



Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

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RICE S.W.C.D.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY – April 15 2026 – 8:00 am

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

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Alan Kraus, Teresa DeMars, Taylor O'Bryan NRCS, Commissioner Charlie Peters, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst

Absent: John Larson

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by Vice Chairman Gene Kuntz.

Brian McFadden introduction:

Brian was hired as a seasonal employee to manage and transport our No-Till Drill. He has been with the Rice SWCD for two summers. Brian shared his background with the board.

Employee of the Year for SE Minnesota – Alan Kraus:

Alan was nominated, and chosen for Employee of the Year for the SE Minnesota Area of Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Minnesota. Congratulations.

March board minutes – action:

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

March financial statement and bills payable – action:

The March financial statement was reviewed by the District Manager.

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the March 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. Unity Properties LLC 26-RC-01, well decommissioning - \$3,000.00 - action:

This contract is for a well-sealing funded by the Zumbro 1W1P grant.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded Al Malecha to approve the Unity Properties LLC 26-RC-01 contract for \$3,000.00. All aye. None opposed.

B. Charles Peters 26-RC-01, WASCOB - \$6,975.00 - action:

This contract is for a water and sediment control basin funded by the Cannon River Watershed grant. NRCS approved the technical engineering.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Charles Peters 26-RC-01 contract for \$6,975.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

C. MASWCD Call for resolutions - information:

Annually, the MASWCD asks all SWCD's to prepare resolutions that can affect state and local conservation. If there are any potential resolutions the District Manager will write them and they will be presented at the May board meeting.

D. Data Practices Policy - action:

The Day Practices Policy has been reviewed by the County Attorney.

A motion by Alan Malecha, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the Data Practices Policy. All ayes. None opposed. Motion carried

E. BWSR grant for strategic planning assistance - action

BWSR has a grant available that will help pay for the hiring of a professional to assist the Rice SWCD with writing a strategic plan.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to apply for the BWSR grant for strategic planning assistance. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

F. Acoustics America – 10 sound absorbing panels - \$737.60 - action:

Would like to purchase some more sound panels for the back office, where three employees work.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to purchase the 10 sound absorbing panels from Acoustics America for \$737.60. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

G. SWCD Supervisor Elections: Filing period May 18 – June 2nd, Districts 3 and 5 - information:

This is a reminder for the two districts up for election this year.

H. Fairgrounds Rain Garden - action:

The raingarden next to the conservation building was created to handle the water from the rain gutters and downspouts. With the new roofing project, the gutters have been removed and won't be replaced. The raingarden will dry up without the inflow of water. The Master Gardeners have proposed taking over that area and have great plans for it as part of their teaching garden.

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by Richard Peterson to allow the Master Gardeners to take over the raingarden area for their use. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried

NRCS REPORT: written and presented by Taylor O'Bryan

April 15th, 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
- ⇒ We are taking applications for sign up 2
- ⇒ We will rank on April 24th

EQIP:

- ⇒ EQIP FY26 Sign Up 1 deadline was January 15th 2026
- ⇒ We ranked and 2 in Rice County were selected, leaner year than most money wise
- ⇒ We are taking applications for sign up 2

CRP:

- ⇒ CRP Continuous was opened for applications February 12 – March 20th
- ⇒ General will open March 9th – April 17th
- ⇒ First batching period results are in

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:

- Local working group meeting discussion

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

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT:

April 2026 District Manager's Report

Work this past month has been focused on a variety of things including Soil Health RCPP contracts, tree program preparation, planning for the bus trip to the National Strip-till Conference and a lot of meetings. Staff has been keeping very busy with plans for spring workload, and I'm proud to say that Al Kraus was recognized as the Southeast Area Employee of the Year last month!

Specific activity this past month:

- Legislative Day at the Capitol: Met with three of our legislators

- SE MN Area Employees Spring Meeting
- Spring State-wide Managers meeting-St. Cloud
- Lower MN Steering Committee mtg.
- Complete MCIT Risk Assessments for SWCD and Cannon JPB
- PRAP meeting to review initial report
- N rate meetings
- Zumbro meeting
- Local Implementers meeting

The rest of April will be focused on making the tree program a success, completing more RCPP applications, and preparing for spring work, including inspecting all the fields we have soil health practices on. The Soil Health RCPP funding at the state level is almost all used up, but we're hoping to get one more round of funding before it is gone. Nonetheless, it has been a tremendous opportunity to get more conservation on the ground, and we've been able to get \$780,000 (3%) out of the \$25,000,000 that was available.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Pahs

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Gene Kuntz: soils are active and the nightcrawlers are out.

Al Malecha: attended the Day at the Legislature last month. Will attend the Lower MN East Watershed meeting this month.

Roger Bongers: Soil temps are around 56 degrees so crops are starting to go in.

Richard Peterson: attended a forest health update webinar by the University of Minnesota. The Emerald Ash Borer is now present in 55 of our 87 counties. Minnesota's forest health is looking good overall.

Staff Reports:

Emmie Scheffler:

This past month I have been working on engineering, Cannon PRAP, CRWJPO items, and got recertified for my Level 3 Conservation planner and JAA for ecological practices. I am still having computer issues with my NRCS computer that is impeding on me completing engineering type work.

Teresa DeMars:

Past

- Website upgrades for accessibility
- April newsletter

- Women in Conservation event marketing
- Southeast MN Soil Health Bus Tour Strip Till Conference marketing

Next

- Tree Week
- Website upgrades for accessibility
- May newsletter
- Southeast MN Soil Health Bus Tour Strip till Conference marketing
- Pocket of Prairie

The Women in Ag event had 35 attendees. Great discussion generated. Looking to do some more of these events.

Allison Henderson:

Last / Current Month

- Setting up site visits with landowner for buffers
- Site visits on WCA violations
- Tree Week
- Helping make RCPP plan maps
- Continuing to review WCA apps as they come in
- DNR well readings

Next Month:

- Native seed mixes for wet soils training - Dakota Co
- More WCA site visits
- More Buffer site visits
- Helping with pocket a prairie
- DNR well readings
- WCA violation restorations due in May

Alan Kraus:

The Rice Creek project is continuing. MPCA will feature this project on earth day. The upcoming bus trip is now advertised on the radio. 40 seats available. The Nitrogen project is set and ready to go for this year. Cover crops are starting to grow.

Commissioner Charlie Peters: attended a 1-day drainage conference in LeSueur county with focus on water retention and tiling.

Commissioner Jim Purfeerst: attended a drainage conference at Arrowwood Resort. The county will redetermine all the county ditches over the next 4 years. County Road 23 will be resurfaced using a new method, where the machine will remove the top ½ inch using heat and relay it.

OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:

UPCOMING EVENTS:

April 15 Wildlife Webinar Series: All About Birds by the University of Minnesota Extension (online), 12:00 - 1:00 pm.

April 17 Fridays with a Forester: Get Ready for Tree Seed Collection in Spring (Webinar) by University of Minnesota Extension, 9:00 - 10:00 am.

April 17 Conserve Reserve Program (CRP) Deadline.

April 22 Landscaping for Clean Water Intro Class (Online), by Dakota SWCD, 6:00 - 7:30 PM.

April 24 Fridays with a Forester: Management Considerations to Improve Forest Habitat for Birds (Webinar), 9:00 - 10:00 am.

April 25 – 26 Northfield Earth Day Celebration, various activities across the city.

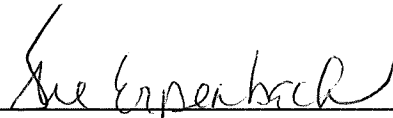
April 30 Spring Ephemeral Tour at Kaplan's Woods by the Wild one's SE MN Prairie Partners, 6:00 pm in Owatonna.

May 2 Maple Syrup Fun Run at River Bend Nature Center.

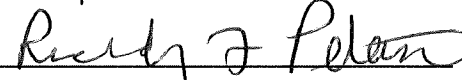
ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha. All aye, none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 am.

Submitted by:



Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant



Board Member –