

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
May 26, 2009
MASWCD Office, St. Paul, MN

Present: President Steve Sunderland, Vice President & Area 6 Director Kathryn Kelly, Area 1 Director Ross Aigner, Interim Area 2 Director Ralph Peterson, Area 3 Director Merrill Loy, Area 4 Director Mark Zabel, Secretary Treasurer & Area 5 Director Clark Lingbeek, Area 7 Director Bob Borchert, Area 8 Director Tom Schulz; MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck and Sheila Vanney; MACDE President Felicia Brockoff.

1. President Sunderland called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the board in the pledge of allegiance.
2. Motion by Peterson, seconded by Kelly, to approve the board meeting agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Loy, seconded by Borchert, to approve the March 24 board meeting minutes. Motion carried.
3. President's Report.
 - a. Sunderland reported that he attended a DNR celebration on the one billionth seedling grown by Minnesota's state forest nurseries in Wadena County.
 - b. Sunderland and Buck attended an award ceremony sponsored by the Minnesota Environmental Initiative. MASWCD, Board of Water and Soil Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Ducks Unlimited were presented with MEI's 2009 Partnership of the Year Award for partnering on the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve - Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Approximately 9,000 acres of wetlands and upland are being restored across the state based on the 2009 partnership work with private landowners.
 - c. Sunderland led a board discussion about the Conservation Technical Assistance Committee (CTAC) and having an MASWCD representative on the committee. It was decided that Merrill Loy will be the MASWCD's representative to the CTAC and Bob Borchert will be the alternate.
4. Finance Report.
 - a. Lingbeek reviewed the monthly financial report and Sunderland accepted subject to annual review.
 - b. Lingbeek discussed with the board the status of membership dues payments. The finance committee held a conference call on May 15, 2009 and Lingbeek presented the committee's recommendations. Motion by Lingbeek, seconded by Borchert, to accept the committee's recommendations related to membership dues. Discussion took place about this being the sixth year in a row of Beltrami's hardship status. Motion carried.
 - c. Sunderland posed question of whether it is MASWCD's role to suggest districts in certain situations reorganize, consolidate, etc. Buck discussed possibly approaching BWSR to provide grant incentives for reorganization. It was noted that MASWCD needs to meet with Association of Minnesota Counties, association to association. Loy commented that it's time to reconsider the formula for assessing dues to make sure it is still reflective of the times.
5. Executive Director's Report.
 - a. Buck reviewed MASWCD's 2009 Priorities and Work Plan. Regarding the item on connecting with decision makers, Zabel noted he may possibly attend National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) legislative conference in July.
 - b. Buck discussed coordinated non-point implementation across SWCD boundaries. In the St. Croix Watershed, she met with SWCD and BWSR staff. The St. Croix basin includes 9 SWCDs. They're thinking about entering into joint powers agreement with the goal of applying for clean water legacy grants. At the meeting, BWSR noted that it may be more administratively efficient

to give one very large grant to a large watershed area/group of SWCDs. Similar JPA's exist already such as the Minnesota River Basin, led by county commissioners and SWCD supervisors; the Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance consists of county commissioners, county local water management staff, SWCD supervisors and SWCD employees; the Redwood Cottonwood River Control Area is led by county commissioners and SWCD supervisors. Lingbeek commented that he thinks it is beneficial to have county commissioners on those organizations to see the benefits first hand. Sunderland posed for discussion the question of whether this is a model for which we want to have some policy.

- c. MASWCD Board Priority – Forestry Easement. A group of districts and BWSR are looking at putting together a proposal for an easement program designed for forest land. Schulz and Buck are attending the meetings to assist with the development of the easement criteria.
 - d. MASWCD Policy Correspondence Non-Invasive & Native Plants. Buck presented a draft memo to districts on this issue. Motion by Zabel, seconded by Schulz, to support sending this memo to reinforce existing policy for the association. Motion carried.
 - e. The SWCD Orientation and Refresher Conference will be held 14 & 15 at the St. Cloud Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites. MCIT has provided written guidance on compliance with the new federal requirements and the insurance implications. Buck recently attended a Public Issues Leadership Development Conference. Buck updated the board on the MASWCD/Science Museum Partnership. Buck noted that Area Directors interested in having the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC) at upcoming Area Meetings should contact Len Price, their executive director. The legislature appropriated funding to BWSR for the MCC to work on local SWCD and other LGU conservation projects.
6. Proposed Changes to Minnesota Rules Chapter 8420, Wetland Conservation – Sheila Vanney. Vanney reported on the status of the proposed rules and comments MASWCD submitted to the Administrative Law Judge.
 7. Legislative Update – Judy Erickson. Erickson reported on the 2009 MASWCD Legislative Platform items addressed during the legislative session, including SWCD Funding, Dedicated Funding, RIM Reserve/WRP, and Green Acres. Approximately \$38 million over the next biennium has been allocated to BWSR and LGUs including Soil & Water Conservation Districts for clean water funding. The MASWCD worked closely with a larger coalition to address a comprehensive approach for clean water appropriations. The Legislature adopted the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council's recommendation for approximately \$9 million for the RIM Reserve/Wetland Reserve Program administered locally by SWCDs and NRCS. The State has a \$6 billion fund deficit and the Association was also successful and limited reductions to SWCD general service grants and the local county water management program.
 8. MN Association of Conservation District Employees Report – Felicia Brockoff, President Brockoff reported on activities of the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees. The MACDE board is providing a scholarship to Grant Pearson with the Stearns SWCD to cover his costs of attending the NACD Legislative Conference in July.
 9. SWCDs and Knowing Your Worth: local, State and Federal Conservation - John Nicholson, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Director (SE MN) Nicholson conducted a presentation on the value of SWCDs and ways districts can articulate that value to their counties and other partners. Nicholson conducted a similar presentation at a recent meeting of the Southeast Area/Area 7 at the request of Southeast Area/Area 7 Director Bob Borchert. Other NRCS staff may be able to present at other Area meetings. Area Directors should contact their NRCS area staff if interested in obtaining information regarding leveraging federal funding.

10. Pre-positioning Districts for County Budget Workshops - Steve Woods BWSR Assistant Director
Woods discussed information and resources that SWCDs can use in developing their budget proposals. He noted that BWSR board conservationists will be meeting with SWCD managers on these issues. Woods also commented on the effectiveness of the presentation provided by Nicholson and indicated BWSR staff may be available to assist in providing that message at Area meetings. Woods offered to attend area meetings to present BWSR budget and county budget information to MASWCD members.
11. Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council – Bill Becker, LOHC Executive Director
Becker provided information about this first year of grant proposals for the dedicated funds of the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. He also provided insight toward future planning efforts, priorities and grant proposal processes.
12. Motion by Zabel, seconded by Aigner, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m. The next board of directors meeting will be held July 14 at 9:30 a.m., in conjunction with the SWCD Orientation and Refresher Conference in St. Cloud.