

**KOOCHICHING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REORGANIZATIONAL BOARD MEETING
HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE
MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Supervisors Voigt, Lewis, Aitchison, Dreher, Reller.

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: None.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Pam Tomevi, Jolen Simon

OTHERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Whitney Sims, James Aasen, Sam Soderman, Jody Peek (NRCS);

Re-elected Supervisors Ralph Lewis and Richard Dreher and newly elected Jody Reller took the Oath of Office, witnessed by Supervisor Eldon Voigt.

As per District policy to elect the chairman and vice chairman on a rotational basis, Supervisor Ralph Lewis was elected Chair and Supervisor George Aitchison was elected Vice Chair for calendar year 2023.

Chair Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:14 p.m.

**2023/1-1 Motion by Dreher, seconded by Aitchison to approve the agenda with one addition:
2022 PERA Exclusion Report.**

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.

2023/1-2 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Dreher to approve the minutes dated December 5, 2022 as presented.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.

Supervisor Jody Reller accepted the office of Board Treasurer and Supervisor Eldon Voigt accepted the office of Board Secretary for calendar year 2023

2023/1-3 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Dreher authorizing committee member(s) and/or alternate(s) to attend scheduled committee meetings up to a maximum of 2 board members per meeting and approve committee assignments as follows:

- Budget Committee: Ralph Lewis/Eldon Voigt/Administrator
- Personnel Committee: Ralph Lewis/George Aitchison/Administrator
- Education/Public Relations Committee: Jody Reller/Richard Dreher
/Administrator/Program Coordinator
- TSA 8 North Central MN JPB: Jody Reller (Eldon Voigt – Alternate)
- Laurentian RC&D Council: Jody Reller (Eldon Voigt – Alternate)
- Big Fork River Board: Richard Dreher/ George Aitchison
- Little Fork/Rat Root River Board: Jody Reller/George Aitchison
- MN SWCD Forestry Association: Eldon Voigt (Ralph Lewis – Alternate)
- Others (As deemed necessary and approved by the Board)

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. **Motion carried.**

- 2023/1-4 Motion by Dreher, seconded by Voigt to approve the following reorganizational meeting business:**
- keep monthly meeting date and time as the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. for November-April meetings and 7:00 p.m. for May-October meetings;
 - set supervisor compensation rates at \$125 for all meetings;
 - adopt the 2023 mileage reimbursement rate set by the IRS;
 - designate Bremer Bank and Border State Bank as official depositories of the Koochiching SWCD (see MN Statute 118A.002);
 - keep the Rainy Lake Gazette as the official newspaper;
 - grant district check signing authority to Pam Tomevi, Jolén Simon, Ralph Lewis, and Eldon Voigt.
 - define ordinary and necessary bills to mean all bills, not to exceed approved operating budget, with the following exceptions (requiring prior Board approval): Dues, publication subscriptions, employee expense reports, and special projects/expenses not included in the approved operating budget.
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

- 2023/1-5 Motion by Dreher, seconded by Voigt approving updated asset inventory list as of 12/31/2022 as presented (details on file).**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

No new working agreements to review.

- 2023/1-6 Motion by Voigt seconded by Aitchison to ratify paid bills, check numbers 11359 to 11374 including electronic transfers, in the total amount of \$83,382.36 for November and December 2022 (details on file).**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**
- 2023/1-7 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Reller to approve the Treasurer's reports ending November 30 and December 31, 2022 as presented.**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**
- 2023/1-8 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Reller to approve accounts payable in the amount of \$12,095.35; and to allow payment of ordinary and necessary bills between January 10, 2023 and February 6, 2023, not to exceed budget.**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

Supervisor Reports

Voigt reported on his attendance at the MASWCD Area VIII meeting in December where a decision was made to discontinue engineering services; Voigt also reported on his attendance at the MASWCD State Convention and passed around a packet that included information outlining increased funding coming to NRCS (funding distribution to areas/programs are yet to be determined); Voigt also reported that he will attend the MN SWCD Forestry Association meeting next week. Voigt requested authorization to attend a legislative webinar on January 17 and permission to travel to St. Paul to met with legislators.

- 2023/1-9 Motion by Dreher, seconded by Lewis authorizing Supervisor Voigt to attend a legislative webinar on January 17th and to travel to St. Paul to meet in person with legislators.**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

Committee Reports

- 2023/1-10** **Motion by Voigt, seconded by Reller approving Budget Committee recommendation “BC 2023-1 Operating Budget” as presented (details on file).
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**
- 2023/1-11** **Motion by Aitchison, seconded by Voigt approving Personnel Committee recommendation “PC 2023-1 Staff Wages and Benefits” with changes (details on file).
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**
- 2023/1-12** **Motion by Voigt, seconded by Reller ratifying the Budget Committee recommendation “BC 2023-1 Operating Budget” to reflect the changes in Motion PC 2023-1 (details on file).
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

NRCS District Conservationist Report

See attached.

District Administrator Report

See attached.

Resource Conservationist Report

See attached.

Water Resources Specialist Report

See attached.

Forest Resource Specialist Report

See attached.

MFRC has reached out to Koochiching SWCD regarding funding for Northern Landscape activities, including the Northern Landscape Plan update. Funding would include staff time and contractor funds.

- 2023/1-13** **Motion by Voigt, seconded by Dreher authorizing the District Administrator to enter into a contract with MFRC for Northern Landscape Activities.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

Program Coordinator

See attached.

NEW BUSINESS

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program (Review/Approve)

- 2023/1-14** **Motion by Voigt, seconded by Dreher selecting Lakes Aquatic Weed Removal, LLC as the weed removal contractor for the Hybrid Cattail Removal and Waterflow Enhancement project and authorizing the District Administrator to negotiate and sign the contract for services.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

2021 Financial Audit Report

The District Administrator reviewed the auditor’s notes to the 2021 financial audit and provided copies of the full audit report to each Board member.

Upcoming Meetings:

Early bird registration for the LOWWSF Water Quality Forum ends January 31st and will be held March 8-9.

2023/1-15 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Aitchison authorizing all board members and staff to attend the 2023 Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum March 8-9 in International Falls.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.

General Business:

Discussion included:

- Supervisor MN Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Notice
- MASWCD Accomplishments Report

2022 PERA Exclusion Report

2023/1-16 Motion by Reller, seconded by Dreher approving the 2022 PERA Exclusion Report as presented (details on file).

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Linder. Motion carried.

Confirm Next Meeting Date:

The next regular board meeting of the Koochiching SWCD will be held on Monday, February 6, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the courthouse board meeting room.

Adjourn Meeting:

2023/1-17 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Dreher to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.

Approved:

Chair, Ralph Lewis

Date



Koochiching Board Report

January NRCS Report
Completed By: Jody Peek

01/09/2022

CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program):

- Annual payments are continuing to be issued. As of today, 201 of 206 payments have been approved.
- Bemidji CST had 43 CSP Renewal applications preapproved. After preapproval 2 participants decided to cancel leaving 41 to obligate. All 41 contracts were obligated in December. In total the Bemidji CST obligated \$722,101.00
 - o Of the applications going forward 8 (20%) of the contracts were AgLand and 33 are NIPF (80%).
 - o Koochiching County has 3 new contracts obligated totaling \$34,577.00
- Signup #1 for CSP Classic Applications is February 10th.

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program):

- FY 2023 application processing deadline was released to field offices. Timelines are listed below:

Signup Number	Date	Activity
1	November 18, 2022	Application Deadline
1	February 3, 2023	Assessment/Ranking Deadline
1	March 17, 2023	Application Approvals
1	April 28, 2023	Obligation Deadline
2	TBD	Application Deadline

- The Bemidji CST took a total of 91 applications.
 - o Bemidji – 33 Applications
 - o Bagley – 23 Applications
 - o Park Rapids – 16 Applications
 - o Baudette – 19 Applications
- Field offices are starting gather eligibility information, complete site visits and complete assessments.



United States Department of Agriculture

Upcoming Workload/General Items:

- Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Tribal Grant - Distributed information to tribal POC's regarding the grant. Deadline to apply is Feb 21st, 2023.
- Contract Management: Contracts with items behind schedule 2022 and prior are being reviewed and mods and non-compliance agreements are being completed.
- RCPP Land Management Deadline was December 16th. No new applications were taken in Koochiching County.
- Attended the MASWCD Convention Dec 12th -14th in Bloomington MN. Take Home message lots of money could be headed our way in and it is going to take lots of people and partnering to get those funds distributed.
- Joint NRCS & FSA Compliance Training (HEL & Wetland) was provided on Dec 13th 14th & 15th.
 - o Reviewed the roles and responsibilities for Conservation Compliance of each agency and staff at the team, state, area, and field office level.
 - o Reviewed policy and regulation authorities of Conservation Compliance.

Koochiching SWCD District Administrator Report

December 2022

- **BWSR Cooperative Weed Management Area**
 - Wrap up invoices/expense tracking
- **BWSR Conservation Delivery**
 - Board meeting prep/attendance/follow-up; work plans and grant agreements for FY23 Local Capacity/Buffer Law/Soil Health Cost Share; 1W1P Manager Training and MASWCD Convention in Bloomington;
- **BWSR Local Capacity**
 - Staff updates/oversight; IJC/WLC meetings/post-flood report, CN Railroad discussions
- **County/District**
 - Website updates; change of address forms; 2021 financial audit final review; SAM.gov ID registration
- **DNR/CPL**
 - Work plan revisions and partner communications; Contractor bid questions; Annual Report for CPL Grant
- **MPCA Contracts**
 - Partner communications and work plan updates for EPA 319
- **Natural Resource Block Grant**
 - eLINK updates; RFP development for cattail project/post flood work plan adjustments
- **Wood Ash**
 - Soil reports
- **Other**
 - Leave to care for dad

General Administration

- Board meeting prep/follow-up items; Board minutes/agenda; calendar update/time tracking; Payroll; PERA; FWT/SWT; bank statement reconciliation; QB transactions/updates; Treasurer Report; Accounts Receivable; Accounts Payable, budget updates; bank deposits/online banking; file/record maintenance; general phone/mail/email

Submitted by:

Pam Tomevi, District Administrator

Koochiching SWCD Resource Conservationist Report

December 2022

WCA

- Working with landowners on WCA rules and regulations
- DNR enforcement on voluntary restoration from 2019

Wood Ash

- Assisting new and current landowners with the wood ash process
- Working with DH contracting on permits
- Permitting new fields
- Planning partner meeting with PCA – Date to be set in late January/Early February
- Ash production is on average **3** loads per day

CPL Grants

- Cattail removal project is underway and expected to begin in 2023 as permits, plans, and contracts are finalized. Grant funds are good until 6/30/2025 and partners have confirmed their prior commitments. We received one bid proposal from Lakes Aquatic Weed Removal.
- Worked and submitted Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program Accomplishment Report

Shoreland

- Completed BWSR survey for disaster relief

Other Business

- Worked with landowner questions about a gravel pit on their property
- Reviewed Eric's e-mails and old cds
- Assisted landowner on well sealing information
- Assisting ESD on the Well index Project again, should have the work complete in January
- Attended the GSA Meeting at the Courthouse

Upcoming Work/Training

- Basic Hydrology Training – January 10th & 12th
- Signed up for sonde training – water quality instrument training in March 2023

Miscellaneous

- Emails
- Staff meetings

Submitted by: Whitney Sims

Water Resource Specialist Report

Dec 2022

AIS

- Inspection program management
- NSL and VNP collaboration
- AIS call-in
- Equipment prep
- End of year data compile
- End of year reporting

LF WRAPS/BF WRAPS

- Geomorph data review
- Sediment fingerprinting end of year wrap-up
- Sample storage and delivery to USGS
- Site review for sediment fingerprinting field work, USGS meetings and collab
- Spring survey work and BF watershed planning
- Spring survey field day with Itasca, MPCA staff
- Watershed document review
- BF Watershed field work plan
- Passive sample review

LWM/Local Capacity

- Rapid River WRAPS conversations
- GIS User Group Meeting
- LCCMR grant planning, field work plan, feasibility
- LCCMR Recon mission
- Grant budgets

WPLMN

- Sampling
- WPLMN call-in
- Hydrograph analysis

Miscellaneous

- Emails
- Staff meeting

Submitted by: Sam Soderman

Koochiching SWCD Forest Resource Specialist's Report

December 2022

Local Capacity-Forestry

- Researched general forestry and forest health topics.
- Many landowner discussions involving native plant programs, FSP's, CAP's, SFIA, 2C tax designation, tree planting etc...
- Continued coordinating several large 20+ acre tree plantings and cost-share with landowners.
- Conducted fieldwork and worked on writing and mapping for a forest stewardship plan.
- Attended the DNR Cooperative Forest Management meeting at the Cloquet Forestry Center.
- Continued coordination on Northern Landscape Committee Plan update and meetings with MFRC staff.
- Conducted seedling bud capping for a landowner.
- Attended the MFRC Landscape Advisory Committee meeting online.
- Continued workshopping an idea for an area tree seed collection training, discussed with partners.
- Worked with staff on filling out and submitting an application for a summer intern from CCMI.
- Worked on developing forestry project items for 319 grant workplan.
- Worked with staff to write press release for Conservationist of the Year and submitted to local papers.

Cooperative Weed Management

- Continued project wrap up and began end of grant coordination and reporting.
- Discussed appropriate herbicide selection for buckthorn, wild parsnip, and spotted knapweed with several landowners

Tree and Native Plant Sales

- Continued to order trees and coordination of 2023 sales.
- Continued working with landowners on custom orders and special request species.

Buffer Law

- Conducted buffer desktop review.

Submitted by: James Aasen

Forest Resource Specialist

Koochiching SWCD Program Coordinator Report

December 2022

Local Capacity:

- Enter climatology, print forms for volunteers, communications with NRCS on volunteer hours
- eLINK data entry
- Coordinate with Littlefork School for possible future environmental education event
- Submit FY2023 workplan
- Update website pages

MPCA BF WRAPS Cycle 2

- Monthly call-in meeting

BWSR Conservation Delivery:

- Walk-in and phone customer assistance
- Social media posts and website updates
- eLINK data entry
- Conservation Corps member summer intern application complete and submit

PCA Wood Ash

- Permit coversheets
- Customer assistance
- Met with hauling contractor as needed
- Updated hauling and spreading reports
- Quarterly meeting moved to end of January or early Feb-Date TBD

NRBG Grants

- Social media update
- Customer service for walk-ins
- 319 workplan
- eLINK data entry, work plans and final reporting

General Administration

Board meeting prep; minutes; website maintenance; credit card tracking; eLINK reporting; board meeting followup; set up web page for CPL; minutes book updating; personal appointments (sick); holiday.

Submitted by:

Jolén Simon

Program Coordinator