

WEST POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MINUTES FROM March 20th, 2025, REGULAR BOARD MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 am by Vice Chair Peterson, at 528 Strander Ave, Crookston, MN.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Peterson, Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

{Motion #32-2025} Motion by Pester and seconded by Sorenson to approve the March 20th, 2025, agenda.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

Supervisors Present:

Derek Peterson, Vice Chairman
Christian Pester, Treasurer
Eric McWalter, Secretary
John Sorenson, PR & I

District Employees Present:

Nicole Bernd, District Manager
Aaron Habermehl, District Technician
Morgan Torkelson, District Technician

Others Present:

BWSR Board Conservationist, Brett Arne
NPOD Engineering Staff, Justin Mueller and Matt Sorvig

Others Absent:

Chris Cournia, President
Zach Anderson, NRCS DC
Taylor Farm Bill Biologist II

SECRETARY'S:

{Motion #33-2025} Motion by McWalter and seconded by Sorenson to approve the minutes with corrections from the regular board meeting held February 20th, 2025.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

FINANCIALS REPORT:

{Motion #34-2025} The February financial reports were reviewed. Motion by Sorenson and seconded by Pester to approve the financial reports, subject to audits and revisions.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

TREASURER'S REPORT:

{Motion #35-2025} Motion by Sorenson and seconded by McWalter to approve the February treasurer's report.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

COST SHARE REPORT:

No report.

OLD BUSINESS

Motion to approve the resolution for the ENRTF (Environmental Natural Resources Trust Fund) grant application in the amount of \$157,000.

{Motion #36-2025} Motion by Pester and seconded by Sorenson to approve the resolution for ENRTF grant application in the amount of \$157,000.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

NEW BUSINESS

West Polk SWCD Soil Health Incentive Program Policy update.

Motion to approve the updated policy.

{Motion #37-2025} Motion by Pester and seconded by Sorenson to approve the updated policy.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

Motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Agassiz Audubon Society for the Aspen Parkland Webcam Network Project.

{Motion #38-2025} Motion by Pester and seconded by Sorenson to approve the MOA.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

Motion to change board meeting date to: 8:00am from December to March and 7:00am from April to November.

{Motion #39-2025} Motion by McWalter and seconded by Sorenson to approve the board meeting times.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

Motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Minnesota-Crookston, Agriculture and Natural Resource Department, NW RSDP, and the Crookston Community Housing and EDA for the Crookston Tree and Pollinator Habitat Project.

{Motion #40-2025} Motion by Sorenson and seconded by McWalter to approve the MOA.

Affirmative: Pester, Sorenson and McWalter

Opposed: None

Motion: Pass

The Economic Impact of Conservation Funding flyer – MASWCD

Notice of Pay Equity Compliance MN Management and Budget

Legislative Update email correspondence from BWSR Board Conservationist, Brett Arne

Additional staff: Discussion

New district logo

MEETING REPORTS

CREP III Training, virtual	Staff
North POD Soil Health meeting, Red Lake Falls	Torkelson/Bernd
RLR Planning Group meeting, Thief River Falls	Bernd
Crookston Community Tree Initiative meeting, virtual	Bernd
FDRWG board meeting, Ada	Bernd
North POD board meeting, Mahnomen	Bernd
RRVSCA board meeting, Mahnomen	Pester/Bernd
SWCD/NRCS Communication Pathway planning meeting, virtual	Bernd
NACDE Employees meeting, Mahnomen	Habermehl
NW RSDP Board Meeting, virtual	Bernd
Red River Watershed Management Board Annual Meeting	Bernd

Upcoming Meetings/Trainings

SWCD/NRCS Communication Pathway meeting, virtual	Bernd
MACDE State Managers Meeting, St. Cloud	Bernd
SWCD/NRCS Communication Pathway Meeting, McIntosh	Staff
Well Aware Steering Committee meeting, virtual	Bernd

DISTRICT EMPLOYEE'S REPORTS:

Bernd

1W1P:

- RLR1W1P: Policy Committee meeting 03/12/2025; received approval on the Implementation Schedule (Section 5) of the Plan Amendment.
- MSTR1W1P: Policy Committee meeting 03/12/2025; discussed the 2023 WBIF Financials/Timeline (Grant Expires 12/31/25), Well Sealings Update, Ag Practices Update, Swift Coulee/RIM Update, County Ditch 45 Update, CCRP Incentives Program
- SHR1W1P: Steering Committee and Advisory Committee will be scheduled for April 15, 2025.
- WRM1W1P: Policy Committee meeting, March 24, 2025.

Other:

Bernd submitted the Crookston Tree and Pollinator Habitat Project. The amount requested is \$157,000 (\$52,333/yr 3 for 3 yrs). \$88,221\$ to support 3 UMC students and 2 Associate Professors and \$68,779 for materials and supplies (trees, shrubs, pollinator seed mixes/plugs, gravel bed and berry boxes supplies).

The grant submitted on behalf of Agassiz Audubon Society to the Red Lake Electric Trust was awarded \$500 for the purchase of a webcam for the Aspen Parkland Webcam Network Project.

Bernd submitted a grant application to the Mn Dept. of Health Groundwater Protection Initiative Accelerated Implementation Grant in the amount of \$13,000. If awarded, this funding would purchase 50 water test kits, \$6,000 (lead, arsenic and bacteria) free for the public and a nitrate testing machine, \$7,000.

Two letters of support were written for LCCMR grant applications. Minnesota Geological Survey, Geophysicist, A. Horsch, a technique called airborne electromagnetics (AEM) using a helicopter mounted geophysical device to better understand the groundwater resources in northwest Minnesota. The second letter was for the Red River Basin Commission, Soil Health Coordinator, K. Melton, seeking funding for the education of farmers about soil health and implementing soil health practices across our landscape through multiple agencies.

Habermehl

Technician Habermehl Report 03/20/2025

WCA:

- RLWD permits (4, *1 WCA), Tax Forfeiture (0).
- WCA 201 training 02/19/2025 WCA form updates.
- Russia 04: WCA inquiry (requires site visit).
- MSTRWD permits?

CCCS/1W1P:

- well inquiries (5 in process). (2) new contracts, Kertsonville 19, 27- \$900.00 each. (1) new contract, Gentilly 05, waiting on (updated) estimate;
- Hammond 10 DNR Public h2o cleanout assistance request; Crookston 18, 24 Michaelson (surveyed/landowner conversation 10/09/2024)- design received/sent to client 12/11/2024 (met FO 02/05). Andover 05 Samuelson (I&E, surveyed), Crookston 27 Gasper (I&E, surveyed), Bygland 01 Sorenson (I&E, surveyed 11/06/2024), Gentilly 14 Langlois (I&E, surveyed), Angus 15 Judovsky preliminary designs transmitted to client. Andover 14, 15, 22 Perry (FO 09/13, contacted DNR, onsite contractor + engineer 11/13/2024) -S15 SWI install 11/18/2024- NRCS/client meeting 12/17/2024. Fisher 27, 34, 35 Faugstad (contractor?), Fanny 04 Radi (DNR PW permit required), Eng. request sent 12/12/2024. Gentilly 05 sinkhole, Kertsonville 27 (meet again w/Eng.), equipment tests

Other:

MN DNR records assist (in progress), CREP III (BWSR training 02/20), RIM inquiries/outreach (schedule 2 landowner FO meetings), NACDE meeting 03/13/2025.

Torkelson

Technician Report 3/20/2025

Tree Program:

- 22 machine plantings in the works so far
 - Nineteen finalized with deposit paid
 - 14 farmstead (5.5 miles)
 - 3 WHTP C-S (2.9 miles)
 - 2 wildlife – no C-S (0.8 miles)
 - 2 field windbreaks (1.4 miles)
 - 1 organic buffer (0.25 miles)
- 89 hand plant orders so far
 - Assisting landowners with species selection/planning projects
 - Unable to procure potted spruce this year – 11 refunds being issued

Soil Health Incentive Program:

- Three inquiries for 2025 growing season
- Amended SHIP policy (acreage cap, rates, premiums)

AgBMP Loan Program:

- One new inquiry on 3/12
- Two inquiries total awaiting purchase/application

Outreach/Other:

- 2/21 Met with Gabe Okins
 - AgLearn, WEPS/RUSLE2
 - Discussed process and checklist for conservation plan folders for JAA
 - In-field soil health assessment mobile tool
 - Outreach collaboration opportunities
 - Gabe will be offering as-needed help for software training and plan submission
- 2/24 North Pod soil health meeting
- 3/6 AgBMP planning meeting

- 3/11 Beginning Farmer Meeting – presented programs of interest to new farmer attendees

NPOD Engineering Staff

NRCS DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST'S REPORT

March 2025 District Conservationist Report

3/19/25

EQIP:

- Fiscal year 2025 Sign Up #1
 - 29 applications ranked
 - **12 applications preapproved (42%)**
 - 5 funded via EQIP-CIC
 - 4 funded via RCPP #2888 (Red Lake Watershed)
 - **3 funded via General Farm Bill Funds**

CSP

- General sign up is closed for FY25
 - Rank & assessment date March 21st, 2025
 - 5 applications in Crookston
 - **3 eligible and ranked, 2 differed**

CRP (No Change):

No talk of CRP sign up, likely awaiting a new farm bill.

Misc.

- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) related funds are currently on pause for new obligations (2025), prior year IRA related funds are active as announced by the Secretary of Agriculture's office on 2/20/2025
- Luke Klawitter will return to his role as District Conservationist for Red Lake County effective April 4th, Matt Waterworth will step in as Team Lead for Crookston CST. His contact information is provided below.
 - Matt Waterworth
Email: matt.waterworth@usda.gov
Office: 218-745-4251, 115

Submitted by,
Zach Anderson
District Conservationist
Crookston Field Office

Other:

Farm Bill Biologist II

Taylor Leback

February 15th - March 1st - Vacation

CRP/SWCD:

- CRP Contract Modifications
- WIA Enrollment
- WRE Monitoring
- Train the Trainer Event

Meetings/Trainings:

- February 20th MN CREP Training

- March 4th Ag Tech Note 31 Training
- March 18th CREP Training

Upcoming:

- March 26th Camp Ripley Fire Training
- March 31st BWSR Online Spring Training
- April 2nd SWCD/NRCS and Partners Meeting

CORRESPONDENCE:

Publications:

Minnesota Conservation Volunteer	Sand Hill Watershed District
Board of Water and Soil Resources	Wild Rice Watershed District
Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust	The Crookston Times
Polk County Newsletter	Crookston Watch

The next meeting was scheduled for April 17th, 2025, at 8:00 am at the Irishman's Shanty.

With no further business, Vice President Peterson adjourned the meeting at 10:12 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary
EM\nb