



Minutes from the June 19, 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 Bruce Juntunen at 7:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Chair: Bruce Juntunen
Vice Chair: Tom Schulz
Secretary: Ken Berg
Public Relations: Jerry Kern

Others Present:

County Commissioner: Murlyn Kreklau
NRCS District Conservationist: Ivan Reinke
District Manager: Darren Newville
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski
EOT SWCD Board Liaison: Bruce Albright
Education, Outreach, & Admin Asst: Kristi Rorah

Members Absent:

Treasurer: Brett Dailey

Adopt Agenda: Added producer scholarship for soil health summit under #13 Meetings. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Ken Berg to adopt the agenda with addition. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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

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

Cost Share

RE WBIF Cost Share:

2022-RE03; Doug's Place LLC; Authorization to amend cost share amount for a forest stewardship plan. The original cost estimate was \$1,857 and final cost was \$1,886.70. The cost share encumbered would change from \$1,392.75 to \$1,415.03. In Leaf River Township, section 24 and Wing River Township, section 19. Motion made by Jerry Kern, second by Tom Schulz to approve contract amendment. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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2022-RE03; Doug's Place LLC; Authorization to approve payment for a Forest Stewardship Plan, with total cost of \$1,886.70, cost share payment not to exceed \$1,415.03 or 75%, whichever is less in Leaf River Township, section 24 and Wing River Township, section 19. (consultant written, 176 acres) Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

2023-RE02; Randy and Nicole Jahnke; Authorization to approve payment for a Windbreak Plan, with total cost of \$296.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$222.00 or 75%, whichever is less in Aldrich township, section 11.

County Commissioner's Report: The county is beginning the budget process. There were an unusually high number of tax abatements in the county.

District Manager's Report: Presented by Darren Newville.

NRCS District Conservationist's Report: Presented by Ivan Reinke

- CSP – 3 applications have been approved.
- Have been working on certifying practices and writing new plans.

Other Agency Reports: Presented by Bruce Albright. EOT SWCD board meeting is Wednesday.

Forestry Update: Presented by Tom Schulz

- Tom and Anne attended the forestry association meeting. Use of tree tubes and NRCS forestry programs were discussed at the meeting.

TSA 8 Report: Presented by Tom Schulz

- All TSA equipment has been sold. Former employee has accepted new employment so there was just one month of unemployment paid out.

Meetings/Trainings:

- MACAI Short Course: Cost will be \$420/person including registration and hotel for two nights. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Jerry Kern to approve employee attendance of CAI Short Course. Opposed: none, motion carried.
- NACD Summer Meeting will be July 15-19 in Bismarck ND if any supervisors are interested in attending.
- Irrigation Technical Training will be July 17-18 in Staples. Since it is close, there will not be a cost to attend.
- MASWCD Leadership Training: Cost is \$5800/person, all inclusive. No staff would be going, this is open for supervisors. Darren suggested attending to Jerry, who may be interested and will check his schedule. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Ken Berg to approve supervisor attending the MASWCD Leadership Training. Opposed: none, motion carried.
- Soil Health Summit: In the past producer scholarships have been provided to cover registration costs for several producers. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Tom Schulz to approve providing five producer scholarships for the Soil Health Summit. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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Lakes Country Service Cooperative – Service renewal agreement

Motion made by Jerry Kern, second by Ken Berg to approve Darren signing the service renewal agreement.

Opposed: none, motion carried.

MASWCD Resolutions: Mille Lacs SWCD Resolution for Forestland Protection

- The board had previously voted to support the resolution. The resolution was updated/modified.
- Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Ken Berg to support updated resolution. Opposed: none, motion carried.

2023 Legislative Update:

- SWCDs will be receiving direct payments from the Department of Revenue
- This will allow more flexibility with funds, less reporting
- More one-time funding for soil health will be available
- There will be \$3 million in state incentives for people to enroll in CRP

Public Comments: Area 8 meeting will be Friday 6/23. Anne, Tom, Ken, Bruce, and Jerry plan to attend as well as Ivan.

Meeting Adjourned: Motion made at 8:42 a.m. by Jerry Kern, second by Ken Berg to adjourn. Opposed: none, motion carried.

District Managers Report
June 19, 2023
Submitted by Darren Newville

- **Tree Program** – The 2023 Tree Program wrapped up in May. We sold over 51,000 trees with 380 orders. Staff planted around 23,000 trees for 14 landowners and laid 1,100 ft of tree fabric.
- **Forest Stewardship** – Anne has been delivering binders to landowners. She and Tom attend the Forestry Assoc. meeting in McGregor. She has also had conversations with the Conservation Fund Committee and the Northern Waters Land Trust on the development of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund Application.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** – Tanner worked with 27 landowners to place seed orders for around 200 acres. He also started seeding in late May and is wrapping the seeding up this week. The rental drill has been very busy. Staff continue to do maintenance on the equipment. There have been a few issues with the tractor again. We will be having an equipment committee meeting later this summer to discuss options.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – The Eagle Point Partnership Easement document was signed and is being recorded. Now that the spring busy season is coming to an end staff will be focusing on the work for our CRP contribution agreement.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work on the MAWQCP assessment, certifications, endorsements, and cost-share. Jim, Alyson, Ken Berg, and I attended the certification celebration event at R.D. Offutt’s Twin Rivers Seed Farm in Staples. The Commissioner of Ag and several state legislators were in attendance. Jim has taken time to meet with all the staff and MDA staff to be brought back up to speed after his extended leave. Alyson has written and sent off two news releases on certified farms.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** – We have signed the agreement amendment to provide more funding and time. Nathan has worked with 6 producers and three agronomists to get 6 NMI plots installed.
- **MDA Central Sands** – Kits were mailed out to participants the first week of May with a deadline to return to RMB Lab by May 31. Anne continues to keep in contact with the lab.
- **AgBMP Loan Program** – Both offices are answering questions from landowners and lenders on the program and application process.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We continue to work with the partners on this project. There are some frustrations with NRCS and changing requirements. The committee has planned and scheduled a technical training session on July 17-18 to be held at the CLC Staples campus.
- **MDH Groundwater Grant** – Our grant application for an additional \$50,000 in funding for staff time and nitrate clinics was approved. Don is working on planning Nitrate Testing Clinics.
- **Red Eye Watershed** – Staff continue to work with landowners to plan and install projects, plan for the culvert and feedlot inventory and plan for an education and outreach effort for

livestock producers in the Bluff/Oak Creek 319 project area. Don and Alyson are also conducting the SWAG monitoring as scheduled.

We will be reviewing the WBIF funding at the next Technical Advisory Committee meeting and will likely be asking BWSR for a budget amendment and a 1-year extension.

LCCMR Forestry Pilot Program – The local forestry team members in Long Prairie and Redeye discussed workplan activities. Don has completed a service provider directory and I think there has been a forest plan writer workshop scheduled.

- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – The initial planning grant expires on June 30th, and we are working to wrap that up. Houston Engineering has developed an Implementation Tracking spreadsheet that will help us track our progress. Partners are encumbering the WBIF grant funds for projects in the watershed.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – The first Policy and Technical Advisory Committee meetings have been held. There will be public kickoff/input meetings held in Nisswa on June 27th and Park Rapids on June 28th. If you have ideas on potential citizen advisory committee members, please let us know. The group also held the 1st of a few Forest Landscape Stewardship Plan technical meetings.
- **Long Prairie Watershed** – They are also working with Houston Engineering on a tracking tool, and they continue to review project requests.
- **Other Watersheds** – Don continues to be involved with the Chippewa, Pomme de Terre, Buffalo-Red, and Mustinka/Bois de Sioux Watersheds, discussing quarterly work and implementation.
- **Irrigation Scheduling Program** – Staff have the rain gauges out and have been running routes for about three weeks covering 72 fields.
- **Shoreland Program** – Liz and Pete continue to do designs and work with landowners interested in projects. They had the Conservation Corps crew here last week to help with installations. Joint engineering staff assisted with construction of a project on Little Pine Lake.
- **Cover Crop Grant** – Staff continue planning for the Soil Health Field Day that will be held August 8 near Deer Creek. A flyer has been distributed to our local Coops as they have agreed to send them out with their monthly statement mailings. Staff visited some cover crop sites to see how they fared during the winter and took photos. These photos were provided to the U of MN. Drone footage was filmed on some sites.
- **Buffer Law** – Both SWCDs are working on their annual buffer compliance reviews. Seven letters of non-compliance have been sent in EOT. 3 of the 7 have already contacted the office and will be getting back into compliance. Staff assist with flagging two sites with the landowners. Wadena staff did site visits on 5 sites of concern, and all were found to be complying.

- **Wetland Conservation Act** – Staff continue to take calls and make site visits as needed. There is one potential violation in SE Otter Tail County that needs more investigation.
- **Feedlots** – Mitch is continuing to work with a Wadena County producer and MPCA to increase the number of animal units on the site. He is waiting for a manure management plan.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Alyson proctored 3 pesticide tests. We are starting to take and respond to complaints about weeds, mostly for leafy spurge. We will continue to work with the township weed inspector and county Hwy Depts on these complaints.
- **Engineering Assistance** – Our joint engineering staff have visited sites in both SWCDs over the past month to do inventory and evaluation as well as some surveying. They are also providing support for construction inspections as needed.
- **Extension Educator Position** – All the agreements and approvals are in place and the position has been posted. Anne and I will be serving on the search committee along with reps from Otter Tail County and the U of M. We hope to have someone in the position by the end of July or early August.
- **Education and Outreach** – Staff assisted with the State Envirothon event. We also met with Dain Erickson, Red Canoe Cre8tive, to see what he has already created and discuss outreach ideas. We have also been focusing on getting more photos and videos for use for our education and outreach efforts. I presented to the Perham Lions Club what SWCDs are and what we do.
- **The Otter's Tail** – Darren assisted Chris LeClair, OTC, with facilitating a group discussion about the perceived issues landowners are having with the channel. This will be an ongoing discussion with 3 more meetings planned over the summer. The main issues identified at the meeting were the issue of boat navigation during low water, boar navigation issues due to weed growth and a perceived water quality issue in the late summer when flow is reduced. There were also a lot of questions about the dam modifications. I provided an impromptu presentation for those that were interested at the end of the meeting.
- **Administration** – We continue to work on the process of tracking all our grants and agreement financial information. Kristi is inputting project information into eLINK.
- **Training and Meetings** – Staff continue to take training courses as needed to develop their JAA. There will be more training on the calendar in the next few months.
- **Staff/Focus Teams** – The staff focus teams continue to meet and we have implemented some of those suggestions coming from these teams.