Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
September 19, 2017  
Hubbell House Restaurant, Mantorville, MN 55955

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; Glenn Skuta, MPCA; Doug Thomas, BWSR and Tom Gile, BWSR. Absent: Mike Jorgenson, Area 2 Director.

President Beckstrom called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and thanked Tom Gile from BWSR for the pre-meeting discussion related to updates on buffer law implementation. Beckstrom also thanked the Dodge SWCD for inviting the MASWCD Board to today’s soil health outreach event today. Beckstrom led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried. Motion by Albrecht and seconded to approve consent agenda including the August 15, 2017 board meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Finance Report. Krabbenhoft discussed the monthly finance statement but the actual report was unavailable, so no action was taken. Krabbenhoft presented a draft 2017/2018 Fiscal Year Budget for the board’s consideration. After discussion, motion by Albrecht and seconded to authorize distribution of the budget and recommend adoption to the members with voting taking place at the business meeting during the annual December convention. Motion carried. Cleveland thanked staff for solid work preparing the draft budget. Krabbenhoft discussed the annual financial review that was conducted of MASWCD’s accounts. He noted there was high praise for Stefanie’s financial work.

BWSR Assistant Director Doug Thomas provide information on District Capacity and Watershed Conservation Planning (NRCS/BWSR Contribution Agreement). The purpose of the agreement is to establish a partnership agreement to provide funding to SWCDs for landowner resource assessments and conservation plans within seven major watersheds that include one or more Upper Mississippi River Basin Initiative or National Water Quality Initiative projects. Having dedicated resources over a three to four year period of time to increase landowner outreach, complete individual resource assessments and conservation plans is designed to increase readiness and participation in EQIP & CSP programs. The project will be run through participating SWCDs. The projected $3 million project cost will come from NRCS $1.5 million and BWSR $1.5 million.

Cleveland left the meeting.

Thomas also provided information for the board related to BWSR’s Future Technical Service Area Management and Structure Analysis Report. The Non-Point Engineering Assistance Program (NPEAP) has been an important component of the local conservation delivery system in Minnesota since 1995. NPEAP delivery is implemented via eight SWCD Technical Service Areas (TSAs) covering all of Minnesota, which are co-aligned with MASWCD administrative areas. Each TSA is governed by a Joint Powers Organization (JPO) of SWCDs. BWSR convened a workgroup to evaluate the current state of TSA workload/need, structure, and management statewide. The project also developed a set of findings and recommendations designed to bring efficiencies to TSA operations and to meet current and future demands for accelerated conservation implementation. Thomas reported that BWSR will continue to assess and work with the TSAs on future recommendations.
MASWCD 2018 Farm Bill Policy Requests (Action Item). Buck provided background and context for the National Association of Conservation Districts information sheet on their 2018 Farm Bill Policy Requests. Several of the policy requests do include policy supported by MASWCD resolutions. Beckstrom recommended the board adopt the policy requests. Motion by Lingbeek and seconded to adopt the NACD 2018 Farm Bill Policy Requests as MASWCD policy. Motion carried. Buck and Beckstrom discussed potential USDA reorganization. Buck will be coordinating a conference call on this issue with Beckstrom, NRCS State Conservationist Cathee Pullman, NACD Executive Board member Ian Cunningham, Minnesota’s delegate to NACD Emily Javens, and BWSR Assistant Director Doug Thomas.

Executive Director’s Report. Buck discussed several items with the board members.

a. AMC & MASWCD District Capacity Workgroup Update. The Workgroup will be meeting tomorrow, September 20.

b. MASWCD 2018 March/April Area Meetings. Buck is recommending joint Area meetings in spring of 2018 with MASWCD, BWSR and NRCS representatives. Consensus of board members was this was a great idea. Buck will create a list of potential agenda topics and work with NRCS and BWSR leadership.

c. 2017 Board Focus Area: Retainer for 2018 Communications Services (Action Item); an agreement to enhance e-newsletter, social media, annual report, etc. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to enter into a six month retainer with Goff Public for communications services. Motion carried.

d. Locally Led Training. SWCD and NRCS joint training will be held on locally led workgroups as part of a grant agreement with NRCS. In accordance with the Farm Bill, Local Working Groups are subcommittees of the NRCS State Technical Committee and provide recommendations to USDA on local and state natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs. According to NRCS program policy, it is recommended that SWCDs should convene the Local Working Group and if the SWCD decides not to convene, the NRCS will.

e. Public Administration Proposal Development. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to work with Roger Reinert on a proposal for public administration training for SWCDs. Motion carried.

f. Office Space Lease Agreement. Buck noted that office space lease for MASWCD is up for renewal, with a 3% increase in cost. Motion by Albrecht and seconded to authorize Buck to sign the new lease agreement for the current office space at a 3% rate increase. Motion carried.

Skuta reported that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is in a process of changing the way Section 319 grants are administered.

Beckstrom reported on attending several of the 25 by 25 town hall water quality listening sessions, representing SWCDs.

The next MASWCD Board of Directors meeting will be held November 8 at the MASWCD office in St. Paul. Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.