

# Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Board Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2005

MASWCD Office, St. Paul, MN

Attending: President Carol Berg, Vice President Loyal Fisher, Area I Director Ken Pederson, Area II Director Mary Ann Scharf, Area III Director Bill Saumer, Area III Co-Director Roland Cleveland, Area IV Co-Director Mark Zabel, Area V Director Clark Lingbeek, Area V Co-Director Steve Sunderland, Area VI Director and MASWCD Secretary/Treasurer Greg Roiger, Area VII Director Ralph Breuer; Area VII Co-Director Rudie Spitzer, Area VIII Director Tom Schulz; MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck, Sheila Vanney and Stefanie Martinez, MASWCD Legislative Specialist Judy Erickson, BWSR Assistant Director Doug Thomas.

Absent: Mary Wetter, Area IV Director

1. **Call to Order** – President Berg called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m. and led the board in the pledge of allegiance.
2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes** – Motion by Scharf, seconded by Pederson, to approve the agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Scharf, seconded by Roiger, to approve the March 22 board meeting minutes. Motion carried. Berg announced that Tom Schulz, MASWCD Area VIII Director and Judy Erickson, MASWCD, were testifying at the capitol on the SWCD levy option and Tom will join the meeting later.
3. **President's Report – Carol Berg**
  - a. Berg reviewed a letter received from the Goodhue SWCD which outlines their concerns about the timing of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up period and the fact that their NRCS district conservationist will be re-assigned to a neighboring SWCD within a CSP watershed to help with the CSP workload. The re-assignment will take place during the busiest time of year for conservation construction. Berg presented her letter of response to the district and noted the Association will work with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and members of Congress to forward the district's concerns and the timing for CSP sign-ups.
  - b. An NACD North Central Region Board Meeting was held April 11-12 in Chicago. Berg was in attendance. The board identified four priorities for the region: communications to state associations and districts; training for supervisors and associations; expanding partnerships with organizations that they haven't traditionally partnered with in the past; and reaching dues quota goals. The NACD North Central Region Summer Meeting will be held July 10-13 in Fort Wayne, Indiana.
  - c. Motion by Breuer, seconded by Roiger, to ratify Berg's appointment of Paul Larson, Kanabec SWCD, as the Area 3 representative on the resolutions committee.
  - d. Berg reported that no announcements have been made yet on the BWSR Board vacancies.
  - e. Berg reported that Minnesota was in the top ten states in the nation for NACD quota payment.
4. **Finance Report – Greg Roiger**
  - a. Roiger reviewed the finance report and Berg accepted subject to annual review.
  - b. Roiger briefed the board on the status of dues and membership. He noted that Aitkin, Carlton, Grant and Morrison SWCDs have submitted correspondence or contacted their area director indicating that they will not be submitting dues payments and so will not be members this year. Roiger also explained the finance committee's review and made recommendations on hardship

requests from Beltrami, Marshall-Beltrami, McLeod and Olmsted. Motion by Roiger, seconded by Lingbeek, to accept the Finance committee's recommendations regarding district hardships requests for 2005. Motion carried. Roiger noted that he has been impressed with the input and preparation of the committee members.

- c. Roiger updated the board on the status of a raffle for the Association. He presented draft documents including a letter to the districts, ticket tracking form, and raffle tickets. Board members reviewed and discussed the items. Motion by Roiger, seconded by Breuer to approve the draft letter with changes suggested by the board and to send this out from the Association office to the member districts. Motion carried. Roiger noted that the raffle is a short-term fund-development opportunity and that there are still bigger, long-term opportunities for the Association to address.

*Tom Schulz, Area VIII Director, entered the meeting.*

**5. 2006 MASWCD Annual Meeting – Sheila Vanney**

Prior to selecting the site for the 2006 convention, the board took action on selecting which Area should serve as host. Motion by Scharf, seconded by Lingbeek, to select Area 1 as host of the 2006 convention. Motion carried.

This year, MASWCD received nine proposals to host the 2006 annual convention. Vanney has been communicating and negotiating with these facilities and presented a spreadsheet which outlined the prices and amenities included in each proposal. Board discussion followed. Motion by Scharf, seconded by Breuer, to accept Sheraton Bloomington Hotel's proposal to host the 2006 convention. Motion carried with dissenting votes from Pederson and Saumer.

**6. Area Director Reports – Future Area Meeting Dates**

Area Directors provided updates on activities from their areas and summer area meetings.

Area 1 – June 23 at Terry McCullom's Pheasant Preserve (Terry is a Mahnomen SWCD supervisor)

Area 2 – June 9 in Morris, MN

Area 3 – June 3 at the UMD Natural Resources Research Institute in Duluth, MN

Area 4 – Wetter was absent, recovering from knee surgery; she submitted a written report of Area 4 activities; the next Area meeting date has not yet been determined

Area 5 – June 16 at Lake Shetek in Slayton, MN

Area 6 – Last week of June at Lt. Governor Molnau's farm

Area 7 – July 7 in Rochester, MN

Area 8 – June 28 at the Deep Portage Conservation Reserve in Hackensack, MN

*The board recessed for lunch at 12:20 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.*

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

- a. Vanney reported on the status of planning for a Washington DC Leadership Institute for this September. A draft agenda was distributed and reviewed. Buck reported that this is part of a grant that the Board of Directors adopted last fall.

- b. Vanney announced to the board that MASWCD and BWSR have been selected as recipients of an Award of Excellence from the Minnesota Association of Government Communicators. The award is in recognition of the document, "Our Working Lands Legacy," which was printed as an insert in the December issue of *The Farmer* magazine. The project was funded in part by an NRCS grant.

- c. Buck stated that she has been working with districts on submitting editorials to their local newspapers on the benefits and importance of the Clean Water Legacy Act that is making its way through the Minnesota legislative process.

- d. Buck reported distributed and reviewed an outline of Grants the Association is working on for the current fiscal year. Grant projects includes orientation training for newly elected SWCD supervisors; SWCD training for outreach, recruitment district demographics and skills assessment; state and national leadership program for SWCD members; and seven regional information sessions pertaining to the Conservation Security Program.

**8. Legislative Update-Judy Erickson, MASWCD Legislative Affairs**

- a. Erickson gave an update on the MASWCD bill regarding the SWCD Levy option. The Senate has included the levy option in the Senate tax bill. The House does not include it at this time. The House tax committee wanted to hear additional information prior to meeting in conference committee. She also noted Tom Schulz did a great job testifying for the bill earlier this morning. AMC testified they are neutral on Bill. Farm Bureau seems to be more receptive and Farmers Union is supportive at this time.
- b. Erickson also reported that the Clean Water Legacy Legislation. Rep. Ozment and the House Agriculture and Environmental Finance Division are discussing several options to replace the fee option that was original to the bill. The Senate will have further discussions.
- c. Erickson reviewed the different options for BWSR's Biennial Budget and the state's budget deficit. The senate proposes to cut BWSR by \$300,000 per year which follows the Governor's recommendation. The Senate also includes additional language to grant an additional \$109,000 to conduct ditch buffer study. The House currently had two options regarding agency budgets. Option A is without gambling revenue and BSWR would incur an additional \$700,000 cut per year. The House's Option B, which includes gambling revenue, includes the Governor's budget recommendation to cut BWSR by \$300,000. The House does not include funding for BWSR to complete the ditch buffer study.

**9. Resolutions-Review 2004**

- a. Buck stated that the 2005 "call for resolutions" has been mailed to the SWCD offices.
- b. Buck reported that 14 resolutions are scheduled to sunset on December 2005. Buck reviewed the status of each resolution and the Association's accomplishments in addressing the resolutions. A list of these resolutions was included in the resolution packet to the SWCDs and the status is included on the Association's website.
- c. Buck reviewed the 2004 resolutions that were passed by the members. The board and co-directors discussed and prioritized the current policies. Motion by Saumer, seconded by Lingbeek, to accept the 2004 resolution priorities. Motion carried.

**10. 2004 MASWCD Resolution #7 Drainage Ditch Buffer-Doug Thomas, BWSR**

Doug Thomas reported that there was legislation introduced based on the Association's resolution #7 pertaining to re-determination of ditch buffer areas. Instead of requiring a change to the buffers on ditch re-determinations the House and Senate changed the legislation that requires BWSR to conduct a ditch buffer study and report back to the legislature. Thomas also noted that in order for BWSR to conduct study they will need additional funding of \$190,000. This study would take about 9 months to conduct and BWSR will work with LGUs.

Breuer presented a letter he sent to Berg regarding the Basin Alliance for the Lower Mississippi in Minnesota. The board may discuss at future board meeting.

**11. Next Meeting & Adjourn**

The next board meeting will take place on June 29 at the MASWCD office in St. Paul. Motion by Roiger, seconded by Lingbeek, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.