

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2007
MASWCD Office, St. Paul, MN

Present: President Ken Pederson, Vice President Steve Sunderland, Area 1 Director Russ Severson, Area 3 Director Merrill Loy, Area 2 Co-Director Ralph Peterson, Area 4 Director Mark Zabel, Secretary Treasurer Area 5 Director Clark Lingbeek, Area 6 Director Kathryn Kelly, Area 7 Co-Director Jim Gebhardt, Area 8 Director Tom Schulz; MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck and Sheila Vanney. Also in attendance: NRCS State Conservationist Bill Hunt and Assistant State Conservationist Ann English; Senator Klobuchar's staff Dave Frederickson, BWSR Assistant Director Steve Woods, Blandin Foundation and Dovetail Partners representative Kathryn Fernholz.

Absent: Area 2 Director Ross Aigner, Area 7 Director Rudie Spitzer.

1. President Pederson called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Introductions were made and Pederson welcomed Ralph Peterson, sitting in for Area 2 Director Ross Aigner who is on vacation, and Jim Gebhardt, sitting in for Area 7 Director Rudie Spitzer who is recovering from triple bypass heart surgery.
2. Motion by Kelly, seconded by Loy, to approve the August 28 meeting agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Kelly, seconded by Schulz, to approve the June 26, 2007 meeting minutes with corrections. Motion carried.
3. President's Report – Ken Pederson
 - a. NACD Capitol Campaign. NACD is seeking funding assistance from the states and districts to repair and make better use of the NACD office building in Washington D.C. Some funds were raised at the NACD Legislative Conference, but they are still requesting state contributions toward this effort. Motion by Loy, seconded by Zabel, to make a donation to the NACD Capitol Campaign. Motion carried. Motion by Zabel, seconded by Loy, to assign 1/3 of the 2007 auction proceeds along with any additional voluntary donations. Motion carried.
 - b. Family Forestry Stewardship Conference. Schulz will attend the conference and will serve as the MASWCD designee. The conference is September 12-13.
 - c. MASWCD representatives to BWSR workgroups: BWSR will be conducting several work groups to address outcomes from the 2007 legislative session. Pederson reviewed the list of individuals he appointed to serve as MASWCD representatives and noted that it is important for these individuals to report back to the board. MASWCD is reimbursing expenses.
 - d. Correspondence from Congressman Collin Peterson was reviewed. Peterson was responding to a letter from MASWCD regarding the conservation title of the next Farm Bill.

Pederson noted that he, Zabel and Kelly just completed the 2006/2007 MASWCD Leadership Institute. He encouraged those who haven't participated to consider this training opportunity in the future.

4. Finance Report – Clark Lingbeek
 - a. Lingbeek presented the monthly financial report and Pederson accepted subject to annual review. The Finance Committee will be meeting September 12.

5. Resolution/Policy Committee Recommendation: Steve Sunderland, Chair
 - a. Adoption of the 2007 SWCD Resolution Packet. The Resolution/Policy Committee met early August 6th to review the area resolutions and made recommendations. In addition to Sunderland as chair, other MASWCD board members on the committee include Zabel and Schulz. Discussion. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Kelly, to accept the packet. Motion carried. The resolution packet will be sent to SWCD offices for pre-convention balloting.
 - b. Adoption of the proposed change to the By-Laws. Sunderland reviewed the proposed clarification in the by-laws regarding voting privileges of the Vice President when serving in capacity of President. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Zabel to adopt the proposed change to present to the members for vote. Motion carried. Zabel suggested the Vice President could also serve as Chief Information Officer, with duties related to media outreach, serving as MASWCD spokesperson, especially when out in Washington D.C. meeting with members of Congress. Board members expressed support as well as concern about making clear distinctions between board member and staff duties.
 - c. Emergency Resolutions. Sunderland reviewed the criteria for emergency resolutions. Schulz spoke to the emergency resolution proposed by Wadena SWCD, Area 8, related to funding for the Wetland Conservation Act. Schulz moved the adoption of the resolution, seconded by Loy. Discussion followed, including whether it meets emergency criteria. Schulz noted that part of the message behind the resolution was to make legislators aware that the districts noticed what they did, in terms of how the Senate and House changed the Governor's proposal of \$500,000 to LGUs for WCA administration to instead be \$250,000 for the metro LGUs where diminimus was lowered (Senate), and \$250,000 to DNR for fly-overs (House). Vote: yes - 3; no – 4. Motion failed. Peterson spoke to the emergency resolution proposed by Douglas SWCD, Area 2, related to excluding SWCD Supervisors from the requirement of filing a statement of economic interest. Peterson moved adoption, seconded by Lingbeek. Discussion followed, including whether it meets emergency resolution criteria. Motion failed.

6. Education Committee Recommendation: Sheila Vanney (Action Item)

Vanney reported to the board on the Education Committee's unanimous recommendations from their August 1-2 meeting. The committee has two closely related recommendations. One is that following the 2007-2008 contests, MASWCD discontinue it's involvement at the state level in the poster/mural/video contests. The materials would continue to be available and updated on the MASWCD web site for districts to use at the local and Area levels. The committee had reviewed the order history chart and, due to a 72% decline in orders, determined that a more effective alternative to reaching this age group is junior envirothons.

The other recommendation follows from this and is to make \$3,000 of the Dec., 2006 auction proceeds available to Areas interested in holding pilot Junior Envirothons. The monies would be made available as \$500 grants, one to each Area requesting it, on a first-come, first-served basis, excluding Area 4, which already has a Junior Envirothon up and running. Motion by Loy, seconded by Severson, to accept the committee's recommendations. Motion carried with dissenting vote from Schulz.

7. Executive Director's Report: LeAnn Buck
 - a. Economic Interest Statement (EIS) for Supervisors. SWCD Supervisors and Watershed board members were added to the list of public officials required to fill out the Economic Interest Statement form. This requirement was part of the "accountability" section of new laws for water management organizations that came out of this past legislative session. Buck referenced the Public Officials Quick Reference Guide printed from the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board's web site. Board members reviewed the list of elected officials already required to complete the form, timelines and the penalties for not filing an EIS.
 - b. Elections White Paper. The Board, through the January, 2006 strategic planning process, identified elevating elections awareness as a priority item. Buck discussed the idea of putting together a white paper explaining SWCD elections and the rationale behind being elected county-wide including acting on county-wide issues, as opposed to just representing a certain area of the county on the board.
 - b. Website Discussions during Area Meetings. Buck and Vanney will be going to Area meetings this fall to give presentations on why to have an SWCD web site, along with facilitating discussion among SWCD employees about the details of putting one together.
 - c. MASWCD Educational Sessions for SWCDs. Buck noted that as a result of recent educational opportunities that MASWCD has provided for SWCDs this summer, MASWCD has reached a total of 164 SWCD participants. Educational sessions have included MASWCD's Leadership Program 5 which just concluded, Program 6 that just started, the MASWCD Supervisor Orientation Conference, and Freedom of Information Act and Data Privacy Act Training.
 - d. CTAC Review of Resolutions. The Resolutions/Policy Committee reviewed three resolutions addressing the Nonpoint Engineering Assistance Program and Technical Service Areas. Because of the divergent positions of the three resolutions, the committee did not vote on recommendations of pass or fail for these resolutions, but instead suggested the Conservation Technical Assistance Committee would be an appropriate forum for discussion and recommendation of any changes to the structure of the TSAs. Board members agreed this was an appropriate approach.
 - e. Update on Board Priority Issues. Buck reviewed with the board the outline of board priority issues and action taken to date.

8. NRCS Report – Bill Hunt NRCS State Conservationist
NRCS is doing damage assessment reports from the flooding in Southeast Minnesota. Emergency Watershed Protection will provide some funds for things like stream and culvert blockages (\$10,000). In total, approximately \$3 million will eventually be made available from NRCS. NRCS is waiting until there is an official federal disaster declaration, because FEMA can provide 100% cost-share, as opposed to USDA's 75%. Hunt reviewed the House proposal for Farm Bill and noted differences between that and the Administration's proposal. Hunt discussed computers and concern about costs including licensing and technical support. He suggested getting a committee together to explore options, pluses and minuses. Motion by Zabel, seconded by Lingbeek, that MASWCD support an employee ad hoc committee to work with NRCS employees to work through the technical issues and come forward with recommendations on computer needs and use. Motion carried.

The Board recessed for lunch at 12:35 p.m. and reconvened at 1:05 p.m.

9. NACD Legislative Conference & Urban Workshop
The Minnesota delegation attended the NACD July Legislative Conference, Board of Directors meeting and Urban Workshop, July 21-25. The delegation included: Ken Pederson, Steve Sunderland, LeAnn Buck, Kathryn Kelly, Mark Zabel, Loyal Fisher, and Jean Diggins. Minnesota participants also attended meetings with House Agriculture Committee members Walz and Peterson and other House members, as well as Senator Norm Coleman, staff with Senator Amy Klobuchar's office, and Governor Pawlenty's Washington D.C. staff. MASWCD's message included: 1) For the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), abandon yellow book appraisals and use fair market value. Minnesota has not been able to use all of its WRP allocations since the appraisal policy change. Minnesota's NRCS is returning federal funding to NRCS headquarters because of lack of landowner interest related to the appraisal method. MASWCD prefers to keep WRP funding in Minnesota and get more wetland restorations on the landscape. 2) Keep CSP and EQIP separate. The Senate has talked about combining them. But the two programs have different approaches – CSP is to reward past conservation, while EQIP is to help fix current problems. It is important to keep the current flexibility of EQIP, local priority setting and the local work group process. At the same time, MASWCD policy recognizes that CSP does need to be streamlined and less administratively burdensome to be more effective, but should be kept a separate program. 3) Additional technical assistance for all programs.

In addition, Zabel attended the Urban Workshop, a session on emerging clientele and reported back to the board. Discussion during the workshop included the possibility of soliciting information from districts for an inventory of urban and community conservation activities taking place across the country.

10. Board Priority: Conservation Title for 2007 Farm Bill – Dave Fredrickson, Senator Klobuchar's Outreach Director for Agriculture
Fredrickson discussed issues related to the Conservation Title of Farm Bill. Buck and board members reiterated MASWCD's key messages noted earlier in the day - WRP appraisals, CSP & EQIP, and technical assistance funds.

11. SWCD Program Policy update – Steve Woods, BWSR
 - a. 2007 Legislation: Local Water Management Accountability – BWSR has put together a stakeholder group to work out details for how to meet the legislative directive of a higher degree of local water management accountability. Kathryn Kelly and Sheila Vanney will serve as MASWCD representatives, and Kevin Ostermann, Nicollet SWCD, will be the employee rep. to the work group.
 - b. Legislative Request for Local SWCD Board Member Information. Woods discussed a legislative request for demographic information on SWCD Supervisors. BWSR will be working with districts to compile this information and report back to the legislature.

12. Family Forest Stewardship Conference: Kathryn Fernholz, Blandin Foundation & Dovetail Partners.

The Blandin Foundation is convening a conference to support an effort to increase the number of acres of family forest land in Minnesota under sustainable management. The Conference will be held September 12-13, 2007 at St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota. MASWCD and 28 other organizations are co-sponsors of the event.

13. Confirm Next Meeting September 25 & Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m. Next meeting will be held September 25 at the MASWCD office. There will be no meeting in October, and then a meeting on November 7.