



### Minutes from the March 18, 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  
Treasurer: Brett Dailey  
Secretary: Ken Berg  
Public Relations: Jerry Kern

**Others Present:**

NRCS District Conservationist: Ivan Reinke  
District Manager: Darren Newville  
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski  
Administrative Secretary: Chantal Tougas  
UofM Extension: Olivia Olson

**Adopt Agenda:** Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Ken Berg to adopt the agenda as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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

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

**Bills Paid and Bills Payable:** Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Brett Dailey to approve the Bills Paid and Bills Payable as presented. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**COST SHARE:**

**Redeye WBIF Cost Share C21-3238:**

**8-C21-3238-01;** Tuinstra, Mike; Authorization to encumber funds for irrigation water management. This is a three-year flat rate contract of \$500/year; cost share payment not to exceed \$500/year for a total of \$1,500 in Aldrich Township, section 3. (\$431.70 will be used from C21-3238 and \$1,068.30 will be used from C22-7830.) Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Jerry Kern to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**8-C21-3238-02;** Perius Farm; Authorization to encumber funds for a cover crop planting on 168 acres. This is a one-year flat rate/acre contract of \$25/acre; cost share payment not to exceed \$4,200 in Aldrich Township, section 20. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Jerry Kern to approve. Opposed none, motion carried.

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**State Cost Share P22-5742:**

**02-P22-6162;** Berg, Ken; Authorization to encumber funds for a waste facility closure, with a total cost of \$9,500.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$7,125.00 or 75%, whichever is less in Thomastown Township, section 34. Motion made by Tome Schulz, second by Brett Dailey to approve. Opposed none, motion carried. *(Please note that Ken Berg abstained from voting)*

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

**NRCS District Conservationist's Report:** Presented by Ivan Reinke

- EQIP– Working on the QAR process with pre-approvals. Gathering required signatures. New applications are still coming in and 2 are signed up. Working through planning. There is no deadline yet. Local work groups need to be held before July 12, 2024.
- CSP – New application screening has 10 applications ranked as high and they are in the planning process. Several of these applicants have already been interviewed.
- Attended: Irrigation Conference on March 5<sup>th</sup> as well as West Central Landscape Committee on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

**County Commissioner's Report:** A new administrator has been hired, C.J. Holl. Meeting being held today with SWCD and County Commissioners from Wadena and Ottertail County regarding ditch issues.

**Other Agency Reports:** UofM Extension – Olivia Olson gave a report.

**Forestry Update:** Presented by Tom Schulz

- The last meeting was online and quite hurried.
- Association doesn't see the need to hire a Forester as the SWCD's already have staff.
- The next meeting will be on Thursday.

**TSA 8 Report:** There was a short meeting held at the Area VIII meeting. Reimbursements were discussed. GIS & IT staff are still employed. Officers were re-elected for the next term.

**Meetings/Trainings:** none.

**Climate Smart Agriculture Grant Application:** Darren updated the board that a joint application was submitted for the EOT/Wadena SWCDs. This grant would cover staff time to promote and provide technical assistance for the project. This is a larger 4 state pilot project that if funded, would make our producers eligible for \$100/acre payment up to 160 acres. This is for Climate Smart practices and funding is through USDA.

**Staffing Update:** Marcie Peeters will be starting on April 8, 2024, and Peter Hendrickx will start in June. We will be advertising for a Conservation Corps intern for this summer.

**Public Comments:** none.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Meeting adjourned at 8:37 a.m.

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**District Managers Report**  
**March 2024**  
**Submitted by Darren Newville**

- **Tree Program** – We continue to take orders for the conservation tree program. As of 2/29 we received 388 orders for almost 56,200 trees. A lot of species are sold out. We have about 3,800 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 13 custom tree planting projects lined up for this spring. In total we will be planting about 16,000 trees. He has one site lined up for site prep with the roto tiller on 5 acres. Tanner is working with the nurseries to determine when we will be receiving and distributing our trees.
- **Forest Stewardship** –Anne has taken several calls on taxes, and she continues to refer them to the county assessor’s office. Anne assisted with the planning for a MFRC West Central Landscape Committee and Local Forestry Team meetings held last week.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** –Tanner continues working with landowners on plans and ordering seed for 2024. He currently has 13 orders for native grass seed for 107.6 acres. He also has 4 sites lined up for custom planting for 75 acres. He is starting to get calls on scheduling the rental drill.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue to work on RIM easement workload.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work with several producers on the process of completing assessments to get farms certified. MAWQCP staff assisted with promoting the U of M Minnesota Irrigation Program. Jim continues to coordinate those staff efforts.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – Mitch continues to support MDA on these projects. He will be working on weather station maintenance next month. We are having conversations with MDA staff about transferring the responsibility of these weather stations to them soon as they develop their statewide network.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We held an all-partners meeting in February to discuss a future application. There was strong support for submitting another application for future funding, with several new potential partners in attendance. We are working with partners to collect letters of commitment and will be assisting with submittal of the proposal. It looks like there will be several new partners joining us for the new proposal.
- **MDA Groundwater Grant** – We continue to follow the workplan for this grant doing education and outreach on groundwater issues.

- **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 working with BWSR on the reconciliation process to make that happen. We have no idea what that timeline will be.

The Policy Committee met on March 11<sup>th</sup>. 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 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.
- **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.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – Partnering LGU’s continue to work on implementing the work plan. The watershed did receive some of the supplemental funding that we requested, and we are waiting for the grant agreement amendment from BWSR.

We have a Policy Committee meeting planned for March 28<sup>th</sup> which will be held in Ottertail. Nicole is working on compiling information on the projects that have been completed and how those projects are helping us make progress on the goals in our plan to share at that meeting. We will be asking the Policy Committee to approve the draft budget and workplan the TAC put together for the FY25/26 round of WBIF funding.

- **Crow Wing Watershed** – We continue participating in the 1W1P planning process for the Crow Wing Watershed. Things are going smoothly. The Policy Committee met on January 24<sup>th</sup> and approved the draft Land & Water Resources Narrative, & Priority Issue sections of the plan. The TAC met on March 6<sup>th</sup> and discussed measurable goals for the watershed. There was a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) held on March 11<sup>th</sup>. The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for March 27<sup>th</sup>.
- **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 will be hosting 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 5<sup>th</sup>, 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. 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.
- **Wetland Conservation Act** –With the unseasonable and dry weather we are seeing an uptick on calls about WCA related issues in both offices. Staff are responding to them as they come in. There are a few potential WCA violations that we will be addressing in the next few months.
- **Feedlots** – Staff completed the 2023 reporting and met with MPCA for the annual review. We have interest in several Ag Waste Pit Closures projects. We will work with those landowners on finding funding sources as they become available.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Staff will be hosting the 2024 Annual Local Weed inspector meetings in the next few weeks. These meetings are designed to provide updates to our local Township weed inspectors on the program and get them any new information we have.
- **Extension Educator** – Olivia continues to work on building contacts and relationships with local partners and clients. She assisted with the planning and implementation of the EOT Horticulture Days held on March 16<sup>th</sup>. She is also assisting with the planning and implementation of our education and outreach efforts.

- **Education and Outreach** – We continue to post on our social media accounts. Staff are finalized and printed the 2023 year in review documents for each SWCD. Pete attended the Perham High School Career Days, and Mitchell and Pete presented at Doug Salo’s class in New York Mills. Pete presented at the EOT Horticulture Days last weekend.
- **Administration** – We continue to work on the important day to day administration and management of the SWCDs.