

**RICE S.W.C.D.
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 17, 2010**

PRESENT: Bob Duban, Wally Hildebrandt, Richard Huston, Steve Pahs, Tom Coffman, Adam Arndt, Tim Labs, Rice County Commissioner Jake Gillen and Debbie Skarupa.

ABSENT: Gary Wagenbach and Robert Borchert

Acting Chairman Wally Hildebrandt called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

The board welcomed Rice County Commissioner Jake Gillen and thanked him for attending the meeting.

MINUTES: Motion by Bob Duban, seconded by Dick Huston to approve the January 20, 2010 board meeting minutes. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye -None opposed - Motion carried.

FINANCIAL: Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Bob Duban to approve the December Program Summary and Bills Payable subject to audit. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye -None opposed - Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

FORESTRY DAY: The Rice, Goodhue, and Dakota Forestry Day will be held February 19 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at Culver's in Northfield. Registration fee of \$5.00 covers lunch. Rice SWCD will pay for morning rolls. Terry Helbig from Lake City DNR is putting together the program. Steve and Dick Huston plan on attending. Agenda will focus on tax benefit for woodlands.

GREEN ACRES/RURAL PRESERVES: Steve Pahs, Tim Labs, Bob Duban and Wally Hildebrandt met with the Rice County Assessor and his staff to discuss the new policy. Assessor would like to know SWCD's fee schedule before mailing out information letter. Tim Labs recapped the new property tax program, Rural Preserves, which is designed to provide tax relief for vacant 2B rural non-ag land such as woodland, wetland, grassland, etc. CRP is considered Ag land. Productive ag land can be pasture land or woodland used to make maple syrup. Non-ag land does not produce a commodity. Rice SWCD must approve the conservation plan regardless of who does the plan and can set up a fee for writing the plan or to just approve the plan. BWSR has a conservation plan program, but staff will need to walk the land. Land must be enrolled for ten years with a five year notice to get out of the program and then must pay back three years of taxes. Sign-up deadline is May 1, 2011 for taxes payable in 2012. Assessor said there are approximately 1150 landowners in Green Acres and 540 would qualify for Rural Preserves besides any additional new signups. If ten acres aren't contiguous, the acreage will be left as ag land. Tim passed out other SWCD's fee schedules. Assessor does not expect a lot of interest. No private contractors have been in the office inquiring.

Motion by Bob Duban, seconded by Dick Huston to set the fee for Rural Preserves property tax conservation plans written by SWCD staff at \$200, which includes the first four hours and \$50.00 per hour after that. Fee includes board approval. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Bob Duban to set the private contractor (outside agency) Rural Preserve property tax conservation plan review fee at \$100.00 and the charge to approve the plan at \$50.00. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

MASWCD DUES CALCULATION: Tabled until the March board meeting when Bob Borchert is present.

NEW BUSINESS:

RICE COUNTY FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR: The board reviewed the past Outstanding Conservationists of the Year. Motion by Bob Duban, seconded by Dick Huston to submit John and Riitta Hellerud, Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Shimota, and Dan and Nancy Morris as our three nominations for U of M Extension's Rice County Farm Family of the Year. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston.

NRCS FOIA 1619 COMPLIANCE: Tom Coffman explained the NRCS Freedom of Information Act as part of the 2008 Farm Bill that requires landowner permission before sharing private information. Staff signed an Attachment C earlier. Wally Hildebrandt signed the NRCS FOIA 1619 compliance document.

MASWCD DAY AT THE CAPITOL: Bob Borchert and Dick Huston will attend the Legislative Briefing this evening. Steve, Danielle and Bob Duban will join them to visit the following legislators:

8:30	David Bly
9:30	Patti Fritz
10:00	Mike Parry
10:30	Kevin Dahl

Danielle made a sheet of the 2009 accomplishments to handout.

ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK: Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Bob Duban to approve the Annual Plan of Work for 2010 as mailed. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

ANNUAL REPORT: Motion by Bob Duban, seconded by Dick Huston to approve the 2009 Annual Report subject to further review. Report is due to BWSR by March 15. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

STEWARDSHIP MATERIALS: Stewardship inserts were handed out that will be given to area churches towards the end of April for Stewardship Week. Religious aspect discussion was tabled until the March meeting. Extra inserts are available.

DESIGNATED RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY AND COMPLIANCE OFFICIALS: Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Bob Duban to designate Steve Pahs and Tom Coffman as the Designated Responsible Authority and Data Practices Compliance Officials for the state and federal side respectively. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING: The 2010 Memo of Understanding with NRCS was briefly reviewed.

4-H AWARDS: Motion by Bob Duban, seconded by Dick Huston to approve the sponsorship of two 4-H Champion Awards at \$7.00 each and two 4-H Reserve Champion Awards at \$6.00 each for the Rice County Fair. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

CONTRACTOR’S 2010 MEETING: A joint contractor’s meeting with Rice and Goodhue will be held February 25 from 9:00 to 12:00 at the Kenyon City Hall.

BIOMASS TECH FARM BILL T & A: Dave Rickert, the biomass technician, is housed in Scott SWCD and jointly sponsored by LeSueur, Dakota, Scott, Rice and Carver SWCD’s. Most of the grant dollars come from BWSR. Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Bob Duban to approve the 2010 \$1500.00 T & A for the Biomass Technician Farm Bill position. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried. Corn cobs and wood chips for ethanol in Benson were discussed along with the cost of biomass balers.

NRCS WOMEN’S DAY: NRCS will have a booth at the Agri-News Fair on March 24 and 25 at the Rochester Civic Center. Wally Hildebrandt will bring in the donated rain barrel that he has.

MASWCD LEGISLATIVE REPORT: Report was mailed to supervisors. Three years ago Minnesota had a surplus. Currently, only Montana and North Dakota do not have deficits.

SURPLUS SERVICES: Motion by Bob Duban, seconded by Dick Huston to approve the Surplus Services signature card. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

NRCS CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT: Agreement was tabled until the March board meeting.

SUPERVISOR REPORTS: Wally mentioned *The Handyman* magazine had an interesting article on rain barrels. Abandoned livestock pits were discussed. Dick Huston mentioned the Pheasants Forever Banquet will be March 13 at the Faribault Eagles Club. Wally mentioned the RC&D dues are out of the federal budget.

D.C. REPORT by Tom Coffman:

EQIP 2010 signup continues through the end of February. There has been a lot of interest. We don’t have an initial allocation yet, however, once we do, part of the funds will go into a separate pool to approve non-feedlot control practices such as compost facilities and nutrient management. As similar to last year, there won’t be enough money to approve all applications. So far, we have the following 22 applications:

No-Till	5
Animal Compost	4
Ephemeral Erosion	9
Well Sealing	1
N.M.I.	1
Nutrient Management	1
High Tunnel	1

C.S.P. – We are nearing completion on the six approved plans – four cropland and two forest land.

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT:

This past month has been interrupted by the remodeling of the office. Staff has been moving furniture and taking down shelves to facilitate painting and carpet installation. Work should be wrapped up by the end of next week. I have been continuing to do some ditch inspection work and have a presentation to give to the county commissioners on February 16th for the 2009 report. The tree program is moving at about a normal pace, with 40% of our inventory sold. We received word that our Clean Water grant for conservation buffers was approved at \$150,000 for the Cannon River Watershed. Details should come soon on how to implement the grant. I have been scheduling classroom visits and expect the next 2 months to be doing many presentations. Tim and I, along with Bob Duban and Wally Hildebrandt met with the assessor's office staff to discuss the Rural Preserves program. They don't believe that there will be many sign-ups. We will send them our fee schedule for conservation plans when it is approved by the board.

Other activity this month:

- Set up appointments with our state legislators
- BWSR meeting on SWCD training needs
- Meeting in Mankato on ag drainage
- Meetings with a group in Northfield on protecting and improving Rice and Heath creeks
- Attended the SE MN JPB meeting in Rochester
- Met with Rice Co. feedlot officer on feedlot projects
- Assisting Danielle with a CRP contour buffer proposal
- Working on annual reports and plans

The next month will be focused on grant agreements, a few reporting requirements, classroom visits, tree sales, ditch program work, and feedlot fixes. The SE MN employees association will have its annual meeting in March and all staff will be attending. Last, we have been asked to contribute to the biomass technician position in Scott County again. It is something I did not have in the budget, but I feel we should support it because there is a direct benefit to the landowners in Rice County.

Steve thought there is about 80 miles of ditches in Rice County and also spoke on a required buffer on drainage system ditching. Some farmers with flat land need a culvert along the ditch. In the past, a buffer was needed if the ditch was new or improved, but now the drainage authority can require them.

Larger equipment has changed the farmers' needs also. Commissioner Gillen felt the District doing the ditch inspections was going in the right direction. Retained County Ditch Attorney Kurt Deter mentioned a possible fee schedule if the District would like to use the county ditch ATV, currently being purchased, for other uses. Steve and Fran are working on a rate.

DISTRICT PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT:

- Completed state eLink reporting of state cost share, Wetland Conservation Act and buffer grant activities.
- Completed the 2010 Ag BMP low interest loan program application.
- Attended a Plat Review meeting at Planning and Zoning.
- Attended a meeting at the Rice County Assessor's office with Steve, Wally and Bob Duban to discuss the upcoming Rural Preserves property tax program and roles of each office.

- ✿ Office remodeling moving, etc.
- ✿ CREP, RIM and RIM/WRP easement processing.
- ✿ Completed a couple of windbreak tree planting plans.
- ✿ Wetland Conservation Act activities:
 - Held a Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) meeting to discuss a trail project along Highway #21 in Faribault.
 - Approval of the Wheatland-Twin Lakes Sportsman’s Club “No Loss” application to lower the water level up to one foot in a fish rearing wetland.
 - Review a wetland impact application on a snowmobile trail project in the Big Woods State Park.
 - Various other WCA issues.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST REPORT:

- E-link reporting for Nutrient Management Grant.
- Attended winter crops day in Kasson.
- Worked on Samuelson certification for EQIP contract.
- Met with producers at their farms: Dennis Samuelson, Jon Huseeth, Anthony Tuma, Jerry Kelm, Steve Matthees, Scott Thompson, and Bill Sexton.
- Attended board meeting.
- Assisted Danielle entering information into E-link for the CWMA.
- Assisted in moving office supplies for remodel.

Nutrient Plans Started, Revised, or Completed Last Month:

- Dennis Samuelson- Goodhue
- Steve Matthees- Goodhue
- Jon Huseeth- Goodhue
- Tuma Brothers- Rice
- Jerry Kelm- Rice
- Bill Sexton- Wabasha
- Scott Thompson- Freeborn

November Ditch Services:

- Sprayed stumps on CD 9 after Tupy’s Tree Service removed trees.

FARM BILL TECHNICIAN’S REPORT:

I have started work on the Farm Bill technician duties working in Steele and Waseca Counties. I have identified locations for CRP and have send out several proposals for CRP. I have been working with these landowners to answer any questions and have been contacting others for follow up.

I have also been working on identifying sites for the current RIM Reserve sign-up. The sign-up is for sites that are located adjacent to public waters that are enrolled in CRP. Letters were sent out to landowners who have potential RIM sites. Landowners have been contacting the office about RIM and

I have been following up with other landowners. Currently there is one landowner in Rice County interested in RIM. I completed the application and send the materials to BWSR.

Accomplishments Include:

- Participated in WLI teleconference
- Completed proposals for CRP
- Worked with landowners that are interested in CRP
- Identified sites for the current RIM Reserve sign-up
- Worked with landowners who have an interest in the RIM Reserve sign-up
- Completed E-Link reporting for the CWMA
- Attended meeting with Scott County about completing conservation work in the Sand Creek Watershed
- Attended ditch redetermination meeting, promoting filter strips
- Attended CRWP agriculture planning meeting in Northfield
- Attended meeting about completing a booth at the Agri-News Farm Show with local SWCD's and Watershed Districts

OTHER: Board thanked Rice County Commissioner Jake Gillen for attending the meeting.

ADJOURN: Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Bob Duban to adjourn the meeting. Ayes: Duban, Hildebrandt and Huston. All aye - None opposed - Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by:

Debbie Skarupa – Admin. Assistant

Robert Duban – Board Secretary