

# Red River Valley Conservation Service Area – TSA 1

## Regular Board Meeting

### November 18, 2014

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The regular meeting of the RRVCSA-TSA 1 was held at the Red Apple Café in Mahanomen on Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>. Those in attendance were Peter Mead-Becker Manager; Jen Wentz-Becker Assistant; Tanya Hanson-Red Lake Manager; Linda Hanson-Pennington Supervisor; David Miller-Red Lake Supervisor; Carol Schoff-Clay Supervisor; Kevin Kassenborg-Clay Manager; Julian Sjostrom-W-O-T Supervisor; Brad Mergens-W-O-T Manager; Darren Newville-E-O-T Manager; Lyle Dittmann-E-O-T Supervisor; Jerome Flottesmesch-Becker Supervisor; Bryan Malone-Pennington Manager; Pete Revier-Mahanomen Supervisor; Ken Pederson-East Polk Supervisor and Northwest Area 1 Director; Jim Hest-TSA Engineer, Jeff Haverland-TSA Engineering Tech and Mary Steinlicht-Shared Services GIS Specialist.

**Call to Order** – Chairman Flottesmesch called the meeting to order at 9:41 a.m.

**Approval of June Meeting Minutes** – there were no changes necessary.

Motion (Miller, Hanson) to approve the June meeting minutes as written. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**Financial Reports** – Peter reviewed the financial reports with the Board.

Motion (Dittmann, Pederson) to approve the October financial reports. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

#### **TSA Reports** –

*Jim Hest, TSA 1 Engineer reported on the following:*

- He has been busy with conservation projects since June.
- Water & sediment basins: 48 installations, 24 designs, 13 sites surveyed and 7 sites remaining to survey.
- Grade stabilizations: 19 installations, 2 designs and 2 sites surveyed.
- Stream bank stabilizations: 400' installations, 120' designs and one site surveyed.
- Installed 2 rain gardens and completed one ag wetland design.
- Kudos to Duane Steinbrink with West Polk SWCD who completed all construction inspections and did a wonderful job partnering with Jim on projects this season.

*Jeff Haverland, TSA 1 Engineering Tech reported on the following:*

- He has had a very busy fall.
- Installed 40 basins; one 90' rip rap project and one side water inlet.
- Completed plans for 3 basins which are staked but snowed out; 3 diversions and one 165' rip rap project.
- He is currently working on the following winter designs: 34 basins but 10 will still need survey because of crop left on the field for hunters; 1,100' lakeshore project with DNR issues and one side water inlet.
- Recent Otter Tail County snowfall has delayed many projects until next spring and some survey projects are yet to be completed depending on any additional snowfall.

*Mary Steinlicht, Shared Services GIS Specialist reported on the following:*

- She and Karen Halver began with RRVCSA in June.
- Completed lake assessments with Peter for Otter Tail County.

- Assisted four counties (Otter Tail, Clearwater, East Polk and Red Lake) with their Clean Water grant applications – made contact with two for next year (Traverse and Grant).
- Completed WQDSS training with Grit May from the International Water Institute.
- Attended four WQDSS presentations and two trainings in how to use data.
- Distributed WQDSS data to all county offices included in the WQDSS database.
- Attended the GIS/LIS conference in Rochester: arc collector class, refresher cartography courses and LiDAR courses.
- Attended BWSR Academy at Breezy Point: tracking landowners and watershed planning tools courses.
- Assisted with County water plans – met with two counties and have three others in the works.
- Meeting with Darrin Hoverson, DNR Hydrologist from the Park Rapids office.
- Involved with the buffer initiative for E-O-T
- Have been providing landowner, contour, watershed delineations and boundary maps as requested.

*Ken Pederson, Northwest Area 1 Director reported on the following:*

He attended the MASWCD board meeting held last Thursday in Minneapolis. Stable funding was the topic of discussion. Ron Harnack was employed for this purpose and introduced a bill in the senate regarding this. Goff Associates have been hired as priority of the association for acquiring stable funding for Districts. Many options have been discussed but key players need to be formulated. More will be discussed at the convention. Levy and taxing authorities probably won't work. Other alternatives have been explored such as fees assigned to every property within the county. LeAnn Buck compared our current operating funds as similar to the late 90s. Most money comes through competitive grants and/or county allocations which can change without notice. We need to maintain a suitable operating fund for our Districts and have a specific plan on how to get it. Our message or mission needs to be heard in order to receive the support we need to survive.

Operating requirements are different across Districts. We would compile a list of requests to get an idea of everyone's needs and offer suggestions and options to acquire that funding.

In order to do this, we need to inform our watershed districts, legislatures and local county commissioners of our requests in order to gain their support.

Conservation isn't politics but acquiring the funding that we use to operate is. We need a permanent solution to our budgeting issues. LeAnn and Sheila will offer a fact sheet for Districts as to why we need this stable funding standard. This should be out to Districts before the Legislative Day at the Capitol held in January.

The TSA 1 is working well and Ken is happy to have that relationship. We need to continue and pursue more work on a local capacity such as holding more training to the smaller districts within our area.

We currently have four pilot programs within the state of MN. Dennis Fuchs mentioned that a Joint Powers TSA should work with area farmers on this opportunity.

LeAnn Buck likes to promote retreats. She believes that launching a TSA retreat for setting goals and priorities would be beneficial to our organization.

Ag Water Quality certification was discussed. We are currently marketing a program that provides exemption from regulation. Is this a cause for concern? Brad notes that they have a small portion. Many are raising questions though. What does the District know that the operators don't? Minnesota is being targeted as

being the first state to bring this program forward across the country. We're unsure whether this is offered to the top producers or to everyone.

**NPEAP Policy Q&A Session Recap** – Peter reviewed the recent meeting that took place in Becker County with Brett Arne and Jeannette Austin from BWSR regarding the TSAs NPEAP purpose, policies and procedures for using the funding.

There were no questions regarding the meeting.

**Becker SWCD FY2014 Grant Verification** – As a product of the Grant Cradle to Grave session held during the summer, Becker has volunteered to undergo grant verification for 2013 funds. As a result, this will also pull in all financial records and grants for the TSA as well as area watersheds and county offices.

We hope to gain peace-of-mind on how we track and spend our money from the state and other agencies which in turn will offer a more precise spending presentation for BWSR staff with our state legislature.

**Approve NW MN Foundation Grant Application Submittal** – Peter wrote and submitted a grant for the 10% cash match towards the Shared Services agreement. He received letters of recommendation from Chuck Fritz and the Mississippi Headwaters Board.

Motion (Revier, Schoff) to approve the submission of the NW MN Foundation grant application. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

**Shared Services Oversight and Technical Committees** – Peter noted the previously approved members for TSA 1: Jerome, Darren, Lyle, Bryan and Peter. The TSA 8 has their committee selected. This oversight committee will formulate plans for the watershed. We now need to hold a committee meeting to govern the projects of the watersheds. The date will be forthcoming as members will need to check their schedules once back in the office.

**Activity and Time Tracking, Accomplishment Reports** – both Jeff and Jim agree that it's quite repetitious and tedious completing activity reports, timesheets, monthly spreadsheets and yearly accomplishment reports. This process needs to be streamlined.

Jeannette Austin mentioned that TSA 2 has a system that works well for them. We wish that BWSR would offer a similar system to all TSAs within the state. A Microsoft Access program is currently being utilized by Stearns County who presented this during the BWSR Academy grant and time tracking sessions.

Peter questioned all districts about charging a fee to cover a good portion of the cost involved in implementing such a system. If each District were to pay \$2,500 we could cover all or most of the cost involved in implementation.

Darren Newville suggested that the TSA hold a special board meeting at the state convention.

Motion (Schoff, Flottesmesch) to authorize the TSA 1 to hold a special meeting at the state convention in December. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

#### **Other –**

Peter noted that the current TSA 1 Personnel Policy should be reviewed and changed from the previous written-in corrections.

Jeff believes that the policy manual should be more specific. Many loopholes exist in the current version.

We should develop a committee or delegation of staff between Districts to refresh the current personnel policy. This wouldn't have to be a meeting, just changes or corrections via email.

Realizing that many districts haven't reviewed their personnel policies in years, Darren recommended that we request a meeting with MCIT to offer a training session that will direct us on what needs to be in a personnel policy.

After discussion, it was suggested that the TSA sponsor a training session with MCIT associates and all district managers to convey necessary changes with our current personnel policies.

Jeff Haverland's GPS system is failing again. It is from 2007. Last year it was the LED screen and this year it hasn't been working for various reasons. Next year, we will see the additional allocations for capital purchases attached to our NPEAP funding. Technology is changing and it seems to be time for a much needed upgrade. Both Jeff and Jim haven't had a chance to transition into the new AutoCAD software. We need to get both of them introduced to this system.

Motion (Hanson, Schoff) to authorize the executive committee to make the purchase of a new GPS system with the replacements we need. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Bryan and Tanya have policy committee meetings where they would like to involve Mary with the one watershed, one plan strategy.

One extra note reported by Jim Hest: his wife had an accident recently, fell and broke both ankles. His time may be limited in the next few months while she is recovering.

Being no further business, motion (Miller, Revier) to adjourn the meeting at 10:49 a.m.

**Approved: Pete Revier, RRVCSA TSA-1 Secretary**

**Date:**