

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2010
MASWCD Office, St. Paul, MN

Present: President Steve Sunderland, Vice President & South Central Area 6 Director Dr. Kathryn Kelly, Northwest Area 1 Director Ross Aigner, West Central Area 2 Director Ralph Peterson, Metropolitan Area 4 Director Mark Zabel, Southwest Area 5 Director Ian Cunningham, Southeast Area 7 Director Bob Borchert, Secretary/Treasurer and North Central Area 8 Director Tom Schulz; MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck, Sheila Vanney, and Stefanie Martinez; Tim Koehler and Gloria Nelson, NRCS; Steve Woods, BWSR.
Absent: Northeast Area 3 Director Kurt Beckstrom.

1. President Sunderland called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Borchert, seconded by Zabel, to approve today's meeting agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Kelly, seconded by Peterson, to approve the May 25 meeting minutes. Motion carried.
2. President's Report
 - a. NACD Board Meeting & Washington DC Conference. Sunderland attended the National Association of Conservation District's (NACD's) Legislative Conference, July 18-21. The event was held in Washington D.C. USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack spoke at the conference. Vanney attended as well, along with Rock SWCD employee Doug Bos. Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE) provided a scholarship to support Bos's attendance. MASWCD attended meetings with members of Minnesota's Congressional delegation to discuss federal conservation issues of interest to SWCDs, including technical assistance. Sunderland serves as MASWCD's representative to the NACD Board, as well as the North Central Region Chair. He attended the NACD Board meeting and North Central regional meeting held in conjunction with the conference.
 - b. Legislative Affairs Transition. Sunderland noted that during the May 25, 2010 MASWCD Board meeting, Judy Erickson announced that she will be stepping down as the MASWCD Legislative Affairs Specialist. Her position was a contract position that was renewed annually. The contract position was only applicable for a limited number of months in conjunction with the legislative session. As a contract lobbyist, Judy also had contracts with other organizations.

The MASWCD Executive Committee conducted a conference call on June 24, 2010 to discuss the transition for legislative affairs. The MASWCD Executive Committee is recommending Sheila Vanney, MASWCD Assistant Director, serve as the lead legislative affairs staff. Her job description and salary would be changed to reflect the staff role related to legislative affairs. Her salary would increase to reflect the additional work responsibility.

The recommendation is based on utilizing existing staff with experience with current association policy issues. Vanney has also received her law degree and has completed courses pertaining to legislative and public policy issues.

Motion by Zabel, seconded by Aigner, to approve the transition of legislative affairs as recommended by the Executive Committee. Motion carried.
3. Finance Report
 - a. Monthly Financial Report. Schulz presented the monthly financial report and Sunderland accepted subject to review.
 - b. 2010-2011 Proposed Budget. As an informational item, Schulz presented a draft MASWCD budget for 2010-2011, which was developed by the Finance Committee and their meeting yesterday, August 9, 2010. Board members discussed. It was noted that membership dues to districts have not increased since 2005. The budget has been operating in the red the last few years by drawing on operating reserves. However, concern was expressed that this is not a sustainable budget scenario and a minor increase to dues may need to be considered. A final proposed budget will be acted on by the board at the September 14, 2010 board meeting. Once the board adopts a draft budget, it is then forwarded to the membership for their review. This will be done in advance of September and November area meetings. The draft budget is a business item during the December 2010 annual business meeting and is voted on by the membership.

4. Great Lakes Committee Report – Tom Schulz, MN Representative

Schulz provided a written and verbal report of his participation in a Great Lakes Committee meeting that was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
5. Water Summit Overview and Next Steps – Steve Sunderland & Kathryn Kelly

MASWCD, the Association of MN Counties (AMC), and the MN Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) executive board members have been meeting monthly to discuss various water management issues. Through this effort, a Local Government Roundtable has been formed. The shared vision is to manage water resources in such ways as to effectively balance the sometimes competing interests of water quality, water quantity, habitat, and resource utilization. The organizations are committed to collaborative efforts with the intent of increasing efficiencies and effectiveness among organizations that share goals, objectives, and responsibilities.

The three Associations conducted a Water Management Summit for Local Governments on Monday, July 12, 2010 at Kelly Inn, St. Cloud. This provided a forum for members to discuss the current state of water management and where our members think it needs to go in the future. Jay Kiedrowski served as the keynote speaker for the event. Kiedrowski is a senior fellow for the Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Approximately 374 people registered for the event. Since the summit, one roundtable meeting has been conducted with the officers from each Association to start the process for determining next steps.
6. Executive Director’s Report - LeAnn Buck
 - a. Overview of Board’s 2010 Priority Issues. Buck provided an overview of the priorities established by the board earlier this year, and progress to date.
 - b. Economic Data for Federal & State Cost Share. Buck is working with NRCS to collect information on the positive economic impact that federal and state cost-share dollars provide.
 - c. NACD Farm Bill Task Force. Buck has been asked by NACD to serve on their Farm Bill Task Force. She has agreed to participate. The task force will be conducting conference calls and exchanging e-mails relating to the policy development of the Conservation Title of the next Farm Bill.
 - d. Resolution/Policy Committee Meeting August 23 & 24. The Resolution/Policy Committee will be meeting later this month to review the resolutions submitted by the Areas for the 2010 resolution process. The committee will also be addressing other current and emerging policy issues, and will be providing recommendations to the board at the September 14, 2010 board meeting.
 - e. 2009 Resolution #16 Forestry Easement & Tree Team Meeting. Buck reported on meetings that have been held to discuss ways to take action on this resolution to establish a forestry easement program. A small group of SWCD staff and supervisors have provided input toward the development of a pilot easement program currently titled, “Shallow Lake Shoreland Protection: Wild Rice Lakes.” The pilot program is being submitted to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for funding and would include Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca and Wadena SWCDs. The hope is that if the pilot gets off the ground and is successful, it could open the door to a more expansive forestry easement program in the future.

Motion by Schulz, seconded by Borchert, that the Resolution/Policy Committee and/or the Legislative Committee consider including the “Shallow Lake Shoreland Protection: Wild Rice Lakes” easement proposal in the MASWCD legislative platform and policy initiatives, with an awareness of both bonding dollars and LSOHC funds as possible ways of funding these protection easements. Motion carried.

 - f. Update: MASWCD Grant Flexibility Request to BWSR. Buck updated the board on the request MASWCD sent to BWSR seeking flexibility for districts in where cuts are taken in their grants. A July 8 letter was received from John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director, stating the BWSR board took action on this request at their June 23, 2010 meeting and approved a board resolution stating that, “for the Comprehensive Local Water Management, Wetland Conservation Act, and DNR Shoreland Programs, Local Government Units will have the flexibility of using allocated funds to support the implementation of these programs as determined by the grantee.” Guidance and reporting on the use of the flexible

FY2011 NRBG funds will be developed and communicated to grantees prior to the February 1, 2011 reporting deadline.

- g. Fund Development. Buck gave an update on fund development activities and the partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Foundation.
- h. Envirothon Update. Vanney reported on the Minnesota State Envirothon program for high school students, which is coordinated by SWCD employees and BWSR employees. For several years, MASWCD has supported the state event with a monetary contribution of \$3,000 from auction proceeds received during the live and silent auctions held at the MASWCD annual convention.

A meeting of the Area Envirothon coordinators and BWSR staff was held August 5, 2010. BWSR communicated at that time that due to budgetary issues and cut-backs in staff, they will no longer be able to administer the program. At the meeting, Judy Johnston from Stevens SWCD indicated that her board would support her taking on the role of state Envirothon coordinator if funding was secured for her time and expenses. There is the possibility that a large corporate sponsor might be lined-up to cover these costs.

Vanney also reported that the team that won the Minnesota State Envirothon went on to compete at the Canon Envirothon which was held the first week of August at California State University in Fresno, California. Minnesota's team, from Rushford Peterson High School in Southeast Minnesota, took third place. Teams from 45 States and 9 Canadian Provinces competed in the event.

7. NRCS Update – Tim Koehler & Gloria Larson, NRCS

Tim Koehler, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, provided an update to the board on visits the State Conservationist, Don Baloun, has been making to local SWCD offices across the state, funding available for EQIP contribution agreements, and possible funding for contribution agreements for CRP.

Gloria Larson, NRCS Human Resources Officer, provided information on the LincPass program and upcoming deadlines for SWCD employee enrollment.

8. BWSR Report – Steve Woods

Steve Woods, BWSR Assistant Director, provided information to the board on BWSR Board FY2011 SWCD Grant Allocations including the native buffer cost share grants, the state cost share base grants, general service grants, easement service grants, and the nonpoint engineering program. Woods updated the board on the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy. Woods provide an overview of the Minnesota Water Sustainability Framework Synthesis Team and overall process. In 2009, the legislature appropriated \$750,000 for the University of Minnesota's Water Resource Center to create a comprehensive, 25-year framework for the management of Minnesota's water resources. Several working committees, a synthesis team and a headwaters team have been created to develop a plan. The plan, titled "Minnesota Water Sustainability Framework," will be presented for recommendation to the legislature in January of 2011.

9. Motion by Kelly, seconded by Borchert, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m. The next board of directors meeting will be held September 14 at the Association office in St. Paul.