



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 19, 2026 – 8:00 am

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

Others in attendance: Steve Pahs, Alan Kraus, Teresa DeMars, Emmie Scheffler, Chris Schmidt NRCS, Taylor O'Bryan NRCS, Commissioner Charlie Peters, Commissioner Jim Purfeerst

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

July board minutes – action:

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

July financial statement and bills payable – action:

The July financial statement was reviewed by the District Manager.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Roger Bongers 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): no consent agenda

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Nancy Braker – Wild Parsnip Management - discussion:

Nancy is the director of the Carleton College Arboretum. She presented concerns about the county plan for controlling wild parsnips. The current spraying and mowing practices are killing off the native grasses and pollinator beneficients in the roadside ditches. Wild Parsnip is easy to control.

She will work with the county highway department about educating the landowners to manage and eradicate the wild parsnip in the ditches.

B. 2025 Draft Audit – action – approve, or review and wait for the final audit:

The 2025 draft audit numbers were entered into the year-to-year comparison worksheet. Both the audit and the worksheet were sent with the board packet prior to the board meeting. The draft audit has been sent to the State Auditor's office for review so the final won't be ready until the end of the year. Audits are sent to the state on a periodic basis.

No action taken.

C. Erosion control policy updates – action:

The policy change was discussed at the previous board meeting with instructions to bring back a draft version to this meeting. The language change would affect WASCOBS. The new language is as follows:

- a. Cost-share for WASCOBS, practice standard 638, are established at 75% for narrow-base structures. Farmable WASCOBS provide the same benefit as narrow-based WASCOBS but are more expensive to build; therefore, the landowner/occupier will pay the cost above the technical estimate to construct a narrow-based WASCOB.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Rogar Bongers to approve the additional language shown above, to the Erosion control policy.

All aye. None opposed. Motion carried

D. Soil Health Equipment Grant Application - action:

District manager would like to submit an application for a 15- or 20-foot No-Till Drill. Approximate cost is \$75,000.00. The equipment grant would pay 50%. A second no-till drill would allow for more cover crop acres to be seeded in the fall.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by Roger Bongers to approve the District Manager to submit an application for the Soil Health Equipment Grant.

All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

E. Kristin Stets trust – 26-RC-005 – grassed waterway - \$62,214.00 - action:

The funding source for this project is the CRWJPO. Project designed by NRCS staff.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Kristin Stets trust #26-RC-005 contract for \$62,214.00. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

F. Alexander Malecha – 26-RC-004 – WASCOB - \$11,475.00 - action:

The funding source for this project is CRWJPO.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by John Larson to approve the Alexander Malecha #26-RC-004 contract for \$11,475.00.

All aye. Al Malecha abstained from voting. None opposed. Motion carried.

G. Daniel Kopp 26-RC-006 – WASCOB - \$24,642.38 - action:

This is an NRCS designed project with the funding source the CRWJPO.

A motion by Gene Kuntz, seconded by John Larson to approve the Daniel Kopp 26-RC-006 contract for \$24,642.38. All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

H. Harvey Reynolds 26-CS-01 – WASCOB - \$10,725.00 - action:

This project uses local cost share funding.

A motion by Richard Peterson, seconded by Al Malecha to approve the Harvey Reynolds 26-CS-01 contract for \$10,725.00.

All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

I. 2026 WCA grant closeout - action:

The 2026 WCA grant funds have been completely expended. Grant is ready to be closed out.

A motion by Roger Bongers, seconded by Gene Kuntz to close out the 2026 WCA grant.

All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

August 19th, 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 2 days a week and the Farmington Office 3 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.

Farm Bill Updates:

CSP:

- ⇒ Deadline for CSP Sign Up is 9/11/26
- ⇒ We are getting ready for Annual Payments to begin in October for existing contracts

EQIP:

- ⇒ Deadline for EQIP Sign Up is 9/11/26
- ⇒ Deferral letters have been sent out for FY26

CRP:

- ⇒ Continuous Sign up: 45 Selected in Rice County
- ⇒ General Sign Up: 4 Selected in Rice County
- ⇒ We are doing summer status reviews of CRP
- ⇒ Deferral letters have been sent out for FY26

WETLAND/HEL:

- ⇒ Rice County has 175 requests awaiting HEL determination for new land from the compliance team
- ⇒ Rice County has 36 requests awaiting a certified wetland determination from the compliance team

Upcoming Events/Deadlines:

- CSP sign up – Sept 11, 2026
- EQIP sign up – Sept 11, 2026

Chris Schmidt added that Eleanor Berg, Pheasants Forever, has resigned. They are currently in the process of filling her position. In May the NRCS held a producer roundtable discussion in Zumbrota. It was well attended. Producers were presented with two different practices in two different sessions. The local information gathered will be compiled and sent back to the National office. NRCS is currently under a hiring freeze, but, fiscal year 2027 will bring some hiring for critical vacancies. More to come.

FSA report prepared by Taylor Carlson:



Farm Service Agency

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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 2026 Board Meeting

Old Business

2023/2024 Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP)

- Deadline extended to August 12, 2026.

Assistance for Specialty Crop Producers (ASCF)

- Application period is open through Aug 7, 2026.
- Payment rates: (crop list is not all-inclusive)
 - Tier 1 - \$650 per acre: Aronia/Garlic/Mushrooms/Strawberries
 - Tier 2 - \$225 per acre: Apple/Broccoli/Cucumbers/Tomatoes/Squash
 - Tier 3 \$65 per acre: Sweet corn
 - Beans and Peas - \$25 per acre

Base Acre Increase for Safety Net Program (ARC/PLC)

- Contact FSA by August 31, 2026:
 - Acreage history data is incorrect or missing,
 - There are "subsequent acres" listed on the producer's Base Allocation summary,
 - If the producer elects to opt out of receiving any additional base acres.

New Business

August CCC Interest Rates announced through Notice FI-3480

- FSFL 3-year term - 4.125%
- FSFL 5-year term - 4.250%
- FSFL 10-year term - 4.500%

CRP Notices

- CRP-1093: Accepting and Rejecting Grassland CRP Signup 208 Offers

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

- August 11 at 8:30 AM was the latest Rice COC Meeting

DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT:



Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

2211 2nd Ave. NW Faribault, MN 55021
Phone: (507) 332-5408 www.riceswcd.org

August 2026 District Manager's Report

I was on vacation for the week of July 20th. Planning for the bus trip and eventually going to the Strip-Till Conference kept us busy. The trip was a huge success, with about 40 people in tow. I presented our budget request to the Rice County Board of Commissioners on August 4th. Al Kraus and I collected soil trays and demonstrated the rainfall simulator at the Passport to Ag event. I also have been working with Kanati group on preparations for the strategic planning meeting. I've also been working on several soil health projects and we are preparing for the fall workload. Last, the Gandy Interseeder was sold on August 10th to a farmer in western Minnesota.

Specific activity/meetings this past month:

- Area 7 TSA meeting
- CRAC meeting
- Site visit to homeowner on Roberds lake for assistance on drainage concern
- Secured additional funds for the Ag BMP Loan Program
- Received a grant from MN Health via Fillmore SWCD for well testing

Coming up is the strategic planning session. We will be lining up farms for the fall cover crop seeding program and working with farmers on seeding plans for this fall. Many staff will be taking vacation time in the next month as well, so the office will be leaner than usual.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Pahs

SUPERVISOR REPORTS:

Gene Kuntz: Attended the CRWJPO bus tour. The water abatement projects that were showcased would not have happened without the producer-staff relationships and the boots-on-the-ground efforts. Recently heard of a push to seed oats in the fall as a cover crop. The crop won't handle the winter temps, but the cover is still there, doesn't need to be terminated in the spring, and provides nitrogen.

Al Malecha: Attended the Lower MN meeting. Also attended the Passport to Ag event and viewed Al and Steve's rainfall simulator demonstration. Very enlightening.

Roger Bongers: Also attended the Passport to Ag event and viewed the rainfall simulator demonstration. Well done. Great crowd.

Richard Peterson: Attended the Best-of-the-Best breakfast and award ceremony at the county fair. Good to see a former SWCD supervisor, Bob Duban, was inducted into the hall of fame. Worked the fair booth. Answered numerous questions about pollinators and ash tree decline follow-up.

John Larson: TSA7 meeting. Potential to use more of their services to help with our projects. Also staffed the fair booth.

Staff Reports:

Emmie Scheffler:

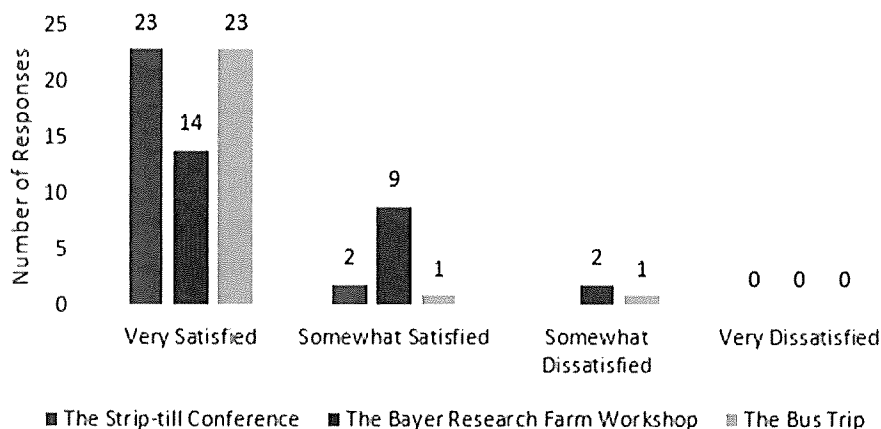
This past month, I helped with the fair and passport to ag. I worked on engineering projects and RIM inspections. We had a CRWJPB meeting and our biannual tour.

In addition, Emmie shared that the Upper Cannon Flood Study is in its final days of the public comment period.

Alan Kraus:

- Conducted a rainfall simulation for the Passport to Ag
- Soil Health Incentive Programs
 - RCPP Funding ~\$4000 to be allocated
 - LCCMR Cover Crop program
 - Met with Olmsted staff to design outreach content - \$240,000 to be allocated over 3 years
 - BWSR Soil Health Delivery ~\$4500 remaining to be allocated
- Bridgewater Streams project
 - Water sampling continues – by Clean River Partners
- Rice-Steele Soil Health Nitrogen Rate Project
 - Minnesota Public Radio will feature the project
 - Working with Continuum Ag to determine Carbon Intensity (CI) scores on the plots
- SE Minnesota Bus Tour to the National Strip-till Conference
 - 43 people signed up, 39 were able to attend
 - We surveyed people on the bus trip back home about how satisfied they were about attending. Staff did not take the survey. 25 people responded. Results below:

SE MN Soil Health Bus Tour 2026
Survey Results



- Looking ahead
 - Conduct outreach for LCCMR Cover Crop program

- Work with Freeborn Area Soil Health Team on September field day – interseeded cover crops & compost extract
- Assist people with MDA Soil Health Equipment Grant
- Participate with Rice SWCD Strategic Planning

In addition, AI shared that the bus trip was funded by a grant from the MN Office of Soil Health (MOSH), which is funded by NRCS.

Teresa DeMars:

Past Month

- Rice County Fair
- Passport to Ag
- Soil Health Bus Tour National Strip Tillage Conference
- Wildlife at Work Field Day at Sharing Our Roots Farm
- GROWS and Wild Ones SE MN Prairie Partners Garden Tours featuring SWCD projects
- Strategic Planning Meeting

Next Month

- September newsletter
- Interseeding Field Day at Tom Polacek
- CRWJPO video development and advertising
- Land to Lake Lectures webinar planning

Board Report:

Last/Current Month

- DNR well readings
- WCA Violation follow ups
- WCA applications reviews
- WCA site visits
- Buffer monitoring
- Farm communications training
- Passport to Ag
- County fair
- Cannon bus tour - Algal bloom talk
- Strategic meeting

Next Month:

- BWCA trip!
- WCA application review
- WCA violation site visits
- DNR well readings
- Buffer letter prep
- Technical Assistance to landowners as it comes up
- Area meeting

Commissioner Charlie Peters: Attended the Passport to Ag which drew record crowds. Made it through the primary election with record numbers turning out to vote. The Conservation Building at the fair looked great after all the work. Now into budget time.

Commissioner Jim Purfeerst: wrapped up outside agency budget requests yesterday.

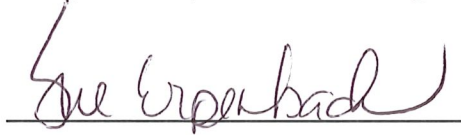
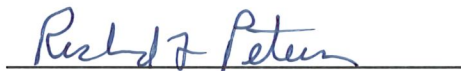
OTHER/CORRESPONDENCE:

UPCOMING EVENTS:

ADJOURN:

A motion by Al Malecha, seconded by Roger Bongers to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 am.
All aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sue Erpenbach", written over a horizontal line.A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Peters", written over a horizontal line.

Board Member –