Meetings/Trainings:** Motion made by Bruce Albright, second by Wayne Enger to approve the meeting schedule with the date change for the January 2024 meeting. It should be the 17<sup>th</sup> not the 14<sup>th</sup>. Opposed: none, motion carried. Terry expressed how much he wants to attend the convention in 2024.

**Soil Health Shared Position:** There will be roughly \$75m coming from BWSR to the Soil & Water Districts. These will be 4-year grants for hiring of these positions which BWSR will oversee. We discussed at the meeting the possibility of partnering with other districts for this position. The board agrees to proceed with this option.



*8:56 a.m. Troy left the meeting.*

**Cost Share Policies:** Cost share and payment rates were reviewed. Staff recommendations were presented to the board. Motion made by Steve Inwards, second Wayne Enger to move forward with the recommendations of the staff. Opposed: none, motion carried. Changes will take place on January 1, 2024, and will affect only those contracts approved after this date.

**Personnel Recommendations:** Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to add in the Juneteenth Holiday and the Sick & Safe time policy to the existing policy. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**Public Comments:** None

**Personnel Committee Report:** The personnel committee gave an update on how things are going. Salary recommendations were made. Motion was made by Lyle Dittmann, second by Bruce Albright to approve those increases. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned.

**District Managers Report  
December 2023  
Submitted by Darren Newville**

- **Tree Program** – Staff continue to meet with landowners to provide technical assistance with potential projects for next year. Tanner has met with 4 landowners and sent out 3 plans. The online tree store is ready to roll out on January 1<sup>st</sup> and we will start taking orders for spring of 2024.
- **Forest Stewardship:** Anne submitted 3 plans to the DNR for approval and is working on one more. She assisted with the organization and attended the MFRC West Central Committee meeting in Browerville. Nicole, Olivia, and I also attended the meeting. The agenda included speakers on climate predictions and adaptations, updates from around the area, and updates on the landscape fund availability.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** – Tanner continues to work with landowners on getting seed orders placed for the 2024 spring planting season. He has taken an additional 4 orders for seed.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – I invoiced MASWCD for the EOT SWCD CRP contribution agreement work done in 2023. MASWCD indicated that they have submitted everything to NRCS, and we should expect payment in February or March. Staff continue to work on RIM easement work as needed.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to assist Jim with the work on the MAWQCP assessment, certifications, endorsements, and cost-share. They also worked to notify eligible producers about the RCPP application deadline and NRCS to help process applications. I DocuSigned the JPA for FY24/25 last week to continue the MDA funding for this program.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** –Mitch completed the weather station maintenance and is working with MDA and NDAWN staff on the process of getting some of the components recalibrated. He is also collecting the harvest data from the NMI plots and will be working with MDA on the process to get payments out to participating producers.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – Most of our local projects have been completed and certified. This has led to an increase in interest from producers who are considering adopting these practices. We continue to work with partners to get the BWSR funding out to completed projects. The Steering Committee continues to meet. We will be holding an all-partners meeting in February to discuss a future application and partner commitments.
- **Red Eye Watershed** –The watershed partners continue to encumber implementation funds for priority projects. We requested a one-year extension for the first WBIF grant. BWSR has already approved the extension and I have signed the grant amendment. The TAC met on November 14<sup>th</sup>. We will be working with Pete Waller on a workplan and budget amendment for our first grant in early January. We will also be developing the budget and request for the next round of WBIF funding soon. The next Policy Committee meeting is tentatively

scheduled for March 11<sup>th</sup>. Huston engineering has been working on the goal tracking spreadsheet for the Red Eye Watershed. We had a quick review with them, and they are currently making a few edits we requested.

- **Oak/Bluff Creek Sub-Watershed** – Staff continue to respond to landowner inquiries from the mailing we sent out to landowners in the watershed.
- **Red Eye Culvert Inventory** - Staff continue to field verify culvert locations and collect information. They have completed North Germany, Lyons, Meadows, Red Eye, Rockwood, Paddock, Homestead, and Butler Townships. They will continue to do the field inventory until weather conditions don't allow it.
- **LCCMR Tree Planting Pilot Program** – Staff sent out two rounds of letters to conservation easement landowner promoting the program. They are being sent out in batches to help with workload issues for the DNR Foresters. We are still waiting for the agreements from the DNR for the tree planter purchases. We will purchase the tree planters and then get reimbursed. We will be organizing and holding another Local Forestry Team meeting in the next month or so.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – Partners continue to incur funds and process payments for completed projects. We will be meeting with Pete Waller in early Jan to discuss a few budget adjustments, a possible request for supplemental funds, and the process of starting the next funding request. The TAC will meet again in February and have tentatively scheduled a Policy Committee meeting for the end of February to give them an update on progress and to review/approve the next WBIF funding request. Nicole and Pete spent some time working on entering project info in the plan goal tracking spreadsheet. We will share this information with the TAC and Policy Committees in February.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – The 1W1P process is proceeding at the pace expected and we hope to have an approved plan in mid to late 2024. The TAC met November 1 and December 6<sup>th</sup> in Staples. We reviewed and prioritized lakes, streams, and groundwater resources. The TAC & Policy Committee will meet in January.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – Mitch has started the process for planning the winter producer meeting. It will likely be held in early March.
- **Shoreland Program** – Liz and Pete continue to make site visits and work with landowners to review plans and get projects approved for installation in 2024. Liz indicated that they have completed 27 designs so far this year after visiting 75 sites. They continue to do site inspection on past projects. They have 7 sites that have committed to installing projects in 2024 and are working with others to get things in line. They also worked together to submit the request for the Conservation Corps Crew assistance in 2024.

- **A.I.S.** – Alyson completed the end of the season reports for both the DNR and our board and has posted the report on our website. She also participated in some A.I.S. webinars.
- **Feedlots** – With Mitch’s assistance Savanna has uploaded the 2023 inspection information into the TEMPO program. They will be working on the year end reporting soon.
- **Buffer Law** – We are working on the eLINK workplans for the 2024 grants. The Wadena SWCD was informed of a potential violation in Wadena County. Staff contacted the landowner and are currently working with them to come in compliance. They will have to field verify it in the spring to make sure they have come into compliance.
- **Engineering Assistance** – Our joint engineering staff continue to help support us with projects needing engineering assistance. They assisted with site visits and surveys on sites in Otter Tail County.
- **Education and Outreach** – I made a presentation to the EOT Master Gardner’s in November. There were about 30 people in attendance. I gave them a brief overview of our work, discussed the types of projects we do, and what resources we use in the process of making plan recommendations for conservation tree plantings. At the end of the presentation, they asked a lot of questions about the resource concerns for our area. We continue to do our social media outreach on a regular basis. We will be working on our 2023 annual year in reviews in the next month or so.
- **Otter Tail River Dam Modifications** – The contractor finished up the Rush Lake and Otter Tail Dams in November. We will be processing payments for the project. We are holding back 2% of the cost that will be paid out in the spring early summer in case we need the contractor to come back in and do some seeding or add chinking stone after everything settles over the winter. We have had a lot of positive feedback on these projects, and some folks expressing some concerns, most of which have to do with the low water levels we have been seeing over the past few years. Not really anything specific about the modifications. I received an email from Nick Klundt, DNR Red River Fisheries Specialist, thanking us for our work on the projects, our education and outreach efforts and answering a lot of questions from residents.
- **Administration** – Staff continue to do the important work of the day-to-day tasks needed to keep the SWCDs running smoothly. Chantal is prepping and adjusting the 2024 timesheets and getting prepared for year end reporting. We are still inputting projects and expenses into eLINK monthly, which will make the annual reporting deadline in February much easier.
- **State Convention** – Several Staff and Supervisors attend the MASWCD state Convention in Bloomington. Overall, I thought it was a good event, and we all had the opportunity to sit in on several learning sessions, network with supervisors and staff from around the state, and accomplish the work of the MASWCD Annual Meeting.

- Personnel Committee – I completed the annual performance reviews and met with the Personnel Committee. Because of state statute we need to make some adjustments to our Personnel Policies. We will be discussing them later in the meeting.
- **Staffing** – Nicole Lundeen started in her position as our Watershed Planner/Coordinator. We have thrown her right into the various meetings and have introduced her to the plans and workplan for the watershed. There will be a very steep learning curve.

I am sad to report that Liz Wiese has taken a position with MPCA and will be leaving the SWCD. While we are happy for Liz and wish her the best, she will be missed in her role with the SWCDs. Her last day will be January 4<sup>th</sup>. We will be working through a staffing needs evaluation and will be posting a position notice very soon.