



Minutes from the April 15, 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 7:29 a.m.

Members Present:
Chair: Bruce Juntunen
Vice Chair: Tom Schulz
Treasurer: Brett Dailey
Secretary: Ken Berg
Public Relations: Jerry Kern

Others Present:
NRCS Team Lead: Josh Hanson
NRCS District Conservationist: Ivan Reinke
District Manager: Darren Newville
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
Administrative Secretary: Chantal Tougas
Ed & Outreach Coordinator: Kristi Rorah
Riparian Conservation Planner: Marcie Peeters

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

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

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

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

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

LCCMR Cost Share P23-2944:

09-2023; Soderholm, Andrew; is requesting payment for his forest stewardship plan, with a total cost of \$1,200.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$900.00 or 75%, whichever is less in North Germany Township, section 36. (Consultant written plan, 80 acres) Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Ken Berg to approve. 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.

An Equal Opportunity Employer
Approved 5/20/2024



Local Capacity Cost Share P22-6162:

8-P22-6162-02; Malone, Bruce; is requesting financial assistance for an ag waste pit closure, with a total cost estimate of \$6,000.00, cost share not to exceed \$4,500.00 or 75%, whichever is less in Aldrich Township, section 28. \$618.05 will come from P22-5742 State Cost Share (to use that fund up) and the balance will come from P22-6162. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Brett Dailey to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

County Commissioner's Report: not present

District Manager's Report: presented by Darren Newville

NRCS District Conservationist's Report: Presented by Ivan Reinke

- EQIP– Working on the QAR process with pre-approvals. Gathering required signatures. More funds will be coming to the state. New applications still coming in. Working through planning, no deadline currently. Local Work Group meeting today after the SWCD Board meeting.
- CTA – Plenty of new interest in projects. Grazing, Irrigation, Tree Plantings, Pollinator Habitat, Etc.
- CSP – Ranking the applications. Friday was the deadline.
- Attended: Cover Crop Café Chat on March 22, 2024. Also attended the Forage Council meeting on March 22, 2024.
- Coming up – Pasture Walk May 23, 2024 @ Erick Blaha Farm and Area NE NRCS meeting on May 29-30, 2024 in Grand Rapids.

Other Agency Reports: none present

Forestry Update: nothing to report at this time

TSA 8 Report: Districts are in the process of submitting their invoices for staff time for reimbursement.

Meetings/Trainings: none.

Tumblers: Motion made by Jerry Kern, second by Brett Daily to approve the purchase of Tumblers with the District and MAWQCP logos. Opposed: none, motion carried.

Public Comments: none.

Meeting Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 8:33 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.