Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
May 23, 2017
MASWCD Office, St. Paul, Minnesota

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, Sheila Vanney and Stefanie Martinez; NRCS State Conservationist Cathee Pullman; BWSR staff Doug Thomas and Dan Steward; DNR Staff Gary Michaels, TSA Area 8 Consultant Mitch Brinks, and MPCA staff Glenn Skuta.

Absent: West Central Area 2 Director Mike Jorgenson.

President Beckstrom called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Hoefert and seconded to approve the agenda as amended to include “other waters” discussion to the agenda. Motion carried. Motion by Albrecht and seconded to approve consent agenda including the March 21, 2017 board meeting minutes and the 2017-2018 final standing committee appointments. Motion carried.

MASWCD President’s Report - Beckstrom reported that he and Vice President Cleveland will be attending NACD’s National Leadership Symposium, June 22, 2017 Lincoln, Nebraska. Both Cleveland and Beckstrom will be receiving a stipend from NACD to assist with expenses. NACD Board Member and Pipestone SWCD Board member Ian Cunningham, MACDE board member and Lac Qui Parle SWCD District Manager Chessa Frahm and NRCS State Conservationist Cathee Pullman will also be part of the Minnesota delegation attending the event. Beckstrom announced that the NACD Summer Conservation Forum and Board Tour will take place in Altoona, Iowa, July 15 – 18, 2017.

Finance Report. Krabbenhoft presented the monthly finance statement. Motion by Albrecht and seconded to approve finance report. Motion carried. Krabbenhoft updated the board on membership dues. Motion by Krabbenhoft, and seconded for the MASWCD President Beckstrom and Vice President Cleveland to meet with North St. Louis SWCD board related to the dues formula and MASWCD will continue to provide member communications for the next 30 days or upon receipt of dues. Motion carried.

Executive Director’s Report - Buck reported that MASWCD worked with NRCS and BWSR on an Economics Impacts of Minnesota Conservation Delivery Partnership Report. The conservation delivery partnership study shows that soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) are part of a $411 million industry that supports more than 3,300 Minnesota jobs. The state study analyzed the economic impact of the National Resources Conservation Service, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program, and SWCDs funding. Specifically, the 2016 study found that SWCDs contribute approximately 635 jobs to Minnesota's economy and create $68 million in economic activity. Buck reported on MASWCD summer area meeting agenda topics including: resolutions, “25 by 25”, leadership institute technology report, and NRCS/SWCD Operational Agreements. Buck reported that BWSR and MASWCD have submitted a grant proposal for USDA’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The proposal is an opportunity to provide federal and state funding for implementation of BMPs and is also based on the Association’s “fund the plan” and one-watershed-one-plan policy. Buck shared with the board the University of Minnesota’s
evaluation of the 2016/17 leadership institute that was completed on March 9, 2017. The analysis included the change between pre and post test assessment and included very positive feedback including an increase on participants’ competency areas with statistical significance.

NRCS & SWCD Operational Agreement – Cathee Pullman, NRCS State Conservationist reported on NRCS and SWCD Cooperative Working Agreements and county-specific operational agreements that make up the basic framework for the partnership. As an outgrowth of NRCS and Association discussions, NRCS, MASWCD, and BWSR formed a workgroup to develop a SWCD and NRCS operational agreement template that outlines a process to identify shared resources at the field office level. The workgroup also worked with nine SWCD and NRCS field offices to have them serve as pilots to provide feedback to the partner workgroup. MASWCD and NRCS informational sessions for district managers and district conservationists are scheduled at various state locations for May 24th. The session will explain the operational agreement process.

Local Working Groups – Buck reported that Minnesota’s Conservation Partnership (MASWCD, NRCS, and BWSR) formed a workgroup to enhance the policy and processes associated with Local Working Groups, SWCD Comprehensive Local Water Management Plans and One Watershed One Plan. The purpose was to enhance the assessment and identification of local and state natural resource priorities for conservation programs and implementation activities. In accordance with the Farm Bill, Local Working Groups are subcommittees of the NRCS State Technical Committee, and provide recommendations to USDA. NRCS program policy recommends that SWCDs should convene the Local Working Group. Buck reported that a white paper was developed with recommendations to the partnership. Motion by Cleveland and seconded for the MASWCD to accept the Local Working Group white paper. Motion carried. Buck provided information on additional outreach activities that will take place with members and the partnership later this year.

MASWCD Legislative Platform and Status – Vanney provided an overview of the 2017 legislative session to date. The regular session adjourned at midnight on May 22nd and the Governor has called a special session to finalize additional omnibus spending bills. Vanney provided the board with the latest information on SWCD related programs including buffers, biennial budget, legacy funding recommendations, bonding bill, LCCMR, and the tax bill.

Prioritized Targeted & Measurable; Private Forestry Management & Partnership Roles – Dan Steward, BWSR Watershed/Private Forestry Coordinator, Mitch Brinks, Area 8 TSA GIS Services, and Gary Michael, DNR Division of Forestry, provided an overview of forestry and water quality activities in the heavily forested regions of Minnesota as well as the future role of SWCDs, DNR and BWSR in private forest management.

Other Water Courses – The Buffer Law requires buffers or alternative practices to provide riparian protection for public waters and public drainage systems as identified on the Buffer Protection Maps. The Law recognizes that ‘other watercourses’ which are not found on the DNR Buffer Protection Map may benefit from installation of buffers or alternative practices to protect or improve water quality. It also establishes a process for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to initiate local water resources riparian protection process that is then incorporated in local water management plans by local water management authorities. The board discussed various SWCD examples to date.

The meeting adjourned. The next MASWCD board meeting will be August 15, 2017.