RICE

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 – October 14, 2026 – 8:00 am

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

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Al Henderson, Emmie Scheffler, Teresa DeMars, Commissioner Charlie Peters, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst

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

September board minutes – action:

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

September financial statement and bills payable – action:

The September financial statement was reviewed by the District Manager.
A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by John Larson to approve the September 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. Tim Wolff SHD 25-01, $960.68

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

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Kuball Dairy 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-13, incentive contract - $250.00 - action:
C. Kuball Dairy 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-14, incentive contract - $500.00 – action:

The State of Minnesota has one-time incentive money available for re-enrollment of CRP acres. This money is tied to existing CRP acres and will expire the end of 2026. The above contracts are all funded through the Cannon River Watershed.
A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to approve the CRP incentive contracts as listed above, items A and C. All aye. None opposed. Gene Kuntz abstained from a vote.

B. Kuball Dairy 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-13, incentive payment - $250.00 – action
D. Kuball Dairy 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-14, incentive payment - $500.00 - action:

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the CRP incentive payments as listed above, items B and D. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried. Gene Kuntz abstained from a vote.

E. Dave Legvold CRP26-02-CC, cover crop contract – CANCEL:

Landowner changed in 2026 and Dave is no longer farming it.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Roger Bongers to cancel contract #CRP26-02-CC. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried

F. Alyssa Clark – Tap-In-2026-01, well remediation contract - $900.00 - action:

Funding for this contract is thru the Olmsted SWCD Tap-In program for which Rice SWCD has a sub-agreement. Program is for low-income families with high Arsenic levels in their drinking water.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to approve the Alyssa Clark Tap-In-2026-01 contract for well remediation for $900.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

G. MASWCD 2026 Resolutions packet and voting instructions – information:

The annual resolutions on-line voting process and deadline were discussed. A few questions were asked about one of the resolutions.

H. Personnel policy updates – discussion/action:

District Manager and the personnel policy committee met recently to discuss language for the work from home policy. This policy is new to the personnel policy. The language was reviewed and the policy was approved. It is reviewed annually.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the personnel policy including the new language for the work from home policy. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

I. Supporting local FFA on KDHL radio - action:

The National FFA convention will take place October 21 – 24, 2026. Local radio is seeking support of FFA thru sponsorship ads during the convention. The ads are 30 seconds in length.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve $200.00 in sponsorship ads. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

J. Sub-agreement with Olmsted SWCD for SE MN regional groundwater Protection & Soil health initiative - action:

This sub-agreement would provide $255,300.00 for cover crops and technical assistance, expiring in December 2029. The contracts would be written for one year. Farmers would not be told what to plant or how much for covers, but instead paid on the height of the covers. Covers must be 12 inch to qualify for payment. The focus is on groundwater protection in certain areas of the county.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the sub-agreement with Olmsted SWCD for SE MN regional groundwater protection & soil health. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

K. Discussion about the future of MDA-CRAC grant – discussion/action:

Funded by Mn Dept of Ag with the purpose of working with large companies like Cargill or Jenni-O to encourage their growers to become Ag Water Quality Certified. The effort is not producing as expected. District Manager would like to discontinue this collaborative effort when the grant expires at the end of 2026.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to discontinue the MDA-CRAC collaborative project when funding expires at the end of 2026. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

L. **Future of Rice/Steele Soil health position – discussion:**

The grant funding the Rice/Steele soil health position will end December 31, 2027. The person in that position is looking to work less hours and has proposed a schedule amounting to about 75% time.

NRCS REPORT: Written report prepared by Taylor O'Bryan:

October 14th, 2026

NRCS Report for the Rice SWCD Board Meeting

General:

⇒ Lucas is 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
⇒ 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.
⇒ New PF employee Andrew will start on October 18th – he is replacing Eleanor as Wildlife Biologist

Farm Bill Updates:

CSP:

⇒ SU2 CSP open
⇒ We are getting ready for Annual Payments to begin in October for existing contracts

EQIP:

⇒ SU2 open
⇒ Sending out eligibility reminder letters for next step in program

CRP:

⇒ All CRP for this sign up in Rice has been completed
⇒ Will be doing 2028 expiration reviews this fall

WETLAND/HEL:

⇒ Rice County has 82 requests awaiting HEL determination for new land from the compliance team
⇒ Rice County has 14 requests awaiting a certified wetland determination from the compliance team

Upcoming Events/Deadlines:

- EQIP Eligibility deadline for SU 1 applications: December 4th
- EQIP ranking deadline: January 15th
- CSP ranking deadline: February 12th
- Clarification: RPP (regenerative pilot program) is the same as EQIP and CSP. It is just a fund pool under each of them. To apply for RPP you apply for EQIP or CSP

FSA report: no report

District Manager's report: Written report:

October 2026 District Manager's Report

The past month has been focused on some soil health contracts, working with farmers on their seed plans and getting paperwork done for RCPP contracts. I've also been reviewing/updating some policy documents and fine-tuning the budget. In addition, I've put together our orders for the tree program and am working on a response for the tree survey we sent out.

Specific activity/meetings this past month:

- Statewide manager's meeting in Clearwater
- Nutrient reduction strategy meeting
- Lower MN Meeting
- MDA N Rate Grant meeting
- Lower MN Advisory Committee meeting
- Wrote an article on the RIM program
- Meeting with Clean River Partners on grants
- Resolutions review meeting
- Personnel committee meeting to discuss telework policy
- WAGZ work plan update meeting

Coming up, I'll be attending the BWSR Academy training October 20-22nd, and will be making sure everyone gets their cover crops planted and then work on payments. I am scheduled to speak at the November 17th County Board meeting to give an update on activity and projects. I'll also be starting the annual reviews for staff.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Pahs

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Gene Kuntz: Attended Area 7 MASWCD and MACDE fall meeting in Owatonna. Toured a 1,000-acre project of Rim and wetlands completed many years ago.

Al Malecha: Soybeans done. Yield average. Cover crops going in next week. Starting on corn.

Roger Bongers: Soybeans are done, less yield than expected. Probably due to lack of rainfall and timing of rainfall. Cover crops are coming up.

Richard Peterson: recently drove Hwy 30 thru new Richland and Ellendale. Still a lot of wet ground from the flooding 3 weeks ago.

John Larson: No report.

Staff Reports:

Emmie Scheffler: This past month, I completed Rim inspections and worked through a few violations with BWSR. I worked on some new RIM easements in the agreement stage. I completed all the CRP incentive contracts. I have been working through a few projects and trying to line up funding and getting preliminary designs on them. I worked on the Cannon reconciliation and setting up a shoreland work session, along with the RCPP application and getting letters of support from various US senator and representatives.

Has been working on a large RIM site near Lonsdale. Working with the state to sort out all the discrepancies and issues that have surfaced.

In addition: construction will be starting soon.

Teresa DeMars

Past Month

- September newsletter
- Interseeding Field Day at Tom Polacek

- CRWJPO video development and advertising
- Land to Lake Lectures webinar planning
- Jefferson Prairie fall planting planning
- News articles: Soil Health Bus Tour & CRWJPO Conservation tour

Next Month

- October newsletter
- CRWJPO Webinar marketing
- CRWJPO Facebook Marketing
- Area VII meeting
- vacation

In addition: 9th grade science teacher from Faribault high School has reached out. Wants to teach about watersheds. Teresa, along with Kourtney Spitzack will be using our Enviroscape and will be presenting to 9 different classes at the high school.

Alan Kraus:

- Soil Health Incentive Programs
    - RCPP Funding – plan to allocate any unused funds in early 2027
    - LCCMR Cover Crop program
        - Expect to roll out the program in Oct - $240,000 to be allocated over 3 years
    - BWSR FY26 Soil Health Delivery – all funding allocated
    - BWSR FY27 funding grant in process
- Bridgewater Streams project
    - Water sampling continues – by Clean River Partners
    - All cover crop funding will be contracted
    - Final year is 2027
- Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate Project
    - Still waiting to complete interview with Minnesota Public Radio
    - Continuum Ag provided estimates of Carbon Intensity (CI) scores on the plots
- SE Minnesota Bus Tour to the National Strip-till Conference
    - Created & shared contact list for those who wanted to continue connecting with each other
- Assisted 4 people with MDA Soil Health Equipment grants
- Participated in Rice SWCD strategic planning
- Had 2 weeks of vacation
- Looking ahead
    - Conduct outreach for LCCMR Cover Crop program
    - Work with Freeborn Area Soil Health Team on September field day – present slides on interseeded cover crops
    - Attend field day on melted urea
    - Attend Haney test webinar
    - Communicate with farmers in N project for corn harvest
    - Conduct field verifications for cover crop contracts

Allison Henderson:

Last/Current Month

- WCA applications
- WCA site visits
- WCA team meetings

- New WCA Violation
- Buffer letters
- DNR well readings
- Technical Assistance to landowners as it comes up
- Area 7 meeting

Next Month:

- On Farms Communications Training
- BWSR Academy
- Buffer Site Visits
- Buffer Letters
- WCA Applications
- DNR Wells

In addition: recently received a lot of WCA applications. Buffer site visits beginning soon.

Commissioner Charlie Peters: road work projects finished. Attended a round-table discussion with DNR. The island on Circle Lake and WMA area was dedicated this weekend. Governor Walz was in attendance. Spoke to Governor a bit, as well as DNR officials. Still working on budgets. Ryan Lermon's position was cut from Steele County. Working to find another county to share his time.

Commissioner jim Purfeerst: Steele County initially cut their master Gardener's position but have since reinstated it. The 911 center is scheduled to move into the old LEC building in early November. Landfill is awaiting approval to expand to the west, which will give them 30 years. Department of Corrections has mandated prisoner inspections every 15 minutes, which will require additional personnel, at a cost to the county.

OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE: CRWJPO meeting on November 4th at the Straight River room. Commissioners are invited to the work session beginning at 10:30, in which shoreland ordinances across the watershed will be discussed. DNR will be leading this discussion.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

October 14 Data Centers, Energy, and Water: Local Government Tools for Decision Making SE MN (Webinar) by the University of Minnesota, 6:00 pm online.

October 14 Rice SWCD September Board of Supervisors Meeting, 8:00 am in Faribault

October 20 Before They Take Hold: Stopping the Spread of Invasive Species (Online Webinar) by the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, 12:00 - 1:00 pm.

October 21 Faribault Tree Planting by Great River Greening, 3:00 - 6:00 pm North Alexander Park in Faribault.

October 25 Bat's, Bones, and Bonefires by River Bend Nature Center, 2:00 -5:00 PM in Faribault.

October 28 Lawns to Legumes: Building Pollinator Habitat at Home (Online Webinar) by Minnesota Women in Conservation, 12:00 - 1:00 pm.

November 11 – 12 Climate Resilience Cohort for Farmers by the University of Minnesota Extension in Chatfield.

December 1-2 Premier Soil Health Event by the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition in Mankato.

January 27-28 Soil Management Summit 2026 by the University of MN-Extension in Waite Park.

ADJOURN:

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 am.
All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Submitted by:

Administrative Assistant

Board Member