



## Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

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Phone: (507) 332-5408 [www.riceswcd.org](http://www.riceswcd.org)

RICE S.W.C.D.

### REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY – February 12, 2025 – 8:00 am

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

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Emmie Scheffler, Teresa DeMars, Allison Henderson, Al Kraus,  
Commissioner Charlie Peters, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst, Taylor O'Bryan NRCS, Cody  
Holubeck NRCS, Shane Bugeja BWSR

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by Chairman Roger Bongers.

#### **January Board Minutes:**

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

#### **December financial statement:**

The December financial statement was not completed for the January board meeting, due to year end processes.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the December financial report, subject to audit. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

#### **January financial statement and bills payable:**

The district manager reviewed the financial statement.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the January financial statement and bills payable, subject to audit. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

#### **OLD BUSINESS: 2211 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW, Suite 200 – lease – action:**

The lease was reviewed by the County Attorney's office.

Building owner wants a 5-year commitment. All utilities except for telephone and internet are included in the lease, as well as snow removal.

Proposed move date is February 28<sup>th</sup>. All concerns have been addressed or will be addressed before the move in date.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the lease subject to county attorney's changes. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA: (payment approval)**

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to donate \$132.00 to support twelve awards. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**I. Tree and Native Plant Sale update - information:**

Information was shared regarding the tree and native plant sale this year compared to last year.

**J. FY2023 Buffer Law grant closeout - action:**

All funds have been expended so this grant is closed out.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Richard Peterson to close out the FY2023 Buffer Law grant. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**K. William Skluzacek CS-24-01 amended amount from \$11,140.50 to \$19,342.50 – action:**

Due to additional erosion on the addressed field, a grassed waterway is added in addition to the WASCOBS. Pre-Construction coverage is also added.

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by Gene Kuntz to approve the amended contract amount for William Skluzacek CS-24-01 from \$11,140.50 to \$19,342.50. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**L. 12-month CD w/Edward Jones set to expire in February - \$40,000.00 – action:**

This CD is set to expire in late February. District manager would like authorization to renew the CD for another term, but increase the funds, along with interest earned, to be \$100,000.00.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Gene Kuntz to authorize the district manager to find the best rates and terms to renew this CD with the additional funds to make \$100,000. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**M. Rice-Steele N Rate ROI Project awarded – action:**

This grant has been approved and award letter received. The grant agreement is pending as we had to submit our W-9 form. The Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate - Return on Investment Trials aim to evaluate the economic and environmental viability of adjusting nitrogen (N) fertilizer rates based on the Haney H3A soil health test results. The project will involve 6-8 corn grain farmers across Rice and Steele counties in southeast Minnesota, who will compare corn yields and N costs between traditional and Haney-recommended N rates over three years on fields with established soil health practices.

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

**N. Custom Interseeding rates for 2025 – action:**

The custom interseeding rates for 2025 were discussed.

A motion by John Larson, seconded by Richard Peterson to approve the 2025 custom interseeding rates. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**O. I, Gene Kuntz, move to reconsider the motion on Item F, with Richard Peterson in agreement.**

By a show of hands, passed 5-0

I, Gene Kuntz offer a motion to amend the previous motion by substituting cancel with postpone. Richard Peterson with a second. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**NRCS REPORT:**



United States Department of Agriculture

February 5<sup>th</sup> , 2025

**NRCS Report for the Rice SWCD Board Meeting**

**General:**

- ⇒ Taylor, Marlene, Cody, 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.

**Farm Bill Updates:**

**CSP:**

- ⇒ FY25 Sign Up 1 Deadline is past, we are taking applications for sign up 2
- ⇒ CSP SU1 Ranking Deadline is on March 21<sup>st</sup>

**EQIP:**

- ⇒ EQIP sign up 1 deadline is past. Producers can still sign up under sign up 2 for potential funding this year.
- ⇒ We have ranked contracts and are now moving towards obligation
- ⇒ Currently 17 selected contracts in Rice county

**CRP:**

- ⇒ Until a new Farm Bill or other legislation is passed, CRP applications and approvals are at a halt.

**WETLAND/HEL:**

- ⇒ Rice County has 14 requests awaiting HEL determination for new land from the compliance team
- ⇒ Rice County has 18 requests awaiting a certified wetland determination from the compliance team

**Upcoming Events/Deadlines:**

- Uncertainty with Government funds – an evolving situation

**DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT:** 1) new data management centers being built may cause concern as they draw a lot of electricity and use a lot of water for cooling. 2) moving the office in 2 ½ weeks. Movers are secured and will be here on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Hoping to be up and running at new location on Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. 3) with the move there will be some expense as we will need tables and chairs for the conference room. Also looking to replace the old mis-matched file cabinets currently in use. 4) attended a training on the new RCPP Soil health program being rolled out. Not sure if 1005 of funding will be available yet. Some funding from state and some from federal. By the end of the month, we need to send a statement of interest in participating to BWSR.

**SUPERVISOR REPORTS:**

**Richard Peterson:** attended a couple of on-line webinars; Legislative priorities and Foundation of Open meeting law. 3 supervisors together can be considered an open meeting so caution is suggested.

**Al Malecha:** no report

**Gene Kuntz:** attended a webinar with Izaak Walton League and Circle Lake. They intend to interview 3 farmers who practice soil health and use them as mentors. Wondering if the peer-to-peer small group meetings will again take place. Planning to attend the Hwy 14 soil health meeting in Owatonna.

**John Larson:** attended SE Tech Assist JPB meeting with Steve. They elected new officers and reviewed projects.

**Roger Bongers:** attended Lower Mn East WS meeting. Also attended the CRWJPO meeting.

**Staff Reports:**

**Emmie Scheffler:**

I have been working on getting EQIP designs done for the January deadline. I have been working on Cannon items and have submitted all the ownership changes to BWSR for Rim sites. Spoke about upcoming water testing with MDH and staff training. Upper Cannon Flood Study meeting last week. Draft should be available this summer.

**Al Kraus:**

- Alan had some time off in December
- Soil Health Incentive Programs
  - Responding to interest from farmers for the 2025 planting season
  - 13 farmers (6 Rice County, 7 Steele County) attended (or will be attending) soil health workshops using grant funds from Mn Office of Soil Health – the grant Rice SWCD received.
    - We still have some funds to pay 2 more registrations
- Rice SWCD Cover Crop Interseeder
  - Storage at Dan Morgan's farm confirmed
  - Exploring options for field activities in 2025
- Bridgewater Streams project
  - Farm cropping data has been compiled, results nearly completed
  - Meeting with collaborating farmers and other partners to be held in late March
- Submitted grant request to MDA for Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate – Return on Investment Project
  - Will learn about our success with the grant on February 15<sup>th</sup>

- Also looking to schedule some upcoming breakfasts to generate interest in the AgWaterQualityCertification program.
- Upcoming meeting with Extension and Dakota SWCD in Randolph on 2/27 about the Economics of Conservation practices.
- Meeting with Clean River Partners and the farmers of Bridgewater Rice Creek area on 3/4/2025 in Dundas.
- Marc 7<sup>th</sup> Izaak Walton group meeting to gather information that keeps people from implementing practices
- Work on policy related to RCPP funding
- Part of the Midwest cover crop counsel reviewing the decision tool.

**Teresa DeMars:**

Past Month

- Hollinger's blog post
- January newsletter
- Vacation time

Next Month

- CRWJPO Webinar Planning/marketing
- February newsletter
- Envirothon marketing
- Native plant sale marketing
- Winter Soil Health Workshop in Owatonna
- Envirothon teams from Northfield are signed up again for this year.

**Al Henderson:** working thru the backlog of WCA delineations. They are slowing up. Continuing to learn both WCA and buffer programs.

**Commissioner Jim Purfeerst:** Ditch 6 bids came in less than anticipated. Meeting to follow this one.

**Commissioner Charlie Peters:** concerns about erosion on solar farms and should SWCD sign off on those? Not necessary as the area of concern was due to June's excessive rainfall. There is native cover required under the panels.

**Dante Rand, Cedar Lake Association:** still waiting on the lake management plan from MPCA. Once they get that, they can look into available grants. Could future SWCD meetings have a virtual component?

**OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:**

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**February 4** 2025 I-90 Tour: Benefits of No-Till by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition and SWCDs, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm in Heron Lake.

**February 5** Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board Organization Meeting, 9:00 am in the Straight River Room at the Rice County Fairgrounds.

**February 5** 2025 I-90 Tour: Benefits of No-Till by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition and SWCDs, 10 am - 2:00 pm in Fairmont.

**February 6** 2025 I-90 Tour: Benefits of No-Till by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition and SWCDs, 3:00 - 7:00 pm in Stewartville.

**February 7** 2025 I-90 Tour: Benefits of No-Till by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition and SWCDs, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm in Hokah.

**February 8** Native Plants 101 Workshop by the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, 9:00 - 11:00 am in Faribault.

**February 11** UMN Extension Women in Ag Conference 2025, 8:45 am - 3:30 pm in Waite Park.

**February 12** Rice SWCD Board Meeting, 9:00 AM, at the USDA Service Center in Faribault.

**February 18** HWY 14 Soil Health Winter Workshop by the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team,  
8:30 a-

**February 19** HWY 14 Soil Health Winter Workshop by SWCDs, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm in Lamberton.  
2:30 pm in Owatonna.

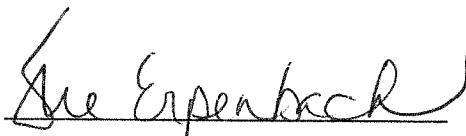
**February 20** HWY 14 Soil Health Winter Workshop by SWCDs, 9:00 am - 2:30 pm in Lake Benton

**March 21-22** The Future of Southern Minnesota Lakes Conference by ISG, in Mankato.

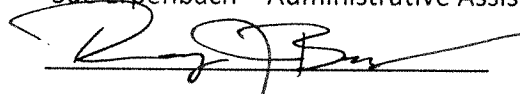
**ADJOURN:**

Motion to adjourn by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson. All aye, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

Submitted by:



Sue Erpenbach – Administrative Assistant



Board Member –