



Regular Board Meeting - Wednesday, October 21, 2015

The regular meeting of the Becker Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors was held on Wednesday, October 21st in the Conference Room of the USDA Ag Center Building located at 809 8th Street SE, Detroit Lakes, MN.

Those present were Supervisors Tony Beck, Travis Schauer, Eugene Pavelko and Chairperson Kathy Stenger. Others present include Becker County Commissioner Barry Nelson, District Administrator Peter Mead, Admin Assistant Jen Wentz, NRCS District Conservationist Ed Musielewicz, AIS/Water Quality Coordinator Karl Koenig and Ag Inspector/Shoreland Specialist Marsha Watland.

Call to Order – Chairperson Stenger called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Approval of September Meeting Minutes

Motion (Schauer, Pavelko) to approve as written. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Financial Reports and Bills for Approval

Motion (Beck, Schauer) to approve financial reports and pay the list of bills for October. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

District Reports

District Conservationist – Ed Musielewicz

- Ended fiscal year September 30th with 101 CRP contracts for a total of 1,726 acres. Many were less than 6.8 acres and included buffers.
- EQIP signup has been announced and is ending November 20th. This will be the only continuous signup period for ranking and scoring. We have 22 applications from last year that were not promoted; letters have been sent to those landowners.
- We had 19 re-enrolls for CSP. We have the authority to make payments on 84 contracts. We will process these by December 8th.
- Leticia's contract with Ultima was discussed earlier this week with the NRCS Area office staff and Area Conservationist Danny Weber. She will continue to work 32 hours for Ultima and the District will pick up the additional 8 hours. She will then be renamed to a Farm Bill Technician, something she's already been performing. This should be a nice raise in salary beginning January 1st.
- State Conservationist Cathee Pullman would like to see an Ultima position in every office within MN.
- Construction update: it's been a dry and mild fall; most projects are nearing completion. Two grade stabilization structures remain. They have been staked, just waiting for contractor to begin. Basins still need to be installed at Nelson's and Hendrickson's. This is one of the earliest construction seasons for completing water & sediment control basins.
- Spot checks have been completed with assistance from Eric Anderson, NRCS Area Resource Conservationist and Dave Jones, Area Engineer. There were no major issues found.
- Upcoming programs –
 - Ag Certainty with MDA receiving dollars from NRCS through the Regional Conservationist program. MDAs goal is to have 1,500 farms certified within the next couple years. We would like to certify Aaron Salo as a Certified Conservation Planner in order to endorse these plans.
 - Cover Crop demonstrations and Soil Health management practices. Working the land less and diversify more with cover crops by keeping living roots in the soil. We will begin collecting data this fall to compare different areas and look at soil health indicators. He would like to hold a demonstration next fall and look at several different goal areas to formulate ideas.

District Administrator – Peter Mead

- We recently held our fall outdoor classroom day at Cormorant Lakes Sportsman's Club. Staff worked on the Soil Soakers station as in the past.
- October 7th was the Central MN Land Use Symposium with great information taken from the event.
- Lot widths: Becker County's ordinance is three times the state's minimum width requirements. Roy Smith gave his ideas for wider lot widths in comparison to state standards. Mead then looked at four lakes in our county along with the criteria Smith developed and formed a scoring system for those lakes. 12 different criteria were measured for all 405 lakes using a surface area shoreline ratio. Over 32; between 25 and 32; and under 25. This will hopefully formulate a natural environment lot width. We're allowing 60' of mowed and accessible land up to the lake with the remaining area to be natural, deep-rooted vegetation.
- Hein-Hendrickson projects were highlighted. The project has some fairly sizable gullies along the Lake Park-Audubon border; we're placing tile in order to improve the tillable land between four different farms.
- Ditch inventory has begun. Clem, Olson and Salo have been working on Ditch 20 which drains through Lakes Maud and Eunice and to the south of Co Hwy 6.
- We're planning cover crop demonstrations and 3 meetings with producers between now and April in the towns of Callaway, Lake Park and Wolf Lake. Clay County will also initiate one in Hawley.
- Joint Powers restructuring is still in the works. An MDA specialist will need to be hired for the region.
- Claire will attend training in Duluth next month to become a certified construction storm planner in order to install and inspect MPDS permits and stormwater plans for anything disturbing more than one acre. This will also allow for certification in design.

Program Updates

Shoreland and Ag Inspector – Marsha Watland

County Ag Inspector

- She is working on the CWMA two-year grant agreement for 2016.
- Hawkweed has one treatment area that remains.
- Annual Township and City weed treatment reports are being returned to the office.
- Leafy Spurge concerns near two gravel pits and landscape operation by Brandy Lake Rd have been checked.
- Private landowner with leafy spurge may not sell soil that is located near the railroad and gravel pits.
- She rode four-wheeler yesterday near Round Lake Township completing Tansy inventory. She drove the Woods and Wheels trails. She spoke to Jona with the Highway Department for treatment and clipping. There are 560 acres of trails in eastern Becker County. We're looking at the camping area for Tansy clippings. The remaining tansy has new growth with minimal seed heads. Formal trails look really good and are in great condition. She did view the snowmobile trails as well.
- Timber industry is a real issue with Tansy. Trees are being choked out. Lady Slippers and Big Bluestem are growing in place of the already removed Tansy along Co Rd 37. We still have issues though. Forestry may become a huge problem in spreading common tansy.

Shoreland

- Conservation Corps assistance is available again next year; we will work on pulling an intern again. Our District has been highlighted in their brochure for our shoreland programs.
- Permitting with Planning & Zoning has been an issue but we're working through this. She and Claire have established some documentation but we still need to stress the fact that our office needs to be involved from initiating, planning and estimating.
- She reviewed photos from the Jennen project that went smoothly from permitting to construction.
- She reviewed another on Big Cormorant with a permit application from Becker County that shows a basic drawing of a non-descriptive plan that was approved by Planning & Zoning staff. Our office was not contacted prior to this approval and the entire project was a complete mess that our staff and Conservation Corps had to fix. We may need to request prior approval from our office on permit applications in the future.
- She recently worked with PRWD on tree removal and mitigation. Each lake has its own shore impact zone that specifies tree removal options.

- BRRWD Fall Tour was held October 15th. She covered the major highlights: Buffalo River stream repairs and Georgetown area completion project with dikes now in place. They will be promoting Becker County for next year. We would like to showcase the Morgan and Hochhalter sites. However, we need to manage and treat Crown Vetch that has popped up among these shoreline plantings. Many of our native shoreline buffers will need this management.
- Site evaluation requests are still coming into the office.

Aquatic Invasive Species – Karl Koenig

- He shared a presentation of the main points of this season including the lakes with inspectors present and their hours worked at each access.
- As of 10/10/15 ...
 - 23 lakes inspected
 - 18,119 inspections
 - 1.51 inspections per hour
 - 2.51% with plug in on arrival (which is against MN law)
 - 3.36% with vegetation, mud and water; 4 watercraft transporting live ZM were intercepted by inspectors (2 at Big Detroit, one at Middle Cormorant and one at Bad Medicine)
 - approximately 13% were from infested waters
 - 155 decontaminations were recorded

There was discussion regarding pontoons with sea legs. We may need to add regulations to restrict their movement from lake-to-lake as they are considered a watercraft lift device.

- He reviewed 2015 budget numbers and the categories where money has been spent.
- Proposals for 2016 which again have a huge allowance for Level I and Level II Inspector hours.
- Inspector coverage on lake accesses is based on a scoring system: # of access points plus # of resorts plus inspections per hour (max of 2 access points and 3 resorts) to produce a score from 0 to 5. This score is then calculated into staffing needs.

Karl states that we need to cover the busiest lakes and accesses. Many boaters learn about AIS awareness through our inspectors. He plans to continue with education and youth events in our community and through the school systems. Looking ahead for 2016, many resorts need to be brought into the bulk of our AIS inspection hours. He may develop an early spring meeting to inform and certify these resort owners to better protect the lakes they service.

AIS monitoring has still been handled through our program but he would like to shift this effort to Lake Associations and have volunteers assist. Additional thoughts for next year: hire better inspection staff with more training so they can perform top notch inspections and represent us in the best capacity.

There was additional discussion regarding lake service providers and DNR staff. Becker County may consider a county lake service provider permit, which would be revoked upon receiving a DNR violation. Both entities have a huge impact on AIS awareness. Consistency is the key.

Committee Reports

Personnel Committee report – reviewed by Gene Pavelko. The following options were brought forward:

- 4-10 hour workweek schedule; allows for two days off per pay period.
- Flex-schedule; consists of 8-hour day, 5-days a week, 40-hours a week and 80-hours in the biweekly pay period with eligibility to earn credit hours at no more than 2 hours per day.
- Furlough plan; employee may request up to 80 hours of unpaid leave during a calendar year; strictly leave without pay and is only allowed on a pre-approval basis.
- 5-4/9 biweekly schedule; 4-9 hour days and 1-8 hour day followed by 4-9 hour days and 1 day off.

Federal staffing options state that employees must be present during the core hours of 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. with flex options before or after that and up to a one hour lunch taken between the hours of 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Board's decision is to establish the options in writing; distribute to all board members and adopt policy change next month.

Grant Submittals and Agreements for Approval –

2016 NCR-SARE Demonstration Project – Aaron has assisted with the agreement on this project. This will allow for cover crop demonstrations. The application is due next week. Great option for our producers that already use cover cropping techniques.

Becker County Township nitrate-N Monitoring – with the MDA. Providing \$15,000 for outreach and test kits to target landowners in three different townships. Karl will lead this effort. Monitoring supplies are covered through the grant.

Motion (Beck, Pavelko) to approve submittals of the above grant agreements. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Contracts & Vouchers for Approval

2013 Clean Water Legacy Vouchers for Payment

CWL-16-2013, Curt Nelson, Grade Stabilization & Water and Sediment Control Basins. Total project costs \$96,904.51 with \$46,596.65 paid through EQIP and \$37,656.56 from Buffalo-Red River Watershed District. The Soil & Water District paid \$1,536.73 from 2012 CWL funds for the initial grade stabilization structure. Final payment of \$11,114.57 is due.

Motion (Pavelko, Schauer) to approve payment of the above voucher from 2013 Clean Water funds. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

2015 MASWCD Resolutions –

All supervisors were mailed resolution packets earlier this month and will have their votes to Jen by the end of today's meeting. These must be submitted to MASWCD by November 1st.

Other –

Moving into 2016, Karl's time should be appropriated to water quality efforts as well as AIS awareness. His position was written as such to allow for half-time on each of these areas.

We hope to have a TSA meeting put together to coincide with our MASWCD state convention in December.

Upcoming Events:

BWSR Academy Training in Brainerd, October 27-29

MASWCD Area 1 Meeting in Hallock, November 3

MASWCD Annual State Convention, December 6-8

Being no further business, motion (Beck, Schauer) to adjourn meeting at 11:33 a.m. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Approved: Gene Pavelko, Becker SWCD Secretary

Date: November 17, 2015