

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 – August 13, 2025 – 8:00 am

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

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Al Henderson, Teresa DeMars, Alan Kraus, Commissioner Charlie Peters, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst, Cody Holubeck NRCS, Eleanor Berg Pheasant's Forever

Absent: Roger Bongers

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by Chairman Richard Peterson.

July Board Minutes:

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the July board minutes as written. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

July financial statement and bills payable:

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

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the July 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. Candace Retka 24-RC-S-008, native shoreline planting payment - \$500.00 – action
- B. Melvin Korbel 25-RC-002 (Lower MN E) well decommissioning - \$2,000.00 – action
- C. Richard Palla CS-23-03, grassed waterway - \$4,891.50 - action

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the consent agenda items. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. RCPP Soil Health Policy – action:

This agenda item was a last-minute addition to the meeting. District Manager reviewed the proposed policy for the new RCPP grant. This grant is federally funded but managed thru BWSR. NRCS guidelines will be followed.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to approve the RCPP soil health policy as presented. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Discussion: can you do a partial farm under the strip-till practice? Yes, you can.

B. Dew Drop Drill – consider sale - action:

The current Dew Drop Drill was purchased in 2015. It is used, on average, 6 to 8 times annually. District Manager has done some research and average re-sale value is between \$3,000 and \$6,000.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha to sell the 2015 Dew Drop Drill for \$4,500.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

C. Dew Drop Drill – consider purchase of new machine - action:

The new Dew Drop drills have a remote controller, instead of the cord running between the machine and ATV. It also comes with tines instead of discs. District Manager recommends purchasing a new dew drop drill with the tines, for \$9,000.00. Shipping cost is \$600.00 but the District Manager would pick it up.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the purchase of a new Dew Drop Drill, with the additional tines for \$9,000.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

D. Stewardship Summit: SWCD Governance & Leadership Essentials - reminder:

The deadline to register for this conference is August 22nd. Please let the SWCD office know if you will be attending.

E. Kuball Dairy 23-RC-006, amended amount from \$4,522.88 to \$4,600.12 – action:

Technical assistance provider did not include the cost of seeding and mulching in the original contract amount. Both of these items are essential components for this project.

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by John Larson to approve the Kuball Dairy 23-RC-006 amended amount from \$4,522.88 to \$4,600.12. All aye. None opposed. Gene Kuntz abstained.

F. Kuball Dairy 23-RC-006, payment of \$4,600.12 - action

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve Kuball Dairy 23-RC-006 payment of \$4,600.12. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried. Gene Kuntz abstained.

G. Mark and Terry Rydberg Trust 25-RC-006, WASCOB - \$61,997.76 - action:

This project is funded thru the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization. It is located in a Level 1 high priority area so funded at 95% cost share. NRCS staff designed the project.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Mark and Terry Rydberg Trust 25-RC-006 project for \$61,997.76. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

H. Chris Donkers 25-RC-007, grassed waterway - \$17,217.69 - action:

This project is funded thru the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization. It is located in a Level 1 high priority area so funded at 95% cost share. NRCS staff designed the project.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the Chris Donkers 25-RC-007, grassed waterway project for \$17,217.69. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

I. Soil Health practices grant agreement – action:

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson at approved the Soil Health grant agreement and grant authority to District Manager to sign the grant agreement thru DocuSign. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

J. Open a money market account with Edward Jones investments – action:

Opening a money market account would make transfer of interest from expiring CD's easier. Would also earn more interest than a standard savings account. District Manager recommends moving some of current savings account into a money market account. Is the money market account FDIC insured? No action taken pending FDIC insurability.

K. LCCMR Regional Soil Health Program – discussion

The 11 counties in SE Minnesota are working together to get LCCMR funds to assist with groundwater issues. The Legislature still needs to approve in the spring of 2026. If approved, the funding would be available in July. The funds are not a guarantee. The District Manager will convey Rice SWCD's interest in participating in this funding source.

L. Revise approval authority on soil health practices – action:

The motion approved at the May board meeting authorizes the District Manager to approve soil health practices that are time-sensitive. It would be better to say "non-structural" instead of soil health. In addition, the motion granted this authority through the end of 2025. It is recommended to extend this authority through 2028, which is the end of the RCPP Soil Health grant deadline.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to revise approval authority on soil health practices by substituting "soil health" with "non-structural" and extend this authority through 2028 instead of 2025. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

M. Tyrone David LC23-04-CS, WASCOB - \$15,299.63 – action:

This project is for two basins on very hilly and rough ground. Project to be completed this fall.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Tyrone David LC23-04-CS contract for a WASCOB in the amount of \$15,299.63. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

NRCS REPORT:

Cody Holubeck presented the following report:



August 13th, 2025

NRCS Report for the Rice SWCD Board Meeting

General:

- ⇒ Taylor, Cody, Elenor and Lucas are working out of the Faribault Office
- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ Passport to Ag was on July 31st and was a fun time and great success. Our booth was Cover Crops and Soil health and we had some great conversations with people on what farmers are doing to farm sustainably.

Farm Bill Updates:

CSP:

- ⇒ FY26 Sign up deadline is October 31, 2025

EQIP:

- ⇒ EQIP FY26 Sign Up 1 deadline was August 1
- ⇒ Sign up 2 is open and taking applications
- ⇒ January 9th is our ranking Deadline

CRP:

- ⇒ 38 contracts selected and moving forward in Rice County to begin October 1st
- ⇒ We are beginning year 3 and expiration spot checks that will continue through the summer.

WETLAND/HEL:

- ⇒ Rice County has 25 requests awaiting HEL determination for new land from the compliance team
- ⇒ Rice County has 35 requests awaiting a certified wetland determination from the compliance team

Upcoming Events/Deadlines:

- CSP sign up deadline Oct 31st
- Intern Arica's last day is on August 15th

FSA report presented by Taylor Carlson:

Taylor Carlson was absent and unable to present the following report:



Rice County, Minnesota

2800 1st Avenue NW, Suite 500
Faribault, MN 55021
Taylor.Carlson@usda.gov
(507) 332-7418 ext 108

TO: Rice County Soil and Water Conservation District Board

FROM: Rice County Farm Service Agency

SUBJECT: August 2025 Board Meeting

Old Business

2023/2024 Supplemental Disaster Assistance

- Supplemental Disaster Relief Program
 - Provide assistance to producers for necessary expenses due to losses of revenue, quality or productions of crops due to weather related events in 2023 and 2024.
 - Sign-up began July 10, 2025, for indemnified losses
 - *Target sign-up date of September 15, 2025, for uncovered losses*

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Second batch period for continuous CRP signup 63 offers submitted between June 6, 2025, and July 18, 2025, are currently pending acceptance.

New Business

COC Elections

- The nomination period ended on August 1, 2025. These nominees are now being reviewed for accuracy for candidacy and ballot creation for sending out in November for voting in the LAA.

County Committee (COC) Meeting; Regular sessions are open to the public (0:15-0:30)

- September 9th at 8:30 AM is the next Rice COC Meeting.

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT:

Have been spending a lot of time on the RCPP grant. Will be presenting budget request to the Rice County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday. Will be attending the Liz Haney workshop next week. Helped Al get the rainfall simulator ready for the Haney workshop.

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Richard Peterson: attended the Best of the Best awards program at the Rice County Fair. Always a good experience. Attendance was down from previous years. Weather was gloomy and rainy so that could have affected attendance. Attended the Rice County Fair with grandkids. They enjoyed the Conservation Building and the teaching garden. Attended the SE Tech meeting in John's absence. Good group. Enjoyed the staff presentations on projects, especially the grazing projects. The workload for TA services from Rice County is about 5%. It's a good resource for projects where we don't have JAA.

Al Malecha: Staffed the SWCD booth one day during the fair. Mostly positive people encountered.

Gene Kuntz: attended the Best of the Best awards program at the Rice County Fair. No breakfast this year due to a scheduling mix up. Otherwise, a nice job. Staffed the SWCD booth one afternoon during the fair. Really low attendance. Attended the Passport to Agriculture event with his grandkids. Very well done.

John Larson: no report

Staff Reports:

Emmie Scheffler:

returned from maternity leave on June 30th. This past month, I spent time working on figuring out potential funds to implement the Upper Cannon Flood Study. In July, I will be catching up on engineering work and working on some RIM scenarios and inspections. I will also be prepping for the August Cannon board meeting and working on reporting for those grants. Working with Kate (TSA7) on a project on French Lake, hoping to have a contract ready at the next board meeting. Also working with US Fish and Wildlife on some WASCOS on a field they want to turn into prairie.

Emmie added that some SWCD's don't have JAA authority, which is why they use the SE Tech Assistance group more than Rice SWCD.

Teresa DeMars

Past Month

- Outstanding conservationists interview
- Rice County Fair prep
- July newsletter
- CRWJPO video media planning
- Peterson Interseeding Field Day
- Vacation

Next Month

- Rice County Fair
- Passport to Agriculture – Teresa said the final attendance count came in at 695.
- August newsletter
- Website upgrades and compliance
- RCPP marketing

Alan Kraus:

- Soil Health Incentive Programs – RCPP Funding
 - RCPP Funding is waiting for confirmation – but could get underway by mid-August
 - Continued discussions with Rice & Steele SWCD staff on outreach & program details
- Rice SWCD Cover Crop Interseeder
 - Completed interseeding for 10 farmers, planted 913 acres
 - Checking fields for germination – looks very good
 - Collected all herbicide info to learn about limitations
- Bridgewater Streams project
 - MPCA is going to fund tile drainage sampling through 2027 – Clean River Partners will do the work
 - May present results at Steele County Fair
- Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate Project
 - 8 farmers are in the project
 - All plots are established and corn is planted and N rates applied
 - 2-day Haney Soil Health Testing Masterclass is set for Aug 20-21
 - Invitations were sent to 95 people
- MDA & Great Lakes Cover Crop Project
 - Collected and submitted 10 cover crop samples
 - Analyzed for N, P, K & Carbon
 - Article submitted to area newspapers
- Soil Health Trailer
 - Planning to use it at 2 events this summer
 - Received grant to purchase equipment and posters of cover crop root systems
- Looking ahead
 - Collect soil trays for rainfall simulator
 - Finalize details for Masterclass & Honken Farm Field Day
 - Prep for RCPP funding opportunity

Al Henderson**Last month:**

- MN Wetland Professionals Certification in training
- WCA Applications
- HABs sampling
- Buffer and WCA site visits

Current/Next Month:

- WCA applications/site visits
- Buffer monitoring
- Agronomy 101 training
- County fair
- Passport to Ag

Provided more detail regarding the Algal Bloom sampling for the MPCA.

Commissioner Jim Purfeerst: County Highway Department is replacing the fuel docking station for about \$80,000.00. The current system is over 30 years old. Project should be done by Winter. A housing update was presented to the Commissioners. Faribault is short 500 housing units and Northfield is short 900 housing units. Paula O'Connell is leaving October 1st. No updates on Conservation Building.

Commissioner Charlie Peters: Commissioners are sitting through Budget presentations. Attended the Passport to Agriculture vent and feels it is an excellent event. Also attended the Best of the Best awards program. County is mowing ditches; fence lines and roadway. Stopped spraying due to "drift" issues.

OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:

UPCOMING EVENTS: keep checking our website for event information:

August 14 Kernza Field Day by the Minnesota Department of Ag, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm in Hastings.

August 21-22 Adapting Grazing and Fencing Workshop by the University of Minnesota Extension, by Dover and Stewartville.

August 29 **Deadline to apply for the** Soil Health Financial Assistance Grant.

September 5 Soil Health Field Day on Tom Cotter Farm by the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm.

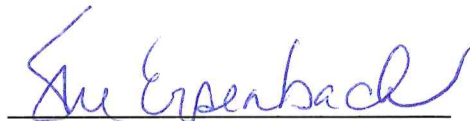
September 6 Food Health Field Day on Cotter Farms by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition 11:00 am- 3: 30 pm.

September 13 All Things Oats & Oat Mill Tour by Practical Farmers of Iowa, 4:00 - 6:00 pm in Albert Lea

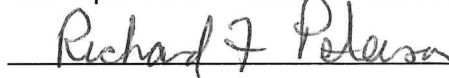
ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn by John Larson, seconded by Al Malecha. All aye, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:10 am.

Submitted by:



Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant



Board Member –