

Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Board Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2004

MASWCD Office, St. Paul, MN

Attending: President Scott Hoese, Vice President and Area I Director 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 Director and MASWCD Secretary/Treasurer Greg Roiger, Area VII Director Ralph Breuer; MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck, and Sheila Vanney; Vicki McKenna; Greg Anderson, FSA; Judy Erickson, MASWCD Legislative Affairs Specialist.

1. **Call to Order** – President Hoese called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. led the board in the pledge of allegiance.
2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes** – Motion by Scharf, seconded by Lovdahl, to approve the agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Berg, to approve MASWCD March 23, 2004 board meeting minutes. Motion carried.
3. **President's Report – Scott Hoese**
 - a. This year is an election year for the offices of MASWCD President & MASWCD Vice-President. Hoese reviewed with the board the nominations and elections process.
 - b. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Berg, to confirm Hoese's appointment of Jim Fitzsimmons of the Scott SWCD to serve on the Finance Committee as the Area IV representative. Motion carried.
 - c. Soil and Water Conservation Society conference – MASWCD returned the Minnesota SWCS chapters check for their booth at our convention this past December, as a way of supporting the SWCS event. Roiger is a member of the entertainment committee for the SWCS conference and he would like to see MASWCD have a booth at the event. Roiger has spoken with Curt Borchert from the Norman SWCD, who has agreed to help with the booth. Consensus of the board was to support Roiger's and Lovdahl's efforts to develop a booth. The board reviewed costs for the booth. Board will re-visit this later in the meeting.
 - d. Hoese sought input from board members on how to move forward with a district funding/levy strategy. Motion by Sunderland, seconded by Lovdahl, to establish a 7 member committee made up of members from the legislative and policy committees with Berg as chair and members from BWSR invited to participate. Motion carried. Funding for the committee will come out of the budgets for the legislative and policy committees. The committee will meet and report back to the board on their recommendation.
 - e. Hoese reported that BWSR is convening a group to address the biennial budget, with the chairs from their constituent organizations (MASWCD, AMC, MAWD). The meeting will take place next week.
 - f. Hoese briefed the board on the BWSR Board appointments. No selections have yet been made.
4. **Finance Report – Greg Roiger**
 - a. Roiger presented the finance report and Hoese accepted subject to annual review.
 - b. The Finance Committee met on April 7th. Roiger presented the Finance Committee's recommendations to the board concerning non-payment of dues. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Sunderland to take off the table the dues issues for Beltrami, McLeod and Meeker SWCDs. Motion carried. Discussion followed. Motion by Roiger, seconded by Hansen, to accept Beltrami SWCD's hardship request to pay \$500 for 2003/2004 dues. Motion carried. Motion

by Hansen, seconded by Roiger, to send Meeker SWCD a letter explaining that to remain members in good standing, MASWCD must receive from them by May 15 the remaining \$345 in dues payment for 2003/2004 or a request for hardship designation. Motion carried. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Lovdahl, to accept McLeod SWCD's hardship request for 2003/2004. Motion carried.

- c. Roiger reported on the 990 tax form and year end statements. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Breuer, to accept the report. Motion carried.
- d. Roiger and guest Vicki McKenna reported to the board on some of their fund development discussions that took place at the last Finance Committee meeting. The finance committee will continue to look into this. Their extra meeting expenses will be covered by the budget for the New Initiative Committee. Hansen suggested the committee look into advertising as a possible revenue source.
- e. Roiger and board members discussed the legislative contract. It expires on May 9, but the legislative session has a constitutional end date of May 17. Historically the bonding session is the "short" session and ends in April. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Breuer, to approach the legislative affairs specialist and see if she can continue to work under the existing contract through the remainder of the session. Motion carried. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Scharf, to authorize the executive committee to work with the legislative affairs specialist if there is a special session. Motion carried. If this took place, the executive committee would then also need to convene a conference call with the full board.

*The board recessed for lunch at 12:20 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.
Rick Hansen, Area IV Board member, left the meeting. .*

5. Update on CRP and CREP – Greg Anderson, FSA Agriculture Program Specialist

Anderson noted that CRP General Sign-Up 29 which was originally expected to start in April has not taken place and we may not have a general sign-up this year. If one takes place, 800,000 acres would be available nationwide. Regarding Continuous CRP, Anderson distributed a handout to the board which outlined numbers of contracts and acres per county/SWCD. Anderson also distributed a packet of information which explained the details of CCRP and maps outlining the number of acres per county/SWCD both for the current sign-up as well as since inception of the program. Anderson noted the special initiative currently underway by FSA in Minnesota to enroll another 100,000 acres into CRP before the end of the current Farm Bill. Minnesota FSA has a CCRP action plan which includes this goal as well as the goals of conducting local meetings with the conservation partnership and with landowners. Nationwide, Minnesota ranks very high in terms of numbers of acres in CRP and CCRP.

Anderson also briefed the board on the status of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The Minnesota River CREP is winding down as the practice implementation phases of the program are nearing completion. The next generation CREP is in the works with the three areas of the state including southeast, southwest and northwest/Red River Basin. Each area had originally submitted individual CREP applications totaling 225,000 acres, but USDA at the national level directed Minnesota to combine the three areas into one application and bring it down to 100,000 acres total. However, the final compromise application that Governor Pawlenty submitted to USDA at the beginning of April includes 120,000 acres, which USDA is expected to be amenable to. FSA, BWSR and the three areas are currently working on a draft agreement for implementation of the program. Anderson commented that if the application and draft agreement are approved, they are hoping to have a signing ceremony by the end of June and start accepting application in July. He also cautioned not to get ahead of ourselves, however, until everything is accepted and confirmed. Roiger suggested to Anderson that there be more communication at the local level from the local FSA offices to the other conservation partners regarding CRP. Anderson agreed and stressed the importance of coordination between the agencies at the local level. Buck asked Anderson for

clarification on the current role for NRCS with CRP. Anderson stated NRCS is required to make sure the conservation plan is completed according to the rules, but who actually completes the plan may be someone else entirely, including an SWCD, DNR, a private TSP or another entity. The board also discussed 2003 resolution No. 8 Cost Share for Tree Matting/Plastic (Lyon SWCD) and Resolution No. 13 Soybean Commodity Payments (Root River SWCD). Greg reported that these resolutions will be forwarded to the State FSA committee. Ultimately they are decisions that have to be made at the national level. Previously, the State FSA committee has supported the concept in Resolution No. 8.

6. Legislative Update – Judy Erickson, MASWCD Legislative Affairs Specialist

BONDING - The House bonding bill is on its way to the Ways and Means Committee. CREP is currently at \$21.5 million and is being short-changed on the implementation dollars. Erickson and the other CREP areas will be talking to the Governor's office again about the need for the implementation dollars. The Senate is open to fully funding the implementation aspects (\$3.2 million). The Senate bonding bill is expected to come out next week.

IMPAIRED WATERS – language establishing the Clean Waters Council is tied up in the supplemental budget bill.

4/16ths – In the Senate, the proposal for a constitutional amendment to dedicate 4/16 of 1 percent of the sales tax for outdoor heritage is moving forward to the Senate Finance Committee. Once it gets there an amendment may be added for the arts. The House probably won't act until the Senate does and may not at all. Erickson expressed concern about the need for a plan for outreach to the public if the proposal passes and raising funds for such a campaign.

SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET – The House has nine bills included its supplemental budget. It includes a 3% reduction for all state agencies. The senate has one bill in its supplemental budget bill and includes a 5% reduction for state agencies, including a \$212,000 reduction for BWSR. Erickson is waiting to see how a Conference Committee will address this. The supplemental budget bills attempt to address the \$160 million revenue shortfall for this year. About half of the House and Senate versions are close to the same. Big differences include the Senate's inclusion of closing a corporate tax loophole and the House's inclusion of the Racino. These and other differences may lead to no agreement being reached, no supplemental budget bill, which would force the Governor to either unallot or dip into the "rainy day fund." Meanwhile, a \$441 million budget shortfall is projected for the next go-around.

OTHER – Rep. Ray Cox and Sen. Steve Murphy will be drafting bills for introduction before the end of the session regarding funding option/SWCD levy. The language will be the same that was included in the SWCD New Century Initiative last session.

7. Executive Director's Report – LeAnn Buck

- a. Buck reviewed with the board the list of resolutions that are expiring in December, 2004 and explained the status of each.
- b. Buck presented an overview of the NRCS grants MASWCD is administering. One focuses on training including helping to support Re-Boot Camp (Refresher Course), Boot Camp (new supervisor orientation) and the Technical Service Provider (TSP) workshops. The second focuses on the Local Work Group/EQIP workshops that were held last year and outreach components on USDA programs. The third grant is helping to support the leadership institute. The board discussed whether part of one of the grants could be used to fund a booth at the SWCS conference. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Sunderland, to find out from NRCS whether \$1,000 could be taken out of the EQIP workshop and outreach grant to cover cost of an SWCS booth. Motion carried. Buck will look into this.
- c. Buck further explained the TSP workshops which will be conducted at seven locations around the state. The workshops will be done with NRCS and U of M Extension Service to explain the

2004 process for cooperative agreements and TSP issues as well as some of the ethics and conflicts of interest that may arise. Dates and locations are posted on the MASWCD web site.

- d. Buck reported that MASWCD staff and the chair of the legislative committee are participating in planning meetings for a conservation tour with the Congressional delegation. The tour is in the early planning stages.

8. Conservation Technical Assistance Program Task Force – Steve Sunderland, MASWCD Rep. to committee

Sunderland reported on the progress of the Conservation Technical Assistance Committee (CTAC) and their meetings on the future of the nonpoint engineering assistance program and other technical assistance delivery issues. There are currently some concerns about the performance measures being proposed. The board held a lengthy discussion on these concerns and issues. Sunderland will be attending the next meeting of the CTAC on April 22.

9. Future Board Meeting Dates

The next meetings of the MASWCD board will be June 14, August 24, and possibly in conjunction with the BWSR tour in September. There will not be a July meeting.

10. Area Directors Reports

Area Directors went around the table and reported on meetings and issues being addressed in their Areas. A complete list of the Area meetings scheduled to date is available on the MASWCD web site.

11. Adjourn

Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Berg, to adjourn the meeting at 3:40 p.m. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.