

Becker Soil and Water Conservation District

Annual Retreat and Yearly Planning Meeting

Tuesday, January 7, 2015

The special annual retreat and planning meeting of the Becker Soil and Water Conservation District was held on Tuesday, January 7, 2015 in the conference room of the US Fish & Wildlife building located at 26624 North Tower Road, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

Those present were Supervisors Tony Beck, Kathy Stenger, Jerome Flottesmesch and Eugene Pavelko. Others present include NRCS staff Ed Musielewicz, Jeff Norby, Ray Hummel and Leticia Kiehl; District staff Peter Mead, Jen Wentz, Ed Clem, Marsha Watland and our Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist Adam Kleinschmidt.

Call to Order – Chairman Stenger called the meeting to order at 10:16 a.m.

Peter reviewed the ideas and outcomes for this meeting. Annual Plan of Operations and the Annual Report were distributed to all. BWSR grants haven't been settled yet for this year. New, old and existing programs will be discussed as well as state Cost-Share set asides and staff hours.

Accomplishment Reports –

District Technician Ed Clem reported on the following:

- The amount of work accomplished in 2014 was a tremendous amount. We should all be proud.
- Work load hours are always a concern. He and Jeff Norby summarized some of the main areas. Practices were presented on the overhead and Ed explained the main points that were covered last year. There were 52 WASCOBs installed. Of those, approximately 13 different sites were included. Each site averaged 2 weeks for survey, design and stakeout. A minimum of one week from contractor in and out. About 3 weeks per site is minimal.
- We are running close to capacity. Many of this depends on outside assistance. The Ag engineer out of Moorhead was taking 80 hours to design one of these sites.
- Other completions for 2014: 2 grade stabilizations; 5 wetland restorations. There's been a tremendous amount of work around the Boyer Lakes area.
- Looking ahead to 2015 – As of now, we're committed to 40 basins which include unfinished projects from 2014 and new projects. 3 grade stabilization structures and 5 wetland restorations with one running at about 80 hours for design. Jeff Haverland, RRVCSA Engineering Technician and Mark Dose, Engineer from the NRCS Area office have both been a great help in making this happen.
- Many of the 2014 projects came about from outreach mailings and local informational meetings.
- Historically, we haven't completed much continuous CRP because there wasn't time or staff available to assist. Adam has taken over a great portion of this. Without Adam here, many projects and accomplishments would not have happened.

Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist Adam Kleinschmidt reported on the following:

- Our accomplishments for 2014 consisted of: 158 ½ acres put into buffers along rivers and streams. Riparian forest buffers have added 137 acres, 22 acres of pollinator habitat, 28 ½ acres into the farmable wetlands program. Grass practices were at 330 acres. Duck nesting habitat was just short of 500 acres, 1.6 acres of renewed farm windbreaks. A total of \$1,358.08 acres for 2014.
- 923 different landowner contacts were made in 2014 which resulted in 62 EQIP and CRP applications.
- We gained some great acreage on native plantings that made up for some CRP acreage losses.

- Looking ahead for 2015, we already have 117 expiring CRP contracts in our office and several others administered close by. There are a total of 2,693 acres expiring in 2015. He's hoping for many more re-enrollments in 2015.
- When the next sign-up period begins, there will be about 40 contracts ready to go.
- BWSR recently announced the RIM wetland program which will be state-run only. We're in the state sign-up now. There is \$24 million in funds to be appropriated to these practices. \$7 million of which will have to be spent before June 30th. This is a perpetual easement, is recorded on the deed and transfers with all land sales.

District Technician Marsha Watland reported on the following:
Shoreland Specialist

- There were 13 installations; many working with private landscapers.
- Her program worked with the Conservation Corp in 2014. One of the important factors to note is that Becker SWCD is the contractor involved. She commended Claire on her assistance with these fall projects. The Conservation Corp crew put in 10 hour workdays and all eleven days were used. Marsha had to make sure all plant material was present. Each site averaged about 100' of shoreline.
- 3 rain gardens were installed in 2014. We have a great rapport with landowners.
- Handouts were developed for many of these projects. Design charges are now received up front. Final installations in the months of August and September saw 8 plans completed.
- Becker County Planning & Zoning and the DNR Hydrologist teamed together with our District to make this a better project for landowners.
- Developed several worksheets to pass onto landowners for each project. She had many phone calls and on-site visits.
- Marsha attended several lake association meetings and initiated meetings with shoreline contractors.
- Designs will be emailed this winter.
- Dan Shaw, Landscape Ecologist with BWSRs St. Paul office has requested photographs of the completed projects. He's looking at a shoreland/pollinator combined list of accomplishments.
- As it takes approximately 2 ½ weeks per shoreline project for design, installation and completion, she has teamed together with Claire to accomplish this.
- For 2015, we're looking at 50 weeks' worth of work thus far.
- We need more contractors working on these projects in order to make this conservation practice run smoother. Certified contractors are a must with shoreline projects.
- Even with certified contractors working these sites, she'll still need to be on-site to oversee that each job is being completed correctly.
- For many of these projects, there's a process that needs to be explained each and every time you begin. From contractor to landowner and even our staff. Claire and Ed Clem have helped tremendously with many of the projects regarding design and water practices. Our office has really come together to make all of the shoreline projects for 2014 a success.
- For 2015, she's been tweaking forms and working on design.
- The adaptability and variety of our staff has assisted with many of these projects.

In regards to our programs, here are some points to ponder – Are we at carrying capacity for our Ag and Shoreline workloads? Will we fall short on our staff's multi-tasking capabilities? We have \$600,000 worth of grant applications for Ag applications in the next year. Ed Musielewicz noted that Jeff Norby will be retiring at some point and possibly as early as 2015. His work will be missed and it will be difficult to replace his experience and expertise.

Specializing in certain areas is definitely important. Many areas of CAD have to be continually worked and tweaked in order to prove accomplishment.

Peter noted that projects will still be there even though the grant money may run short.

We need to maintain constructive public relations with all partnering agencies. There are many unknowns for grants and other partnerships with many of the projects in 2015.

Appropriate training must take place in order to maintain a proper workload for projects. Claire needs to be able to take over Jeff's role. Transition needs to be one of the first needs for the future. Mentoring is of high importance in making this as easy as possible.

County Ag Inspector

- Township concerns are on the rise. There will be more weed issues for 2015 especially regarding Tansy. Their Becker Highway Department budgets have dropped by more than half.
- Mapping must be applied now in order to plan accordingly for the month of March.
- Spring of 2014 was a good season for treatment. There are a few townships that need to be watched a bit closer.
- 34 applicator exams were administered in our office in 2014.
- Erie Township has seen an influx of orange and yellow hawkweed. Detroit Mountain will need to be inspected carefully for biological control areas. Spotted Knapweed has been found in roadway construction areas.
- She will conduct the annual township meeting in March with training to follow.
- CWMA is concerned over a new weed. There will be a workshop for noxious weeds and native plants to discuss these concerns.
- She remains as President of the Minnesota Association of County Ag Inspectors. The short course for the organization will be held in July at Thumper Pond.
- 100 miles of recreation trails have been treated in the last two years.
- She will need to work extensively with Round Lake Township regarding timber sales and weed treatment.
- Ag Inspector time has been 770 hours or more which equates into 34% of FTE.
- Townships continue to battle over their responsibilities and what is considered landowner responsibility. Townships need to participate in educating their residents for proper weed control. The Annual Township Training will need to go more in depth on township responsibilities.
- Township supervisors have the same authority as she or Peter would have.
- Leticia could possibly handle notice one's with an authorized signature from Marsha or Peter.
- In 2015, township weed inspectors need to further their responsibilities and this will be shared at spring training. Tansy control is essential for this.
- Biological control wasn't present in 2014 when comparison to earlier years.

It was discussed that the Becker County Ag Inspector role should be no more than a facilitator role. Townships need to take on more accountability in weed control for our county. The first point of contact for weed complaints should be the local township supervisor.

We will continue to enforce the MN Noxious weed law as stated by the Commissioner of Agriculture and be a resource for our township/city weed inspectors.

Our goal for this program over the course of 2015 is to minimize the burden of the weed inspector duties. We will continue to improve communication with township weed inspectors so they may follow through with MN Noxious Weed Law enforcement.

Programs –

The Shoreland Contractor Training meeting will be held February 19th at the Holiday Inn in Detroit Lakes. Some of the agencies making presentations for the event include Buffalo-Red River Watershed District and Cormorant Lakes Watershed District. Other topics for discussion include stormwater control, shoreland design projects, material suitability, pre-construction meetings, erosion control measures, chemical pre-treatment, BMP installations and project completion.

This permit and the required training is a necessity in the future. There's been an important change for 2016 regarding disrupting all shoreline in excess of 10 cubic yards in the shore impact zone.

We're not enforcing anything with this training session. Instead, we're hoping to build trust with contractors and a certain sense of security that shoreline projects will be installed according to the principles mentioned and always in accordance with Becker County Planning & Zoning and DNR regulations.

Peter mentioned some of the upcoming projects that are still an *Unknown* regarding grant funding and sustainability such as the CWL Buffalo-Red Shallow Lakes Application and South Branch of the Wild Rice Application.

The 2012 Clean Water Legacy grant has been closed out and the final eLINK reports and reimbursements have been requested.

The DNR Aquatics program has a little over \$4,900 remaining to be used in 2015 shoreline projects.

The AgBMP program has seen an increase of funds regarding a large Ag waste system that will be put into place in 2015.

Our tree program order forms were mailed yesterday along with the new native plant order forms which include a pollinator kit, two shoreline buffer kits and a rain garden kit.

Last month we ordered another 100-150 additional plat books. Making annual changes to the plat book is a possibility. Mapping Solutions has been very accommodating and easy to work with. Sales have been going very well for the District.

Education outreach has consisted of the following – Ag in the classroom, Cormorant Sportsman club field trip, Ike Fisher Farm tour and the Junior and Senior Envirothon will continue for 2015. These programs are specific to area children. Ag Inspector programs as well as shoreland contractor training are all education programs too. We don't just educate children. We should also include our Hodge Podge radio broadcasts.

Updates to our Ditch Inventory grant projects – Thanks to Claire, we finally have the Ditch 16 system uploaded to CAD but have more work in the ditch system near Lake Eunice and Lake Maud. Pelican River Watershed District will be involved with two of their systems in the coming year as well. We spent 5-6 days out surveying ditch 16. Ditch 20 will be next. We're performing inventory but also documenting drainage flow, sedimentation, vegetative cover and potential for additional BMPs such as buffers, side inlets, wetland restorations and other opportunities for improving water quality in these systems.

DNR Well Monitoring will continue for another year or so for manual readings and a small reimbursement on each.

The Becker County Water Plan has been extended. Buffalo-Red River Watershed District is where? Pelican River Watershed District has requested an extension that has not been approved by BWSR yet. One Watershed, One Plan is currently being piloted in four watersheds across the state.

A Rice Lake project meeting was held yesterday. Funding options have been laid out. Another meeting will be held within the next month. LCCMR proposals are now open. There may be some CWL options for the next opening date in September. PL566 is full of possibilities but many unknowns. Water quality benefits are definitely evident but so are many other aspects with this project.

Annual Report – Peter had everyone review the 2013 Annual Report. He’s hoping to highlight our main accomplishments in a way that gets to the point without being too wordy and cut the page count in half. We’re still looking at units of work completed in a tabular summary along with pollution reductions.

Annual Plan of Operations – Peter highlighted the main areas that will be removed and/or updated. He discussed specific changes with the group or individuals as needed.

Objective #1: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSIBILITIES

Motion (Flottesch, Stenger) to move into a fiscal agreement with DNR and International Waters Institute for the Mahnomen Geospatial Project. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Objective #2: REDUCE WIND AND WATER EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION WITHIN CRITICAL AREAS OF BECKER COUNTY

Update design and install counts for WASCObS.

Objective #3: PROTECT BECKER COUNTY’S SURFACE WATER RESOURCES THROUGH EXISTING REGULATIONS, USE OF EXISTING PROGRAMS AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS

Add Claire as a certified wetland delineator along with Ed Clem. Add information regarding the Shoreland Contractor Training Certification meeting.

Objective #4: PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE GROUND WATER QUALITY IN BECKER COUNTY

Offer well testing at the Becker County Fair in 2015.

Objective #5: ADMINISTER AND CARRYOUT A BECKER COUNTY SHORELAND PROGRAM

Apply for relevant grants not just Clean Water Legacy. Conduct lake association meetings without a number mentioned. Increase design and installation counts for native buffers.

Objective #6: ADMINISTER AND CARRYOUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BECKER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL INSPECTOR PROGRAM

Increase activity with Erie Township and Detroit Mountain.

Objective #7: PROMOTE WILDLIFE HABITAT DEVELOPMENT IN BECKER COUNTY

We have the possibility of helping facilitate title closings for RIM Easement projects. There are upcoming meetings regarding this. There’s been talk of receiving ½ of the RIM Delivery dollars given to each LGU per easement completed but time involved may be extensive. RIM Wild Rice Easement program in a seven county area. Increase outreach to these areas.

Objective #8: CARRYOUT A BALANCED EDUCATIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAM THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT

Perform another stakeholder meeting, Buffalo-Red River Watershed meeting and Wild Rice Watershed meeting.

Objective #9: STATE COST-SHARE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Update TAA job approval authority for SWCD and partner staff, especially Adam and Marsha.

Objective #10: OTHER SWCD AND PARTNER PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Attend TMDL/WRAPs/PRAP meetings.

Objective #11: IMPLEMENT EEO AND CIVIL RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE DISTRICT

Offer a *Receipt for Services* which documents when the public enters our office and why they were there. Our newest Becker County weather station site has been identified but not confirmed.

Staffing Needs – Our Ultima position won't be able to include any technical work in the future. Leticia currently works approximately 3 days for NRCS and 2 days for the District. Because of the loss with technical hours, we should probably match the higher technical rate for her District hourly rate.

Add time for Ray Hummel at 50/50 Administrative & Technical.

Budget needs for 2015 – Peter reviewed the need to purchase desk furniture for Claire's workstation and various equipment needs that may arise. Look into the possibility of adding another individual to help with shoreland, RIM and various projects. This could be a project technician of some sort. Space issues are the only barrier. Our fund balance is a few months more than what the state recommends. We have additional funds to add another staff person or purchase another vehicle if needed.

Carrying our own postal permit has been put on hold; however, we can piggy back onto Midwest Printings permit and still use our nonprofit postal rates so long as they perform some of the tasks for us such as folding, stuffing, addressing envelopes, etc.

Healthcare changes from 2014 are now mandated in 2015. We need to ensure that our changes meet with current legal standards and won't fall under penalties.

We still need to fill Duane Grossman's board position. Three names were mentioned. Kathy Stenger will contact the individuals regarding their interest and availability.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:16 p.m.

Approved: Gene Pavelko, Becker SWCD Secretary Date: February 18, 2015