RICE

Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

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RICE S.W.C.D.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY – September 16, 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, Shane Bugeja BWSR, Commissioner Charlie Peters

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

August board minutes – action:

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

August financial statement and bills payable – action:

The August financial statement was reviewed by the District Manager.
A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the August 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

NEW BUSINESS:

A. **Reliance Bank 12-month CD renewal (9/23/26) - action:**

District Manager is recommending that this CD be allowed to auto-renew for another 12 months at current rates.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to allow the Reliance 12-month CD auto-renew at the current rate. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

B. **MASWCD Annual Convention Dec 1 and 2nd 2026 - informational:**

All are encouraged to attend. Deadline to register is November 13th.

C. **066-05-15, cover crop planted green - $50,000.00 – CANCEL:**

The landowner would like more flexibility in which fields to plant cover crops on. Recommendation was to cancel this contract and set up a new contract to allow the flexibility.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Roger Bongers to cancel contract #066-05-15.
All aye. None opposed. Motion carried

D. **066-05-30, cover crops not planted green - $50,000.00 - action:**

This contract replaces the previous contract 066-05-15 that was just canceled. Same number of acres, but flexibility on which fields are planted.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve contract #066-05-30 for $50,000.00 for cover crops not planted green.
All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

E. **Ron Salaba 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-8, incentive contract - $ 500.00 - action**
G. **Cynthia Ford 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-7, incentive contract – $500.00 - action**
I. **Robert DeGrood 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-12, incentive contract – $250.00 - action**
K. **Michael Karp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-3, incentive contract - $1,215.00 – action**
M. **Dan Kopp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-9, incentive contract - $250.00 – action**
O. **Dan Kopp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-10, incentive contract - $250.00 – action**
Q. **Dan Kopp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-11, incentive contract - $250.00 – action**
S. **Charlie Peters 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-5, incentive contract - $250.00 – action**
U. **Charlie Peters 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-4, incentive contract - $500.00 – action**
W. **Richard Huston 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-6, incentive contract - $500.00 – action**
Y. **Gary Carlson 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-15, incentive contract - $250.00 – action**
AA. **Gary Carlson 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-16, incentive contract - $250.00 - 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 John Larson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the CRP incentive contracts as listed above, items E, G, I, K, M, O, Q, S, U, W, Y, and AA. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

F. **Ron Salaba 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-8, incentive payment - $500.00 - action**
H. **Cynthia Ford 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-7, incentive payment - $500.00 – action**
J. **Robert DeGroot 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-12, incentive payment - $250.00 – action**
L. **Michael Karp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-3, incentive payment - $250.00 – action**
N. **Dan Kopp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-9, incentive payment - $250.00 – action**
P. **Dan Kopp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-10, incentive payment - $250.00 – action**
R. **Dan Kopp 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-11, incentive payment - $250.00 – action**
T. **Charlie Peters 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-5, incentive payment - $250.00 – action**
V. **Charlie Peters 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-4, incentive payment - $500.00 – action**
X. **Richard Huston 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-6, incentive payment - $500.00 – action**
AA. **Gary Carlson 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-15, incentive payment - $250.00 – action**
BB. **Gary Carlson 2025-Cannon-RC-CRP-16, incentive payment - $250.00 - action**

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the CRP incentive payments as listed

above, items F, H, J, L, N, P, R, T, V, X, AA, and BB. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

CC. Jason Franek 26-RC-CRP-002, incentive contract (Lower MN) - $1,000.00 - action:
This is CRP incentive funding through the Lower MN East Watershed.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the Jason Franek 26-RC-CRP-002, incentive contract for $1,000.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

DD. Jason Franek 26-RC-CRP-002, incentive payment (Lower MN) - $1,000.00 - action:

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the Jason Franek 26-RC-CRP-002 incentive payment for $1,000.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

EE. Aaron Bauer 2026WAGZ-RC-02 – grassed waterway - $15,930.00 - action:
This contract is for work on an older structure with a lot of water flowing through it. Funded by the Zumbro 1W1P.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the Aaron Bauer 2026WAGZ-RC-02 grassed waterway contract for $15,930.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

FF. Sub-agreement signing authority to Manager for Olmsted program – action:
A new performance-based cover crop grant is nearing roll-out. District manager is recommending the Board authorize him to sign the sub-agreement.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to authorize the District Manager to sign the sub-agreement when it becomes available. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

GG. October Board Meeting conflict – action:
The October board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21st, however, staff will be attending BWSR Academy in Brainerd.
The October board meeting will be re-scheduled to Wednesday, October 14th at 8:00 am.

HH. Teleworking policy – discussion
A draft of a telework policy was shared and discussed. The District Manager will seek information at the upcoming manager's meeting and will bring information back to the October board meeting.

II. Jefferson pollinator planting agreement – action:
Teresa DeMars is working with Jefferson elementary on a large pollinator planting project. She secured funding from BWSR for approximately $5,000 in project costs and T/A.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the Jeferson pollinator planting agreement. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

NRCS REPORT: no report

FSA report: no report

District Manager's report: attended a facilitation meeting for managers, NRCS at Camp Ripley. Working on fall projects. Upcoming vacation.

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Gene Kuntz: Nephew recently harvested corn sileage. Good yield.

Al Malecha: Soybeans should be ready in a week or two.

Roger Bongers: recent trip to/from Chicago. Expected to see more soybeans being harvested. Some corn being harvested.

Richard Peterson: Attended Zumbro 1W1P meeting on-line. They were presented with an overview of feedback series from around the state.

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.

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

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

Commissioner Charlie Peters: road construction season coming to an end. Had the Levy down to 7.2% but now Dept of Corrections has added new policy requiring hiring more staff. All outside agencies budgets cut by 10%.

Shane Bugeja – BWSR: new grants coming up including a Soil health Delivery grant for $30,000.00. Buffer Implementation request for interest form will be available soon.

OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:

UPCOMING EVENTS:

September 11 Urea Melting at Tom Cotter's Farm by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm, near Austin.

September 12 Food Health Food Day 2026 at Tom Cotter's Farm by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, near Austin.

September 15 Compost Webinar – Roundtable Discussions by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition, 1:00 - 2:00 pm.

September 16 Rice SWCD September Board of Supervisors Meeting, 8:00 am in Faribault.

September 16 Interseeding Field Day on the Tom Polacek Farm by the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm near Owatonna.

September 16 Feeding the Soil: Cover Crops, Crop Rotations, & More by Farmers for Soil Health (Webinar) 11:30 am online.

September 19 Watershed-Wide Cleanup by Clean River Partners, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, various locations in the Cannon River Watershed.

September 21 Rain Garden Workshop by Clean River Partners, 6:00 - 9:00 pm, in Owatonna.

September 24 Seed Collection at Sharing our Roots by Clean River Partners, 3:00 - 5:00 pm near Northfield.

September 30 Prescribed Burn Associations: Community-Led Conservation (Webinar) by Minnesota Women in Conservation, 12:00 - 1:00 pm, online

ADJOURN:

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 am.
All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Submitted by: Jane Erpenbach

Board Member –