

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
June 16, 2026,
MASWCD Office St. Paul MN

Present: President Chuck Rau, Vice President and Southeast Area 7 Director Randy Smith, Secretary/Treasurer and Northeast Area 3 Director Jake Janski, Northwest Area 1 Director Randy Schellack, West Central Area 2 Co-Director Wase Bastian, Metro Area 4 Director John Rheinberger, Southwest Area 5 Director Mona Henkels, South Central Area 6 Director Bob Nielsen, North Central Area 8 Director Ken LaPorte, MASWCD Executive Director LeAnn Buck, MASWCD Events Manager Michele Asmussen, NRCS State Conservationist Troy Daniell, MACDE representative and LeSueur SWCD Manager Michael Schultz, Goff Public Senior Vice President Elizabeht Emerson, BWSR One Watershed One Plan Coordinator Julie Westerlund, and BWSR Clean Water Coordinator Maggie Karshinia.

Absent: West Central Area 2 Director Tom Gregory

Call to Order. President Rau called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

Approval of Board Meeting Agenda. Motion by Rheinberger and seconded, to approve the board agenda. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes. Motion by Schellack and seconded, to approve the board meeting minutes from April 21, 2026. Motion carried.

President's Report. President Rau led board discussion on the status of the Association's Nominating Committee and the 2026 President and VP Election Process. The board discussed the eight MASWCD June Area meetings and agenda content including SWCD Aid and the Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) program considerations currently being developed by the MN Clean Water Council.

Finance Committee Report. Janski reviewed the monthly finance report. Motion by Janski and seconded to accept the financial report subject to annual review. Motion carried.

Executive Director's Report. Buck provided information to the board on the following items:

- MASWCD focus areas activities and accomplishments to date.
- SWCD Aid \$12 million FY 2027; Minnesota SWCDs will receive district allocations from the State's general fund following the start of the State's fiscal year (July 1). SWCD Aid provides predictable state funding that strengthens districts by supporting technical assistance and on-the-ground conservation delivery.

- MASWCD Leadership Cohort Offering for 2026/27. The MASWCD is launching the 16th leadership cohort training to build skills in personal, team, visionary, and ethical leadership. Registration information has been shared with the members.
- Status of MASWCD/NRCS agreements including CRP program delivery and training activities.
- Status of MASWCD/BWSR Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture agreement.
- MASWCD Area resolution submission deadline is July 21, 2026.
- The Drainage Work Group (DWG) is conducting a stakeholder assessment to address the future work and policy process development associated with drainage management.

MASWCD 2026 Legislative Report. Elizabeth Emerson George, Goff Public Senior Vice President for Public Affairs, reported that the Minnesota 2026 legislative session concluded on May 17. She provided a review of the session's deliberations and outcomes, status of the Association's legislative platform, and an update on the MASWCD advocacy cohort in preparation for the 2027 legislative session.

MASWCD Events Report. Asmussen, Conference and Events Manager, shared updates on the following MASWCD member events:

- MASWCD 2026 Envirothon is an annual environmental competition for high school students. Area, state, and national event summaries were provided. The MASWCD State Envirothon is conducted in partnership through an agreement with the Sherburne SWCD.
- MASWCD is partnering with Minnesota Counties Insurance Trust (MCIT) to offer a webinar for SWCDs highlighting MCIT services and resources available to districts. The session will be held June 23, 2026.
- MASWCD 90th Anniversary Annual Meeting is scheduled for November 30 – December 2, 2026, in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Clean Water Fund FY28-29 Biennium Budget Process Buck provided information to the board on the following items.

- MASWCD Resolution (E1-22) pertains to Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) policy and supports advancing the Clean Water Fund to address on-the-ground BMPS as outlined in locally adopted and state approved watershed management plans.
- MASWCD and the Association of Minnesota Counties and the Minnesota Association of Watersheds are working together and providing public input to the Minnesota Clean Water Council as they develop programmatic FY28-29 budget recommendations for the Legislature and the governor.

Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Report. Troy Daniell, NRCS State Conservationist, shared information pertaining to Minnesota NRCS conservation delivery and programs. Highlights included outcomes related to the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).

Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) Grant Program Status. Julie Westerlund, One Watershed One Plan Coordinator and Maggie Karschnia, BWSR Clean Water Coordinator, shared with the board updates on WBIF program. This program serves as a Clean Water Fund mechanism to accelerate measurable water quality improvements by directing resources toward watershed scale priorities. WBIF grants awarded to watershed partnerships build on local planning, public engagement, monitoring, and data collection, turning those investments into on-the-ground projects that advance water quality outcomes. A statewide overview was provided on how watershed partnerships are implementing their work plans and progressing toward priority actions, along with discussion on BWSR's assurance measures. Westerlund also announced upcoming listening sessions in July and August to gather input for the next generation of comprehensive watershed management plans. Local and Tribal government staff and policy committee members involved in 1W1P will be invited to participate.

Rau adjourned the meeting at 2:08 pm.