

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2007
Water Street Inn, Stillwater, MN

Present: President Ken Pederson, Vice President Steve Sunderland, Area 1 Co-Director Terry McCullom, Area 3 Director Merrill Loy, Area 4 Director Mark Zabel, Secretary Treasurer Area 5 Director Clark Lingbeek, Area 6 Director Kathryn Kelly, Area 7 Director Rudie Spitzer, Area 8 Director Tom Schulz; MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck and Sheila Vanney. Also in attendance: NRCS State Conservationist Bill Hunt.

Absent: Area 1 Director Russ Severson, Area 2 Director Ross Aigner.

1. President Pederson called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Pederson welcomed Mahnommen SWCD Supervisor Terry McCullom, who is sitting in for Area 1 Director Russ Severson.
2. Motion by Spitzer, seconded by Loy, to approve the June 26 meeting agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Loy, seconded by Lingbeek, to approve the May 22, 2007 meeting minutes. Motion carried.
3. President's Report – Ken Pederson, MASWCD President, announced that the MASWCD Board of Directors meeting is being held at the same location as the state MACDE conference so our board can express support for the work of the SWCD employees. Pederson also commented about his visits to local district offices. Pederson commented about a call he received from the Pennsylvania association president pertaining to learning more about the MASWCD services to members.
 - a. Pederson reported on appointing MASWCD representatives to serve on BWSR Work Groups. BWSR work groups will be meeting over the next several months to work on several issues related to outcomes from the 2007 legislation session. Appointments include: New SWCD Cost-Share Program: Schulz and Lingbeek, Sunderland as alternate; Forestry Cost-Share Docket: Loy (Loy commented that maybe the SWCD Forestry Association could offset participant mileage costs for attendance at these meetings); RIM Clean Energy: possibly Craig Mold from Chisago SWCD, Spitzer as alternate; Public Drainage Ditch Buffers Work Group: Greg Roiger from Brown SWCD; and Kathryn Kelly, Oversight and Performance Standards for Local Work Government. Motion by Kelly, seconded by McCollum, to approve these representatives. Motion carried.
 - b. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Lingbeek, for Ross Aigner to serve as the MASWCD representative to the NRCS State Technical Committee. Motion carried.
 - c. Finance Committee Member Appointment (action item). Area 2 representative to Finance Committee had to resign because of time commitments. Glen Matejka from Douglas SWCD agreed to serve again. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Zabel, to approve Matejka as the Area 2 Finance Committee representative. Motion carried.

3. President's Report – Ken Pederson (*continued*)
 - d. NACD Capitol Court Campaign. NACD is seeking funding assistance from the states to repair and make better use of the NACD office building in Washington D.C. Loy commented that NACD should have included this as part of their operational budget. Kelly noted part of the need is for a security system and having been in D.C. she recognizes the need. Consensus was to take no action now, but address it later in August. Motion to table made by Loy, seconded by Spitzer, Motion carried. .
4. Finance Report – Clark Lingbeek
 - a. Lingbeek presented the monthly financial report and Pederson accepted subject to annual review.
 - b. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Kelly, to stay at our current office space and negotiate lease terms with the United Properties for renewing the five year lease at our current office building. Motion carried.
5. Area Directors Reports

Area 1 – Area meeting took place last week and included presentation from a local sheriff on drug use/trafficking and potential for water pollution from meth production. There was also a report on the newly established tribal conservation district in the area.

Area 2 – absent; no report.

Area 3 – Area meeting was June 12 at Long Lake Conservation Center. BWSR staff Jeff Hrubes reported on Clean Water Legacy. LeAnn provided a legislative report. Six resolutions were submitted and approved. Next meeting is September 26-27 in Two Harbors.

Area 4 – Area meeting was last week. Three resolutions passed with one on water quality trading, one to explore having NPEA staff being BWSR staff, and one on invasive species. Sunderland was in attendance. BWSR staff Dave Weirens gave a very thorough legislative summary. Meeting was followed by a tour of a green building and a bio-retention project.

Area 5 – Area meeting last Thursday. Three resolutions passed. DNR gave a presentation on Heron Lake, the wildlife habitat and other issues. Members of the public unexpectedly paid registration and attended the Area meeting and handed out literature about the controversial issues surrounding Heron Lake, such as phosphorous levels. The meeting was followed by a bus tour to Schumacher's Nursery which supplies many districts with trees.

Area 6 – Area meeting was last week with 55 in attendance. Two resolutions were approved. BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke made a presentation. LeAnn along with area producer Lawrence Sukalski gave a presentation on their involvement in the Governor's Conservation Legacy Council. On July 11 LCCMR will be touring Renville County and Kelly will be in attendance to interact with the legislators. Kelly also reported on convention planning and commended Vanney on her work with that.

Area 7 – Thom Peterson with Farmers Union, Jeff Broberg, and Dave Frederickson from Sen. Amy Klobuchar's office were present to participate in a round table discussion on the Conservation Title of the federal Farm Bill. Fifteen resolutions were presented and approximately twelve were approved.

Area 8 – The meeting was held June 1st in Bemidji and included resolutions and a report from BWSR staff on the legislative session. All districts in the Area were represented at the Area meeting. Schulz also reported that he attended a meeting conducted by Congressman Oberstar regarding the Clean Water Act and wetland regulations.

6. Governor's Conservation Legacy Council Recommendations – LeAnn Buck
Buck provided a presentation on the Conservation Legacy Council. She was appointed by Governor Pawlenty to serve on the Council. The council had citizen and legislative members and met over from December 2006- April 2007 and presented a final report to the Governor in May. Pederson commended her on all her work with the project and other board members provided comments.
7. Executive Director's Report – LeAnn Buck
 - a. Website Proposal. Buck reviewed a proposal to BWSR for MASWCD to provide information and training to districts regarding web sites. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Lingbeek, to approve implementation of the proposal subject to final approval from the BWSR board. Motion carried.
 - b. Freedom of Information/Data Privacy Workshops. MASWCD is working with an NRCS contribution agreement to provide workshops for members related to federal and state law pertaining to public data. The sessions will be held August 13 in Brainerd and August 16 in Mankato.
 - c. Livestock Environmental Quality Assurance Consortium Stakeholders. Motion by, Lingbeek, seconded by Kelly to support listing MASWCD as a stakeholder. Motion carried.

Board recessed for lunch at 12:15 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

8. Conservation Title of the Farm Bill
 - a. MASWCD Policy and Congressional Update. Buck distributed a letter from MASWCD to Congressman Collin Peterson outlining MASWCD's policy regarding the conservation provisions of the next Federal Farm Bill. She also reviewed a letter from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to Mr. Peterson, which supported continuing a commitment to locally-led conservation. Comment from Zabel regarding the buffer strip program that Scott and Carver SWCDs implemented through Met Council funds in the early 1990's – the contracts are now up and the district would like to work with the landowners to enroll in CRP, but the acres now do not meet cropping history requirements of CRP. One of the proposals NACD is pursuing with Mr. Peterson includes providing flexibility for situations like this that would give the state FSA director the opportunity to allow enrollment in those situations.
 - b. NACD Board Meeting/Legislative Conference/Urban Workshop. Buck reviewed the agenda for the July 21-24 event that will be held in Washington D.C. MASWCD is encouraging local SWCD representatives to attend. Representatives from MASWCD will include Ken Pederson, Steve Sunderland and LeAnn Buck. Mark Zabel will be the MASWCD representative attending the urban workshop. Mark Zabel, Kathryn Kelly, Loyal Fisher, and Doug Thomas also plan to attend to the legislative conference. .
 - c. Status of Federal Conservation Program in Minnesota. NRCS State Conservationist Bill Hunt provided an update.
 - Minnesota has encumbered over \$26 million in EQIP funds this past year. Over 1500 individual contracts signed. The local workgroup process is very successful. Over 52% of the funds in the state addressed livestock concerns.

Status of Federal Conservation Program in Minnesota. (*continued*)

- Hunt reported that an additional \$1.4 million for emergency water and grazing practices and \$500,000 for tribal concerns was allocated. Area 7 helped to contribute to the driftless initiative in the Whitewater watershed for approximately \$270,000 in conservation practices.
 - Minnesota ranks number 4 in the nation for EQIP funds. NRCS and partners will have are implementing a special nutrient management initiative in Blue Earth River Watershed with side-by-side demos following U of M rec's and someone else's or their own.
 - WRP. Minnesota initially received \$13.8 mil for the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). This is one of three largest WRP allocations in the nation. Because of the new appraisal system being mandated – the yellow book appraisal fewer landowners are signing up for the WRP program. NRCS and BWSR were planning to utilize RIM Reserve funding to partner. The Governor ultimately vetoed the bonding bill which included the RIM Reserve funding. Since no bonding funding will be available for RIM Reserve this year, it is now likely that some of the initial allocation will need to be sent back to national headquarters.
 - Conservation Technical Assistance. There is a tremendous backlog of work for conservation projects. NRCS is partnering with Technical Service Providers and SWCDs. Hunt reported that NRCS provided \$733,000 for contribution agreements to SWCDs this year. Most of the work is for CRP and EQIP. NRCS also provided a contribution agreement to BWSR for \$150,000. Minnesota is number 4 in the nation for program dollars under the Farm Bill, and number 17 in the nation for technical assistance dollars.
 - Hunt reported on that NRCS is maintaining and paying for software licenses for all computers. Computer budget items per computer include maintenance, software, internet access, etc. Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations (Area Conservationists) will be initiating discussion with their local staff and SWCDs about potential reductions of computers.
 - Hunt also updated the board on security issue for common computing in local field offices.
9. Confirm Next Meetings & Adjourn. Next meeting will be August 28 at the MASWCD office, September 25, and November 7. Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.