



Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

2211 2nd Ave NW Suite 200 Faribault, MN 55021

Phone: (507) 332-5408 www.riceswcd.org

RICE S.W.C.D.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY – March 18, 2026 – 8:00 am

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

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Emmie Scheffler, Teresa DeMars, Alan Kraus, Al Henderson,
Commissioner Charlie Peters, Shane Bugeja BWSR

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by Chairman John Larson.

Absent: Gene Kuntz

February Board Minutes:

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the February board minutes as written. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

February financial statement and bills payable:

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

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the February 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.

CONSENT AGENDA: (payment approval): no consent agenda items

NEW BUSINESS:

A. **MN Ag Water Quality Certification Funds TA program – action:**

This is a sub-agreement with Wabasha SWCD for funds to help promote the MNAgWaterQuality Certification program. We can request up to \$2,500.00 to help with promoting this program.

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by Roger Bongers to accept the sub-agreement with Wabasha SWCD for the MNAgWaterQuality Certification funds. All aye. None opposed.

B. **Data Practices Policy - action:**

The PRAP process has identified the need to have a Data Practices policy in place. The District Manager has used other SWCD's policies to draft our own and has sent it on to the County Attorney for review. The County Attorney has not reviewed it yet so this item will be added to an upcoming agenda as soon as it is received.

C. **FY26 Soil Health Delivery Erosion Control Policy - action:**

The District Manager pointed out some changes to the Soil health policy for the FY26 Soil health Delivery Grant. The rates are going to more closely mirror the rates of the RCPP Soil health grant to avoid having so many rate variables across grants. Each application will be capped at 200 acres as well.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the FY26 Soil health Delivery Erosion Control policy. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

D. Soil Health Delivery P26-0844 for \$30,000.00 - action:

This grant has already been electronically signed.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by John Larson to approve the FY25 Soil health Delivery grant. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

E. Soil health RCPP – Amend funding source for contract 66-04-24, cancel local funds previously encumbered, approve SH RCPP funds for \$11,109.00 - action

The next round of RCPP funding has come through and will cover the \$11,109.00 so local funding is no longer needed.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Richard Peterson to cancel the local funding and approve the RCPP funding for contract 66-04-24. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

F. Authorize pre-approval of local funds for 66-04-15 for \$41,725.00 - action:

The District Manager is going to write two contracts for 66-04-15, one using the remaining RCPP funds available and the second using the next round of RCPP funds. This way no local funds will need to be used.

No action needed.

G. Soil Health RCPP grants: Authorize District Manager to continue to sign current and future grants - action:

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to continue authorizing the District Manager to sign current and future BWSR grant agreements and Soil Health Contracts until December 31, 2026. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

H. Wage increase for seasonal employee Brian McFadden: 5% to \$22.05 – action:

Brian McFadden is responsible for coordinating the use of the No-Till Drill as well as delivering and maintaining it. The District manager is proposing a 2% COLA and a 2% step increase for him for 2026.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve a 5% wage increase for seasonal employee Brian McFadden to \$22.05. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

I. Letter of support for Friends of Northfield Area Natural Areas (FoNANA) – action:

The District Manager received a request of support, from Breanna Wheeler who is seeking a grant from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. This grant would help to bridge stewardship gaps in the Northfield area. By empowering volunteers and aligning community resources, this model ensures habitat restoration and provides framework for statewide replication.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve a Letter of Support for Friends of Northfield Area Natural Areas (FoNANA). All aye. None opposed. Motion carried. Roger Bongers abstained from voting.

J. Delores Dierking 2026-RC-01, well-decommissioning - \$2,437.50 - action:

This contract is for well decommissioning funded by the Zumbro 1W1P grant.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Delores Dierking 2026-RC-01 well decommissioning contract for \$2,341.50. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

K. Edward Jones CD renewal 3/12/2026, renew or cancel with \$100,000 at 3.75% - action:

This 12-month CD matured on 3/12/2026. It earned \$4,257.00 in interest. The District Manager has directed Edward Jones to release a check to the SWCD for the interest amount. The \$100,000.00 is currently in limbo – cash it out, or re-enroll it back into a CD. The District Manager recommends re-enrolling it into a 12-month CD.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Richard Peterson to re-enroll the \$100,000.00 into a 12-month CD. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

L. Create CD with \$200,000.00 – action:

The District Manager is recommending that \$200,000.00 be set aside into a 12-month CD.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to create a 12-month CD using \$200,000.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

M. Cannon River Watershed Flood Study Match – discussion:

The Cannon River Flood Study through LeSueur County is still looking for match money to help offset the flood study expense. Rice SWCD has already submitted \$5,000.00. If no more partners step forward with match money, LeSueur County will absorb the remaining balance. This will continue to be monitored.

N. Outreach report for 2026 – information:

Teresa DeMars, Outreach Coordinator, prepared the following report of Outreach activities for 2025.

2025 Outreach for the Rice SWCD

Adult Outreach

Partnered with the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team to hold Winter Soil Health Workshop, 120 people attended. Partnered with Clean River Partners for Bridgewater Streams meeting, 12 people attended.

Hosted two Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program breakfast meetings, 14 farmers attended, resulting in 12 program signups.

Presented about interseeding cover crops at the UMN-NRCS Planting Green Workshop on the Dave Legvold farm, 30 people attended.

Presented about soil health, strip-till, and interseeding cover crops to the Farmers Union International Exchange event, 20 people attended.

Hosted Soil Health “Shop Talk” for producers, nine people attended.

Conservation Booth at Rice County Horticulture Day, Northfield Earth Day, Rice County Fair, and Passport to Agriculture, reaching approximately 3,000 people.

Presented about native prairie and pollinators to the Friendship House, attend by 15 people.

Hosted Well Testing Clinic at Annual Tree Day and Rice County Fair, tested 30 private wells.

Partnered with the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team at the Steele County Fair to host the Working Together for Clean Water & Thriving Farms event at the Steele County Free Fair, 20 people attended.

Partnered with Steele SWCD to host meeting for the Rice/Steele Nitrogen Rates Project, 12 people attended

Partnered with the CRWJPO to present six conservation webinars, 404 people registered and 205 people attending live. All registrants received an email of the recording to watch on demand.

Partnered with the CRWJPO to talk about conservation with the Cedar Lake Association Annual Meeting, 25 people attended.

Partnered with the CRWJPO to present about conservation during round table talks at Southern Lakes Conference, 125 people attended.

Staffed the State Fair Dig it Soils Booth in the Eco Experience building, four-hour period, 300 people attended.

Hosted Haney Master Class for area producers, 35 people attended.

O. Prevailing Wage Update Memo – information:

BWSR provide a memo outlining the guidelines for use of prevailing wage when using grant funds for conservation projects. More information can be found in the BWSR Grant Administration manual.

P. Interseeder income and expense – information:

The following information was prepared by Alan Kraus regarding the Interseeder program in 2025.

**Spring Interseeding
2025 - Actual**

Expenses	Cost	
Seed Cost	\$18,315.90	
Shane Peterson	\$15,688.00	
Staff	\$4,200.00	60 hrs @\$70
Overhead	\$2,450.00	3.5% of purchase price @\$70,000 (Depreciation, Interest, Repairs, Taxes, Insurance, Storage)
Total w/Staff & Overhead	\$40,653.90	
Total w/o Staff & Overhead	\$34,003.90	
Total Revenue	\$36,778.10	
Net w/Staff & Overhead	-\$3,875.80	
Net w/o Staff & Overhead	\$2,774.20	
Cost/ac w/Staff & Overhead	\$44.49	
Cost/ac w/o Staff & Overhead	\$37.22	
Total Acres	913.7	

**Custom Cover Crop
Planting Fall 2025 -
Actual**

Expenses	Cost	
Tractor	\$3,265.00	65.3 hrs @\$50 79 hrs
Operator	\$1,975.00	@\$25
Fuel	\$657.03	227 gallons
Tender	\$1,757.70	28-Oct Invoice Bob Sommers
Seed	\$12,184.18	
Overhead	\$2,450.00	3.5% of purchase price @\$70,000 (Depreciation, Interest, Repairs, Taxes, Insurance, Storage)
Staff	\$3,500.00	50 hrs \$70
Total Expenses w/Staff & Overhead	\$25,788.91	
Total Expenses w/o Staff & Overhead	\$19,838.91	
Total Revenue	\$22,264.20	
Net w/Staff & Overhead	-\$3,524.71	
Net w/o Staff & Overhead	\$2,425.29	
Cost/Ac w/Staff & Overhead	\$44.02	
Cost/Ac - w/o Staff & Overhead	\$33.86	
Total Acres	585.9	

**Interseeder Custom
Work 2025**

Total Acres	1499.6
Total Revenue	\$59,042.30
Total Operating Expense	\$53,842.81
Total Staff Expense	\$7,700.00
Total Overhead	\$4,900.00
Net less Operating Expense	\$5,199.49
Net less Operating & Staff Expense	-\$2,500.51
Net less Operating, Staff & Overhead Expense	-\$7,400.51

**Overhead Cost Table @ 7% of purchase
price**

Purchase	Overhead
\$30,000	\$2,100
\$40,000	\$2,800
\$50,000	\$3,500
\$60,000	\$4,200
\$70,000	\$4,900

The plan is to continue discussions about selling the interseeder and set up a program for custom interseeding for 2026.

Q. Tree Sales and Nstive Plant Kit sales update – information:

There are still trees available for sale. About 1500 left in stock. Have sold 55 native plant kits to date.

R. Rain Garden discussion:

There is a rain garden on the east side of the Conservation building that handled the roof runoff from the old rain gutters. With the new roof planned for the Conservation Building, there will be no rain gutters and downspouts. What happens to the rain garden area? Keep it as a rain garden? Let the master Gardneres utilize it? Terea will reach out to the Master Gardeners to get a proposal from them to bring back to this board for further discussion.

NRCS REPORT: written by Taylor O’Bryan: see next page

Taylor O’Bryan was not present to discuss her report. She did provide a written report.

March 18th, 2026

NRCS Report for the Rice SWCD Board Meeting

General:

- ⇒ Elenor and Lucas are working out of the Faribault Office
- ⇒ Taylor is working out of the Faribault office 3 days a week and the Farmington Office 2 days a week
- ⇒ Taylor is covering Farmington office with counties of Washington, Ramsey, and Dakota
- ⇒ Chris is working out of the office a few days a week, will be in other offices in our team the rest of the time.

Farm Bill Updates:

CSP:

- ⇒ FY26 Sign up deadline was January 15th, 2026
- ⇒ Ranking deadline April 24th, 2026
- ⇒ We are taking applications for sign up 2

EQIP:

- ⇒ EQIP FY26 Sign Up 1 deadline was January 15th 2026
- ⇒ Ranking Deadline March 20th, 2026
- ⇒ We are taking applications for sign up 2

CRP:

- ⇒ CRP Continuous is opened for applications February 12 – March 20th
- ⇒ General will open March 9th – April 17th

WETLAND/HEL:

- ⇒ Rice County has 25 requests awaiting HEL determination for new land from the compliance team
- ⇒ Rice County has 36 requests awaiting a certified wetland determination from the compliance team

Upcoming Events/Deadlines:

FSA report prepared by Taylor Carlson: written report: No report

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT:



Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

1810 30th St. NW Faribault, MN 55021

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March 2026 District Manager's Report

The past month has focused on a variety of things including tree sales, Soil Health RCPP, grant agreements, planning for outreach events, and finances. Starting in March, I have been using some vacation as needed for making syrup.

Other activity this past month:

- Lower MN East mtg in Le Center
- SE SWCD Managers Meeting-Rochester
- Review and update work agreements with Clean River Partners
- Schedule legislative appointments
- BALMM mtg

The outlook for the rest of March and into April is more RCPP contract work, including preparation for field inspections late April, completion of the PRAP process and setup of a strategic planning session, and preparation for tree arrival.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Pahs

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Al Malecha: will be meeting with Legislators today for the Day at the Capital

Roger Bongers: noticed a lot of no-till farming between here and Chicago on a recent road trip.

John Larson: attended the Legislative briefing at the Capital. Atmosphere is tense. Major asks are for additional funding for District Aid, and 9 million for RIM.

Richard Peterson: quiet month. Watching the birds returning - a sign of spring?

Staff Reports:

Emmie Scheffler:

This past month, I had worked on some RIM requests and conservation plan changes. I have been working with landowners to get bids for projects before contracts. I went to the U of MN soil conservation class to present on conservation jobs and presented to Le Sueur County board for the CRWJPO.

Teresa DeMars:

Past

- Final CRWJPO webinar marketing/planning
- March newsletter
- Rice County Garden Day Booth
- Southeast MN Soil Health Bus Tour Strip Till Conference planning
- MASWCD Supervisors Election Video planning meetings
- Women in Conservation event marketing

Next Month

- Website upgrades for accessibility
- April newsletter
- Women in Conservation event marketing
- Southeast MN Soil Health Bus Tour Strip Till Conference MARKETING

Al Henderson:

Last / Current Month

- feature plant article for BWSR being released April 2026! - Wild Blue Phlox
- Issued 3 Restoration Orders for WCA Violations
- Using ArcPro training at work - such a helpful course!
- WCA apps starting to come in
- Buffers update meeting
- Meeting with landowner

Next Month:

- Issuing buffer letter and setting up site visits with landowner
- Site visits for violations/restorations
- BWSR Spring Training
- Setting up buffer site visits before crops are planted
- Continuing to review WCA apps as they come in

Working on the next round of Buffer letters and some WCA violations

Alan Kraus:

- Worked on interseeding program for 2026
- Attended UMN Haney Test Learning Group meeting
- Soil Health Incentive Programs – RCPP Funding
 - Assisted with new contracts
- Bridgewater Streams project
 - New contracts for 2026-2027 cover crops completed
- Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate Project
 - Newspaper article of 2025 results published
 - Shared results with watershed partners
 - 2026 plots on farms are getting set
- SE Minnesota Bus Tour to the National Strip-till Conference (hardest details are now figured out)
 - Meetings with Rice & Steele staff to plan this project
 - Lots of communications with bus company, conference organizers & hotel for lodging
 - Registration link & info for trip ready to go
- MDA Cover Crop Biomass Project
 - Selected fields in Rice & Steele Counties

- First set of photos taken
- Looking ahead
 - Field verifications of practices
 - Outreach for Soil Health Bus Tour to Strip-till Conference
 - Collect photos of cover crop growth for MDA project
 - RCPP contracts with farmers for cover crops & reduced tillage
 - Meetings with UMN Haney Test Learning Group
 - Interseeding program
 - Meetings with farmers in the N rate trials

Commissioner Charlie Peters: county wants to redetermine all county ditches over the next three years. Drainage conference in LeCenter coming up next week. Would like to see a map of all our projects in the county

Shane Bugeja BWSR: 45 RCPP grants left statewide. Nearing the end of a fiscal year so no grant requests will be sent out in May and June.

OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE: A video produced through the CRWJPO was shared. The link to view is:

UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 20 [Planting for Pollinators - Online Webinar](#) by the Scott SWCD, March 20, 7 - 8 PM

March 20 [Continuous Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Deadline.](#)

March 24 [Landscaping for Clean Water Intro Class \(Online\)](#), 6:00–7:30 PM.

March 26 [Rain Gardens: Plan, Prep, Plant, Maintain" Virtual Workshop](#) by the Scott SWCD, 6:00-7:00 PM.

April 11 [Le Sueur County Horticulture Day](#) by the Le Sueur County Master Gardeners – April 11, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM in Le Center.

April 17 [Conserve Reserve Program \(CRP\) Deadline.](#)

April 22 [Landscaping for Clean Water Intro Class \(Online\)](#), by Dakota SWCD, 6:00 - 7:30

PM.

ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers. All aye, none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:26 am.

Submitted by:

Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant

Board Member –