



Minutes from the January 22, 2024, 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 Bruce Juntunen at 7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Chair: Bruce Juntunen
Vice Chair: Tom Schulz
Public Relations: Jerry Kern

Members Absent: Secretary: Ken Berg
Treasurer: Brett Dailey

Others Present: County Commissioner: Murlyn Kreklau
NRCS District Conservationist: Ivan Reinke
District Manager: Darren Newville
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
Education & Outreach Admin: Kristi Rorah

Oath of Office: not required

Re-organization: Chair, no change; Vice Chair, no change; Secretary, no change; Treasurer, no change; Public Relations, no change. Committee Members: Crow Wing Policy, Jerry Kern added as alternate; Long Prairie Policy, Bruce Juntunen added as alternate; remaining committees, no change. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern, to adopt the re-organization changes. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Adopt Agenda: Added Always There Staffing contract and discussion of compost bins to agenda. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to adopt the agenda with additions. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Approve Board Meeting Minutes: Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve last month's Board Meeting Minutes. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Bills Paid and Bills Payable: Tom Schulz noted that Forestry Association dues changed to \$265.00 this year from \$75.00. Motion made by Jerry Kern, second by Tom Schulz to approve the Bills Paid and Bills Payable as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Cost Share: C22-7830-01; Flanagan, Steve; Authorization to encumber funds for prescribed grazing, with a total cost of \$3,099.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$2,324.25 or 75%, whichever is less in Leaf River Township, section 2. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve the cost share contract. Opposed: none, motion carried.

District Manager's Report: Read by Darren Newville.

The Wadena Soil & Water Conservation District seeks to achieve and maintain the highest quality and quantity of natural resources possible through wise stewardship for now and the future of human and financial means available.

An Equal Opportunity Employer
Approved 1/22/2024



NRCS District Conservationist's Report: Presented by Ivan Reinke

- EQIP – worked on ranking and submitting application from signup 1, receiving new applications for sign up too, irrigation has been the primary
- CSP – finished up payments for last year, new application signup was through Jan 12. Working through screening those now.
- RCPP – waiting on some producers to bring in invoices
- Crow Wing Basin winter workshop coming up February 2, 2024.

County Commissioner's Report: Presented by Murlyn Kreklau

- County's Lessard-Sams funding request approved
- County highway garages are being looked at for improvement/updates.
- County looking at proposal for a well near Sebeka for use by the fire department, possibly with cooperation with the dnr as an option, cost would be approximately \$80k
- County ditches continue to be controversial, discussion regarding responsibilities is ongoing
- Discussed official County newspaper

Other Agency Reports: No other agencies present.

Forestry Update: Presented by Tom Schulz

- Dues increased for 2024 to help cover staff time
- Discussed concerns of private forestry consultants regarding losing business to SWCDs when the SWCDs write forestry plans, Tom shared charts showing private consultants do the majority of forestry plans

Water Plan/Watershed Plan: Policy committee meetings are coming up for the Crow Wing and the Redeye plans.

TSA 8 Report: Starting to invoice the TSA for engineering services, no upcoming meetings

Meetings/Trainings: Crow Wing Policy, Jan 24; Redeye Policy, March 11; Legislative Days, March 12-13; State Manager's meeting in Baxter, March 26-27. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve registration of staff attending Legislative Days. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Staffing Update:

- Decision was discussed by personnel committee and made to offer Liz's position to Pete to streamline the hiring process. There will be a position restructuring for Pete and Michell's positions. Two open positions are currently being advertised for.
- Darren is working with partners to put together a budget for a soil health specialist position.
- Always There Staffing contract for AIS inspection staff; Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve the contract. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Mileage rate: The federal mileage rate increased from \$0.655 to \$0.67 for this year.

Per Diem rate: Per diem is currently \$125.00, which is the maximum allowed. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve the current per diem of \$125.00. Opposed: none, motion carried.

The Wadena Soil & Water Conservation District seeks to achieve and maintain the highest quality and quantity of natural resources possible through wise stewardship for now and the future of human and financial means available.



Official Newspaper: County adopted the Sebeka Review-Messenger, SWCD has followed the County in the past in regard to official newspaper. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to adopt the Sebeka Review-Messenger as the official newspaper of the Wadena SWCD. Opposed; none, motion carried.

Official Financial Institution: Have been advised by Peterson that the official financial institution should be re-approved each year. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve Bremer Bank as the official financial institution of the Wadena SWCD. Opposed; none, motion carried.

Peterson Engagement Letter: has not been received as of the date of this meeting, will defer

Public Comments: Tom presented info on compost bins, discussion followed regarding cost/logistics.

Discussed remote meeting attendance. In addition to the remote attendee being required to have audio/video, the in-person meeting must have audio/video. SWCD will need to invest in equipment to facilitate remote attendance. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to authorize the purchase of equipment necessary to facilitate remote meeting attendance. Opposed; none, motion carried.

Meeting Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 8:48 a.m.

District Managers Report
January 2024
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. As of the morning of 1/16 we had received 256 orders for over 36,300 trees. 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 is working on 1 more. We have contracts in place with the DNR to purchase new tree planters for both SWCDs through the LCCMR Forestry Pilot project. Tanner is working on getting them ordered. We hope to have them available for the 2024 planting season. Anne will be organizing and holding another Local Forestry Team meeting in the next month or so.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** –Tanner continues working with landowners on plans and ordering seed for 2024.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue to work on RIM easement workload. The Nolte easement has been recorded and sent to BWSR's for payment. We have not received notice of a payment yet. Anne also submitted the application for the Crow Wing RIM and is still waiting to hear if it has been funded.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work on the process of completing assessments to get farms certified. Staff also contacted 35-40 producers to discuss the MAWQCP RCPP sign-up. They provided 16 affidavits and associated information to NRCS for those producers who signed up. They took several inquiries from new producers interested in the program.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – Mitch has received the harvest data back from the NMI plots and is working with MDA to get it evaluated.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – Mitchell continues to work with the producers who have received funding on documentation for completed projects. We have an all-partners meeting scheduled for February 6th to discuss a future application. We will need to decide to ask for a renewal of if we will submit a whole new application. There are pros and cons to each scenario. I am still working on getting the invoicing information for the Tech Assistance funding. I have asked Mitchell to reach out to the SWCD that have state funding commitments to see how it is going and we will be looking at how to get the rest of the funding allocated.
- **MDA Groundwater Grant** – We continue to follow the workplan for this grant.

- **Red Eye Watershed** – Partnering LGU’s continue to work on implementing the work plan. We worked with Pete Waller to adjust the eLINK work plan on the initial WBIF grant to match what the funding has been spent on. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be meeting on February 13th to discuss the budget for the next WBIF application that will be submitted this spring. We are planning a Policy Committee meeting on March 11th. Nicole has been working on inputting completed project information into the plan tacking tool that was developed by HEI.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – Partnering LGU’s continue to work on implementing the work plan. We submitted a request for supplemental WBIF funds on behalf of the watershed implementation team. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be meeting on February 8th to discuss the budget for the next WBIF application that will be submitted this spring. We are planning a Policy Committee meeting for February 22nd. Nicole has been working on inputting completed project information into the plan tacking tool that was developed by HEI.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – We continue participating in the 1W1P planning process for the Crow Wing Watershed. Things are going smoothly. There is a Policy Committee meeting scheduled for January 24th. We hope to have a completed plan by the end of the year.
- **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.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – The 2024 Winter Irrigation and Nutrient Management producer workshop is scheduled for March 5th. It will be held at Thumper Pond in Ottertail. Staff are working on finalizing the agenda. We will be focusing on getting the producers signed up for the 2024 growing season.
- **Shoreland Program** –Staff continue to work on project designs and cost-estimates. We submitted the application for a Conservation Corps Crew assistance for the summer of 2024. We are arranging a check-in meeting with the staff from WOT. With several staffing changes between the two SWCDs we just want to make sure we are on the same page.
- **Wetland Conservation Act** – Staff are working on year-end reports. We continue to get a few calls on WCA issues in each office. The Wadena office is working with the County on some concerns with a Judicial Ditch in Leaf River Township. This is more a Public Drainage Authority issue than it is a WCA issue.

- **Feedlots** – Staff will be working on the 2023 reporting soon. MPCA staff has changed over the last few months and the Wadena office is waiting to find out who they will be working with.
- **County Ag Inspector** – We are slowly getting the 2023 Township and City Annual Reports returned to our offices. Staff will be planning for the 2024 Annual Local Weed inspector meetings soon.
- **Education and Outreach** – We continue to post on our social media accounts. Staff will begin working on the 2023 year in review documents soon.
- **Administration** – On top of the normal day to day administrative tasks, Chantal and Kristi continue 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.