

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
March 25, 2008
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 4 Director Mark Zabel, Secretary/Treasurer and Area 5 Director Clark Lingbeek, Area 6 Co-Director Bill Hohenstein, Area 7 Director Rudie Spitzer, Area 8 Director Tom Schulz; MASWCD Assistant Director Sheila Vanney. Also in attendance: MASWCD Legislative Affairs Specialist Judy Erickson, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist Ann English, Justin Fay with Vote Yes Minnesota, MACDE President Rick Reimer.

Absent: Area 6 Director Kathryn Kelly.

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 Spitzer, seconded by Schulz, to approve today's agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Spitzer, seconded by Loy, to approve the February 25 minutes with additions. Motion carried.
3. President's Report – Ken Pederson, MASWCD President
 - a. Pederson noted that National Association of Conservation Districts Legislative Conference will be held in July. Pederson and Sunderland will be attending. The employees' association is offering a scholarship to offset costs of an individual attending.
 - b. Other items of note included Pederson's attendance at an Area 1 Employees' meeting at the end of February and attendance at a Red River Watershed Management Board Meeting earlier this month. As a member of Extension's Citizen Advisory Board, Extension will be providing Buck with the opportunity to attend an April conference in DC. Buck is absent from today's meeting to attend funerals, one of which is for Marilyn Schafer, who passed away on Saturday, March 22. Marilyn was MASWCD Auxiliary President from 1995-1996. Marilyn's husband Jim was MASWCD President and still serves as a Renville SWCD Supervisor.
4. Finance Report – Clark Lingbeek, MASWCD Secretary/Treasurer
 - a. Lingbeek presented the monthly financial report. Pederson accepted subject to annual review.
 - b. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Severson, to accept requests from Aitkin and Mille Lacs to pay dues on installment basis. Motion carried. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Zabel, to provide Beltrami SWCD with a hardship designation and allow the district to pay half of their assigned dues payment while maintaining full membership benefits, with the expectation that next year they will provide full payment of dues. Motion carried with dissenting vote from Spitzer. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Loy, to provide Marshall-Beltrami SWCD with a hardship designation and allow the district to pay \$500 toward membership dues while maintaining full membership benefits. Motion carried.
5. MASWCD 2007 Emergency Resolution #1 – Steve Sunderland, MASWCD Policy Committee
 - a. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Aigner, that the MASWCD Board of Directors endorses the proposed eight Technical Service Areas as developed by the Conservation Technical Assistance Committee on March 12, 2008. The proposal changes the Technical Service Areas from 11 to 8 regions and still provides statewide coverage. Motion carried. This endorsement does not address specific grant allocations. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Zabel, to recommend equalization of assets to extent possible and to extent that liquid assets be allocated among counties in current TSAs to transfer to new TSAs. Motion carried.

5. MASWCD 2007 Emergency Resolution #1 – Steve Sunderland, MASWCD Policy Committee
(continued)
 - b. Board members discussed whether MASWCD governance areas should change if TSA areas change, so the two match-up. Comment from Aigner that Area 2 discussed this at their last meeting and they would oppose such a change. Consensus of board members was to put out a straw-man resolution at the summer Area meetings to get a feeling from the membership statewide about whether to change MASWCD areas contingent on BWSR approval of changes in TSA areas.

Board members reviewed the results of Resolution Prioritization conducted by the MASWCD Policy Committee. The prioritization process included a tiered process. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Hohenstein, to adopt the Resolution Prioritization, with resolution #32 moved (“Base Acres” to include Hay) to tier 3. Motion carried.

6. Legislative Update – Judy Erickson, MASWCD Legislative Affairs Specialist
Erickson provided an update on activities at the legislature, including debate over the size of the bonding bill.
7. Campaign for Dedicated Funding – Justin Fay, Vote Yes Minnesota
Fay presented information and marketing materials on the campaign. Motion by Zabel, seconded by Schulz, that MASWCD supports the Vote Yes for Minnesota campaign. Motion carried.
8. Executive Director’s Report – Sheila Vanney, MASWCD Assistant Director, sitting in for MASWCD Executive Director LeAnn Buck
Vanney reported that she will be preparing an SWCD guide to the 2008 elections process, which will include information and materials to assist district’s in communicating with the public about this year’s elections. Vanney asked for input for the Board. Schulz noted that districts should coordinate their announcements in local newspapers, or alert districts in their area if providing materials for larger papers. Vanney noted that Buck initiated a joint memo with the Board of Water and Soil Resources this past fall to remind districts about the option in statute for delineating their nomination district boundaries to match county commissioner boundaries and have SWCD Supervisors elected by nomination districts. Board members discussed other issues related to SWCD elections and came to the consensus that the MASWCD Policy Committee should meet with State Representative Hansen, either at the regularly scheduled committee meeting in August, or at a separate meeting. Vanney then reviewed with the board the MASWCD 2008 Work Plan and progress made to date.
9. MASWCD Washington DC Leadership Program – Sheila Vanney, MASWCD Assistant Director
Vanney reported on the latest session of the MASWCD Leadership Institute which took place in Washington D.C. Approximately 30 program participants took part in the 5-day educational experience which had the focus of civic leadership, with the goal of helping the participants become more fluent in navigating federal governmental systems and more informed about how policy development works on the national level. The group kept up a full schedule, usually from early in the morning until late in the evening, visiting a broad spectrum of organizations and representatives. The process of passing the current Farm Bill in its final stages of development was of particular interest to the group. The group met with folks from the USDA about the status of the conservation and energy titles of the Farm Bill. Participants also met with aids of our senators and all of the congressmen, including longer visits with Congressmen Colin Peterson and Jim Oberstar. Other highlights included meetings with organizations like the American Farm Bureau, the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Protection Agency. The group also met with staff with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and staff with the Rural Policy Research Institute.

10. Board Self Evaluation Summary – Steve Sunderland, MASWCD Personnel Committee
Sunderland reviewed the results of the board member self-evaluations.
11. Area Directors' Reports
Area Directors reported on activities taking place within their Areas, including recent and upcoming Area meetings.
12. NRCS Report – Ann English, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist
English reported on the CSP sign-up in the Thief River Watershed, open enrollement, and Earth Day activities in the Driftless Area.
13. MACDE Report – Rick Reimer, MACDE President
Reimer discussed the MACDE scholarship for attending the NACD Legislative Conference in July. He also reported on MACDE's June summer conference, an upcoming forestry conference, a shallow lakes forum, SWCD web sites, computers, Area Envirothons and the Livestock Environmental Quality Assurance program.
14. Meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m. The next meeting will be held May 20, 2008 at the MASWCD office in St. Paul.