

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
May 22, 2007  
MASWCD Office, St. Paul, MN

Present: President Ken Pederson, Vice President Steve Sunderland, Area 1 Director Russ Severson, Area 2 Director Ross Aigner, Area 3 Director Merrill Loy, Area 3 Co-Director Roland Cleveland, 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, Sheila Vanney and Stefanie Martinez. Also in attendance: Ann English, NRCS; Judy Erickson, MASWCD Legislative Affairs Specialist; Doug Bos, Rock Land Management/SWCD; Bev Nordby, Mower SWCD; Tom Petersen, Ramsey Conservation District; Doug Thomas, BWSR; Rick Reimer, MACDE President.

1. President Pederson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the board in the pledge of allegiance.
2. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Spitzer, to approve today's agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Zabel, to approve the March 27 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

3. President's Report – Ken Pederson

Pederson welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through housekeeping announcements

- a. Fund Development. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Loy, to provide fiscal authorization to the fund development task force for up to \$1200 and report back to the board at the August or September meeting. Motion carried.
- b. There is a vacancy on the Finance Committee from Area 2. Pederson and Aigner are working on finding another individual to serve.
- c. Pederson reviewed the status of upcoming committee activities for the legislative, finance, resolution, personnel, awards, education committees and fund development activities.
- d. NACD will hold a Summer Legislative Conference and Urban Workshop in July and individuals from Minnesota are encouraged to attend.

Pederson commented about a meeting he had with BWSR Board Conservationist Brian Dwight regarding cooperation with Watershed Districts.

4. Finance Report – Clark Lingbeek

- a. Lingbeek presented the monthly financial report and Pederson accepted subject to annual review.
- b. MASWCD Directors and Officers Insurance. Staff researched insurance coverage for MASWCD board members for liability purposes and presented information to the board. Motion by Loy, seconded by Schulz to accept staff's recommendation for purchasing directors and officers insurance to be effective June 1<sup>st</sup>. Motion carried.

5. NRCS Report – Ann English, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist  
Minnesota NRCS has obligated \$24 of \$26 million in EQIP funds and is optimistic that all funds will be obligated by the deadline. There is uncertainty about whether to request additional funds from national headquarters. WRP – last year there was a change in appraising from ag value to yellow book value, so appraisals are lower now because of potential income from renting to hunters. That has made WRP not as attractive to landowners, but partnerships with Minnesota’s RIM Reserve Program help. Other states have been turning a great deal of WRP funds back because they are not able to obligate the funds. Locally Led/Local Work Groups – English reviewed the local work group process and the rationale behind it, providing flexibility to targeting locally identified resource concerns. Buck noted that at the national level, certain livestock producer groups are concerned that local priority setting and would rather have national priorities. Certain groups have been lobbying the House Ag Subcommittee for changes. Computer Security Background Checks – there is a problem with how to handle individuals that the federal Office of Personnel Management has deemed unsuitable to access the USDA system. Because it is sensitive information, the question becomes how to notify the supervisor/manager with the district about the concern with particular staff without violating that person’s privacy. English also commented about new/beginning farmers – the State Technical Committee is addressing it at today’s meeting. MN has not had anything special for them, even though it’s in the Farm Bill, because of difficulty in defining new/beginning farmer.
6. MASWCD Legislative Report – Judy Erickson, MASWCD Legislative Affairs Specialist.  
Erickson and the board reviewed results of the MASWCD 2007 legislative platform, the legislative session and discussed items that may be raised in next year’s session. The legislature appropriated millions for Clean Water Legacy Act, shifted the funding appropriation for feedlot cost-share from the regular BWSR budget to the Clean Water Legacy appropriations. The legislature created a new cost-share program related to native buffers and a weed cooperative program. Seed money was made available to develop a new RIM Clean Energy easement program. Other policy changes include the requirement for SWCDs to have websites and SWCD board election requirements. Items not funded include a supplemental bonding bill which included RIM reserve funding to leverage federal Wetland Reserve Program funding and SWCD general service grants. Also, language was not adopted once again related to the constitutional dedication for the outdoors, clean water, parks and trails, and the arts. The 2008 session will start in February and will focus on capitol improvement projects (bonding bill).
7. Executive Director’s Report – LeAnn Buck
  - a. Buck updated the board about action on the board’s priority issues.
  - b. MASWCD is sponsoring Supervisor Training for newly elected board members on June 20-21, 2007.

- c. Buck updated the board on the status of the five previous leadership programs. The MASWCD Board identified SWCD policy topics for the current program members to address during their cohort leadership program. Following the completion of the program, reports and/or recommendation will be forwarded to the board. The sixth leadership program will start August 2007. The board will need to address future SWCD issues to assign for the next working group.
- d. Buck reviewed a response from BWSR chair Randy Kramer regarding 2006 Resolution No. 25 and adjusting the make-up of BWSR Board regarding metro vs. Area 4.
- e. Buck reviewed with the board correspondence with U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chair Representative Collin Peterson regarding the conservation title of the Farm Bill. MASWCD is working closely with NACD related to federal policy issues.

*Board recessed for lunch at 12:30 and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.*

8. Board Priority: Local Governance Models – Doug Bos (Rock Land Management/SWCD); Bev Nordby (Mower SWCD & newly formed Cedar River Watershed District); & Tom Petersen (Ramsey Conservation District)  
Bos, Nordby and Petersen gave presentations and answered questions regarding their somewhat unique governance structures at the local level.
9. SWCD Program Policy Update – Doug Thomas, BWSR Assistant Director  
Thomas updated the board on several issues that were outcomes from the 2007 legislative session. Items include: Local Water Management Accountability; Wetland Conservation Act Policy; Public Drainage Ditch Buffer; New Native Vegetation Cost Share /Forestry Cost Share Docket; RIM Reserve Energy Proposal; and General Service Grants and SWCD Website Requirement. BWSR will be conducting several work groups to address policy items. The MASWCD will work closely with BWSR on providing input on the issues and provide members to serve on work groups.
10. 2009 Annual Convention Site Selection.  
Vannev presented convention site proposals and information to the board and discussion followed. Motion by Aigner, seconded by Spitzer that the 2009 event be held in Duluth and hosted by Area 2. Motion carried.
11. MACDE Report – Rick Reimer, MACDE President  
Reimer discussed the envirothon, wetland certification and training, Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE) web site, and the MACDE summer session.
12. Schedule Next Meeting & Adjourn. Next meeting will be June 26, no meeting in July, August 28, September 25, and November 7. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.