

Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Board Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2004

GrandStay Suites, St. Cloud, 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 Co-Director Marj Ebensteiner, Area V Director Steve Sunderland, Secretary/Treasurer and Area VI Director Greg Roiger, Area VII Director Ralph Breuer; MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck, and Sheila Vanney; Doug Thomas, BWSR.

Absent: Rick Hansen, Area IV Director

1. **Call to Order** – President Hoese called the meeting to order at 11:05 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 Lovdahl, seconded by Breuer, to approve MASWCD November 29, 2003 board meeting minutes. Motion carried. Motion by Scharf, seconded by Sunderland, to approve the MASWCD December 2, 2003 board meeting minutes. Motion carried.
3. **President's Report – Scott Hoese**
 - a. Hoese presented an overview of events and discussion which took place at the NACD North Central Region winter meeting in Chicago. This included strategic planning issues such as the region's budget and work plan, along with informational topics like The Nature Conservancy's Upper Mississippi River Basin Project, an update on partnerships with EPA, other committee reports, ongoing business, and election of the region's representative to the NACD Executive Committee. Owen Knutson from Goodhue SWCD in Minnesota was re-elected to serve as the region's representative to NACD Executive Committee.
 - b. Four resolutions which passed at our annual convention deal with national issues and these were brought to the Chicago meeting for discussion. They will be addressed at the NACD Annual Convention in Hawaii in February.
 - c. The NACD Spring Legislative Conference will be held March 15-17 in Washington DC. Hoese, Berg and Buck will attend the conference and will meet with the Minnesota Congressional Delegation. Issues such as the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and Minnesota's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) application will be topics of discussion.
 - d. Hoese discussed the current vacancy for a Minnesota representative on the NACD Great Lakes Committee. Minnesota SWCDs in the Lake Superior Basin will be meeting in a couple weeks, and Hoese would like to receive their input prior to making an appointment. Motion by Roiger, seconded by Berg, to table the issue until the next meeting.
 - e. The MASWCD office was recently contacted concerning a new committee being established jointly by the Minnesota Association of County Agricultural Inspectors (MACAI) and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. They are looking for us to submit a member to this committee. Buck provided this information to the SWCD offices. The Board reviewed the responses to date and discussed. Consensus of the board was to offer the committee appointment to Doug Bos from Rock SWCD. Buck will contact him.

The board recessed for lunch at 11:45 a.m. and reconvened at 12:15 p.m.

3. **President's Report – Scott Hoese (continued)**
 - f. Hoese and Buck reviewed the Board of Directors Annual Calendar of Activities and Events and asked for board input. Consensus of the members was the calendar is complete and accurate.
4. **Finance Report – Greg Roiger**
 - a. Roiger reviewed the finance report with the board. Hoese accepted subject to annual review. Roiger noted the IRS approved mileage rate has increased to 37.5 cents per mile and requested board action on whether to use this rate for the coming year. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Breuer, to adopt the new IRS approved mileage rate of 37.5 cents per mile. Motion carried.

5. Personnel Committee – Carol Berg

Berg presented the Personnel Committee's information on staff salaries and a recommendation for a cost of living adjustment. No raises are being recommended due to budget constraints. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Breuer to approve a 2 percent cost of living adjustment for staff salaries. Motion carried.

6. Executive Director's Report – LeAnn Buck

- a. Buck reported on negotiations for Minnesota's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) application. The application includes three areas of the state: southwest, southeast and the Red River Basin and has had considerable involvement from the SWCDs in those areas. After Governor Pawlenty submitted the application to USDA Secretary Ann Veneman in October, 2003, USDA responded to MASWCD in December that consideration of the application will not proceed until consensus is reached with the agricultural groups. Leaders of the ag groups oppose permanent easements. MASWCD, local SWCDs, CREP coalition leader Judy Erickson, BWSR, FSA, agricultural groups, environmental groups and the Governor's office are all involved in continuing dialogue on the application. Buck has submitted the CREP policy statement approved by this board along with letters of support to the Minnesota Congressional Delegation. The CREP policy statement is on our web site.
- b. Buck reviewed the legislative agenda including the impaired waters initiative, bonding items (CREP and streambank erosion control), SWCD levy authority and tracking of the LCMR process. The legislative session convenes on February 2nd and this is a bonding year. The Governor is expected to announce his proposed bonding package on January 15th. Buck elaborated on the impaired waters initiative and the stakeholder meetings she has been participating in on behalf of MASWCD. A public stakeholders meeting will take place tomorrow in St. Cloud. More than 200 people are expected to attend. The implementation components of an impaired waters program are where SWCDs could really shine.
- c. Applications are steadily coming in for the Leadership for This Century Educational Program. The application deadline is March 1. It is hoped that each of the seven MASWCD Areas will be represented in the course. There will also be participation from NRCS staff. The tuition for the program has been greatly reduced for this one time only because of grant dollars from NRCS. Hoese commented that as a graduate of the program he strongly encourages MASWCD board members and SWCD staff and supervisors across the state to take advantage of this opportunity. Paper copies of the registration information went to districts in mid December and the materials are also posted on the web site.
- d. Buck and Vanney reported on the Legislative Briefing and Day at the Capitol, scheduled for February 17-18 at the Holiday Inn St. Paul East. Registration deadline is February 6 and the registration form is available on our web site. SWCD offices were notified via e-mail and a message was also sent to supervisors with e-mail addresses. The February 17 briefing will include information and reports on the legislative agenda items. February 18 will start with a short briefing and then is open for SWCDs to schedule meetings with their state legislators. Districts are encouraged to make these appointments at least one week in advance. A shuttle bus will be running between the hotel and the Capitol from 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. that day.
- e. Vanney updated board members on planning for this year's MASWCD Supervisor Refresher Course. The conference will take place March 24-25 in the Brainerd area. Topics will include customer service, economics of conservation, board leadership, basin level planning, the local work group process, tracking our accomplishments, and open meeting law requirements as well as group discussions. Vanney has been working with BWSR Assistant Director Steve Woods on the conference agenda. More information will go out in a couple weeks. While the conference is designed with veteran supervisors in mind, SWCD staff are also invited to attend. The conference is different from the Boot Camp session that is held each winter after an election. Boot Camp is an orientation course to provide new board members with the basics of their roles on the SWCD board. This Supervisor Refresher Course is for all SWCD board members and is set-up as a continuing education opportunity. The speakers and topics lined up so far are excellent and SWCDs are encouraged to attend. MASWCD board members accepted a friendly challenge offered to them. Motion by Ebensteiner, seconded by Scharf, that the Area with the most attendance at the conference will win two tickets to a Minnesota Twins game. Tickets will be donated by Steve Woods.
- f. Roiger suggested that we might consider having a booth at the SWCS annual conference this July in St. Paul. A response was made that this might be done by SWCD staff or supervisors who sign up as Earth Team Volunteers. Roiger serves on the entertainment committee and has lined up events for the Monday night of the conference on Harriet Island.

7. Nonpoint Engineering and Technical Assistance – Doug Thomas, BWSR

In 2003, a committee of SWCD supervisors prepared the Technical Assistance Ad Hoc report. One of the recommendations in the report included the formation of a Conservation Technical Assistance Committee. BWSR is contacting the Non Point Engineering Joint Power Boards and asking them to select representatives to serve on the committee. Other representatives to the committee may include BWSR and MASWCD. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Breuer, that Sunderland serve as the MASWCD representative to the Conservation Technical Assistance Committee (CTAC), with Berg as alternate. Motion carried.

8. BWSR Board Appointments

By statute, MASWCD has the opportunity to recommend three SWCD supervisors for appointment to the BWSR board. There is currently one SWCD Supervisor vacancy. To date, MASWCD has received only one request for support and that has been from H. Merrill Loy of the Carlton SWCD. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Breuer, to support the application of H. Merrill Loy for appointment to the BWSR board. Motion carried.

9. Convention Wrap-up – Sheila Vanney

Vanney provided board members with summary data regarding the annual convention including attendance and comments received. She presented information on the press room which outlined those who took advantage of assistance with the media.

10. Forestry Discussion with DNR, BWSR and SWCDs – Carol Berg & Ted Lovdahl

Berg and Lovdahl provide comments on a meeting between DNR, BWSR and SWCDs. Notes from the meeting were provided to board members. The meeting focused on technical assistance to forestland owners.

11. Future Board Meetings and Adjourn

Prior to setting future board meeting dates, Sunderland reported to the board that this year is Chippewa SWCD's 50th Anniversary. They will have a special event each month to celebrate. This month they held an open house and over 200 people attended, including state legislators, county commissioners, county FSA committee members and two of the original SWCD board members. Sunderland commented that in speaking with the original board members it was interesting to see how the efforts of the district have changed over the years from drainage and encouraging tiling to encouraging wetland restorations.

The next board meetings will be held February 17 at the Holiday Inn St. Paul East, March 23 at the MASWCD office, and April 27 at the MASWCD office. Motion to adjourn by Berg, seconded by Sunderland. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.