

Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

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RICE S.W.C.D.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY – February 18, 2026 – 8:00 am

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

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Emmie Scheffler, Teresa DeMars, Taylor O’Bryan NRCS, Commissioner Charlie Peters, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst

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

January Board Minutes:

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the January board minutes as written. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

January financial statement and bills payable:

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

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the January 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):

- A. Lyle Gunderson, cover crops - \$997.50
- B. SE SWCD Technical Support JPB annual dues - \$4,000.00
- C. Lower MN WS East JPB dues - \$2,000.00

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the consent agenda items as listed. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. **2026 supervisor committee assignments – action:**

The committee assignments were reviewed and discussed. The following changes were made: Add John Larson to Personnel Committee and remove from Budget Committee.

Add Al Malecha to Personnel committee. Add Richard Peterson to Budget Committee and remove from Personnel Committee. Remove Roger Bongers from Personnel committee.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Al Malecha to adopt committee assignments as discussed. All aye. None opposed.

B. 4-H award sponsorship for the fair - action:

Rice County extension is asking for sponsorship of 4-H awards for the Rice County Fair. The past year, the Rice SWCD sponsored 12 awards for a total of \$132.00. It was suggested that the sponsorship for 2026 be the same.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the sponsorship of 12 awards at \$11.00 each for a total of \$132.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

C. A guide to the 2026 election process - information:

The MASWCD sent out guidelines on how to recruit and inform potential new SWCD supervisors for the upcoming election. Supervisors not running for re-election will work with the Rice SWCD in recruiting potential supervisor candidates.

D. March 17 & 18: Legislative briefing and day at the Capital. March 16th deadline to register - information:

Annually, the Rice SWCD staff and Supervisors meet with our Senators and Representatives to inform them of the importance of the work we do. District Manager will work on scheduling these appointments for the afternoon, after our monthly board meeting.

E. Amend funding source for contract 66-03-16, cancel local funds previously encumbered, approve soil health RCPP funds \$41,374.00 - action

RCPP contract 66-03-16 was approved using RCPP grant funds and local funds as the next round of RCPP funds had not arrived. Those funds have now been received so the recommendation is to amend this contract to replace the local funds with the RCPP funds.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to cancel the local funding and approve the RCPP funding for contract 66-03-16. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

F. Amend funding source for contract 66-04-24, \$11,109.00 local funds - action:

RCPP contract 66-04-24 was approved using RCPP funds and local funding until the next round of RCPP funds is received.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Richard Peterson to amend contract 66-04-24 using local funds until the next round of RCPP funds is received. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

G. EJ 12-month CD for \$100,000.00 up for renewal on 2/28/2026 - action:

District Manager has recommended that this CD be re-enrolled for another 12 months.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Richard Peterson to renew the expiring CD of \$100,000.00 with Edward Jones for another 12 months. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

H. Interseeder – action:

The Rice SWCD currently owns two interseeders. The older one could be sold or potentially used as a rental. The newer one is by Hinicker and has been used for custom interseeding for the last two years. The SWCD does not own a tractor for the interseeder, does not have a means to transport it and does

not have an operator. The District Manager would like to sell this machine to someone who would continue the custom interseeding practice. Machine was purchased with grant money and there was no stipulation in the grant that the equipment needed to be owned for a certain number of years before selling. District Manager is tasked with researching more details before the March meeting.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to table this item until the next meeting. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

I. **Copy machine/Printer lease – action:**

The current copier/printer lease is expiring soon. District Manager has requested a quote from Metro Sales as well as Coordinated Business Solutions for purchase versus lease. It is recommended that a copier/printer be purchased from Metro Sales.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to proceed with the purchase of a copier/printer from Metro Sales as quoted. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried. Roger Bongers abstained from voting.

J. **Update on PRAP status - informational:**

Everyone should have received the survey via email. Please make sure you complete those. We need to have a data practices policy in place. District Manager will work on putting one together and will have it reviewed by the county attorney.

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

Taylor O’Bryan presented the following report. No questions were asked.



February 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 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:

January 2026 District Manager's Report

Assisted Al Kraus with the Agronomy workshop last week and also attended. 45 attendees. Presentation was well done. Attended the Hwy 14 Soil health Workshop in Owatonna yesterday. 125 attendees registered as of Friday. Presentations were well done. RCPP applications still taking up a big chunk of time. Upcoming interseeding season, PRAP process and other reporting requirements are keeping me busy as well.

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Gene Kuntz: attended the Hwy 14 Soil health workshop yesterday. Has been attending for many years and the number of attendees keeps increasing. Feels positive about the response to the RCPP program. Also attended the Farmer's Union Q & A session. Discussion was mostly about immigration and the stalled government funding.

Al Malecha: noticing wind erosion in the ditches.

Roger Bongers: Attended Hwy 14 Soil health workshop yesterday. Felt it was very informative. Presented the benefits of No-Till versus Strip-Till and also the results from the Rice Creek project.

John Larson: attended the TSA7 meeting in Rochester. Projects were discussed. Feels there is a discrepancy on how much each county uses their services. It was explained that each SWCD has varying levels of JAA authority among their staff. Higher levels don't require as much TSA7 assistance.

Richard Peterson: attended Zumbro 1W1P meeting last week with District Manager. They are doing a lot of outreach thru the local TV stations and are getting a lot of hits. Also taking an enhanced look at what content should be on the website.

Staff Reports:

Teresa DeMars

Past

- CRWJPO marketing/Planning webinars
- February newsletter
- Envirothon marketing
- Winter Soil Health Workshop Marketing
- Strip Till Bus Tour planning

Next Month

- Final CRWJPO webinar marketing/planning
- March newsletter

- Website upgrades for accessibility
- Rice County Garden Day Booth

In addition, Teresa and Emmie are planning a Women in Conservation workshop for April 1st using CRWJPO peer-to-peer funding.

Emmie Scheffler

I assisted the Northfield FFA class on web soil survey, I have been working on engineering designs, and meeting with landowners. For the Cannon, we had a quarterly board meeting I prepped for, reporting due, and have been working on a new tracking spreadsheet.

In addition; has 6 landowner designs done and ready for funding.

Al Henderson

Last / Current Month

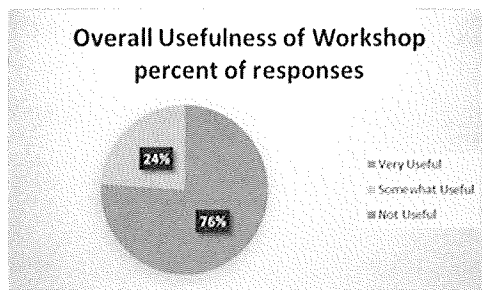
- RIM Training
- PRAP Meeting for WCA
- WCA Trainings
- Buffer Monitoring
- Working on Restoration Orders
- WCA Apps starting to come in more frequently
- Writing a feature plant article for BWSR - released for April 2026!

Next Month:

- Issuing Restoration Orders for WCA Violations
- Site Potential site visits for violations/restorations
- Continued review of WCA Apps
- ArcPro Training
- Buffer monitoring and creating maps
- Buffer letter prep

Alan Kraus

- Soil Health Incentive Programs – RCPP Funding
 - Assisting with new contracts
- Bridgewater Streams project
 - 2025 crop data & water quality results completed & tabulated
 - New contracts for 2026-2027 cover crops started
 - Farmer meeting being planned
- Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate Project
 - Mtg with farmer group held for Jan 21, 2026
- Agronomist training workshop held February 10-11 2026 in Owatonna
 - 43 agronomists attended



- Received MOSH Grant for SE Minnesota Bus Tour to the National Strip-till Conference
- Looking ahead
 - Continue working on RCPP contracts with farmers for cover crops & reduced tillage
 - Cover crop contracts for Bridgewater farmers
 - Working with MDA on cover crop biomass project
 - Begin cover crop & reduced till verifications for contracts
 - Working with Hiniker on warranty maintenance on Interseeder
 - Evaluating custom service outcomes/future options
 - Working on summer bus tour to National Strip-till Conference

Commissioner Charlie Peters: Attended the MN Drainage conference. A lot of maintenance and redeterminations needed. Receiving road and ditch calls pertaining to load limit restrictions. These limits won't go in affect yet, as the weather is supposed to turn colder. Still working thru the County Road 20 trails proposal.

Commissioner Jim Purfeerst: Ditch redeterminations would be assessed at \$4 per acre and would be passed on to landowner. The Conservation Building will be getting a new roof. The Grandstand needs new handrails to be compliant.

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

<https://youtu.be/bN3cySslciU>

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Fridays with a Forester Webinar Series by the University of Minnesota Extension, various dates in February, 9:00 am, online.

Focus on Forage by the University of Wisconsin (webinar series), various dates in February, online

February 6 I-90 Soil Health Tour - Reducing Tillage for Input Savings & Soil Health, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, in Hokah

February 10 Aquatic Invasives 101: What's in our Waters? (webinar) by the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, **12:00 pm, online.**

February 10 – 11 Soil Health Workshop for Agronomists by Agronomists by the Rice & Steele SWCDs, in Owatonna.

February 17 HWY 14 Soil Health Winter Workshop Strip Till Makes Dollars and Sense, 8:30 am – 2:30 pm, in Owatonna.

February 18 Rice SWCD February Board of Supervisors Meeting, 8:00 am at the Rice SWCD office in Faribault.

February 18 HWY 14 Soil Health Winter Workshop Strip Till Makes Dollars and Sense, 9:00 am - 2:30 pm, in Lamberton.

February 18 Small Grains Gathering by the University of Minnesota-Extension, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm in Rochester.

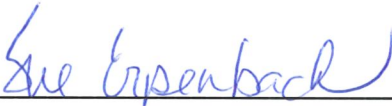
February 19 HWY 14 Soil Health Winter Workshop Strip Till Makes Dollars and Sense, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, in Lake Benton.

February 25-26 Reclaiming Profitability: Farming Smarter in 2026 with Russel Hendrick by Profit Pro Ag in Albert Lea

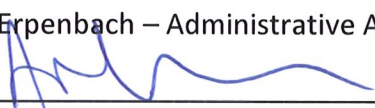
ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers. All aye, none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:18 am.

Submitted by:



Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant



Board Member –