



### **Minutes from the August 21, 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 7:31 a.m.*

**Members Present:** Chair: Bruce Juntunen  
Vice Chair: Tom Schulz  
Secretary: Ken Berg  
Treasurer: Brett Dailey

**Members Absent:** Public Relations: Jerry Kern

**Others Present:** County Commissioner: Murlyn Kreklau  
NRCS Team Lead: Josh Hanson  
NRCS District Conservationist: Ivan Reinke  
District Manager: Darren Newville  
Assistant District Manager: Anne Oldakowski  
Administrative Secretary: Chantal Tougas

**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 Brett Dailey, second by Tom Schulz to approve last month's Board Meeting Minutes. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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

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

#### COST SHARE

#### **Soil Health Cost Share P23-2744:**

P23-2744-01; Derek, Harrison; Authorization to approve payment for his field windbreaks, with a total cost of \$954.00, cost-share not to exceed \$715.50 or 75%, whichever is less in Orton Township, section 30. Motion made by Bruce Juntunen, second by Tom Schulz to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

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#### **LCCMR Cost Share P23-2944:**

01-2023; Cottrell, Clesson; Authorization to approve payment for a forest stewardship plan, with a total cost of \$1,020.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$765.00 or 75%, whichever is less in Bullard Township, section 9. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Ken Berg to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

03-2023; Brejcha, Brad & April; Authorization to encumber funds for a forest stewardship plan, with a total cost of \$1,254.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$940.50 or 75%, whichever is less in Aldrich Township, sections 11 & 15. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Brett Dailey to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

04-2023; Gilligan, Ryan; Authorization to encumber funds for a forest stewardship plan, with a total cost of \$993.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$744.75 or 75%, whichever is less in Bullard Township, section 7. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Tom Schulz to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

05-2023; Anderson, Roger; Authorization to encumber funds for a forest stewardship plan, with a total cost of \$1,900.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$1,425.00 or 75%, whichever is less in Bullard Township, section 17. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Brett Dailey to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

06-2023; Schouveller, Keith & Jan; Authorization to encumber funds for a forest stewardship plan, with a total cost of \$1,320.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$990.00 or 75%, whichever is less in Wing River Township, section 14. Motion made by Brett Dailey, second by Tom Schulz to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

#### **Redeye WBIF Cost Share C21-3238 (EOT):**

2023-RE03; Schulz, Tom; Authorization to encumber funds for components of a grazing system (heavy use protection, watering facility), with a total cost of \$3,722.00, cost share payment not to exceed \$2,791.50 or 75%, whichever is less in North Germany Township, sections 5 & 6. Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Brett Dailey to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried. *(Note: Tom Schulz abstained from voting)*

#### **DC 2021 Cost Share P21-2762:**

DC 2018-02; Meech, Reese; authorization to amend funds for cover crops. This was originally a three-year contract for a single species total flat rate in the amount of \$7,200 (\$15/acre for 160 acres) in Orton Township, possible sections 14,15,16,21,22,25, & 36 and Lyons Township section 2. He was paid for the 1<sup>st</sup> year in 2022. He would like to switch to a multi-species flat rate of \$6,400 (\$20/acre for 160 acres) for the other 2 years. Motion made by Bruce Juntunen, second by Tom Schulz to approve. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**County Commissioner's Report:** A housing tax abatement policy was drafted and should be finalized this fall. There is a 5-year construction plan for maintaining roads and it started this year. The County website has a list of those roads.

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

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

- EQIP – There are new applications coming in. October 6, 2023, is the cutoff date for signups. Management may be increased to 5 years. Payment rates and caps are being adjusted.
- IRA – More funding will be coming under this allocation again this year.
- CSP – Starting to review contracts for 2023 payments.
- CRP plans were written for landowners enrolling in SIGN UP 59 and 60.
- Payments are being made on the EQIP, RCPP, and certifying CSP practices installed.
- Attended the following trainings: Livestock Water System Design, Pollinator and Grazing for Wildlife, and Ag Waste Closure hosted by EOT SWCD.
- Attended the Soil Health Field Day in Deer Creek.
- Personnel – Openings for a SCT and SC have been out, Wadena has an opening.
- Area NE meeting will be held September 19-20 in Grand Rapids.
- Working with Mitch Janson, SWCD to update JAA for engineering.

8:27 a.m. Murlyn left the meeting.

**Other Agency Reports:** None.

**Forestry Update:** The next meeting will be held in Grand Rapids. RCPP forestry applications are being submitted by DNR not BWSR. Need more details about the application. Motion made by Tom Schulz, second by Brett Dailey to write a letter of support for the forestry application. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**TSA 8 Report:** An audit is to be conducted by Peterson Company.

**Meetings/Trainings:** Tom Schulz will be attending the MFRC meeting tomorrow in New York Mills. Bruce will be attending the Otter Tail Tour as liaison on Sept. 11. The next Area 8 meeting and tour is scheduled for Oct 12-13.

**Tree Planter** – The DNR has indicated they will provide us funding for a new tree planter to rent out through the LCCMR grant. The plan is for the district to purchase the tree planter and DNR will reimburse us. We will also need to decide what to do with the old tree planter once we have the new one.

**Website Hosting:** Motion made by Ken Berg, second by Tom Schulz to approve using the same company that EOT SWCD uses for their website with estimate at \$3,000 plus annual update costs. Opposed: none, motion carried.

**Public Comments:** none.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Motion made at 8:58 a.m.

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**District Managers Report**  
**August 2023**  
**Submitted by Darren Newville**

- **Tree Program** – Staff continue to meet with landowners to provide technical assistance with potential projects for next year. We will be putting together our 2024 tree order numbers in the next month.
- **Forest Stewardship Planning:** Anne completed site inventories on two sites. She is working on cost share applications and has received phone calls from landowners to set up times in August to meet. Anne has also been working with Kylee Berger from DNR on setting a location and date for our initial kick off meeting for the rejuvenated West Central Landscape Committee in New York Mills on August 22.
- **Drill Rental/Custom Seeding/Seed Sales** – The drill was rented to 3 landowners in July.
- **RIM/CREP/CRP** – Staff continue working on the CRP contribution agreement writing plans, doing site inspections, and certifying projects. Staff are also working with landowners on RIM applications at the various stages of the process and doing the required site inspections on easements that need them.
- **MAWQCP** – Staff continue to work with producers on the MAWQCP assessment, certifications, endorsements, and cost-share. Both SWCDs have been promoting the program on our social media accounts. Alyson is working with certified producers to present them with their signs and take pictures. We completed the quarterly report and invoice.
- **MDA NFMP/NMI Project** –Staff assisted MDA with the Perham LAT meeting held on August 20<sup>th</sup>. Nathan and I attended the meeting. With MDA expanding the weather network we will likely turn over the maintenance of our weather stations to them sometime in the next year. We completed and submitted the quarterly report and invoice.
- **MDA Central Sands** – After receiving the invoice from RMB Anne worked with Chantal to create and submit the invoice and report to MDA.
- **AgBMP Loan Program** – Both offices continue to take calls, answer questions, and aid landowners requesting information or loans.
- **Irrigation RCPP** – We continue to work with the partners on this project. The technical training session on July 17-18 was held at the CLC Staples campus. There was a good turnout with 41 people registered. Some of the projects are starting to get completed and need to be. We continue to work with MDA and NRCS to refine the reporting.
- **MDH Groundwater Grant** – Five nitrate testing clinics were held in July: WOT Fair on 7/20 (44 wells tested), EOT Fair on 7/21 (11 wells), Wadena SWCD on 7/25 (16 wells), Becker County Fair on 7/27 (18 wells) and Ottertail City on 7/31 (61 wells) for a total of 150 wells.
- **Red Eye Watershed** – There was no July TAC meeting. Staff began work on a culvert inventory, with MPCA grant funds, in the watershed and have developed outreach letters to promote conservation practices in the watershed. The letters will be mailed out in early to

mid-August. Staff also continue to organize a grazing workshop to target landowners in the Bluff/Oak watersheds. The next TAC met on August 8<sup>th</sup> and discussed distribution of funds not encumbered at this time.

- **SWAG** (Surface Water Assessment Grant) Don and Alyson have completed 5 rounds of water sampling at 8 locations in the Redeye River Watershed. Samples collected are analyzed for temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity, total suspended solids, and e coli bacteria. Lab reports from RMB show elevated e coli levels this spring at various locations.
- **LCCMR Tree Planting Pilot Program** Our local forestry team met on July 27<sup>th</sup>. Don presented a service provider directory and the capacity assessment to the group. This information will document what forestry work is getting done in the watersheds and help us plan for future needs. BWSR and DNR continue to work on education and outreach materials. The project partners will be working on sending out public outreach letters shortly. The next meeting will be held on October 26<sup>th</sup>. The EOT SWCD purchased the rototiller, and it has arrived. Tanner has done some experimenting with it.
- **Otter Tail River Watershed** – There was no July meeting. Staff have been working on developing outreach letters to promote conservation practices. The letters will be mailed out in early to mid-August. Discussions have also been taking place to explore the possibility of developing a GIS tool to help identify and manage impervious surfaces around priority lakes to help us reduce phosphorus loading. The TAC met on August 7<sup>th</sup>.
- **Crow Wing Watershed** – A tour of the Crow Wing River Watershed was held on July 26<sup>th</sup> with approximately 25 Policy Committee and Technical Advisory Committee Members attending. A draft copy of the issue statements was distributed to both committees during the tour. A TAC meeting was held on August 9<sup>th</sup> and the Policy committee will meet on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- **Long Prairie Watershed** – The Steering Committee met on July 7<sup>th</sup>. The partners reviewed the implementation tracking spreadsheet, planning grant budget, and project requests. They also met on August 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Policy Committee met on July 20<sup>th</sup>. Topics discussed included project updates and an update on Nelson Lake. The policy committee did not take an official position on the project and made a motion recommending that Otter Tail County work directly with local partners as the project develops.

- **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 continue to run weekly routes. Tanner and Pete have stepped in to assist as Nathan and Nicole are moving on to other positions. We will be pulling rain gauges and finishing up on the small grain fields with edible beans to follow.
- **Shoreland Program** – Staff installed 5 sites across Otter Tail County with the help of the CCM crew. They installed over 5,820 square feet of native grasses and forbs on 5 different lakes. They helped Otter Tail County install a native planting outside their office building. Liz & Pete have been making site visits to potential sites and will be starting on cost share site inspections in July. Liz is working with Chantal to finish the billing for the last few projects. Staff have also been involved in the monitoring of the construction of a few rip rap projects.
- **Cover Crop Grant** – The soil health field day was held on August 8<sup>th</sup> at the Ron Sakry Farm. We had about 65-70 people in. Staff did a great job organizing the event and making it happen. There were 4 different strip-till machines demonstrated at the event. This i
- **Feedlots** – Mitch has sent Inspection letters out. He is hoping to get all the inspections done in August. He has also been working with a TSP to wrap up Todd Meech's MMP and construction application so we can keep making progress so he can get his new building built.
- **County Ag Inspector** – Staff are responding to complaints about weeds. We will continue to work with the township weed inspector and county Hwy Depts on these complaints. Alyson proctored two pesticide tests.
- **Engineering Assistance** – Our joint engineering staff continue to help support us with projects needing engineering assistance. They put on a training on Ag waste pit closures on August 14<sup>th</sup>. Most of our technical staff attended the training.
- **Extension Educator Position** – After making an offer and several discussions with Sarah Chur our #1 candidate declined the offer. Sarah & I agreed that the other candidates that we interviewed did not have the background for the position, so it was decided to start the search over again. Sarah has been on vacation and will be contacting us soon with more details on the process for moving forward.
- **Education and Outreach** – Staff have started planning the Wadena SWCD Conservation Days. This event was put on hold for the COVID years, and we are working to reestablish it. We are working on putting together the sites for the September 11<sup>th</sup> tour for the EOT and WOT SWCD Boards, the County Board, and State Legislators. The EOT Breakfast on the Farm was held on August 5<sup>th</sup>, there were just shy of 1,200 people served. Liz and Pete will be presenting at the Stewart Lake Association meeting on August 12<sup>th</sup>. I will be presenting at the COLA meeting on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Liz and Pete are working with the COLA to put on a shoreland project tour that will be held on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Staff are also working on some target mailings for several different aspects of the 1W1Ps. We continue to use our social media accounts for effective outreach.
- **The Otter's Tail** –Chris LeClair, OTC, and I facilitated meetings for this group of citizens on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. The last meeting focused on coming to a group consensus on which

potential solutions they should further explore. I felt that this was a good process and hopefully the different groups can come together for the common interest of all parties.

- **Otter Tail Dam Modifications:** They are still working on the Big Pine dam project. I would say they are over halfway done at this point. Getting enough rock to the site in a timely fashion seems to be holding them up a little. Otherwise, the project is coming together nicely. The Perham paper did a story on it the week of August 9<sup>th</sup>.
- **Administration** – Staff continue to do the day-to-day tasks needed to keep the SWCDs running smoothly. Chantal and Kristi continue to work on the process of tracking all our grants and agreement financial information. Kristi is inputting project information into eLINK. Audits for both SWCDs were completed on July 24<sup>th</sup>. We submitted our annual county budget requests for both SWCDs.
- **Training and Meetings** – Staff continue to take training courses as needed to develop their JAA. Training attended includes the following topics: Irrigation, Plant Identification, Grazing for Wildlife, County Ag Inspector Short Course, Forage Production, & Ag Waste Pit Closures.
- **Staffing** – Nathan and Nicole have both moved on to new opportunities. Mitch Janson has been selected to replace Nathan as the Irrigation and Nutrient Management Specialist. We have posted Mitch’s position. Mitch will be maintaining his workload in Wadena through the transition. After discussions with the technical staff and personnel committee members we feel it is best to hold off for a few months and reevaluate our needs before posting Nicole’s position. I wish Nathan and Nicole the greatest success in their new roles and thank them for their time and efforts here.