

# Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Board Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2004

MASWCD Office, St. Paul, MN

Attending: President Scott Hoese, Vice President and Area I Director Carol Berg, Area II Co-Director Glen Matejka, 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; Doug Thomas, BWSR; Brian Watson, MACDE.

1. **Call to Order** – President Hoese called the meeting to order at 9:30 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 Hansen, seconded by Breuer, to approve MASWCD April 21, 2004 board meeting minutes. Motion carried.
3. **President's Report – Scott Hoese**
  - a. Hoese announced the nominating committee members for the 2004 election process. Offices of MASWCD President and MASWCD Vice President will be voted on at the annual convention.
  - b. BWSR Board Appointments have not yet been announced by the Governor. An announcement is expected at the June 23 BWSR board meeting.
  - c. Hoese and Buck reviewed with the board the MASWCD strategic goals which the board initially developed through strategic planning at their board retreat. Board member input was gathered on areas to update the goals.
  - d. Hoese noted that a letter was received from Wadena SWCD inviting MASWCD to participate in the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration for WesMin RC&D. Motion by Hansen, seconded by Roiger, to ask Scharf to represent the Association at the July 13-14 event. Motion carried.
  - e. Hoese discussed the need for a new Area III representative on the Education Committee, to replace Carol Hauck from Carlton SWCD, as they are now non-members. Motion by Lovdahl, seconded by Berg to ratify Hoese's appointment of Bill Saumer from Pine SWCD as the new Area III representative on the Education Committee.
  - f. Roiger and Lovdahl are in charge of an MASWCD booth at the SWCS annual conference this July. Roiger updated the board on their efforts to date. Hansen discussed the Earth Team Volunteer issue regarding the conference. He will serve as a liaison to NRCS to work to clarify the process.
  - g. Hoese noted an article in *The Farmer* magazine where he was quoted regarding the second generation CREP program.
4. **Finance Report – Greg Roiger**

Roiger presented the monthly finance report and discussed issues relating to the budget. Hoese accepted the report subject to annual review.
5. **Personnel Committee – Carol Berg**

Berg reported that as a follow-up to board retreat discussions, the committee has been working on identifying a process for MASWCD board member self-evaluation. The evaluation will be finalized soon and board members should expect to receive it and complete it prior to the August meeting.

**6. Executive Director's Report – LeAnn Buck**

- a. The legislature adjourned on May 16 without passing a bonding bill and without approving a supplemental budget to deal with the current year's budget shortfall. This left the Governor to deal partially with the budget deficit through his own authority by calling for a 3% cut across the board to all state agencies. BWSR is addressing their cut through cost savings and internal administrative reductions. It is still not known whether a special session will be called by the Governor to deal with the unfinished business. Strong divisions remain between House and Senate leadership on controversial issues. Without a bonding bill, items such as new road construction projects and the second generation CREP program will go unfunded for the time being.
- b. As authorized by the MASWCD board at the last meeting, a joint committee of members from the Legislative and Policy committees will meet in mid-July to consider a strategy for alternative funding for districts, including levy authority.
- c. Buck updated the board on BWSR action regarding MASWCD resolutions on well sealing cost-share. The BWSR board approved their Cost-Share Committee's recommendation that cost-share policies be amended to allow for cost-sharing on well sealing with some constraints on how the funding is used, targeting the high priority wells. The action puts the new policy in effect beginning in FY 05 (July 1, 2004).
- d. Buck reviewed with the board correspondence received from FSA State Director John Monson regarding an MASWCD resolution on CRP cost-sharing on tree matting/plastic mulch authored by the Lyon SWCD. Monson reiterated the national policy stating the use of plastic mulch was not determined a cost-effective method for establishment of certain practices in areas where the average annual precipitation is more than 25 inches. The Minnesota FSA committee has requested a change to the policy in previous years but at this time there is no policy change.
- e. Buck presented an overview of on-going MASWCD involvement in the impaired waters stakeholder process and the need for MASWCD to continue representing SWCDs in these discussions. During the 2004 legislative session, the Governor supported the policy initiative for an impaired waters strategy but not the funding mechanism. During the session, legislators discussed and were educated on Minnesota's requirements for the Clean Water Act and the need for resources related to non-point pollution. Buck stated the MPCA is reconvening the stakeholders for continued discussion in preparation for funding and policy issues for the Pawlenty administration and the 2005 legislative session.
- f. Discussions and meetings are continuing within MPCA and with stakeholders regarding implementation of NPDES Phase II. Buck reported that Jay Riggs from the Dakota SWCD has been representing MASWCD in these meetings. At some point this summer a meeting with President Hoese, Buck and MPCA Commissioner Sheryl Corrigan may be scheduled to reiterate to MPCA that SWCDs are the local experts regarding erosion and sediment control and a logical entity for administering components of NPDES Phase II.
- g. Buck reported on the seven regional TSP/Contribution Agreement Workshops that were held across the state. Approximately 150 district staff and supervisors attended the sessions, which were conducted jointly with U of M Extension Service and NRCS. The workshops were a component of a grant MASWCD received from NRCS. Key issues raised by SWCDs center around Technical Approval Authority and the low payment rates.
- h. Buck reported on a training conference she attended relating to USDA grant administration.
- i. Vanney reported on the potential for a conservation tour for Minnesota's Congressional delegation, to be held in conjunction with Farm Fest in August. Several agencies and organizations including MASWCD are involved with the planning.
- j. Vanney updated the board on the 2004 award applications and process. Some changes have been made in response to MASWCD resolutions approved by the membership, including a new award – "Community Conservationist Award." The award application forms will be available on-line only to better utilize the MASWCD web site.

*The board recessed for lunch at noon and reconvened at 12:45 p.m.*

**7. MASWCD Message for BWSR Initiatives Committee – LeAnn Buck**

Buck reported that BWSR has been holding meetings with representatives from MASWCD, MAWD, and AMC to discuss priority issues for the next biennial budget session. She reviewed a list of potential items for MASWCD to support during these meetings. Board members discussed and there was consensus that the items listed adequately cover priority issues for districts. Hoese and Buck will share these items during the next BWSR Initiatives Committee meeting.

**8. Conservation Technical Assistance Committee (CTAC) – Steve Sunderland**

Sunderland reported on his attendance at the April 22 CTAC meeting. The committee reached consensus on a proposal for non-point engineering assistance program delivery. A copy of the proposal was available for the board members. Sunderland commented that the discussions and the process for reaching this consensus was very positive and had active input from many of the individuals in attendance at the CTAC meeting. The next steps are for the MASWCD and BWSR board to take action on the proposal. Motion by Sunderland, seconded by Hansen to support the proposed technical service delivery model recommended by the CTAC. Motion carried. The proposal would go into affect in July of 2005.

**9. BWSR Report – Doug Thomas**

Hoese requested that Thomas speak to two specific issues: the role of BWSR Board Conservationist and WCA specialists; and the status of district board assessments. Thomas distributed a handout showing the work areas of both board conservationists and WCA specialists, and a handout showing the issues board conservationists address on a day to day basis. A discussion was held on how the role of board conservationists has changed over the years, as BWSR's clientele has grown to include counties and watershed districts, and as high workload programs such as WCA have been established. Thomas also spoke to the status of district board assessments. Three SWCDs have gone through the full process – Todd, Mower and Carver. Due to lack of funds and lack of available staff time within BWSR, there are no plans to start any new assessments. Where BWSR can commit to helping facilitate a district board assessment is where there is a problem that needs resolution.

**10. Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA) Grant Application – Ted Lovdahl**

Lovdahl and Vanney reported on a grant proposal submitted by the Minnesota Forestry Association to the Blandin Foundation. MASWCD was listed as a supporting organization. The grant proposed to augment the funding available for Forest Stewardship Plan Writing, and would focus on the north central and north eastern counties of Minnesota, on ownerships of 40 acres or more. Blandin denied the grant application but encouraged MFA to re-submit the application in future funding rounds.

**11. MACDE Report – Brian Watson**

Watson reported on the upcoming annual MACDE conference being held at Cragun's in Brainerd. Results from a survey they conducted at the December, 2003 MASWCD convention showed continued interest in holding the training conference. Watson highlighted the topics that will be covered. Registrations are currently up to about 100, which is significantly higher than last year. Watson also reported on MACDE support of the MASWCD Leadership Institute. Their board is very supportive of such training and provided \$3,200 to offset registration costs for SWCD employees participating in the program. Other items the MACDE board is addressing include Technical Approval Authority issues, certification programs such as wetland delineation certification, and the NPDES Phase II program. He noted that in the next 30 days or so MPCA will be posting a request for proposals in the State Register for pilot projects relating to NPDES. SWCDs may want to consider applying to be a pilot for this program.

**12. Area Directors' Reports – Feedback from SWCDs & Area Meetings**

Area Directors went around the table and discussed their Area Meetings and feedback from their SWCD constituents. Area meeting dates are posted on the MASWCD web site.

**13. Adjourn**

Motion by Hansen, seconded by Lovdahl, to adjourn the meeting at 2:50 p.m. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned. MASWCD board meetings for the remainder of the year include August 24, one in September (date not yet identified), no meeting in October, a meeting in early November, and then meetings prior to and immediately following the annual convention in December.