



Minutes from the January 17, 2023, Board Meeting

The regular monthly board meeting of the Wadena Soil and Water Conservation District was held at 7:30 a.m. in person at the Sheriff's Building at the fairgrounds.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Ken Berg at 7:35 a.m.

Reorganization of the Board of Supervisors as follows:

	<u>Current Positions</u>	<u>Reorganized Positions</u>
Members Present:	Chair: Ken Berg	Chair: Bruce Juntunen
	Vice Chair: Bruce Juntunen	Vice Chair: Tom Schulz
	Treasurer: Tom Schulz	Treasurer: Brett Dailey
	Secretary: Nancy Benson	Secretary: Ken Berg
	Public Relations: Brett Dailey	Public Relations: Jerry Kern

Others Present: County Commissioner: Murlyn Kreklau
NRCS District Conservationist: Ivan Reinke
District Manager: Darren Newville
Ass't District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
Administrative Assistant: Chantal Tougas

Oath of Office: Ken Berg, Brett Dailey, and Jerry Kern said the oath of office. Introductions were made as we have a new board member.

Reorganization: Motion made by Tom Schulz to make the above changes to the board appointments, second by Brett Dailey. Opposed: none, motion carried. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Brett Dailey to nominate Bruce Juntunen as the new Wadena Liaison to attend EOT Board meetings and to make changes to the committee appointments. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Adopt Agenda: Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Ken Berg to adopt the agenda with a new business addition. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Approve Board Meeting Minutes: Motion made by Brett Dailey, seconded by Ken Berg to approve the last month's Board Meeting Minutes. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made by Tom Schulz, seconded by Ken Berg to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Bills Paid and Bills Payable: Motion made by Ken Berg, seconded by Tom Schulz to approve the Bills Paid and Bills Payable as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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Redeye WBIF Cost Share:

2022-RE09; Thompson, Tyler; authorization to approve payment for a forest stewardship plan, with a total cost of \$858.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$643.50 or 75%, whichever is less in Aldrich Township, section 14. (Consultant written) Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Tom Schulz to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

2023-RE01; Schreiner, Paul; authorization to encumber funds for a tree planting, with a total cost of \$8,930.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$6,697.50 or 75%, whichever is less in North Germany Township, section 15. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Brett Dailey to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

2023-RE02; Jahnke, Randy & Nicole; authorization to encumber funds for a field windbreak, with a total cost of \$316.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$237.00 or 75%, whichever is less in Aldrich Township, section 11. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Brett Dailey to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

District Manager's Report: as written and read by Darren Newville.

County Commissioner's Report:

- The county web page is being worked on.
- Wadena County is ranked #5 in the state internet/broadband service.
- The DNR has put out ditch proposals and there has been push back on that.
- The Conservation Fund Committee will be discussing PILT payments at a future meeting.

NRCS District Conservationist's Report: as written and read by Ivan Reinke

Other Agency Reports: none in attendance

Forestry Update: The next meeting is Thursday, January 19, 2023. They will be discussing an increase in plan writing fees. The current rate is \$7-9/acre + \$300/plan.

Water Plan Update: covered in District Manager's report.

TSA & Report: The TSA no longer has staff. We do have access to a PE and Engineer Tech for assistance. The engineer received severance pay. Currently working on a dues schedule.

Meetings/Trainings:

- CMIC Meeting – Jan 19th CLC Staples
- SWCD Forestry Meeting – Jan 19th in McGregor
- MnSTAC Meeting – Jan 19th virtual
- Cow/Calf Days – Jan 24th in Staples, \$10
- MASWCD Legislative Webinar - Jan 25th 10:30 to noon
- LCCMR Grant Meeting – Jan 26th in Brainerd
- Nitrogen Smart Workshop – Jan 31-Feb 1 in Willmar, hotel

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- Forest Health Workshop – Jan 31st in Walker
- Redeye TAC Meeting – Feb 14th in Perham
- IAM Meeting – Feb 16th in Freeport
- Irrigation and Nutrient Management Clinic – Mar 2nd in New York Mills
- Legislative Days – Mar 7th & 8th in St Paul
- MACFO Workshop – Mar 21-23 in Winona, \$100 + hotel
- AIS Management 101 – Online Course - \$75.00

Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Brett Dailey to approve those planning on attending the above meetings. Opposed: none, motion carried. Darren noted he is planning on a Staff/Supervisor retreat for Tuesday, March 28.

Mileage Rate: Federal mileage rate has increased from \$0.625/mile to \$0.655/mile for 2023.

Per Diem: Per diem for 2023 is currently at \$125.00.

Official Newspaper: Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Brett Dailey to use the Verndale Sun as the official District newspaper, as we usually follow what the County does for that. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Official Financial Institution: Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Brett Dailey to keep Bremer Bank as the official District financial institution. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Peterson engagement letter: Motion made by Brett Dailey, seconded by Ken Berg to retain Peterson Company Ltd for year-end audit. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Year End Documents: Error on W-2 PERA reporting. Request made to reissue those W-2's with PERA reporting.

Public Comments: none

Meeting Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 8:47 a.m.

District Managers Report
January 2023
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – The tree store went online on January 1st. Staff sent out postcards, emails and have done some social media posts promoting the program. We took in 126 orders in the first week. Staff in both offices continue to work with landowners to get plans and cost estimates for tree planting projects.
- **Forest Stewardship** –Anne delivered 2 plans and has more appointments scheduled for later this month. We will be focusing more work on the LCCMR Forest Pilot Program in the next few months. This pilot program will be focused on the Red Eye and Long Prairie Watersheds.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** –Tanner continues working with landowners on plans and ordering seed for 2023. Tanner has worked on updating rental pricing which we will review at the EOT SWCD board meeting.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue to work on RIM easement workload. Tanner continues to work with interested landowner who are interested in easements. The landowners on Star Lake have signed the RIM agreement which has been forwarded to BWSR.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work to get farms certified and MDA cost-share processed for producers. Brian Ingmire, MDA, is assisting us while Jim is taking some time to deal with some medical issues. Brian is working closely with the other staff assisting with the program. We do have 3 to 4 farms that should be certified soon. Alyson, Pete, Nicole, and Nate are providing assistance for this program.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – We held an informational meeting set up for the Perham wellhead area on December 20th. It was well attended with over 20 ag producers or ag industry representative attending. There was a lot of good discussion. Nathan has started promoting the NMI program for 2023. He currently has 4 producers signed up.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We are continuing to work with the committee on any RCPP work. The most recent signup period ended December 16th. There were just shy of 100 applications with just over 60 that screened out as high priorities. We will get more information on which projects will receive funding in the next few weeks. I have requested quarterly reports from the other SWCD and will be working on completing that to be submitted to MDA. We will be planning an all-partner webinar that will be held in late February or early March. Our staff are working with NRCS on the application, ranking and scoring process. We have been asked to give updates on the project at the local Irrigators Association meeting.

- **MDA Groundwater Grant** – We continue to follow the workplan for this grant.
- **Red Eye Watershed** – Don has finalized the budget and workplan for the 319 grant. This will bring \$291,965 in additional federal funding to address e coli and bacteria related issues in the Redeye River Watershed. I hope that is approved by MPCA and the EPA soon so we can get the contract executed.

Staff continue to work on projects that use the WBIF and will be working with Mitch Brinks to develop a story map for projects completed.

- **Otter Tail River Watershed** –The plan was reviewed at the BWSR Northern Committee on January 4th, and the committee will be recommending its approval by the full BWSR board on January 24th. The Steering Committee continues to meet to develop a workplan and budget. Each participating Local Government Unit (LGU) will need to formally adopt the plan in the next month. We hope to have the request for funding into BWSR by the end of February. The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for Jan 26th.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – We will be meeting with the Hubbard SWCD staff next week to discuss how we will be incorporating Don’s time to assist with the planning administration and coordination. I am hopeful that this process will start in earnest soon.
- **Long Prairie Watershed** – Progress continues to be made to request the WBIF grant dollars for this watershed. The next meeting is scheduled for February 3rd.
- **Other Watersheds** –Don continues to be involved with the Chippewa, Pomme de Terre, Buffalo-Red, and Mustinka/Bois de Sioux Watersheds.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – The 2023 Winter Irrigation and Nutrient Management producer workshop is scheduled for March 2nd and will be held in New York Mills. Staff are working on finalizing the agenda.
- **Shoreland Program** –Liz and Pete continue to work on project designs and cost-estimates. We are working with the shared engineering staff to develop guidelines and cost-share policies for rock rip rap projects. We have several of these projects in the process. Liz will be presenting on native gardens/and shorelines at the EOT Horticulture Days. This event is on Saturday March 18th.
- **Cover Crop Grant** – The cover crop program participant winter meeting was held last week. We had a good turnout with a lot of positive feedback on the program. 19 of the 22 program participants were present at the meeting. We have some funding left in this grant for a field day in 2023. The Stelling Brothers presented on their soil health efforts and promoted the Soil Health Coalition.

- **Wetland Conservation Act** – Staff are working on year-end reports.
- **Feedlots** – Mitch completed the re-registration process for 19 sites. The next re-registration cycle will be in 2025. He is working on completing the year-end report.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Alyson proctored two pesticide tests. 4 staff members will be attending the annual County Ag Inspector training that will be held in St. Paul in February. This training focuses on staff that are new to the County Ag Inspecting Program. Staff continue to work with the Townships to get their annual reports and will be working on scheduling our annual spring Township Ag Inspector meetings.
- **A.I.S.** – Alyson submitted the Wadena County AIS prevention plan to the DNR and has attended a few AIS detectors webinars.
- **Education and Outreach** – We continue to post on our social media accounts including promoting our local Facebook photo contests. Several staff are working on story maps for specific projects. Staff are also working on the 2022 year in review documents soon. We did a direct mailing to 190 producers who are involved with the MAWQCP to inform them of the MDA Soil Health Equipment Grant. Nathan and I presented Doug Salo with his MASWCD Teacher of the Year Award last Friday.
- **Otter Tail River Dam Modification Projects** – The most recent update has the projects being postponed until later in the winter. I am working with HEI staff to get a better handle on the timeline. Evidently the bid winning contract does not have access to enough rock to get the projects started.
- **Administration** – On top of the normal day to day administrative tasks, Chantal and Kristi continue to refine the process of updating grants in eLINK monthly for both SWCDs. Chantal and I continue working on an updated timesheet that will help staff with tracking their time allocated to various grants better. We are also working on finalizing the eLINK reports before the Feb. 1st deadline. Chantal has been working on the year-end items, W-2's, 1099s and all things grant related.
- **Other** – Don, Chris LeClaire, Wes Drake, DNR staff & I attended a meeting of some concerned landowners along the Otter's Tail on Otter Tail Lake. The Otter Tail River channel through there has filled in and the property owners are having issues with boat passage. There are several ideas and groups of landowners with differing thoughts on what should be done to resolve the issue. Chris LeClaire and I volunteered to facilitate some meetings with the landowners to work towards a shared vision for a solution to the problem.

- **Training and Meetings** – In the last month several staff attended the Soil Health Summit in St Cloud, WASCOB Training, Basic Hydrology Training, Conservation Planning, MAWQCP training. Mitchell passed the Part 107 certification test for flying the drone. Nathan attended the Regional NACD meeting in Bloomington.
- **Staff/Focus Teams** – After the training we took at the state convention we have set up several staff teams to work together on specific goals. These have just been developed and these teams will be having their initial meetings in the next few weeks. The goal is to get better communication, for staff to have a better understanding of their role in work plans, more efficient and effective use of our time, to make sure we are accomplishing the goals in our various workplans, and to hold each other accountable for work items. The staff all seem to be willing to participate fully.