

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, October 15, 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:

-Friends of Rice Lake Refuge

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve the agenda with an addition. Approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Dan Gravley to approve the September 17, 2024 minutes. Approved unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Discussion re: CDs come back in November with information, interest rates, etc.

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Bob Janzen to accept the September financial statement. Approved unanimously.

CHECKS WRITTEN

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Dan Gravley to approve the checks written. Approved unanimously.

DRONE RENTAL COSTS

Nothing at this time. Renville County found a local person with a drone.

HEALTH INSURANCE DISCUSSION-HEALTH BENEFIT POLICY

Benefit Innovations manages our healthcare and another company manages HSA/VEBA (Volunteer Employees Beneficiary Association).

It was recommended to have a Health Benefit Policy.

-A Health Savings Account (HSA) qualifying plan will be offered to each employee. It will include general health care, vision and dental coverage. An employee may elect all, some, or none of them.

-Remaining funds will be placed in a Health Savings Account (HSA) for employee until the maximum annual contribution limit is reached as determined by the IRS.

-Once the maximum HSA contribution is met the balance will be placed in a Voluntary Employers Association (VEBA) account for the employee.

All disbursements from these accounts will meet IRS/plan guidelines.

The Aitkin County SWCD Board has allocated a \$1000 per month for employee for the health care benefit.

This policy applies to all employees of the SWCD equally.

No cash payment in lieu of offered benefits is available.

There is an administrative fee for the HSA/VEBA account.

STAFF POSITIONS

Forester Position-Four applied for the forester position. It was recommended to re-advertise for the forester position. List of DNR courses etc. was received.

Sam Seybold SWCD Buffer Specialist is interested in the forester position and has the required courses. It was a general consensus by the Aitkin County SWCD Board to give it a try.

In taking the forester position the SWCD Board would like Sam Seybold to be a part of the SWCD Forestry Association-not the technical part of it.

AIS COORDINATOR/OTHER GRANTS COORDINATOR

This position has been posted and applications are due on October 28, 2024. Interview Committee will be Dan Gravley, Tom Fasteland along with Janet Smude.

GROUNDWATER PROTECTION INITIATIVE GRANT

Veronica and Emilee gave a Power Point presentation on the Groundwater Protection Initiative Grant.

Plan is to educate, locate wells, GPS mark, score/grade.

It is a 2 yr. grant (\$50,000) ends April 2026.

COST-SHARE PROJECTS TO APPROVE

KING, LONE LAKE/STORMWATER RUNOFF CONTROL PROJECT
\$21,156.75, MISS BRD 1W1P

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve a stormwater runoff control project, cost-sharing not to exceed \$21,156.75 or 75% of the total eligible cost, whichever is less. Approved unanimously.

STANEK/SHORELINE STABILIZATION & REVEGETATION, \$3967.50
BIG SANDY 319

A motion was made by Dan Gravley and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve a cost-share assistance contract for a shoreline stabilization and revegetation project \$3967.50, cost-share not to exceed 75% of the total eligible cost whichever is less. Approved unanimously.

PROPERTY 1/SHORELINE STABILIZATION & REVEGETATION/BIG
SANDY 319

No action taken.

PROPERTY 2/SHORELINE STABILIZATION & REVEGETATION/BIG SANDY 319

Discussion. Estimate came in \$4000 more than expected. A motion was made by Francis Dierickx to table until later in the meeting when Environmental Services can come up and talk to SWCD about this property.

RIPPLE LAKESHORE RE-RESTORATION

COIR Log failure-Request for cost-share to fix the project that was installed in 2023. A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Dan Gravley to approve a redo of this project \$3192.74 (90%). Approved unanimously.

COST-SHARE PROJECTS TO PAY

MCGREGOR TOWNSHIP SOIL HEALTH/\$1000, DISTRICT CAPACITY 23

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Tom Fasteland to approve payment of \$1000 for a soil health project in McGregor Township. Approved unanimously.

LONE LAKE SHORELINE RESTORATION, MISS BRD 1W1P

No bill was sent in.

VOLUNTEER HOURLY RATE/\$32

A motion was made to change our volunteer hourly rate to \$32/hr. It was previously \$30/hr. Approved unanimously.

OTHER

FRIENDS OF RICE LAKE REFUGE/\$35

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Dan Gravley to approve \$35 to Friends of Rice Lake for membership dues. Approved unanimously.

MASWCD CONVENTION/DECEMBER 2-4, 2024

Dan Gravley, Tom Fasteland, and Frank Turnock will attend. Janet Smude is also planning to attend the MASWCD Convention.

MN BWSR BOARD CONSERVATIONIST REPORT-Darren

BWSR Academy is coming up at the end of October.

Tom Schultz is now on the BWSR Board.

Grant Agreements from BWSR will now include the policy in the Grant Agreement.

2024 RESOLUTIONS

The 2024 Resolutions were sent out and ballots are due by November 1, 2024.

SNAKE RIVER REPORT-Dan

No meeting

DISTRICT MANAGER REPORT-Janet

- Project spot checks/DNR Cisco Lakes Grant
- County Strategic Plan
- Miss. GR Public Hearing
- Budget Committee meeting review with the County
- Interviews on 10/24 for Farm Bill Biologist
- Miss. Brd. Policy meeting
- BWSR Academy

PROPERTY 2 SHORELINE STABILIZATION AND REVEGETATION/ BIG SANDY 319

Discussion with the Environmental Services. It was decided to take care of only the drainage part of this project now. A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Dan Gravley to approve \$5591.25 or 75% of the total eligible cost, whichever is less for the drainage part of this project. Approved unanimously.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT/WETLAND SPECIALIST REPORT/CHELSEY

- Site visits
- Water samples
- Attended meetings (staff meetings, board meetings, Mille Lacs Watershed Mgmt. Group, Big Sandy Watershed)
- Site Inspections
- Project plans, cost estimates and contracts
- News articles (Rusty Patched Bumblebee)
- Podcast with Emilee on shorelines
- Writing restoration orders
- TEP meetings
- Compliance visits
- Wetland Delineation Certificate

SOIL HEALTH SPECIALIST/OUTREACH SPECIALIST REPORT-Veronica

- Soil Health Peer Group
- Presentations (Cattleman's Association)
- FFA Alumni, hoping to attend some meetings
- Projects (4), Lake Minnewawa
- Groundwater Grant
- Leadership Training

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT-Tom

- Program update
- FY 2025 deadline for Conservation Stewardship Plan, November 15, 2024
- 2024 Program results
- Update on Aitkin Field Office Forester position
- Staff attended training on "Selling Conservation"

TSA 3 REPORT-Tom

The TSA 3 met on September 25, 2024. They went over the budget and will post Mary's position in January 2025. The position will be located in Duluth or Aitkin.

The next SWCD Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at the Aitkin County Government Center.

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to adjourn at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Fasteland
Secretary