



MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 17, 2024, BOARD MEETING

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
Public Relations: Wayne Enger
Treasurer: Bruce Albright

Others Present: County Commissioner: Dan Bucholz
OTC Land and Resource: Chris LeClair
NRCS Soil Conservationist: Olivia Schmitz
Wadena Liaison: Bruce Juntunen
District Manager: Darren Newville
Ass't District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
Administrative Assistant: Chantal Tougas
Riparian Conservation Planner: Marcie Peeters

Marcie Peeters was introduced as a new staff member. She gave a brief introduction of her background.

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

LCCMR GRANT – P23-2944

6-P23-2944-02; David Breuer; Compton and Bluffton Townships, sections 5,32; is requesting cost share payment for his forest stewardship plan. The total estimated cost of the project was \$1,350.00 with cost sharing of \$1,012.50 or 75%, whichever is less. (Consultant written plan, 105 acres) Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.



REDEYE 1W1P – C21-3238

6-C21-3238-34; Ken Sakry; Compton Township, Section 32; is requesting to cancel his cost share assistance for Cover Crops, in the amount of \$ 8,050.00. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Wayne Enger to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

REDEYE 1W1P 2.0 – C22-7830

6-C22-7830-01; Evan Welter; Newton Township, Section 17; is requesting cost share payment for his forest stewardship plan. The total cost of the plan was \$390.00 with cost sharing of \$292.50 or 75%, whichever is less. (Consultant written plan, 38 acres) Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C22-7830-03; Gary Dornbusch; Corliss Township, Section 14; is requesting cost share assistance for his forest stewardship plan. The total estimated cost of the project is \$700.00 with cost sharing of \$525.00 or 75%, whichever is less. (Consultant written plan, 150 acres) Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Bruce Albright to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C22-7830-04; Ken Sakry; Compton Township, Section 32; is requesting cost share assistance for his Irrigation Water Management. This is a 3-year flat rate contract with the Cost Share amount of \$ 1,500.00 at \$500.00 per year. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C22-7830-04; Ron Sakry; Deer Creek/Compton Township, Section 15; is requesting cost share assistance for his Irrigation Water Management. This is a 3-year flat rate contract with the Cost Share amount of \$ 1,500.00 at \$500.00 per year. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

OTTER TAIL WBIF – C23-4546

6-C23-4546-22; Nate Chesley; Corliss Township, Section 23; is requesting cost share assistance for his Pasture Seeding. The total cost of the plan is \$ 4,052.19 with cost sharing of \$ 3,039.14 or 75%, whichever is less. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-23; Dan Dreyer; Ottertail Township, Section 12; is requesting cost share assistance for his Cover Crops. This is a 1-year flat rate contract with the Cost Share amount of \$ 5,250.00. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

6-C23-4546-24; Mike Dombeck; Perham Township, Section 8; is requesting cost share assistance for his Cover Crops. This is a 1-year flat rate contract with the Cost Share amount of \$ 8,100.00. \$ 6,787.86 will come out of C23-4546, with the remaining \$ 1,312.14 coming out of the Soil Health Grant P23-2716. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.



BLUFF AND OAK CREEK 319 – P22-3257

P22-3257-01; Nathan Berry; Blowers Township, Section 33; is requesting cost share assistance for his Prescribed Grazing plan. The total cost of the plan is \$ 42,000.00 with cost sharing of \$ 31,500.00 or 75%, whichever is less. \$ 21,000.00 (50%) will come out of P22-3257, with the remaining \$ 10,500.00 (25%) coming out of the Redeye WBIF C21-3238. Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Steve Inwards to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

P22-3257-02; David Curtis; Newton Township, Section 12; is requesting cost share assistance for his Cover Crops. This is a 1-year flat rate contract with the Cost Share amount of \$ 1,225.00. \$ 612.50 (50%) will come out of P22-3257 with the remaining \$ 612.50 (50%) coming out of the Redeye WBIF C21-3238. Motion made by Terry Greenwaldt to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

District Manager's Report: Presented by Darren Newville.

District Conservationist's Report:

- CSP – All classic applications have been ranked/submitted. Request for additional funding has been submitted. Preapproval list should be out hopefully the week of April 22, 2024.
- EQIP – All first-round preapproved applications have been obligated or partially obligated. Request for additional funding has been submitted. The idea was to finish funding round 1 of applications and partial obligated applications. Unsure at this point if they will get to round 2 applications. Unsure how the additional money will be split.
- CRP – We continue to work on CRP contracts and have started on status reviews.
- Other – The team is continuing to advertise and hire additional staff. Wilkin & Clay counties have filled their DC positions. DL hired a Soil Conservationist – Adam Mortenson who starts in June. PF intern was selected, Karlee Kunza, starts in May after school is out. No word on CLC interns for 2024.
- Meetins/Trainings – Attended a shop talk at Inwards farm with Mitch Janson and Olivia Olson. Went well with lots of discussion. 9 producers were in attendance.
- Upcoming – Conservation Days May 6 – May 9 (roughly 650 students). Ag in the Classroom (New York Mills) April 30th.

County Commissioner's Report:

- Went to the State Capital in February to meet with Representatives. The representatives have received 4,000 bills to go through. Electric cars are currently the hot topic.
- Three members have retired from the County U of M Extension Committee, so the County is searching for new members.
- Main Street in Perham will be under construction this summer.

Other Agency Reports: OTC Land and Resource: Chris LeClair

- VHR (Vacation Home Rental) Ordinance Public Hearing on Tuesday morning. Current license \$400) is licensed by the Lodging Ordinance, this new ordinance will be more about standards for behaviors.
- Subdivision Ordinance regarding the splitting of property will have a public hearing coming soon. The last revision was in 1997. July 1, 2024, is the proposed effective date. Minimum size is 2.5 acres.



Old Business

TSA Update: nothing to report at this time.

New Business

Meetings/Trainings: none at this time.

BOTF Donation: Motion made by Steve Inwards, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve a \$600 donation to BOTF (Breakfast on the Farm). Opposed: none, motion carried.

Tumblers: Motion made by Wayne Enger, second by Terry Greenwaldt to approve the purchase of tumblers with the EOT & MAWQCP logo. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Public Comments: none.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

District Managers Report
April 2024
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – We continue to take orders for the conservation tree program. As of 3/30 we received 421 orders for almost 59,000 trees. A lot of species are sold out. We have about 1,250 trees and shrubs still available. Staff in both offices continue to work with landowners to get plans and cost estimates for tree planting projects. Tanner has 16 custom tree planting projects lined up for this spring. In total we will be planting about 50,000 trees. He has one site lined up for site prep with the roto tiller on 5 acres. Tanner has confirmed delivery from the nurseries, and we will be holding our tree pick up day on April 26th & 27th.
- **Forest Stewardship** –Anne met with one landowner who did not meet the 20-acre requirement for plan but had a good discussion about forest management as they walked through the property. She 1 landowner visit lined up for April. Anne assisted with the MFRC West Central Committee meeting on March 14th. And held a Local Forestry Team meeting that same day.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** –Tanner continues working with landowners on plans and ordering seed for 2024. He currently has 18 orders for native grass seed for 155 acres. He also has 5 sites lined up for custom planting for 100 acres. He is starting to get calls on scheduling the rental drill.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue to work on RIM easement workload. The EOT Manske Easement has been approved for funding. Anne is working on the process for Martin easement in Wadena County.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work with several producers on the process of completing assessments to get farms certified. Jim Reports that they certified 2 farms in the last month and have 6 new applications in the process. Jim hosted a producer panel at the U of M Minnesota Irrigation Program training. They are also assisting several producers with eh MDA Grant Fund Program.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – There were 5 local producers who signed up for the NMI plots. Mitch will be busy doing the spring maintenance on the weather stations.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – The RFP for the next round of RFPP funding has been announced. We are working with the partners to collect their letters of commitment. Mitch continues to work with partnering SWCDs to allocate and distribute the state funding. We will have a steering committee meeting later this month.

- **MDA Groundwater Grant** – We continue to follow the workplan for this grant doing education and outreach on groundwater issues. Pete and Mitch went to Doug Salos class in New York Mills with the groundwater model and talked to about 50 kids.
- **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 still waiting to hear from BWSR about the reconciliation process to make that happen.

The Policy Committee met on March 11th. Nicole compiled and shares information on the projects that have been completed and how those projects are helping us make progress on the goals in our plan. The Policy Committee also approved our draft budget and workplan for the FY25/26 round of WBIF funding.

- **Red Eye LCCMR Forestry Pilot** – We are still waiting to hear when we can pick up the new tree planters for each of the SWCDs (we were told the first part of May). We continue to coordinate and complete the work identified in the work plan. Anne has taken on the role of coordinating this project and will be working on and submitting the next quarterly report.
- **Oak and Bluff Creek 319** – Staff continue to discuss potential projects with landowners in the targeted sub-watersheds. We have two projects that have requested funding.
- **Red Eye Watershed WRAPS inventory** – Staff have been able to continue the culvert inventory work and will continue to do so as weather conditions and staff time allow. This will be put on hold once trees come in.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – Partnering LGU's continue to work on implementing the work plan. The grant amendment and work plan for the supplemental funds have been approved and executed.

We held a Policy Committee on March 28th in Ottertail. Nicole updated them with information on the projects that have been completed and how those projects are helping us make progress on the goals in our plan. The Policy Committee approved the draft budget and workplan the TAC put together for the FY25/26 round of WBIF funding. The next PC meeting is scheduled for Sept. 26th.

- **Crow Wing Watershed** – We continue participating in the 1W1P planning process for the Crow Wing Watershed. The TAC met on March 6th and discussed measurable goals for the watershed. There was a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) held on March 11th. The next Policy Committee met on March 27th. The TAC met again on April 3rd and reviewed goal numbers and started talking about implementation efforts. The next Policy Committee Meeting will be April 24th. We are on track to have an approved plan by the end of 2024.

- **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 staff are continuing their efforts focusing on education and outreach efforts for the priority areas identified in the plans. We hosted 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 was held on March 5th, we had about 50 people in attendance. It was held at Thumper Pond in Ottertail. U of M extension offered their Minnesota Irrigation Program (MIP) in Staples this year. This is a three-day training program on all things’ irrigation. We 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 sent out the Irrigation Scheduler Program contracts for the 2024 growing season, and they are trickling in. Staff will be making calls to those we have not heard from in the next week. Mitch is working with producers on possible cost-share for irrigation practices.
- **Shoreland Program** – Pete continues to meet with landowners and has delivered 2 shoreland restoration plans to the interested landowners and discuss cost-share options with them. He continues to work with scheduling projects for installation this year. We have been notified that we will have the assistance of a Conservation Corps Crew for two weeks in early June.
- **Soil Health** – We were notified that our application for a joint Soil Health Specialist with the Todd SWCD has been funded. We will work with the Todd SWCD on that as timelines get solidified. Mitch has reported that we have nearly 1,700 acres of cover crops contracted for this year between the two SWCDs. We are also expecting another round of inquiries after the planting season is completed.
- **Wetland Conservation Act** –We have seen an uptick in calls about WCA issues this past month. Staff are responding to them as they come in. Projects include wildlife ponds, irrigation travel lanes, and ditch cleanouts. We did meet with a few OTC and Wadena County Commissioners to discuss Public Ditch issues.

- **Feedlots** – Savanna and Mitch met with MPCA for the annual review. We have interest in several Ag Waste Pit Closures projects. Staff are working with those landowners on finding funding sources as they become available.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Staff hosted the 2024 Annual Local Weed inspector meetings for both counties. These meetings are designed to provide updates to our local Township weed inspectors on the program and get them any new information we have.
- **A.I.S. Wadena** – Alyson made sure the A.I.S. tubs are ready to go and has contacted the DNR about downloading the new updated survey on our tablets.
- **Extension Educator** – Olivia continues to work on building contacts and relationships with local partners and clients. She assisted with the EOT Horticulture Days held on March 16th. There were about 130 people in attendance. She assisted with calling producers about the irrigation clinic, and with the small Café/Shop talk meetings. She has also started a monthly email newsletter.
- **Education and Outreach** – We continue to post on our social media accounts. Mitchell and Pete presented at Doug Salo’s class in New York Mills. Pete presented at the EOT Horticulture Days, staff assisted with the Ag in the Classroom at the Perham Middle School, staff are planning for the Otter Tail County Conservation Days, and the EOT Breakfast on the Farm will be August 3rd on the Mike and Sandy Dombeck Farm. Kristi has been working on updating our websites.
- **Administration** – We continue to work on the important day to day administration and management of the SWCDs. This month will be focused on quarterly reporting. Chantal is now a Notary.