

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
March 22, 2011
St. Cloud, Minnesota

Present: President Dr. Kathryn Kelly, Vice President Mark Zabel, Northwest Area 1 Director Ross Aigner, West Central Area 2 Co-Director Mark Weimerskirch, Northeast Area 3 Director Kurt Beckstrom, Metropolitan Area 4 Director Mary Wetter, Southwest Area 5 Director Ian Cunningham, South Central Area 6 Director Loyal Fisher, Southeast Area 7 Director Ed McNamara, North Central Area 8 Director Tom Schulz, MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck, NRCS State Conservationist Don Baloun, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist John Beckwith. Absent: West Central Area 2 Director Ralph Peterson

1. Kathryn Kelly called the meeting to order at 9:55 a.m. and led with the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Beckstrom, seconded by Schulz to approve the agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Cunningham, seconded by Aigner to approve the February 16, 2011 board meeting minutes with one minor change to replace "Wright" with "Wetter". Motion carried.
2. President's Report – Kathryn Kelly reported that the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) North Central Region is providing a one-time \$400 scholarship for State Associations to send one district board member to an NACD meeting – either the summer 2011 Legislative Conference in Washington, DC or the 2012 NACD Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, NV. The only qualification set by the region board is that the board member recipient has never attended a prior NACD meeting. *Ed McNamara and Mark Weimerskirch arrived at 10:05 a.m.* Motion by Cunningham, seconded by Schulz, to offer the NACD North Central \$400 scholarship for the 2011 NACD Spring Legislative Conference or the 2012 NACD Annual meeting for one board member with priority to a current state association board member, second priority to a area co-director, third priority for other area officers and if no area officers are interested open eligibility to member SWCD supervisors; the MASWCD would also contribute additional funding to cover the conference registration fee if not covered by the \$400 scholarship. Motion carried.
3. Finance Report – Tom Schulz reported on the MASWCD financial statement. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Beckstrom, to approve the February 28, 2011 finance statement, subject to annual review. Motion carried. Schulz reported on the Finance Committee February 27, 2011 conference call to review the dues status, district request for hardships and their financial statements. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Beckstrom, for MASWCD to adopt the Finance Committee recommendations to accept the Aitkin SWCD, Kanabec SWCD and Steele SWCD dues installment schedules; and hardship designations be granted to Beltrami, Crow Wing, Hennepin, Isanti and Mahnommen at rates recommended by the Finance Committee. Motion carried. Motion by Schulz, seconded by McNamara, for the finance committee to use the BWSR approved balance sheets, previous planned and actual financial statements, and the current year projection required for each SWCDs as the financial information to be reviewed by the finance committee for hardship designations. Motion by carried. Schulz reported that the committee briefly discussed area budget procedures including transparency, accountability, uniformity and timeliness. The committee will continue discussion during the next finance committee meeting and forward recommendations for the board consideration. Motion by Cunningham, seconded by Aigner, for MASWCD to pay \$300 for the NACD North Central Dues. Motion carried.
4. NRCS Report – NRCS State Conservationist Don Baloun and NRCS Assistant State Conservationist John Beckwith updated the board on various NRCS activities. Baloun has visited all 82 NRCS field offices and met with local SWCD Board members and staff during the field visits. Currently, the federal government is operating under a continuing resolution which means they have short-term

extension on their budget to avoid a federal government shut down for the remainder of this federal fiscal year. Discussion also included a focus on structure practices, watershed planning, watershed operations and watershed rehab projects. Discussion included the trend to focus on the increased number of national initiatives for watershed areas including the Red River, Mississippi and the Great Lakes. Beckwith reported that current U.S. House proposals include the potential elimination of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) programs. This would prevent NRCS to provide staffing and assistance to the ten RC&D councils in Minnesota. SWCD Supervisors and County Commissioners serve on the RC&D boards and if federal funding for administration is eliminated, the councils will have to determine their existences or transitions issues as non-profits. NRCS, Farm Service Agency, USDA Rural Development and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture conducted a roundtable discussion to provide congressional offices and key partners on updates and initiatives related to their agencies. MASWCD and BWSR participate in the meetings.

5. Legislative Committee Report – LeAnn Buck reported on the status of the MASWCD Legislative platform adopted by the board earlier this year. Currently, the house and senate are preparing their omnibus finance bills for natural resource funding. The omnibus bills include funding for SWCD and BWSR programs. The board discussed the governor’s recommendations during the February board meeting. For the Conservation Delivery grants the Governor’s budget proposal held these grants harmless; the House proposes a 15% cut; and the Senate proposes a 6% cut. For the Natural Resources Block Grant the Gov’s budget proposal held these grants harmless; the House proposes a 15% cut; and the Senate proposes a 6% cut. MASWCD President Kathryn Kelly and Renville SWCD Tom Kalahar staff testified during the House Natural Resources committee the night before on the implications to SWCD operations. MASWCD will testify during the Senate hearing later this evening. Ultimately the budgets will need to go to conference committee to work out the differences and then forwarded to the Governor where the various omnibus bills, including the environment and natural resources may be vetoed. Discussion also included the 2009 Resolution No. 15 “State Nurseries to Remain Open” by No. St. Louis SWCD. Currently the Senate has legislation that proposed to close the nurseries by the end of this fiscal year, June 30, 2011. MASWCD has sent a letter stating our Association’s policy to DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr. MASWCD providing legislative updates to our members.
6. Executive Director’s Report - LeAnn Buck reported that she attended a meeting with Don Baloun, Rep. Collin Peterson, Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Franken, and NRCS Chief David White related to Peterson’s announcement for policy development related to a Red River Valley initiative and the potential to utilize NRCS programs including the Wetland Reserve Program for flood reduction projects. MASWCD forwarded the board’s policy recommendations related to the roundtable principles to Association of Minnesota Counties and the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts. All three Associations have adopted the principles and information will be communicated to the members. The Roundtable members have also prepared joint statement of principles related to the Clean Water amendment funds. Following the board retreat in February, Buck compiled the Association’s work plan and highlighted the priorities developed by the board of directors. Buck reported that Association is assisting SWCD staff with seeking donations and work related to the State Envirothon student competition that will be held May 16 in Duluth. The Association also completed the contribution agreement with NRCS and SWCDs related to the completion of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plans.

Lunch

7. Board Priority: SWCD Self Assessment – Loyal Fisher provided the board with an update on the development of a SWCD self assessment tool for SWCDs to increase district capacity. A work group

has been identified and MASWCD will also work with Don Buckhout, BWSR staff that currently oversees the Performance Review and Assessments Program (PRAP). This priority is based on a resolution passed by the membership at the annual meeting and the board's commitment to building capacity. Buck also reported on correspondence received by the Anoka CD related to the capacity score sheet. The Awards Committee will be assigned to work on recommendations for the continuation and/or developing a process for identifying a "SWCD of the Year".

8. Board Priority: Assessment of Collaboration with Other Organizations – LeAnn Buck provided the board with a comprehensive list of the various and partners and organizations that the Association board and staff work with on a regular basis. The list also includes the MASWCD appointments of SWCD representatives serving on various agency work groups. As per the board discussion during the January board meeting, MASWCD board members and staff will be meeting with BWSR Grant Committee members later this year. The Association has also been asked to serve on a work group with U of M Water Resources Center.
9. Board Priority: Enhancing MASWCD Budget Fund Development Task Force – Kathryn Kelly reported on the next steps for the Fund Development Task Force. Members include Ross Aigner, Steve Sunderland and Ken Pederson. Motion by Fisher, seconded by Schulz to have Aigner to serve as the chair. Motion carried. Kelly will need to confirm task force members, including past presidents, at the next board of directors meeting. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Cunningham, to allocate 40% of the \$2500 task force budget for the fund development task force to utilize for travel expenses. Motion carried.
10. Area Directors' Reports – Zabel and Buck attended the MPCA Clean Water Act: Category 4B Meeting on March 10. Representatives from EPA provided an overview on Section 303D Clean Water Act requirements and alternatives for Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) categories. This includes the documentation for reasonable assurance requirements which may be difficult to establish especially for non-regulated activities. MPCA staff will be working to outline a process for Minnesota. Cunningham reported on the State Technical Committee meeting on March 17. During the meeting, it was reported that Minnesota has one of the largest Wetland Reserve Program allocation in the nation because of our state's partnership with SWCDs/BWSR and the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program. The state technical committee also discussed the potential for a NRCS Grazing Reserve easement program. Board members provided updates for their area meetings.
11. The board confirmed the next meeting date on May 24, 2011. The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.