Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 8, 2018
Sugar Lake Lodge, 37584 Otis Lane, Cohasset, MN 55721

Present: President Kurt Beckstrom, Vice President and Metro Area 4 Director Roland Cleveland, Secretary Treasurer and Northwest Area 1 Director Paul Krabbenhoft, West Central Area 2 Director Mike Jorgenson, 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 Ken Laporte, MASWCD staff LeAnn Buck and Sheila Vanney; NRCS State Conservationist Troy Daniell, BWSR Assistant Director Doug Thomas, BWSR Watershed/Private Forest Management Program Coordinator Dan Steward, Freshwater Society Executive Director Steve Woods, North St. Louis SWCD Supervisor Chuck Bainter.

President Beckstrom called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and led the board in the pledge of allegiance. Motion by Schnobrich and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda. Motion by Krabbenhoft and seconded to approve the consent agenda, consisting of board meeting minutes from May 22. Motion carried.

President’s Report. Beckstrom updated the board on the status of the Farm Bill Conservation Title in Congress. A handout was in the board members packets showing the House positions, Senate positions, and current law. The bill is now in conference committee which has been meeting. Beckstrom attended the NACD Board Meeting and Conservation Forum in Virginia this past week. The conservation title of the Farm Bill was a topic of conversation. The conference highlighted a new partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation.

President Beckstrom welcomed NRCS State Conservationist Troy Daniell to the meeting. Daniell spoke to the board about upcoming priorities and workload for Minnesota NRCS. Priorities Daniell is conveying to his staff include customer service, and program delivery and technical assistance. Daniell stated that agriculture and conservation need to go hand in hand. You can’t have one without the other. Conservation needs agriculture to be productive and economical.

Finance Report. Krabbenhoft presented the monthly financials for board consideration and action. He noted that we are doing well with 100% membership. Motion by Schnobrich and seconded to approve the monthly financials subject to annual review. Motion carried. The Finance Committee will be meeting September 12 to develop and present to the board a recommended budget for the coming year. The board will act on that at the next meeting and the members will vote on it at the convention in December.

Executive Director’s Report. Buck noted that she and Vanney are working with BWSR leadership to consider potential updates to SWCD enabling statute, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C. Vanney stated the intent is to clarify and streamline the provisions and highlight the numerous and varied statutorily prescribed responsibilities. Buck also updated the board on the work of the Local Government Water Roundtable and Clean Water Funding process for FY 2020-2021. Buck and board members discussed work to date on MASWCD Res. # 15-2017 (Author Crow Wing SWCD) & Forestry Association Correspondence. Buck has been working on the 80th Anniversary of SWCD Celebration, taking place in Winona on August 14. Locally Led Citizen Engagement Training for SWCDs and NRCS have completed. Buck has been traveling to the workshops, which have included discussion of Comprehensive Local Water Management (1W1P) and Local Working Group requirements. Buck also noted the next MASWCD Leadership Institute will be launching this month.

Putting Minnesota on a Clean Water Trajectory – Steve Woods, Freshwater Society Executive Director. Fourteen years ago, MASWCD was part of a group of interest & agency representatives (G-16) that developed a consensus about how to tackle Minnesota’s impaired waters in a way that was effective, met the requirements of the federal
Clean Water Act, and removed a significant threat to economic development. The group produced 31 recommendations, of which 27 are either completed or in progress. The Freshwater Society recently reconvened the G-16 through a series of meetings to develop guidelines for the next ten years of CWF spending for the Clean Water Council and executive branch agencies as they refine the trajectory of Minnesota’s water management approaches, now that creating the systems to tackle the initial impaired waters vision has largely been accomplished. Woods presented the results of those meetings and requested the board’s endorsement of the trajectory report. Board members discussed. Motion by Jorgenson and seconded to authorize staff to work with Freshwater Society on additional edits to the report and sign on to the report on behalf of MASWCD. Motion carried, with Hoefert abstaining because of his membership on the Clean Water Council, representing Minnesota Farmers Union.

Board members recessed for lunch at 12:21 pm and reconvened at 1:12 pm. Krabbenhoft left the meeting.

One Watershed One Plan & Private Forestry Management Working Together – Dan Steward BWSR Watershed/Private Forest Management Coordinator. Front ending 1W1P’s with a landscape stewardship plan is a good way to start bringing Private Forest Management (PFM) perspectives into local water management. The Pine River 1W1P was the first watershed to start their water plan process with a landscape plan. Minnesota’s PFM program exists to assist private forest landowners with forest management. Steward provided an overview of these programs, along with forestry riparian easements, as we continue to define, assess and support district forestry activities.

Beckstrom left the meeting, and Cleveland chaired the remainder of the meeting.

SWCDs & Clean Water Fund Overview – Doug Thomas, BWSR Assistant Director Field Operations. SWCDs receive Clean Water Funds for a number of landowner project & programmatic activities including Competitive Grants, Buffer Implementation, Buffer Cost Share, One Watershed One Plan, & District Capacity. Discussions included an assessment of current clean water funding.

SWCD Audit & Accounting Assistance – Doug Thomas, BWSR Assistant Director. MASWCD has resolutions (authors: Winona, Traverse, Carlton & Anoka SWCDs) requesting the streamlining of reporting & audit requirements. The reporting requirements & fiscal oversight of SWCDs are in the form of financial reports, grant monitoring and grant reconciliation. The requirements are governed by a combination of Minnesota Statutes (116 and 103C), Office of Grants Management Policies & the Department of Administration Office of Minnesota Management & Budget. Motion by Jorgenson and seconded that MASWCD support working with BWSR to provide recommendations related to SWCD reporting requirements, grant monitoring, and grant reconciliations. Motion carried.

The next board meeting will take place September 18 at the MASWCD office in St. Paul. Meeting adjourned at 3:06 pm.