

Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Board Meeting Minutes

June 24, 2003

Chaska River Inn Best Western

Chaska, MN

Attending: President Scott Hoese, Vice President Carol Berg, Area II Director Mary Ann Scharf, Area III Director Ted Lovdahl, Area IV Director Rick Hansen, Area V Director Steve Sunderland, Area VI Co-Director Loyal Fisher, , LeAnn Buck (MASWCD Staff), Sheila Vanney (MASWCD Staff). Others in attendance: Tom Radermacher, NRCS; Roland Cleveland, Chisago SWCD Supervisor & Area III Co-Director; John Jaschke and Al Kean, BWSR staff; Dwain Otte, Dakota SWCD Supervisor and BWSR Board Member; Felicia Brockoff, Carver SWCD staff.

Absent: Area VI Director Greg Roiger, Area VII Director Ralph Breuer.

1. **Call to Order** – President Hoese called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and led the board in the pledge of allegiance.
2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes** – Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Sunderland, to approve the agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Fisher, seconded by Hansen, to approve MASWCD April 22, 2003 board meeting minutes with amendment. Motion carried. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Fisher, to approve the May 14, 2003 board conference call minutes. Motion carried. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Fisher, to approve the June 11, 2003 board conference call minutes. Motion carried.
3. **President's Report – Scott Hoese**
 - a. Hoese attended the most recent meeting of the Lake Superior Association of SWCDs. He suggested to them that they support their representative to the NACD Great Lakes Committee, as opposed to it being funded by the Association, as it currently is.
 - b. Hoese noted that unless board members had any objections, MASWCD will be submitting payment for NACD North Central Region Dues, which is a budgeted item. Board members had no objections.
 - c. The situation with the four NACD Leadership staff positions has been changing daily, but the current word is that they will be funded through August 15. Christa Jones holds one of these positions and serves the NACD North Central Region out of Indiana. This means that there should be no problem with her attending the NACD North Central Region annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin.
 - d. The NACD North Central Region annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin will take place July 14-16, 2003. Hoese, Vanney, Sunderland, Hansen and possibly Lovdahl will be attending. The situation with the NACD budget, reorganization and staffing will be discussed at the meeting.
 - e. The next NACD Forestry Committee meeting will be held in Minnesota August 2-5, 2003. Hansen suggested Lovdahl work to get media involvement with the event.
 - f. Board members received a copy of a letter from NACD President Gary Mast regarding USDA field office closures. Hoese, Buck and Tom Radermacher provided board members with input on the issue. Nationwide, USDA plans to close 200 field offices as required by the federal Office of Management and Budget. In Minnesota, NRCS, FSA and RD will receive a number of offices they need to close and will need to work together to identify the locations of those offices. This is expected to take place over the next two to three years starting after October 1, 2003.
 - g. Board members received a listing of the board members for the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC). Hoese suggested that our board should do more outreach with the AMC board. In addition to setting up a meeting of our executive committees and staff, Area Directors are encouraged to invite AMC board members to Area meetings.

4. Finance Report – Scott Hoese

- a. Hoese noted that Roiger was unable to attend the meeting due to a leg injury. Hoese and Buck presented a dues update. Four SWCDs are currently not members due to non-payment of dues. One SWCD was officially granted a hardship waiver, and the board is still waiting to hear from Kanabec SWCD with regard to the Finance Committee's May letter, including a counter-proposal on their hardship request. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Sunderland, that MASWCD must receive payment from Kanabec by July 1st to remain a member in good-standing. Motion carried. The Policy Committee will meet later in the summer to develop recommendations to the board on how to deal with non-payment of dues.
- b. Hoese and Buck presented the monthly finance report. Board member discussion followed. Hoese accepted subject to annual review.
- c. Buck requested board input on a couple items relative to dues to other organizations. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Fisher, to approve payment of dues to the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association. Motion carried.

5. Executive Director's Report – LeAnn Buck

- a. Buck updated the board on the purchase of a laptop. Tom Radermacher provided input on the latest offer from NRCS to SWCDs for purchasing common computing environment (CCE) computers and software.
- b. Buck handed around the most recent Local Government Lobbying Expenditure Report prepared by the State Auditor, Patricia Awada. The report includes the lobbying expenditures of Minnesota local governments and associations of local governments.
- c. Buck reported that The Farmer Magazine has decreased their sponsorship funding for the Outstanding Conservationist and District Capacity Awards programs. As a result, there may be some changes to the program and staff may be seeking additional sponsors.
- d. Buck referenced the 2000 Resolution dealing with the Wetland Conservation Act formula and how MASWCD has responded by working with BWSR, AMC and SWCDs to revise the formula. The new formula will be used for the next allocation of WCA funds.
- e. Board members received a memo from NACD President Gary Mast outlining the U.S. House of Representatives Agriculture Committee inquiry into NRCS - their conservation programs, relationships with partner organizations. A staff person for the committee has contacted Buck and requested our board minutes for 1999 meetings. Other organizations have also been contacted with similar requests.
- f. Buck reported on being part of planning for the Minnesota Environmental Initiative (MEI) TMDL policy forum taking place today in St. Cloud. Governor Pawlenty is expected to be in attendance to unveil his vision for clean water in Minnesota. SWCDs have been informed about the conference.
- g. A bulletin from Bill Hunt, NRCS State Conservationist, was reviewed which outlines the EQIP allocation process. SWCDs have been informed of their allocation for EQIP cost share funds.
- h. Buck updated the board on the EQIP Local Work Group grant and the training workshops held in each MASWCD Area of the State. Sid Cornelius from NRCS did a great job explaining the nuts and bolts of the revised EQIP program. Extension staff Cindy Bigger and Kim Boyce outlined methods for SWCDs and NRCS to solicit public input for establishing natural resource priorities for the program in each district. Over 300 individuals from NRCS and SWCDs attended.
- i. Buck went over a grant from NRCS which will focus on training efforts. Board members discussed. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Scharf to provide authority for Buck to administer the grant. Motion carried.
- j. Vanney reported that she is attending meetings to provide input on a land drainage education conference. The conference is tentatively taking place in January, 2004 in three locations – northwest, central and south. Other attending include watershed districts, counties, auditors, reviewers, DNR hydrologists and many others who have interest in drainage in Minnesota. At some point later in the year, more details will be available and MASWCD may be asked to be a sponsor, either in-kind or financial.

- k. Vanney reported that she presented comments today to the Pollution Control Agency Citizen Board, Permitting Committee on the construction site general stormwater permit. A copy of her remarks was distributed to the board. All construction sites greater than one acre in size will be permitted through the new program. A few SWCDs have been involved in Phase I of the program which addressed construction sites 5 acres in size and greater. With the expansion of the program to the smaller, more numerous construction sites, local governments will be looked to for assistance with the program. The budget signed by Governor Pawlenty at the end of this legislative session allows the pass through of a portion of the permit fees to SWCDs to help implement the permitting program. MASWCD and other stakeholders will be working with MPCA this summer to further develop the details of how the program will work. The potential for soil erosion and impacts on water quality posed by construction sites has the potential for fitting well into the work conducted by SWCDs.

6. Legislative Committee Report – LeAnn Buck

Buck reported on the outcomes of the legislative session relative to the MASWCD legislative agenda. The Legislative Committee met and reviewed all of this as well and started to look ahead to the next legislative session, which will be a bonding year. She emphasized that in this last round of cuts, SWCDs were one of the very few entities who did not have their administrative funding cut via the general service grants. This was due to MASWCD efforts.

7. Ad Hoc Technical Committee Report – Scott Hoese

- a. Board members reviewed the nine recommendations that came out of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee's final report. A considerable amount of discussion took place. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Lovdahl, to authorize Hoese and staff to send a letter of comments on the recommendations to BWSR. Motion carried. Further discussion followed. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Sunderland, that MASWCD retain the current number of seven Areas. Hansen clarified that the motion does not address boundaries, but merely the number of Areas. Motion carried. After additional discussion, motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Scharf, to approve the recommendations outlined by the Ad Hoc Technical Assistance Committee. Motion carried.
- b. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Fisher, to authorize Hoese to appoint two members of MASWCD to serve on the soon to be developed State Conservation Technical Assistance Committee. Motion carried. The proposed State Conservation Technical Assistance Committee will be administered by BWSR.
- c. Board members discussed the issue of revising the Area boundaries and shared input from Area meetings. Scharf stated that districts in Area 2 would like to see a mail in ballot procedure on the realignment recommendation. MASWCD Bylaws were reviewed. "Article 1.2) AREAS – The Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Minnesota may be divided from time to time by the Board of Directors into not less than five (5) nor more than fifteen (15) Area of approximately equal number and proximity. Any re-establishment of Areas shall be submitted to, and shall receive a majority vote of, **the members present at the annual meeting of the Association** before becoming effective." Motion by Scharf to use e-mail system to conduct a non-binding straw ballot of supervisors statewide on the issue of Area boundaries and options provided in the maps. Motion seconded by Berg. Discussion followed. It was pointed out that less than one half of the supervisors in the state have e-mail addresses. Hansen expressed concern that such a straw poll would be intended to influence the vote of those attending the convention. The Association's bylaws are laid out so that each SWCD Supervisor has one voice and one vote, and each person should be able to vote their conscience at the annual meeting. Board members discussed further. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Sunderland, to table the motion. Motion carried.

8. Future Meeting Dates and Adjourn

Future meetings will take place August 26, October 28 and November 29. Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.