

AITKIN COUNTY SWCD
307 2nd STREET NW, ROOM #216
AITKIN, MN 56431

Minutes of the Aitkin County Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meeting held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 at the Aitkin County Government Center, 3rd Floor Training Room. Meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Frank Turnock, Chair. Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Those attending were:

Those absent were:

Frank Turnock, Chair
Dan Gravley, Vice Chair
Bob Janzen, Treasurer
Tom Fasteland, Secretary/Reporter
Francis Dierickx, Supervisor
Janet Smude, District Manager
Lori Nelson, District Secretary
Darren Mayers, MN BWSR Board Conservationist

Additions to the agenda:

- Amendment to Statement of Work
Rum River Watershed Partnership & Aitkin SWCD
- (2) Cost-Share Payments (Malmo Twp. & Hazelton Twp.)
- DNR Award
- Area III Annual Meeting Report (Cook County)

A motion was made by Bob Janzen and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve the agenda with additions. Approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve the August 21, 2024 minutes. Approved unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Discussion. A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to accept the August financial statement. Approved unanimously.

CHECKS WRITTEN

A motion was made by Bob Janzen and seconded by Dan Gravley to approve checks written. Approved unanimously.

SOIL HEALTH SPECIALIST/OUTREACH SPECIALIST REPORT-Veronica

-SOIL HEALTH

- Workshops (Cromwell Pavilion Open House)
- Projects (Renville County, Drone Seeder need to schedule a time)
- Passed drone license
- Working with a Duluth news reporter writing an article about Soil Health practices, no till drills in the area and at different SWCDs

-WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

- BSALWMP Boat Tour (Lake Minnewawa)
- Groundwater Grant
- Leadership Training (1st Leadership training at the end of August, headed out today for the 2nd session in Duluth)
- Website-adjust website and learn the website
- Newsletter sent out
- Apparel order sent in
- AIS article to write in Oct. (last one)

AREA III ANNUAL MEETING

Tom Fasteland, Bob Janzen, and Frank Turnock attended—very well attended, 24 supervisors all nine districts represented and at least one supervisor from each district.

Next year Kanabec County will be hosting and looking at having a 2-day meeting.

There will be a \$500 scholarship offered for Leadership Training (Aitkin & Lake County SWCD).

DRONE RENTAL COSTS

There is no new information on drone rental costs. After Veronica goes to Renville County for a drone seeder demo will have more information.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Janet has been working with Benefit Innovation—Darren Mayers recommended them and Stearns County uses them re: benefits. Benefit Innovation has proposed a plan (Group Plan Blue Cross & Blue Shield (BCBS) with a HSA that would cover employees if they choose. The Aitkin SWCD would cover a health insurance premium up to \$1000. Example: If a plan is \$350 that would be covered and the remainder \$650 would go into a HSA.

Discussion: It was brought up that there is a cap on a HSA. A motion was made by Dan Gravley and seconded by Tom Fasteland to stop at the maximum amount. Approved unanimously.

MEDICAL ALLOWANCE/\$1000 year

Over the last few years a medical allowance was given \$1000 a year, pro-rated for part-time. A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Dan Gravley to do away with the medical allowance when the new insurance becomes effective. Approved unanimously.

INSURANCE BENEFIT FOR PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

A motion was made by Dan Gravley and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve health insurance for part-time employees if they so choose. Approved unanimously.

CHELSEY KOEBERNICK/6-MONTH PROBATION UNTIL 11/22/24

Chelsey Koebernick is a new hire 5/22/24, probation is up on 11/22/24. Discussion re: is she covered or does she have to wait until probation is ended? A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Dan Gravley to cover Chelsey immediately or any other new employee immediately. Approved unanimously.

EFFECTIVE DATE FOR HEALTH INSURANCE

Discussion as to when to start the health insurance. A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Tom Fasteland to start the health insurance benefits earliest available date 10/1/24. Approved unanimously.

WELCOME DENNIS THOMPSON, AITKIN COUNTY LAND COMMISSIONER

Dennis Thompson gave a Power Point Presentation on the new MN Tax Forfeiture Law.

DNR Award-The Aitkin County SWCD was given a DNR Award in July. Tom Fasteland read the DNR letter to Dennis as he was an important part of forestry for many years at the Aitkin County SWCD.

BREAK

Called meeting back to order.

STAFF POSITIONS

The deadline for the forester position was at the end of the day on September 16, 2024. A time needs to be set up for interviews. It was suggested to reach out to DNR Forestry and see what qualifications they require for writing stewardship plans. Sam Seybold, Tom Fasteland, Dan Gravley and Janet Smude will be a part of the interview committee.

Discussion re: posting the AIS Coordinator/Forestry Grant Coordinator

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to post the AIS Coordinator/Forestry Grant Coordinator. Approved unanimously.

COST-SHARE PROJECTS TO APPROVE

NORDLAND TWP/AGRO FORESTRY SILVOPASTURE, SOIL HEALTH
23 \$475 & DISTRICT CAPACITY 22 \$1000

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Dan Gravley to approve a cost-share assistance contract (Agro Forestry SilvoPasture, cost-sharing not to exceed \$1475 or 75% of the total eligible cost, whichever is less and amend the meeting agenda to read \$1475 not \$475. Approved unanimously.

MORRISON TWP/SOIL HEALTH 23, COVER CROP, \$4663.82

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve a cost-share assistance contract for a cover crop project, cost-sharing not to exceed \$4663.82 or 75% of the total eligible cost, whichever is less. Approved unanimously.

MALMO TWP/FORAGE PLANTING, SOIL HEALTH 23, \$1856.90

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Tom Fasteland to approve payment of \$1856.90 to landowner in Malmo Twp. Approved unanimously.

HAZELTON TWP/COVER CROP, SOIL HEALTH GRANT 23, \$120

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve payment of \$120 to landowner in Hazelton Twp. Approved unanimously.

AMENDMENT TO STATEMENT OF WORK RUM RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP AND AITKIN SWCD

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve and sign the Amendment to Statement of Work Rum River Watershed Partnership and Aitkin SWCD. Approved unanimously.

BUFFER SPECIALIST REPORT-Sam

- Riparian Buffers
- Culvert Inventory
- Miss GR 1W1P
- Soil Health
- Well Inventory
- Ag Inspector
- Rum River Partnership

SUPERVISOR MEETING RESPONSIBILITIES/APPOINTMENTS

Darren Mayers, MN BWSR Board Conservationist gave a presentation on Board Officer roles.

DAN GRAVLEY, MN SWCD FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

FRANCIS DIERICKX, CATTLEMEN'S MEETING

A motion was made by Tom Fastland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve Dan Gravley to attend the MN SWCD Forestry Association meetings and amend the motion to also approve Francis Dierickx to attend the Cattlemen's meetings. Approved unanimously.

Discussion re: appoint a supervisor to attend the Miss. Brd. 1W1P meetings. This can be thought about and decide at the October meeting. The next Miss. Brd. 1W1P meeting is in late October.

SNAKE RIVER REPORT-Dan

No report.

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT-Janet

- Boat tour (Lake Minnewawa) was held last Wednesday.
- Conservation Partnership Legacy Grant was working on, will apply for \$ due in November.
- Mary TSA 3 retired last Friday 9/13/24.

AIS COORDINATOR/FORESTER REPORT-Kyle

-AIS

- 10 Cleaning Stations
- Decont. units winterized and in storage
- AIS end of year picnic
- Last AIS Committee meeting
- Finishing guide on AIS program

-FORESTRY

- Stewardship Plan update
- Private Woodlands Group-Fall tour mailing
- Grants (CCFFC, LCCMR, 1W1P Rum River, CPL)
- Meetings (LCCMR, CCFFC)
- Other (SFIA ?'s, forest/tree health ?'s)

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT & WETLAND SPECIALIST REPORT-Chelsey

- Site visit
- Water samples
- Meetings (staff meetings and Board meeting)
- Site inspection forms
- Outreach
- WCA (writing restoration orders, TEP meetings, compliance visits, wetland delineation training for a week)
- Passed FAA part 107 drone certification

NRCS REPORT-Tom

- Program update
- Update on Aitkin field office forester position
- Area Resource Conservationists visited Aitkin Field office and worked with staff on establishing JAA for NRCS/Partner staff and provided training on HEL determinations.

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to write a thank you letter to Troy, NRCS thanking him for attending the Area III annual meeting in Cook County.

TSA 3 REPORT-Tom

No report—next meeting is next Wednesday, September 25, 2024.

FARM BILL BIOLOGIST REPORT-Joe Quehl

- NRCS Program Updates
- Easement Updates
- New position with NRCS, Soil Conservationist, Baxter Field Office—last day will be October 18, 2024.

CONSERVATION CORP REPORT-Emile

- Groundwater Initiative Grant (abandoned well mapping)
- Easement inspections with Joe
- Trash survey, Mille Lacs
- Drone footage delivered to Mille Lacs SWCD and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe DNR
- Soil Health Peer Group
- September newsletter

-AIS article

The next SWCD Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at the Aitkin County Government Center.

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Dan Gravley to adjourn at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Fasteland Secretary