



Board of Supervisors Meeting
SWCD/NRCS Conference Room
USDA Service Center
Wednesday, December 18, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Supervisor's Present:

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

Staff Present:

Bryan Malone, District Administrator
Jamie Bischoff, Office Manager
Christy Johnson, Education/Outreach Coordinator
Brandon Dahring, Resource Technician
Logan Riedel, Resource Technician
Ed Clem, Soil & Water Resource Technician

Guests:

Ed Musielewicz, District Conservationist NRCS
Barry Nelson, County Commissioner

Absent:

Curt Ballard, Vice Chair

Call to Order

Chair Andresen called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Agenda Approval

Motion (Beck, Schauer) to approve the December Agenda. All in favor, motion carried.

Minutes

Approval of November Meeting Minutes – November 20, 2024 - Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion (Beck, Schauer) to approve the November 2024 meeting minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

Financial

Treasurers Report and Bills

Bischoff presented the Treasurers Report and Bills.

Motion (Schauer, Pavelko) to approve the November 2024 Treasurer's Report and to pay the Bills. All in favor, motion carried.

Supervisors Q4 Meetings and Expenses

Discussion was held about the maximum mileage cap you can claim on a trip.

Motion (Schaer, Pavelko) to strike the rule (if there was one) and create a new rule to include in-state travel distances to the twin cities. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion (Pavelko, Beck) to approve the Q4 Supervisor expenses. All in favor, motion carried.

Envirothon Donation

The annual budget is expected to be \$7,500.00 for 2025. Each of the 8 participating districts will be asked to contribute \$937.50.

Motion (Beck, Pavelko) to approve \$937.50 donation to the Envirothon Fund. All in favor, motion carried.

Soil Health Bus Tour Contribution

Malone explained the total budget of \$35,000 and the breakdown of grants requested to fund the trip. If grants are approved by MOSH (and MTT (\$10,500) there is a gap of \$8,000. Each of the 16 SWCDs in Area 1 has been asked to contribute \$500 to this training event for staff and producers.

Motion (Schauer, Beck) to contribute \$500 to the Soil Health Bus Tour Training event. All in favor, motion carried.

Tractor and Drill Services

Brandon Dahring presented on the results of the 2024 drill program.

Chairman Andresen closed the regular meeting and opened the public hearing at 9:29 a.m.

Public Hearing – Wetland Conservation Act

LL Ranch Agricultural Wetland Bank Mitigation Plan

Date Complete Application Received: 9/12/2024

Becker County WCA Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) Findings and Recommendations

The proposal is to create a MN Wetland Bank for mitigation of agricultural impacts to wetlands. The project sponsor, Jonathon Lowry of LL Ranch LLC. proposes to restore approximately 55 acres of wetland and 41 acres of adjacent upland buffer on a 96-acre project easement. The MN Board of Water & Soil Resources is assisting with the development and implementation of this plan as part of a 2020 grant agreement between BWSR and NRCS for the establishment of MN Agricultural Wetland Banks. Kane Radel is the project contact and main plan writer for BWSR and BWSR Engineering staff completed the surveys and designs for construction of the hydrologic restoration components. The goal of this restoration project is to emulate pre-drainage conditions to the greatest extent possible by reestablishing and rehabilitating the natural hydrology regime and native vegetation.

The plan describes historical and existing ecological conditions within the easement area. It also sets goals with performance standards for future conditions after the restoration actions are completed. The TEP concurred on May 12, 2023 with the *“Alternative Method for Determining Wetland Credit Potential for Hydrologic Restorations on Cultivated Fields in Minnesota”* (CFC) methodology used in the plan to determine wetland crediting potential. Crediting potential for upland buffer areas will use the credit determination criteria in 8420.0526 Subpart 2.

BWSR’s Construction Engineering and Design Plans have been reviewed and approved internally by BWSR Engineering staff. The TEP delegates engineering oversight to BWSR and concurs with the approval of plans, designs, construction inspection, and final as-built approvals by BWSR.

The TEP finds that:

- All documents, maps, and other components required in a MN Wetland Mitigation Plan have been completed and included in the plan.
- The plan clearly explains the historical and existing altered conditions of the site.
- The goal of emulating pre-drainage conditions to the extent possible is reasonable for this site. The TEP recognizes that a constructed ditch that bisects this easement and

currently diverts the Buffalo River makes complete restoration of natural conditions impractical for this site.

- The TEP recognizes that an independent project by MN DNR and Buffalo-Red Watershed District to restore the natural meandering river channel around this easement area may impact the hydrologic input to this site.
- The Buffalo River restoration project should result in a more natural pre-drainage hydrologic condition and is not anticipated to have a negative impact to this easement area. There may be an opportunity for the landowner to work with BWSR Easement Staff to create a contiguous easement area following the river restoration project.
- The proposed conservation easement with the State of Minnesota should ensure long-term sustainability of this plan.
- The proposed credit actions, credit amounts listed, performance standards, and credit release schedule are reasonable and achievable per WCA Rule.
- The vegetation establishment plan is satisfactory and the long-term monitoring plan for the vegetation communities throughout the site has the potential to ensure compliance with the listed performance standards.
- The hydrologic restoration plan described in the engineering designs, construction plans, and final as-built certifications will be provided and approved by BWSR.
- The plans for long-term control and management of beaver activity that could negatively impact access to the site, integrity of the water control structures, and hydrology/vegetation performance standards are adequate.

The TEP recommends that:

- Becker SWCD, serving as LGU for the MN Wetland Conservation Act in Becker County, approve the LL Ranch Agricultural Wetland Bank Mitigation Plan
- Approval of this plan be conditioned on the receipt of all permits and positive environmental reviews that may be required by other Federal, State, and local agencies.

Andresen called 3 times for further comments. Hearing none, the public hearing was closed, and the regular board meeting was reopened at 10:19 a.m.

Discussion: It is recommended that approval is conditioned on receipt of all permits and positive environmental reviews that may be required by other Federal, State, and local agencies. The LGU concurs with the Becker TEP findings, recommendation, and conditions for approval. Consider adding a condition for approval that the applicant or applicant's representative notify the White Earth Tribal Nation of this project so that they have an opportunity to conduct a cultural resource site review.

Motion (Schauer, Pavelko) to concur with the TEP findings and add that the applicant notify the White Earth Tribe of the proposed project. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion (Schauer, Andresen) to approve the LL Ranch Ag Wetland Mitigation Bank Plan. All in favor, motion carried.

State Cost Share Amendments

SCS-23-05 ToFo, Conservation Cover - Project cost increased from \$3,013.94 to \$6,167.63. Proposed amendment would increase the allocated amount by \$2,365.26 for a total allocated amount of \$4,625.72.

Motion (Schauer, Beck) to approve the State Cost Share Amendment for contract SCS-23-05. All in favor, motion carried.

Watershed Based Implementation Fund Amendments

1W1P-19-BR MaBj, Conservation Cover – Increase the allocated amount from \$22,846.79 to \$26,580.54 due to a natural gas line crossing through the project.

Motion (Beck, Schauer) to approve the amendment for contract 1W1P-19-BR. All in favor, motion carried.

Personnel Committee

2025 COLA

SWCD 2025 Budget has been approved with a 4% COLA.

Any revisions will be presented in February.

Management Teams

Malone briefly spoke about creating management teams. Instead of all the staff supervised by the Administrator, a team manager would direct a group of employees and report to the Administrator. There may be 3-4 teams possibly. Further discussions will be held at future meetings.

Local Water Management

Crow Wing River CWMP – Implementation MOA

Malone presented the Memorandum of Agreement to implement the Crow Wing River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. This plan is very similar to our other MOAs for implementation. This MOA will have three organizations working to keep things organized. The fiscal agent will be Crow Wing SWCD. Hubbard SWCD will be the planning coordinator, and administration will be handled by Cass SWCD. On January 6th, the plan will be presented to the BWSR North Region Committee in Bemidji. The committee will make a recommendation to the BWSR Board for approval on January 22nd. The MOA must be approved by all the LGUs that plan to participate on the policy committee. **Motion (Schauer, Beck) to approve the CWR CWMP Implementation MOA. All in favor, motion carried.**

Board Retreat – February 19, 2024

It was agreed to schedule our Board/Staff Retreat in Detroit Lakes. Christy will reserve an appropriate location such as Holiday Inn.

Tentative Topics: mission statement, vision statement, core values, and/or dealing with the public.

MASWCD

Convention and Resolution Report

Eight resolutions were presented, and seven resolutions were approved.

Open Forum

Friendly reminder that the Oath of Office for the recently elected officials will be January 7, 2025 at the Becker County Courthouse.

Staff Reports

District Administrator - Bryan Malone

Thanksgiving was a great time together with Family. We hosted for about 12 of us. The Sunday before the convention we took in a Vikings Game against the Arizona Cardinals prior to the Convention. We got a win but it was a struggle, just like a few of them have been.

1W1P – The Crow Wing Planning Team came to an agreement on the budget for the new workplan once the plan is approved by BWSR in January. I will bring the MOA for Implementation to the County Board on December 17th and to the SWCD Board on the 18th. The Wild Rice Policy committee meeting was held Monday November 25th. The FY21 WBIF grant expires the end of the year and all the funds are now expended before the December 31,

2024 deadline. The Redeye FY21 grant funds will also be expended by the end of the year. We finally received our final invoice for the Buffalo Red initial grant and processed those payments so that one is done too. Worked on CRP incentive payments for the Wild Rice and Buffalo Red.

Projects – Processed the voucher for payment on Jerred Jirava and Terry Kohler. Created vouchers and payment should be made by the Board meeting for the Matt Bjerke, Dennis Schouviller, Bill Steffl and Kevin Olson contracts. Owen is working on a list of Ag waste pits that could be closed in the Toad River watershed. We will develop a game plan to contact those landowners. Also received Darwin Huwe’s forest management plan so made payment on that contract too.

Personnel – Completed all the personnel reviews and met with the Personnel committee meeting on December 12th.

Meetings and Other – Working on Soil Health Bus Tour agenda and budget. Attended the MASWCD Convention December 2-4. Caught up with a lot of peers, attended a joint NRCS/SWCD session to improve customer service, human resources making connections with colleges, keynote speaker focused on the 8 pillars of trust, and the business meeting.

TSA – setting up meetings for 2025 and sent the audit out for review.

Adjourn

Seeing no further business, Chair Andresen adjourned the meeting at 11:23 a.m.



Secretary



District Administrator

21 Jan 2025

Date

1/21/2025

Date