Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
MASWCD Office, St. Paul MN
February 28, 2017

Present: President Kurt Beckstrom, Vice President and Metro Area 4 Director Roland Cleveland, Secretary Treasurer and Northwest Area 1 Director Paul Krabbenhoft, Northeast Area 3 Director Bob Hoefert, Southwest Area 5 Director Clark Lingbeek, South Central Area 6 Director Mark Schnobrich, Southeast Area 7 Director Bill Thompson, North Central Area 8 Director Bob Albrecht, MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck and Sheila Vanney, BWSR staff Doug Thomas, Bill Penning, and Tim Koehler, MPCA representatives Glenn Skuta and Dana Vanderbosch. Ramsey Conservation District Supervisors Margaret Behrens and Lena Buggs.

Absent: West Central Area 2 Mike Jorgenson

President Beckstrom called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Albrecht and seconded to approve agenda as amended. Motion carried. Motion by Lingbeek and seconded to approve consent agenda consisting of meeting minutes from January 13, 2017. Motion carried.

MASWCD President’s Report. Beckstrom reported on attendance at the Governor’s Town Hall Water Summit. Two SWCD representatives were part of the presentation panels that day – Holly Kovarik with Pope SWCD, and Dan Schutte with Lake SWCD. Beckstrom presented personnel committee recommendations. The Personnel Committee, consisting of the President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer, did a review of Executive Director Buck and determined her performance to be superior. Motion by Cleveland and seconded to adopt the Committee recommendation of following the approved budget that provides for a 4% increase in staff salaries to be distributed by the Executive Director. Motion carried. Beckstrom noted that Bob Hoefert would be the new MASWCD board representative to the NRCS State Technical Committee. The board agreed to come back to other committee appointments later in the meeting.

MASWCD Board of Directors Retreat Overview and Adoption of 2017 MASWCD Focus Areas. Beckstrom reviewed with the board the draft 2017 focus areas for the Association that came out of the January board retreat. Beckstrom noted the board would move on with the agenda and revisit this item later in the meeting.

Finance Report. Krabbenhoft presented monthly finance statement. Motion Cleveland and seconded to approve subject to annual review. Motion carried. Krabbenhoft reviewed with the board the status of outstanding dues payments and encouraged Area Directors to reach out to SWCDs that have not yet submitted membership dues. He also referenced a letter from North St. Louis SWCD that the board discussed.

Executive Director’s Report – LeAnn Buck, Executive Director

a. MASWCD Fund the Plan policy update: MASWCD’s “Fund the Plan” policy is advancing. MASWCD, AMC and MAWD adopted policy recommendations in 2016 to enhance the funding for implementation activities that are an outgrowth of local ‘One Watershed One Plan’ program. The Clean Water Council’s recommendations include performance based pilot grants to implement projects and BMPs. The MASWCD representatives to the Roundtable’s workgroup will be reconvening with the partners in March and April to further refine the process. Buck noted to the board that this is a big deal and the Association’s policy efforts are making a difference.

b. District Capacity/MASWCD Training Opportunities for members: MASWCD Governance 101, Leadership Institute 2017-2018, and MCIT training regarding personnel. Buck noted that planning and discussions are underway for these training opportunities. The Governance 101 conference will likely take place in August or September. Buck noted that she is working with NRCS on an agreement that will help offset registration costs for a new Leadership Institute, with the plan for an August launch.

c. District Capacity/MASWCD Leadership Institute & Technology Survey Status: MASWCD Board of Directors launched the 2016-17 Leadership Institute for Problem Solving. The purpose of the year-long institute is to
strengthen the leadership capability of supervisors and staff while addressing current issues that lead to more effective conservation delivery throughout the state. The board assigned the topic of SWCD technology. Cohort participants are working to develop policy and frameworks to support technology strategies that meet the SWCD needs and are independent, but complimentary, of the BWSR and USDA systems.

d. NRCS and SWCD Operational Agreement; The NRCS/SWCD workgroup is working with 11 pilot field offices to develop a recommendation for an operational agreement template between the local SWCD and NRCS that outlines shared resources at the field level. The workgroup is currently assessing feedback from the pilot field offices.

e. NACD Legislative Fly – In March 20-21, 2017 Washington DC. Motion by Cleveland and seconded to approve Emily Javens, MASWCD Delegate to the NACD Board and Blue Earth SWCD Supervisor, to attend NACD Fly-in to Washington DC. This is a budgeted item. Motion carried.

District Capacity/SWCD Local Capacity and Matching Grants Summary – Doug Thomas, BWSR Assistant Director: As an outgrowth of MASWCD and BWSR policy efforts, BWSR allocated non-competitive grant allocations that support SWCD local capacity and enhanced delivery of technical services as outlined in district statutes. The CWF appropriation language included base funding and also matching grants to SWCDs based on county allocations. Thomas provided a statewide overview of the status of the grants based on SWCD work plans.

2016 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Proposal Overview – Bill Penning, BWSR Conservation Easement Section Manager and Tim Koehler, BWSR Senior Program Advisor. In January 2017, Minnesota entered into a $500 million Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture. This federal, state, and SWCD partnership will work with landowners across 54 counties who choose to voluntarily implement conservation practices on up to 60,000 acres of land to restore and protect water quality and enhance habitat. BWSR staff provided an overview of the final agreement and highlighted next steps.

MASWCD Legislative Platform and Status. Vanney and Lingbeek provided an update on the MASWCD Legislative Platform. The MASWCD Board adopted the 2017 Legislative Platform on January 13th. Updated information was provided and the board discussed SWCD related programs and funding being addressed at the Legislature including buffers, biennial budget, Legacy funding recommendations, bonding bill, LCCMR, and tax bill.

MPCA Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies – Glenn Skuta, MPCA Watershed Division Director. a. MASWCD Resolution No. 14 – 2016 Accurate WRAPS Schedule Needed (author Wadena SWCD). The MASWCD membership passed a resolution requesting that the Association strongly encourage the MPCA, based on their experience to date, to release a revised Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) completion schedule to allow Local Government Unites (LGUs) to schedule water management activities with the expectation of having the best data available in a timely manner. MPCA staff provided an update on the status of the WRAPS including schedules/timelines.

b. MPCA Staff Presentations during MASWCD Area Meetings. The MPCA is interested in attending Area meetings to provide updates and have conversations with districts on MPCA monitoring, TMDL, and WRAPS work going on in the particular Areas. Information would include updates for the watersheds of the given Area on the current schedule for the work, and findings from monitoring and strategy development work. MPCA will seek feedback during MASWCD area meetings on how things are going with the monitoring, TMDL, and WRAPS work in the watersheds.

MASWCD Resolution No. 2-2015 Soil Health Guiding Principles (authors Mille Lacs, Crow Wing and Big Stone SWCDs). The MASWCD membership passed a resolution requesting MASWCD to develop a set of Soil Health Guiding Principles as it has with Wetlands, Groundwater, Forest, and Water Management Guiding Principles. The draft guiding principles were in the board packet. Because Jorgenson is ill and absent from today’s meeting, further discussion and action was postponed until the next board meeting.
Board members returned to discussion of MASWCD committee appointments. Motion by Hoefert and seconded to approve committees membership as presented by Beckstrom. Motion carried.

Board members returned to the item of 2017 focus area. Motion by Cleveland and seconded to adopt the following as MASWCD 2017 focus areas. Motion carried.

- Maintain support for SWCD capacity funding as a priority for the 2017 Legislative Platform.
- Monitor and respond to potential changes in buffer law policies and local implementation.
- Clarify and enhance MASWCD state board knowledge and understanding of forestry practices and policies.
- Clarify and enhance MASWCD state board knowledge and understanding of agribusiness and public/private role of conservation delivery.
- Continue to enhance an effective MASWCD communications plan.
- Monitor and respond to Excessive Soil Loss Rulemaking Process.
- Develop and communicate guiding principles for soil health.
- Review and respond to recommendations related to SWCD technology needs and the impacts on the NRCS relationship.
- Provide SWCD educational opportunities to enhance public administration, leadership, and governance.
- Communicate and advocate the importance of Job Approval Authority processes and technical training for SWCDs.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm. Next meeting will be held March 20 in conjunction with the MASWCD Legislative Briefing and Day at the Capitol.