

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
May 24, 2011
MASWCD Office - St. Paul, Minnesota

Present: President Dr. Kathryn Kelly, Vice President Mark Zabel, Northwest Area 1 Director Ross Aigner, West Central Area 2 Director Ralph Peterson, Northeast Area 3 Co-Director Wayne Anderson, 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 and Sheila Vanney, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist John Beckwith, BWSR Assistant Director Steve Woods, BWSR Performance Review and Assistance staff Don Buckhout, Carver SWCD staff Felicia Brockoff, Anoka CD supervisors Vici Nass and Mary Jo Truchon. Absent: Northeast Area 3 Director Kurt Beckstrom.

1. Dr. Kathryn Kelly called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led with the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Wetter to approve the agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Cunningham, seconded by Wetter to approve the March 22, 2011 board meeting minutes with a grammatical change. Motion carried.
2. President's Report – Dr. Kathryn Kelly
 - a. MASWCD Representation at Earth Day Event & MN Waters Conference. Kelly represented MASWCD at these events and reported on the activities and networking.
 - b. NACD North Central Conference Scholarship (Action Item). The National Association of Conservation District (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. At the March 22 board meeting the decision was made 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. Kelly and Buck reviewed which members of the MASWCD would be eligible for the scholarship. No MASWCD board members expressed availability to attend the 2011 NACD Spring Legislative Conference, but McNamara noted he may be interested in attending the 2012 NACD Annual meeting.
 - c. NACD Summer Board Meeting July 15-17 & Legislative Conference July 17-19. Zabel and Steve Sunderland will be attending and will report back at the next MASWCD board meeting.
 - d. NACD Delegates Designation Information. Kelly and Buck reviewed with the board the language from the MASWCD bylaws relating to MASWCD designation of delegates to the NACD board. They also shared information from a few other state associations on how they make these designations.
3. Finance Report – Tom Schulz reported on the monthly MASWCD financial statement. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Loyal, to approve subject to annual review. Motion carried. Schulz also provided an update on dues payments. Motion by Anderson, seconded by Aigner, to adopt accounts receivable summary relating to dues payments. Motion carried.
4. Resolution Committee, Resolution Guidelines & Considerations – Mark Zabel
With Area resolutions meetings coming up in June, Zabel encouraged Area Directors to make sure that resolutions passed out of their Areas provide clear language and direction as to the purpose of the resolution, who is being asked to act and how, when action is needed/a timeline, as well as where geographically the resolution is focused.

5. MASWCD Request to Minnesota Forest Resources Council & Forest Research; Forest Land Essential for Economic & Environmental Health Resolution by Cass SWCD - Tom Schulz (Action Item)
A memo and a draft letter were presented to board members relating to follow up on a 2009 resolution passed by the membership, authored by Cass SWCD. Motion by Schulz, seconded by Anderson, that MASWCD send correspondence to the Minnesota Forest Resources Council related to two items: 1. the need for increasing research related to the preservation of large forestry tracts and their economic and environmental impacts (Cass SWCD 2009 Resolution); and 2. the need for increasing research for water quality and forests. Motion carried.
6. 2011 MASWCD Legislative Platform Update – Sheila Vanney
Vanney provided an update on the 2011 Legislative Session and activity related to MASWCD’s legislative platform.

Lunch

7. Board Priority: District Self Assessment – Loyal Fisher & Don Buckhout, BWSR Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP)
During the February MASWCD board retreat, the board decided to discontinue the District Capacity Score Sheet and develop a district self-assessment (simplified PRAP) as a replacement for SWCDs to assess work and increase district capacity. Fisher reported on the status of the ad hoc working group and BWSR staff Don Buckhout, who has been helping the group, also provided information on progress to-date.
8. District Capacity & BWSR Report – Steve Woods, BWSR Assistant Director
Woods led the board through a discussion of how Area Director & Peer Assistance might be extended to Lower Performing SWCDs. He also reported on the BWSR Grants Committee & MASWCD Clean Water Fund Policy Resolutions. The BWSR Grants Committee will be meeting in June to discuss those resolutions.
9. Executive Director’s Report – LeAnn Buck
 - a. SWCD Tree Program Evaluation & Non-Invasive & Native Policy (Action Item). Buck led the board in a conversation about SWCD tree programs and MASWCD standing policy that encourages districts to use native and non-invasive plant material for SWCD tree sales and conservation plans (2007 resolutions from Beltrami and Stearns SWCDs). With the current legislative debate about the public and private role for DNR’s operation of tree nurseries, it is timely to have SWCDs assess their own services provided via their annual conservation tree programs. Motion by Peterson, seconded by Cunningham, that MASWCD staff should send correspondence reminding and encouraging districts to use native and non-invasive plant materials for SWCD tree sales and conservation plans. The correspondence should also recommend that SWCDs complete a self-assessment of their local tree programs. Motion carried.
 - b. Consolidation Statute Language. Buck noted that in the future, MASWCD may want to seek changes to SWCD statute to allow consolidations of 2 or more districts to occur with less burdensome requirements. Currently, consolidation of SWCDs requires referendum of the voters in the districts impacted.
 - c. State Envirothon & Future Transition. Buck noted that Vanney has been working with Carver SWCD employee Felicia Brockoff and Stevens SWCD employee Judy Johnston on coordinating the State Envirothon. This past year was the first year that all the funds ran through MASWCD and, after BWSR staff has no longer been dedicated to leading the coordination efforts. Brockoff provided a written summary of the budget and information on the event.
 - d. Supervisor Orientation Conference. Buck reported that staff is working on a conference in late summer, early fall to provide high quality training for locally elected SWCD officials to maintain and improve the governance of local conservation districts. She provided a handout with some of the likely training components. More information will soon be distributed to the membership.

10. NRCS Report – John Beckwith, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist
Beckwith provided information to the board on the transition of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) councils. Federal funding for these non-profit organizations was zeroed out in the budget approved by Congress and signed by the President. The NRCS employees who coordinated the RC&Ds will be redirected toward other efforts. Beckwith also reported that NRCS has some funds that will be dedicated toward joint implementation of the state Wetland Conservation Act and the “Swampbuster” provisions of the federal farm bill. The NRCS effort stems from a newly funded 4-state initiative in the Praire Pothole Region aimed at reducing the backlog of certified wetland determinations.

11. Confirm Next Meeting – August 9, 2011; Confirm June Area Meetings & Adjourn.

The next meeting will be held August 9, 2011 at the MASWCD office in St. Paul.

June Area meetings will be held as follows:

NW Area 1 – June 23, Ada MN

WC Area 2 – June 2, Alexandria MN

NE Area 3 – June 3, Carlton MN

Metro Area 4 – June 23, Farmington

SW Area 5 – June 16, Luverne MN

SC Area 6 – June 15, Sacred Heart MN

SE Area 7 – June 14, Rochester MN

NC Area 8 – June 3, Bemidji MN

Zabel noted that at a future board meeting he would like to discuss guiding principles around the issue of water management.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.