



Board of Supervisors Monthly Meeting
SWCD/NRCS Conference Room
USDA Service Center

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Supervisors Present:

Michelle Andresen, Chair
Curt Ballard, Vice Chair
Tony Beck, Treasurer
Gene Pavelko, Public Relations
Travis Schauer, Secretary

Staff Present:

Bryan Malone, District Administrator
Jamie Bischoff, Office Manager
Deana Westberg, Office Manager
Colton Utecht, Shoreland Technician
Phil Doll, Private Lands Biologist
Ed Clem, Resource Technician
Adam Mortenson, Program Technician

Absent:

Christy Johnson, Education/Outreach Coordinator

Guests:

Barry Nelson, County Commissioner
Ed Musielewicz, NRCS

Chair Andresen called the meeting to order at 8:27 a.m.

Agenda and Consent Agenda Items

Approval of Agenda

Motion (Ballard, Schauer) to approve the Revised Agenda. All in favor, motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion (Beck, Pavelko) to approve the Consent Agenda and to include the March 2024 meeting minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

Financial

Treasurers Report and Bills for Approval

Bischoff presented the Treasurers Report and Bills for Approval.

Motion (Ballard, Schauer) to approve the March 2024 Treasurer's Report and April Bills for Approval. All in favor, motion carried.

QuickBooks

Deana Westberg is the current Primary Administrator of our QuickBooks account. We need to change it from Deana Westberg to Jamie Bischoff as Deana will be retiring at the end of May. QuickBooks requires board approval when changing the Primary Administrator.

Motion (Schauer, Beck) to approve Jamie Bischoff as the Primary Administrator for the Quickbooks account. All in favor, motion carried.

Soil Health Staffing Grant

We received a Soil Health Staffing grant for \$538,000 (4-year grant). This grant proposed the sharing of our Project Coordinator to implement soil health practices in all aspects of conservation projects between Hubbard and Becker SWCDs.

Motion (Pavelko, Ballard) to approve the Soil Health Staffing Grant Agreement. All in favor, motion carried.

Financial Assistance Policy

Ag Waste Pit Closure Policy

Malone presented a ranking sheet of 11 site specific criteria that was used in a prior grant to fund the closure of ag waste pits. Scores could vary from 11-33. It was suggested by Ed Clem and Malone that a low, medium and high priority be developed with 11-17 points as low, 18-24 as medium and 25-33 as high. Cost-share rates would vary from 60% for a low-ranking application, 75% for medium and 90% for high.

Motion (Beck, Schauer) to approve a revised Ag Waste Pit Closure policy stating that Utilizing the Ag Waste Pit Closure Priority Ranking sheet, Becker SWCD will reimburse landowners 60% (Low), 75% (Medium) or 90% of the cost to close ag waste pits.

Closures must have an approved NRCS plan and landowners are responsible for receiving 3 bids for construction. All in favor, motion carried.

Forest Management Policy

Malone met with Howard Mooney, consulting forester to determine a compromise from the policy developed by the Board in February and as discussed at the March meeting. Howard suggested that 50% cost-share was better than what landowners were receiving in the past and 75% was plenty. As a way to entice landowners to enroll in SFIA, Malone suggested a higher cost-share rate for those enrolling in SFIA.

Motion (Pavelka, Beck) to approve the Forest Management Policy to Reimburse landowners for a portion of the cost to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan. There are two programs that promote implementation of the forest management plans. The amount of cost-share is based on enrollment in those Programs. SFIA provides a longer duration covenant therefore will receive 75% cost-share and 2C which is year by year tax reduction will receive 50%. The applicant is responsible for coordinating and paying the plan writer. The landowner will provide: 1) a copy of the plan; and 2) the paid receipt from the consulting forester and 3) a copy of the SFIA covenant or 2C declaration to receive the reimbursement. The maximum cost-share amount will match the MN DNR rate of \$300 base plus \$10 per acre. If the DNR Rate changes during the year, Becker SWCD will acknowledge that change. All in favor, motion carried.

Cost Share

Clean Water Fund Application

CWL-07-FFBCII ToBe - Cover Crop Project Cost \$38,851.20; Flat Rate Cost Share \$38,851.20

Motion (Pavelko, Ballard) to approve the Clean Water Fund Application with Beck abstaining. Motion carried.

Clean Water Fund Applications Con't

CWL-08-FFBCII MaBI - Cover Crop Project Cost \$40,563.57; Flat Rate Cost Share \$40,563.57
CWL-09-FFBCII SpDa - Cover Crop Project Cost \$39,014.40; Flat Rate Cost Share \$39,014.40
CWL-11-FFBC DeSc - Cover Crop Project Cost \$20,708.62; Flat Rate Cost Share \$20,708.62
CWL-05-TDII MaFa – WACBs - Project Cost \$194,716.30; 90% Cost Share \$175,244.67

Motion (Ballard, Schauer) to approve the Clean Water Fund Applications. All in favor, motion carried.

Watershed Based Funding Applications

1W1P-15-BR KeFa, WASCB - Project cost \$274,302.98; 90% Cost Share \$254,872.68
1W1P-14-OT ScPa, Conservation Cover – Project cost \$4,074.73; 75% Cost Share \$3,056.05

Motion (Pavelko, Beck) to approve the Watershed Based Funding Applications. All in favor, motion carried.

SSTS Upgrade Application

SSTS-24-01 MaTu – SSTS Upgrade - Project Cost \$20,400; 100% Maximum Cost Share \$15,000.

Motion (Beck, Schauer) to approve the SSTS Upgrade Application. All in favor, motion carried.

State Cost-Share Applications

SCS-24-07 VeBa, Windbreak Est., Project Cost \$3,640.00; 75% Cost Share \$2,730.00

SCS-24-08 AnOs, Windbreak Est., Project Cost \$2,610.00; 75% Cost Share \$1,322.50

SCS-24-09 JeHo, Windbreak Est., Project Cost \$1,482.00; 75% Cost Share \$1,111.00

Motion (Pavelko, Ballard) to approve the State Cost-Share Applications. All in favor, motion carried.

Personnel

Office Manager, Program Technician, and Engineering Technician

Deana Westberg, Office Manager and Adam Mortenson, Program Technician, submitted their resignation letters. Their last day in the office is May 31, 2024. The Program Technician position opening for applications is now closed with 6 applications submitted. The Engineering Technician position will remain open as we are having a difficult time receiving applications.

Local Water Management

Wild Rice WD Advisory Committee

The Wild Rice WD requested a representative from our SWCD to sit on their Advisory Committee as they have not requested that in the past. Malone offered to be part of this committee and offered the same opportunity to the Supervisors. Ballard lives the Wild Rice Watershed therefore, he agreed to be a committee member as well. This committee meets twice a year in Ada, MN.

Big Cormorant Lake Area Foundation Agreement

Malone developed and presented an agreement between the Foundation and SWCD as directed by the Board at the last meeting. It has been reviewed by the County Attorney and approved by the Foundation. The agreement is effective after it is signed by both parties.

Motion (Schauer, Beck) to approve the Big Cormorant Lake Area Foundation Agreement. All in favor, motion carried.

Supervisor Elections

Malone gave information to Schauer, Andresen, and Beck regarding how to file for election.

Equipment & Services

Tree Planter

Another 3-point tree planter option was found in Nebraska since the last meeting. We could receive shipment yet this spring and the cost is \$8,200.00. The freight cost is \$4,250.00 and will be split between Kittson SWCD and us as they also have equipment to pick up their. The DNR grant can be revised to show the information stated above. Our payment will be processed and mailed after the grant agreement is revised.

Motion (Schauer, Ballard) to purchase the tree planter and work with Kittson SWCD to split shipping dependent on the DNR grant agreement revision. All in favor, motion carried.

Out of County Rate and Priority Policy

Brandon D. is receiving requests for seeding with the drill outside of Becker County. Malone asked the Board how they would like this handled for all services we provide, suggesting that those jobs be lower priority and that an out-of-county rate be established. Discussion was held that Becker County resident projects take priority. However, if there is a time such as it's wet here and dry in an area outside Becker County, we will assist.

Motion (Schauer, Ballard) that services can be provided Out-of-County however, Becker County projects take priority and establish an Out-of-County rate charging \$3.00 per mile loaded one-way from the office. All in favor, motion carried.

Conservation Easement Alteration Request

A RIM Easement holder has requested to remove acreage from their easement and replace it with acreage from a different parcel adjacent to a WRP easement. The Board is required to send a letter recommending approval or disapproval to the BWSR Board. Much discussion was held whether the proposal met the required replacement ratio of the BWSR Easement Alteration Policy.

Motion (Ballard) to table for more information until next board meeting. Motion failed due to not receiving a second.

Motion (Schauer, Ballard) to recommend the BWSR Board approve the RIM alteration, acknowledging that the acreage removed be adjusted to fit the required replacement ratio as stated in the BWSR Easement Alteration Policy. All in favor, motion carried.

MASWCD Area 1

Future Agenda Items and Meeting Location

Malone received suggestions that the Area 1 meeting be moved from Mahanomen and rotated between Crookston and Detroit Lakes. The Area 1 planning committee asked each SWCD to discuss this idea and to also brainstorm ideas for presentations. The committee would like a list of options to choose from when planning each meeting. Malone will email the committee with our list of ideas. The Board is in favor of keeping the meeting in Mahanomen or changing the location if so decided by the group.

Open Forum

Discussion was held on pending legislation regarding the transfer of Becker County Tax Forfeit Land to the White Earth Band of Ojibwe.

Staff Reports

Colton Utecht – Shoreland Technician

CLWD Site visit for retaining wall and native plantings on Big Cormorant Lake. CLWD Board Meeting to discuss new rules, Bluewater Bay project, permits, and tree order. Zoom meeting with Ed and Liz to discuss a plan for CLWDs tree order this spring. Ottertail Education outreach

meeting to discuss potential education ideas for 2024. Area 1 meeting at Shooting Star Casino discussing budgets, grants, and future projects. PRWD board meeting to discuss rule changes, upcoming work with zoning, and permits. Called landowners for PRWD to let them know we would be at their property this spring to check their completed project. County weed inspection training in Callaway to discuss invasive weeds of Becker County. Talked to the Becker County assessors to get a parcel list of everyone around the cormorant lakes watershed district to organize a tree sale. Five zoom trainings revolving around pollinator plants, protection of shoreland zone, floodplain regulations, and shoreline BMPs. Celebrated Ed Clem's 30 years of Becker SWCD.

Phil Doll – Private Lands Biologist

• **RIM:**

- RIM Grasslands: 1 easement in progress. All final easement documents have been signed, recorded, and mailed to St Paul along with final title policy.
 - One new application for Grasslands has been submitted to St. Paul.
- RIM 1W1P: 2 easements in progress. The landowner has acquired the required signed mortgage subordinations from his bank. The RIM conservation plans have been completed. The next step will be final easement docs.
- RIM Crow Wing Watershed Healthy Waters: 2 applications in Spruce Grove Township have been approved for funding. One landowner has signed his RIM agreement, and the others is in the mail.
- I'm still working with a landowner near Tamarac NWR on a new RIM 1W1P application. The application has been submitted for funding consideration. We should know soon if it was selected as March was the last application deadline.
- Landowners along the Upper Buffalo River project have been contacted by the BRRWD about their easement options. I have been having conversations with a few of them about applying for RIM. If the landowners elect to go with a RIM easement, they will also receive a bonus payment from the BRRWD.

• **WIA:**

- I've been working with the landowners who have expiring Walk-in Access contracts on re-enrollments. They can choose up to a 3-year contract with a payment rate of \$18/acre. The deadline to re-enroll or sign-up is April 19th.

• **1W1P:**

- Incentive payment contracts for CCRP contracts are starting to roll in for the Wild Rice watershed. I've been developing our tracking system for these as there's up to \$30,000 available to landowners at a rate of \$100/acre.

District Administrator - Bryan Malone

1W1P – Met with Christy and Claire to develop an Outreach plan for the Otter Tail watershed. Also met with them and the technical staff to develop a strategy to focus our shoreland restoration program outreach efforts. The group selected Floyd Lakes as our focus area. Supplemental funding has been received for the Buffalo Red, Wild Rice and Otter Tail watersheds so time was spent updating the grant logs to include that. Attended the Crow Wing River Watershed Policy Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee meeting in Staples where reviewed the draft Goals and priority lakes. The Otter Tail Policy Committee met on March 28th for the first time since plan approval.

Projects – Worked on Forestry cost-share policy with Howard Mooney. Prepared Future of Farming Contracts for the Board meeting. Met with Kevin and Don on their cooperative project. This project will solicit bids and plan for construction in 2024. The U of MN has asked again this

year for Becker SWCD to complete a tillage transect. This is done once planting is mostly done and before the crop emerges very far. Worked with Ed Clem to develop an Ag Waste Pit Closure ranking sheet. Found another tree planter in Nebraska that may be able to set us up this spring. Nothing for sure yet. WASCB project bids were near the engineers estimate and construction should start soon. 10 tree planting projects with cost-share and they include weed barrier fabric. Received a soliciting bids for a SSTS upgrade grant project. Also received soliciting bids for WASCB projects to be installed in 2024.


Personnel – Received a handful of applications for the Program Technician and a couple for the Engineering Technician. Next will be ranking the applications and scheduling interviews. Things have been going well with training for Deana and Jamie. Were successful in receiving the Soil Health Staffing grant for \$538,000. This grant proposed the sharing of our Project Coordinator to implement soil health practices in all aspects of conservation between Hubbard and Becker SWCDs.

Meetings and Other – Attended the Local Weed Inspector meeting in Callaway. Met with Howard Mooney to develop the Envirothon Forestry Test. Created the Big Cormorant Lakes Area Foundation agreement and had our County attorney review it. Sent to BCLAF for them to review. It was the end of the quarter in March so submitted quarterly reports for NACD, DNR Farm Bill, MAWQCP, TSA, etc. Attended the County NRM meeting.

TSA – Prepared a new quarterly report for the SWCDs to submit their expenses. The FY25 TSA grants will be distributed early as the expiration dates were messed up during the legislative session last year. They expire 12/31/2025, not giving us much time to spend them down.

Adjourn

Seeing no further business, Chair Andresen adjourned the meeting at 11:02 a.m.



Board Secretary



District Administrator

15 May 2024
Date

5/15/2024
Date