

## **Rice Soil and Water Conservation District**

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**RICE S.W.C.D.**

### **REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY – November 12, 2025 – 8:00 am**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Richard Peterson, Al Malecha, Roger Bongers, John Larson, Gene Kuntz

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Al Henderson, Alan Kraus, Emmie Scheffler, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst, Shane Bugeja BWSR

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by Chairman Richard Peterson.

#### **October Board Minutes:**

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the October board minutes as written. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

#### **October financial statement and bills payable:**

The district manager reviewed the financial statement and bills payable for October.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to approve the October financial statement and bills payable, subject to audit. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- A. Project encumbrance report – information: this report was reviewed. Project acres will be added

#### **CONSENT AGENDA: (payment approval):**

- A. Dan Forcelle 25-RC-001, cover crops - \$990.00
- B. Tim Wolff SHD-25-01, cover crops - \$960.68
- C. Joe Jirik 23-RC-009, cover crops all 3 years - \$14,445.00
- D. Brian Koester SWCD-25-02, cover crop payments - \$463.00
- E. Joe Hollinger CRP24-12-CC, cover crop payment - \$451.50
- F. Joe Hollinger CRP24-13-CC, cover crop payment - \$168.00
- G. Joe Hollinger SHD-25-02, cover crop payment - \$2,600.00
- H. Jeff Trnka CRP24-25-CC, one year cover crop - \$1,400.00

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the consent agenda items as listed. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. **Approve 2024 final audit - action:**

The 2024 audit is complete. Bound copies provided to each supervisor.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the 2024 final audit. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**B. PFML discussion, update:**

The board approved using Shelterpoint insurance company to handle the PFML rather than go with the State's program. The exemption to not use the state's program has been filed prior to the deadline. Awaiting status. The district's policy on funding the PFML needs to be laid out and approved.

**C. KC Betzold 23-RC-007, amendment to extend contract - action:**

This contract is being extended due to a late harvest and not being able to meet the November 1 seeding deadline for year two. Item number 4 is also changing to follow the Midwest Cover Crop Council guidelines instead of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the KC Betzold 23-RC-007 contract amendment. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**D. CRWJPO Joint Powers Agreement - action:**

This agreement is in place from 2026 thru 2029 and defines the roles for administering the Cannon River Watershed grants.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the CRWJPO roles agreement for 2026 to 2029. All ayes. None opposed. Motion carried

**E. Mark and Terry Rydberg 25-RC-006, amendment to extend contract – action**

This project was designed by NRCS. Due to the Federal government shut-down, the project cannot move forward until the government re-opens. Rice SWCD is unable to gain access to the files. The contract is extended.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the Mark and Terry Rydberg 25-RC-006 amendment to extend the contract. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**F. Matthew Purfeerst 2024WAGZ-RC-02, amendment to extend contract - action:**

This project was designed by NRCS. Due to the Federal government shut-down, the project cannot move forward until the government re-opens. Rice SWCD is unable to gain access to the files. The contract is extended.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the Matthew Purfeerst 2024WAGZ-RC-02 amendment to extend the contract. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**G. Matthew Purfeerst 2025WAGZ-RC-01, amendment to extend contract - action:**

This project was designed by NRCS. Due to the Federal government shut-down, the project cannot move forward until the government re-opens. Rice SWCD is unable to gain access to the files. The contract is extended.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the Matthew Purfeerst 2025WAGZ-RC-01 amendment to extend the contract. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**H. Tyrone David LC23-04-CS, amendment to extend contract – action:**

This project was designed by NRCS. Due to the Federal government shut-down, the project cannot move forward until the government re-opens. Rice SWCD is unable to gain access to the files. The contract is extended.

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by John Larson to approve the Tyrone David LC23-04-CS amendment to extend the contract. All aye. None Opposed. Motion carried.

**I. 2026 Board meeting times and dates – discussion:**

The question was raised about meeting dates and times for 2026. Do changes need to be made? As for now, the dates and times will stay as they are, but if something arises requiring a change, more discussion will occur.

**J. Soil Health presentation:**

Al Kraus shared an article from the NoTill Farmer magazine, titled “Carbon loss proportional to tillage intensity.” Discussion followed.

**NRCS REPORT: no report**

**FSA report prepared by Taylor Carlson: no report**

No report provided due to Federal Government Shut-down.

**DISTRICT MANAGER’S REPORT:**

Busy month working on soil health practices and fall interseeding. The old interseeder has been listed with TractorHouse for one month. Two weeks left. Ad will be left to expire and will market in on Facebook marketplace in the spring.

**SUPERVISOR REPORTS:**

**Gene Kuntz:** hearing about record corn yields from farmers he’s spoken with. Still seeing tillage in bean ground. Seeing the media reporting more on carbon nationally.

**Al Malecha:** buffer checks all squared away. Had Rice SWCD do some fall interseeding. Impressed with the ease of the process.

**Roger Bongers:** shared the newspaper article written by Al Kraus with some out-of-state family members, which generated some great discussion. Still seeing tillage in the county

**John Larson:** no report.

**Richard Peterson:** also seeing tillage in bean fields across southern MN. Zumbro 1W1P meeting upcoming.

**Staff Reports:**

**Sue Erpenbach:**

Continuing to work on the new website design and the online store. New website will launch by December 1<sup>st</sup>. Also helping Steve navigate the upcoming PFML program which takes effect January 1. Will also be taking some vacation time around the holidays.

Ready to roll out new website design.

**Emmie Scheffler:**

Attended a session at BWSR academy that spoke a lot about commodity prices and the effects on farmers. Has 3 projects left to survey. This past month, I have been working on contract amendments due to the federal shutdown, the CRWJPO packet and reporting, attended BWSR academy, surveying, and cost share inspections. This next month I will continue surveying and work on engineering as much as I can.

**Teresa DeMars:**

Past Month

- November newsletter
- CRWJPO Webinar Marketing/Planning
- CRWJPO Video Outreach Project
- BWSR Academy/Presentation
- Website Upgrades
- November Newsletter
- Vacation

Next Month

- December Newsletter
- CRWJPO Webinar Marketing/Planning
- Website upgrades
- December newsletter

**Al Henderson:**

Past Month

- WCA site visits
- WCA violations
- BWSR Academy
- Buffer letters
- Setting up site visits
- Wrapping up Harmful Algal Bloom (HABs) Sampling
- DNR wells

This/Next Month

- Buffer site visits
- WCA site visits
- Wrapping up WCA field season
- Buffer aerial reviews
- Organizing HABs data to send to MPCA
- DNR Wells
- A few days off in November

**Al Kraus:** agronomist training could happen in early February.

- Soil Health Incentive Programs – RCPP Funding
  - 2 new contracts are initiated but paused until NRCS is back to office
- Rice SWCD Cover Crop Interseeder
  - Completed report on outcomes of Spring interseeding
  - Completed Fall custom planting service - 586 ac, 9 farmers
- Bridgewater Streams project
  - 2025 crop data collection underway
  - Beginning to work on contracts for 2026-2027 cover crops in Bridgewater
- Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate Project
  - 2025 plot yields are being reported - data entry underway -
  - Results from 6 of the 8 farms are entered
  - Avg yld of 2.8 b/a less with 20.7 lbs of N less/acre
- Conducting field visits to verify cover crop planting
- Wrote November soil health blog
- Looking ahead
  - Finish/obtain JAA for Residue & Tillage Management – No-till
  - Continue working on RCPP contracts with farmers for cover crops & reduced tillage
  - Will present Rice Creek project to MPCA staff
  - Determine maintenance needs for interseeder & NT drill
  - Working on agronomist training workshop for March 2026 and a summer 2026 soil health bus tour

**Commissioner Jim Purfeerst:** Bids came in for the Conservation building. \$55,000 to \$65,000 for shoring up the support pillars and re-roofing. County donated to local food shelves. Working on the budget.

**Shane Bugeja:** Still RCPP money available to allocate out to districts. Talk about some competitive grants rolling out earlier in the year next year.

#### **OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:**

**UPCOMING EVENTS:** keep checking our website for event information:

**November 13-16** River Bend Nature Center closed for Public Use due to Deer Management Hunt.

**November 19** Lunch and Learn: Minnesota Turtle Conservation by River Bend Nature Center, 12:00-2:00 pm in Faribault.

**November 20** Healthy Soils: Why Organic Matter Matters webinar by the CRWJPO, 12:00 pm online

**November 20** Farm Business Lunch by Faribault Chamber of Commerce, 12:00 pm in Faribault.

**December 2** Role of Birds Webinar Series by Wild Farm Alliance, 11:00 am, online.

**December 2-3** Premier Soil Health Event by the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition in Mankato.

**December 15** Land Rent Workshop by University of Minnesota Extension, 10:00 - 12:00 pm in Faribault.

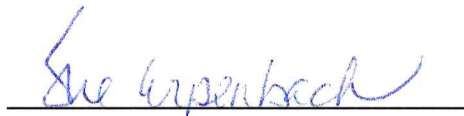
**December 15** Land Rent Workshop by University of Minnesota Extension, 1:30-3:30 pm in Owatonna.

**January 13-15** Soil Management Summit/Dirt Conference 2026 by the University of MN-Extension and NDSU, in Fargo, ND.

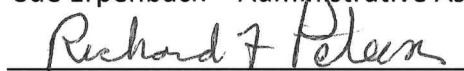
**ADJOURN:**

Motion to adjourn by John Larson, seconded by Roger Bongers. All aye, none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:29 am.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sue Erpenbach", written over a horizontal line.

Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard F. Peterson", written over a horizontal line.

Board Member –