

Becker Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting
Wednesday, February 18, 2015

The regular meeting of the Becker Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors was held on Wednesday, February 18, 2015 in the Conference Room of the Ag Center Building located at 809 8th Street SE, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

Those present were Supervisors Tony Beck, Kathy Stenger, Jerome Flottesmesch, Travis Schauer and Eugene Pavelko. Others present include Becker County Commissioner Barry Nelson, District Administrator Peter Mead, District Office Assistant Leticia Kiehl, NRCS District Conservationist Ed Musielewicz, District Technician Ed Clem and Shoreland Specialist Marsha Watland.

Call to Order – Chairman Stenger called to order at 8:04 a.m.

January Regular Meeting Minutes – no changes to report.

Motion (Beck, Pavelko) to approve the January meeting minutes as written. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

January Special Meeting Minutes - no changes to report.

Motion (Flottesmesch, Beck) to approve the special meeting minutes. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Board Positions– Board positions in 2015 will remain as follows: Kathy Stenger-Chairperson; Jerome Flottesmesch-Vice Chair; Tony Beck-Treasurer; Eugene Pavelko-Secretary and Travis Schauer-board member.

Motion (Flottesmesch, Beck) to approve the board member positions. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Signature Authority – Signature authority on accounts and certificates of deposit delegated to Administrator Peter Mead and Administrative Assistant Jennifer Wentz, with current board Treasurer Tony Beck to be listed if required by the financial institution.

Motion (Flottesmesch, Schauer) to approve the signature authority for all bank accounts. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Financial Reports and Bills – Peter reviewed the financial records for the month of January and presented the February bills for approval.

Motion (Beck, Schauer) to approve the January financial reports and authorize payment of all February bills as presented. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Reports –

District Conservationist Ed Musielewicz reported on the following:

- *EQIP:* 1st scoring period ends Feb 27th with 23 eligible applications, the 2nd scoring period ends April 27th and the 3rd scoring period will be at the end of May. There are 21 applications in the 2nd and 3rd scoring period. He doesn't see a reason why any of these won't be funded.

- *CSP*: last day to enter this scoring period is February 27. There were 27 renewal letters that were mailed to contracts expiring this year; they have to respond no later than February 27. March 31st we should know who will receive funding. We have received \$10 million to use in the Red River basin.
- *Upper Rice Lake project*: 800 acres drained wetland complex between the Floyd Lakes and Highway 34. 1997 was the start of this project and it was a PL566 project. The semi-unsuccessful ditching event has led to the restoration of the wetland. Every time there's a flood event, brings a huge influx of Phosphorus that ends up in Big Detroit Lake. The project is 97% completed. WRP will no longer fund it due to the work of easement. Peter Mead sent a pitch to BWSR about helping with the project. They are trying to receive the funding again from the Feds with the Red River funding initiative. The Chairman of the House of Ag Committee will possibly help with the funding.

District Technician Ed Clem reported on the following:

- *eLINK reporting*: He and Jen have been working on this over the last few months and have received approval of completion from BWSR.
- Assisting Jeff Haverland with WASCOD plan reviews. Jeff and Claire have been working on some in-house plans as well.
- Tree Plans are in progress. We are behind on tree sales, but they are slowly picking up. Most will be funded through CRP. There will be no funding from state cost-share.
- BWSR has approved the Thomas St, Hwy 10 and Hwy 59 underpass wetland credits withdrawal. Significant wetland acres will be impacted with this project. Each entity is funding wetland credits for their part of the project. City of DL has purchased credits from the Becker County Wetland Bank and MNDOT has secured credits from the State Road Bank.
- Ed and the TEP panel are assisting Wally Danielson by evaluating the feasibility of creating a wetland bank northeast of Audubon.
- The TEP continues to advise the DNR regarding the south shore public access improvements on Detroit Lake. Previous comments and realignment of the design to minimize wetland impacts have received significant opposition from a neighboring landowner.
- 2014 results for the Central Sands Plain nitrate monitoring – Central Sands aquifer and 10% of the wells in the area have elevated nitrate levels.
- Ed, Marsha, Claire, Leticia and Peter have been working diligently on the shoreland contractor training that will take place tomorrow. This project has required a huge amount of staff time.

District Shoreland Specialist/Co Ag Inspector Marsha Watland reported on the following:

- North Dakota weed inspector panel consists of Marsha and 3 others. Becker County serves a great model for gravel pit certification.
- MN Department of Ag is making a shift to online pesticide testing and Becker County has been asked to serve as a pilot site. The Department of Ag will provide the computer; applicators can register to take commercial applicator tests and will receive their results immediately. In 2016 this will become statewide.
- This Friday she will be conducting seed inspections of the major box stores. Elevators don't have their seed stock yet.
- Frazee Community Education has contacted us about holding a shoreland training course.
- Thus far, there are about 65 people in attendance for the Shoreland contractor training course scheduled for tomorrow. Becker County Planning & Zoning, various watershed districts and the DNR will be directing presentations.

2015 State Cost Share Program Policy – in the past we have talked about focus areas and where to put the funding. This year we have an Ag waste system we need to fund, with the remaining monies to be split between erosion control and sediment issues. We will prioritize funds with shoreland and tree projects. This year's funds will breakdown as follows: \$7,000 (\$3,500 each) for two Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP); \$10,000 for shoreland projects and the remainder for eligible tree plantings and miscellaneous projects. Cost-share assistance will be limited to 50% of estimated project costs.

Motion (Flottesmesch, Beck) to approve the 2015 cost-share policy as noted above. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

2015 Clean Water Legacy & Conservation Corps Grant Awards – With the #1 and # 10 applications in the state, we were successful in securing two Clean Water Legacy project and practice grants; Buffalo-Red River Shallow Lakes, Main Stem Improvement Strategy and the South Branch Wild Rice Sediment Reduction Project. The Buffalo-Red grant area includes a portion of Clay County and the targeted portion of the South Branch stops just short of the Becker/Clay County line. This segment of the Wild Rice is largely an Ag area with significant sediment loading contributing to a TMDL downstream. Dean Hendrickson inventoried most of the South Branch grant area and combined with sites identified using the RRBDIN-WQDSA we have numerous suitable areas targeted for specific BMPs.

Two applications to the Minnesota Conservation Corps were also successful; we secured 15 days of the Corps labor crew and will be hosting a Conservation Corps Apprentice once again this summer.

2015 Grant Practices, Incentives and Eligibility - 65 erosion control structures and 80 acres of filter strips/buffers in BRRWD; 45 erosion control structures and 40 acres of filter strips in the WRWD. Discussion ensued regarding filter strip incentives and payment rates. Several options were discussed including tying payment rates on structural practices to buffer installation or compliance with the State 50 foot buffer rule on Ag lands adjacent to waters of the state, i.e. maintain or install a buffer we will cover a larger portion of the structural cost.

In cases where landowners are not interested in enrolling into CRP or other existing programs to establish filter strips, there was a suggestion of creating a contractual "working lands" program where landowners would contract directly with the SWCD and in exchange for tillage and stubble height restrictions the SWCD would cover the costs of buffer establishment. The contract would include a minimum width, be restricted to being hayed one time a year and maintain a minimum stubble height. Landowners would be responsible for maintenance.

Structural practices (i.e. sediment basins) should be eligible for up to 100% cost-share if the field is within 1,500 ft of an affected water body or tributary and the land owner or operator agree to install all of the prescribed practices for treating nutrient and sediment delivery and the field is compliant with state buffer laws. Practices outside of the 1,500 ft range should be eligible for up to 75% cost sharing provided all recommended practices are in place.

We do want to provide incentives for the buffers. The question is how much of an incentive and how to accommodate producers that find existing programs either too restrictive or cumbersome. Ed M and Peter will research current average cash rental rates and the mean CRP rental rates in both grant areas to establish an appropriate incentive rate and evaluate criteria and practice standards for a SWCD

“working lands” buffer program. We will evaluate participation and effectiveness after the first year to make any adjustments to the program and rates.

Motion (Flottemesch, Pavelko) to approve the administration to develop a program of incentives and eligibility as discussed. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Delegation of Authority for Grant Agreements and Reporting – to reduce turn-around time and simplify grant administration procedures, District Administrator Peter Mead requested that the Board of Supervisors delegate signature authority to SWCD staff for grant agreements and final reports.

Motion (Pavelko, Schauer) to approve Peter Mead, District Administrator; Jennifer Wentz, Administrative Assistant or Ed Clem, District Technician for signature authority on grant agreements and final reports. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Becker County AIS Program – Jerome and Peter attended the Becker County commissioners meeting where commissioners requested that the SWCD assume the administration of the Becker County Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program. The SWCD will recruit and supervise a coordinator for the County and handle grant administration for the \$319,000 in annual grant funds coming to the County for AIS prevention and education. The county will continue to recruit and provide HR and payroll for level 1 and level 2 inspectors. Guidance/assistance on AIS issues will be provided by Pelican River Watershed District. The coordinator position will be ½ time. Becker County will provide \$25,000 annually for the coordinator to perform SWCD related work with the remainder of their time.

Peter has decided to brand the position a “Water Quality Coordinator”, a position that will handle AIS and Non-Point Source Pollution Prevention and Education in the county. Peter reviewed the draft job description and duties for the Water Quality Coordinator with the board.

Commissioner Nelson discussed the existing framework of the AIS Committee and plans to disband it and form a “paired down” advisory board that could be formed at the SWCD’s discretion. Suggestions were to include 1 county commissioner, 1 SWCD board member, 1 Pelican River Watershed District supervisor and one member “at-large” steered by the Water Quality Coordinator. This AIS board would serve in an advisory capacity and provide a public forum with recommendations and proceeding to be relayed to the BSWCD board for action or approval.

Space is tight at the SWCD and PRWD offices; however, room is available in the Wells Fargo building in close proximity to PRWD with conference room facilities, janitorial services and sufficient space for growth at a nominal monthly rate. Consensus was to move forward with securing appropriate office space for the Water Quality Coordinator.

The official agreement with the county will be finalized at a later time and remains open for annual review.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to authorize administration to draft and enter an agreement with the county to administer the AIS program and create the Water Quality Coordinator position and secure space for the program. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

2013 Clean Water Legacy Amendment –the following amendment is submitted for approval:

Contract #CWL-25-2013 with Barry Nelson. Project costs have increased from previous estimates. Total project costs \$59,472; EQIP \$21,549.40; BRRWD \$3,697 and CWL funds of \$29,840. This is an increase of \$8,253 from original estimates.

Motion (Beck, Pavelko) to amend the contract as noted above. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

2014 State Cost-Share Vouchers – the following contracts were submitted for payment approval:

Contract #14-7 with Brad Grant, well sealing. Total project costs \$415; c-s payment \$207.50.

Contract #14-10 with Spadgenske Dairy, well sealing. Total project costs \$550; c-s payment \$240.

Motion (Flottemesch, Pavelko) to approve the above vouchers for payment. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

2013 Clean Water Legacy Vouchers – the following contracts were submitted for payment approval:

Contract #CWL-25-2013 with Barry Nelson, WASCObS and Grade Stabilization. Total projects costs \$59,472.06; CWL payment \$29,840.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to approve the 2013 Clean Water Legacy voucher as noted above. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

2014 State Cost-Share Contract – the following contract was presented for consideration:

Contract #14-13 with Dennis Schouviller, field windbreak. Estimated project cost \$1,997; eligible cost-share \$1,491.

Motion (Flottemesch, Schauer) to approve the 2014 State Cost-Share contract as listed. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Other –

Job posting for the Water Quality Coordinator position that we have agreed upon with the county to supervise.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to approve the posting for this position. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Authorize District clothing purchases and change the apparel allowance policy to state “two articles of clothing allowed per employee per year, not to exceed \$150. Board members are allowed to purchase one clothing item per year at their discretion.

Motion (Flottemesch, Beck) to change the apparel allowance policy as worded above. Affirmative: Unanimous. Carried.

Being no further business, motion (Pavelko,Schauer) to adjourn the meeting at 11:21 a.m.

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