



## Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

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RICE S.W.C.D.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY – May 20 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

Remotely listened - John Larson

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

**April board minutes – action:**

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

**April financial statement and bills payable – action:**

The April financial statement was reviewed by the District Manager.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the April 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. #066-01-10, windbreak/shelterbelt - \$1,912.50
- B. #066-01-01, cover crops planted green - \$8,592.00
- C. #066-01-02, cover crops planted green, not planted green - \$15,414.00
- D. #066-01-03, cover crops planted green - \$2,136.00
- E. #066-01-04, cover crops planted green - \$5,316.00
- F. #066-01-05, res. management and No-till continuous - \$6,926.50
- G. Jack Volkert 25-RC-008 – WASCOB – final payment - \$14,373.50
- H. #066-01-11, res. management no-till - \$5,801.50
- I. #066-01-08, res. management no-till continuous - \$20,744.50
- J. Kuball Dairy SHD 25-07 - \$1,150.00

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

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Don Bajumpaa, BWSR – PRAP report via Teams meeting - information:**

Don Bajumpaa reviewed the final report from the PRAP process completed in early 2026.

**B. Tyrone David LC23-04-CS amendment of funds from \$15,299.63 to \$15,580.12 - approve:**

This contract is amended due to additional tile costs for a better outlet spot.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Tyrone David LC23-04-CS amendment of funds from \$15,299.63 to \$15,580.12. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**C. Tyrone David LC23-04-CS, final payment of \$15,580.12 - approve:**

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Tyrone David #LC23-04-CS payment of \$15,580.12. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**D. Local Capacity 2023 Grant - closeout - action:**

This grant is now fully expended.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the close-out of the Local Capacity 2023 grant. All ayes. None opposed. Motion carried

**E. 2024 Conservation Contracts closeout- action**

This grant is now fully expended.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the close-out of the 2024 Conservation Contracts grant. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**F. 2025 Conservation Contracts closeout and return of funds - \$8,122.87 - action:**

This grant has now expired. Funds were not all spent so therefore, the unspent funds need to be sent back to BWSR.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the close-out and return of unspent funds of \$8,122.87 for the 2025 Conservation Contracts grant and request a written notice from BWSR as to what happens with unspent funds, in a timely manner. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**G. Archer Data Center - discussion:**

A discussion took place regarding data centers and the responsibilities of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to review and comment on how these and other businesses impact local resources. The board recommended bringing the topic up for discussion at the upcoming Area 7 Resolutions meeting on June 9<sup>th</sup> in Stewartville.

**H. #066-01-06, Res. Management and No-Till/Strip-Till - \$1,277.50 - Cancel:**

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by Roger Bongers to cancel #066-01-06, Res. Management and No-till/Strip-Till contract. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried

I. **#066-01-12, amended contract install dates, reduced contract amount – action:**

The original contract only had one install completion date listed and it is a three-year contract. The other two install completion dates were added. There was a discrepancy in the acreage which resulted in a reduction to the contract amount of \$441.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the amendment of the dates and the amount on contract #066-01-12. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

J. **#066-01-12, partial payment of res. management and no-till/strip-till - \$16,782.50 – action:**

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the partial payment of \$16,782.50 for contract #066-01-12. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

K. **#066-01-07, amended contract install dates, reduced contract amount – action:**

The original contract only had one install completion date listed and it is a three-year contract. The other two install completion dates were added. There was a discrepancy in the acreage which resulted in a reduction to the contract amount.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the amendment of the dates and the amount on contract #066-01-07. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

L. **#066-01-07, res. management strip-till - \$10,536.00 – action:**

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the partial payment of \$10,536.00 for contract #066-01-07. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

M. **Resolution in Support of Continued Statewide Funding for Soil health Technicians in Minnesota:**

A resolution drafted by the Rice SWCD, in support of continued statewide funding for soil health technicians was shared. There is a need for continued funding as current funds will end in 2027. A similar resolution from the MASWCD was also shared, but this one focused more on increased SWCD Aid money.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to adopt the resolution drafted by the Rice SWCD in support of continued statewide funding for soil health technicians in Minnesota. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**NRCS REPORT: written and presented by Taylor O'Bryan**

May 20th, 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:**

- ⇒ 4 CSP contracts in Rice County selected
- ⇒ Sign up 2 is open for CSP

#### **EQIP:**

- ⇒ 3 selected in Rice County
- ⇒ Sign up 2 is open for EQIP

#### **CRP:**

- ⇒ Continuous Sign up: 45 Selected in Rice County
- ⇒ General Sign Up: 4 Selected in Rice County

#### **WETLAND/HEL:**

- ⇒ Rice County has 6 requests awaiting HEL determination for new land from the compliance team
- ⇒ Rice County has 40 requests awaiting a certified wetland determination from the compliance team

#### **Upcoming Events/Deadlines:**

- Local working group meeting – after this meeting

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

### **DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT:**

#### **May 2026 District Manager's Report**

This past month has been busy with getting field inspections completed on all the soil health contracts and completing the paperwork to get them paid. We had a successful tree program with about 1000 more trees sold than in 2025. Delivery was done in the poultry building due to the repairs on the conservation building. We signed up more farmers for both cover crops and reduced tillage in the past month as well. We are now out of money for the RCPP program, but expect the new LCCMR funds to come in July to begin another new cover crop program. The bus trip to the National Strip-till Conference is coming together, and we have about 25 people signed up so far. We are also preparing for the early interseeding program, and I am still trying to find a buyer for the old interseeder. I've got several more contracts to finish for payments and those contracts will be ready for payment in June. We prepared a

proposed resolution on staffing soil health specialists. I will be preparing a budget proposal for 2027 to be reviewed at the June meeting as well.

Specific activity this past month:

- Southeast MN managers meeting held April 29<sup>th</sup> in Rochester
- Training session for the LCCMR soil health program April 30<sup>th</sup>
- Assisting AI H with a wetland restoration order
- Cannon JPB meeting
- Zumbro meeting
- Lower MN meeting and training on new reporting system

The coming weeks will focus on wrapping up field inspections, assisting with the interseeding program, preparing payment vouchers and supporting documentation, and working on the budget for 2027.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Pahs

#### **SUPERVISOR REPORTS:**

**Gene Kuntz:** has seen evidence that cover crop terminations are working.

**Al Malecha:** attended the Lower Mn River East watershed meeting.

**Roger Bongers:** attended the Clean River Partners meeting and learned about rock rapids. Very informational.

**Richard Peterson:** Attended the Zumbro 1W1P meeting. They had created a one-page document highlighting the projects and accomplishments of the watershed. Feels the SWCD could create something similar on an annual basis.

#### **Staff Reports:**

**Emmie Scheffler:**

This past month, I have had two construction projects completed. I have been working on surveying and engineering designs, and awaiting bids for four different projects. I worked on CRWJPO items and had our quarterly board meeting. I have been working on windbreak designs and meeting and RIM.

**Sue Erpenbach:**

Completed assembling all audit data for the auditor. Admin assistant conference in June in Walker MN.

**Teresa DeMars:**

Past Month

- Tree Week
- Jefferson Prairie Planning

- May newsletter
- Southeast MN Soil Health Bus Tour Strip till Conference marketing
- Pocket of Prairie

#### Next Month

- Women in Conservation event marketing
- June newsletter
- Vacation
- Jefferson Prairie Planning
- Southeast MN Soil Health Bus Tour Strip Till Conference marketing

#### Alan Kraus:

- Spring interseeding program
  - Signed up farmers for service
- Soil Health Incentive Programs
  - RCPP Funding
    - Assisted with new contracts
    - Assisted Steve with practice certifications
  - Attended training for LCCMR Cover Crop program
- Bridgewater Streams project
  - Assisted with water sampling and tillage/cover crop verifications
- Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate Project
  - Collected and submitted soil samples 8 farms for UMN soil tests
  - Collected and submitted soil samples 2 farms for Haney test
- SE Minnesota Bus Tour to the National Strip-till Conference
  - Meetings with Rice & Steele staff to plan this project
  - 24 of 50 seats are filled
- MDA Cover Crop Biomass Project
  - Finished 7 weeks of cover crop photographing on 2 farms for MDA
- Looking ahead
  - Conduct field verifications of practices
  - Continue planning for Soil Health Bus Tour to Strip-till Conference
  - Carry out interseeding program – work with Petersons and farmers that signed up for service
  - Collect soil samples and one-on-one meetings with farmers in the N rate trials
  - Begin outreach for LCCMR Cover Crop program
  - Work with Freeborn Area Soil Health Team on summer/fall field day

#### Al Henderson:

##### Last/Current Month

- WCA applications
- Buffer Visits
- DNR well readings
- Native seed mix for wet soils training
- WCA Violation Restorations
- On Farm Communications Training
- Helping with Pocket-a-Prairie

Next Month:

- Continuing follow up with WCA restorations
- Buffer site checks
- DNR well readings
- Reviewing WCA applications
- WCA site visits
- Technical assistance to landowners as it comes up
- Vacation time

**Commissioner Charlie Peters:** shifted the 10-year road plans around. A new bonding bill was passed affecting some projects.

**Commissioner Jim Purfeerst:** the county is starting to work on the 2027 budget. Lots of projects are underway.

**OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:** Cannon 1W1P tour on August 5<sup>th</sup>. Working on Annual report.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**May 7** Minnesota Bumble Bee Nest Quest Training by the University of Minnesota. Online webinar.

**May 16** Plant Hike by River Bend Nature Center, 1:00 - 2:00 pm in Faribault.

**May 20** Rice SWCD Board Meeting, 8:00 AM, at the Rice SWCD office in Faribault.

**May 20** Local Work Group Meeting by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, 10:00 am at the Rice SWCD office in Faribault.

**May 20** Recycling in Rice County: How to Reduce your Waste by River Bend Nature Center, 12:30 pm in Faribault

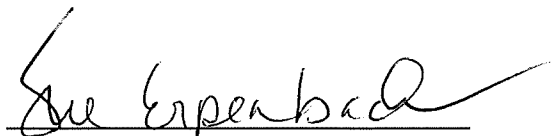
**July 30** Passport to Agriculture by Rice County ag organizations, 4:00 - 8:00 pm at the Rice County Fairgrounds in Faribault.

**August 5-7** Southeast Minnesota Soil Health Bus Tour to the 2026 National Strip-Tillage Conference by the Rice and Steele SWCD in Springfield, IL.

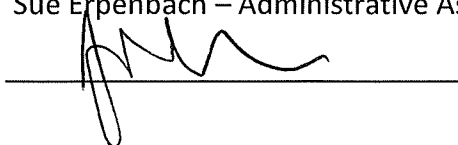
**ADJOURN:**

Motion to adjourn by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha. All aye, none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.

Submitted by:



Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant



Board Member –