

**KOOCHICHING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REORGANIZATIONAL BOARD MEETING
HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE
MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024**

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

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: None.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Pam Tomevi, James Aasen, Sam Soderman, Marcie Peeters

OTHERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Michael Steinhauer (NRCS)

As per District policy to elect the chairman and vice chairman on a rotational basis, Supervisor George Aitchison was elected Chair and Supervisor Eldon Voigt was elected Vice Chair for calendar year 2024.

Chair Aitchison called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

**2024/1-1 Motion by Dreher, seconded by Aitchison to approve the agenda as presented.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

**2024/1-2 Motion by Dreher, seconded by Voigt to approve the minutes dated December 4, 2023
as presented.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

**Supervisor Jody Reller accepted the office of Board Treasurer and Supervisor Richard Dreher
accepted the office of Board Secretary for calendar year 2024.**

**2024/1-3 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.

- 2024/1-4 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Dreher 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 2024 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.**

- 2024/1-5 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Reller approving updated asset inventory list as of 12/31/2023 as presented (details on file).**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

No working agreements to review.

- 2024/1-6 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Lewis to ratify paid bills, check numbers 11467 to 11479 including electronic transfers, in the total amount of \$59,578.27 for November 2023 (details on file).**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**
- 2024/1-7 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Reller to approve the Treasurer’s reports ending November 30, 2023 as presented.**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**
- 2024/1-8 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Reller to approve accounts payable in the amount of \$13,144.51 and to allow payment of ordinary and necessary bills between January 9, 2024 and February 5, 2024, not to exceed budget.**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

Supervisor Reports

Supervisor Voigt reported on attending the MASWCD Convention and meetings with the SWCD Forestry Association. Voigt also reported that he is currently serving as Acting Director of Area 8 until the elected Director returns from a leave of absence.

Committee Reports

- 2024/1-9 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt approving Budget Committee recommendation “BC 2024-1 Operating Budget” as presented (details on file).**
- Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

**2024/1-10 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt approving Personnel Committee recommendation “PC 2024-1 Staff Wages and Benefits” as presented (details on file).
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

NRCS District Conservationist Report

Micheal Steinhauer reported that Will Lee has left the Baudette office for a position in Wilmer. A District Conservationist position will open next week until the end of January to qualified applicants. Seven EQIP applications have been submitted for ranking and potential funding. CSP classic application deadline ends January 12th, 2024.

District Administrator Report

Tomevi reported on discussions with Itasca SWCD district manager about the Little Fork 1W1P application, Jackfish Cattail Project wrap up, and TSA 8 coordination. Tomevi also reported on price increases to Quickbooks computer software.

See attached

Resource Conservationist Report

Peeters reported on updates in the wood ash program, CPL project partner meeting, native plant sale organization, and ongoing training for BWSR JAA for various conservation practices.

See attached.

Water Resources Specialist Report

Soderman reported on working with county ESD on coordinating the upcoming 2024 AIS program. He also reported on the sediment fingerprinting projects with the US Geological Service in the Little Fork and Rainy Rivers.

See attached.

Forest Resource Specialist Report

See attached.

Program Coordinator

See attached.

NEW BUSINESS

Upcoming Meetings:

**2024/1-11 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Reller authorizing all board members and staff to attend the 2024 Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum March 6-7 in International Falls and authorizing the District Administrator to attend the 2024 MACDE Spring Manager’s meeting March 26-27 in Baxter, MN.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Dreher, Reller. Motion carried.**

General Business:

Discussion included:

- Future need for a new district vehicle.

Confirm Next Meeting Date:

The next regular board meeting of the Koochiching SWCD will be held on Monday, February 5, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the courthouse board meeting room.

Adjourn Meeting:

2024/1-12 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

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

Approved:

Chair, George Aitchison

Date

NRCS Report
By: Jody Peek, DC

02/05/2024

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Programs:

CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program):

- Application acceptance Deadline was Jan 12th. Bemidji CST obtained 169 CSP applications by the deadline.
- Workload Prioritization Worksheet was completed on all applications by Jan 26th. A total of 84 applications were high priority.
 - o 9 Koochiching
 - o 15 Lake of the Woods
 - o 15 Hubbard
 - o 14 Clearwater
 - o 31 Bemidji
- Deadline to assessment and rank applications is April 12th.

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program):

- Deadline to complete assessments and rankings on applications was Jan 19th. This date was extended to Feb 2nd.
 - o Bemidji CST had 95 applications. In total 60 of those applications are moving forward. Preapproval of applications will be selected soon.
 - A total of 6 applications were submitted for Koochiching county.
- Goal is to have 50 % of EQIP funds obligated by April 5th, 2024.

Upcoming Workload/General Items:

- Grazing workshop to be held with Lake of the Woods on February 15th.
- Grazing Workshop to be held by Hubbard SWCD/NRCS on March 6th.



Koochiching SWCD District Administrator Report

January 2024

- **AIS**
 - Expense tracking/invoicing
- **BWSR Conservation Delivery**
 - JAA meeting with BWSR/Staff; eLINK updates;
- **BWSR Cost-Share**
 - Soil health cost share contract template review/discuss with staff; program guidelines/work plan review
- **BWSR Local Capacity**
 - Staff oversight/assistance; IJC/IRLWWB/WLC meetings; IWI proposal review; and prep for pre-spring engagement and upcoming public meeting
- **County/District**
 - Computer security training; Legislative updates; staff meetings/workload updates; Board Meeting; Budget and Personnel Committee reports; Operational and Personnel Handbook review meeting with board members; year-end financial reports; W-2/1099 filings/distributions; 2023 Sales & Use Tax filing and payment; Tree and Native Plant program document review; 2024 operating budget review/projected updates; Asset inventory update; 2023 Special District report; newsletter article on 1W1P process; TSA 8 funding update with Crow Wing SWCD;
- **DNR/CPL**
 - Contractor/partner communications re: Hybrid Cattail Removal and Water Flow Enhancement
- **MPCA/Other Contracts (MFRC, WPLMN, LF WRAPS, BF WRAPS, USGS)**
 - Expense tracking/invoicing; partner communications; staff updates
- **Natural Resource Block Grant**
 - eLINK updates; 319 NKE discussions with MPCA; draft 2024-2025 service agreement with ESD; landowner visit and print RR-RL WRAPS/1W1P info;
- **Rainy River-Rainy Lake 1W1P**
 - Communications with consultant; Advisory Committee meeting organization and follow-up; Policy Committee meeting preparation; quarterly financial report
- **Wood Ash**
 - Expense tracking/invoicing; partner updates/program review with staff

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

Water Resource Specialist Report

Jan 2024

AIS

- Inspection program management
- NSL and VNP collaboration
- End of year reporting for DNR and next year
- 2024 program planning
- Delegation agreement documents
- Small communities plan with ESD
- Always There Staffing 2024 meeting

LCCMR

- Sample collection
- Sample prep with USGS, LOTW SWCD
- Planning for 2024, budget review, monitoring plan
- Data review for equis
- Meeting with USGS MPCA LOTW SWCD to coordinate spring sampling
- Budget review and outlook

LF WRAPS/BF WRAPS

- Geomorph data review
- Sediment fingerprinting proceedings paper review
- Watershed document review
- Sediment fingerprinting results meeting

LWM/Local Capacity

- Grant budgets
- DNR assistance for Rat Root
- Mapping, Arc Pro utilize

WPLMN

- Sampling
- WPLMN call-in
- Hydrograph analysis
- End of year document compile

Miscellaneous

- Emails
- Staff meeting
- landowner talks, project review, watershed planning
- 1W1P meeting

Submitted by: Sam Soderman

Koochiching SWCD Forest Resource Specialist's Report

January 2024

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...
- Conducted fieldwork and developed two FSPs.
- Began working with several other landowners on forest planning.
- Began MN Tree Inspector Certification Online
- Attended the SWCD Forestry Association Meeting Online
- Worked on creating contracts for the soil health cost-share
- Wrote an article for the 2024 newsletter
- Continued assisting several landowners with spring tree planting plans.
- Assisted with WPLMN Water Sampling.
- Assisted staff with CCMI Apprenticeship application.
- Worked with NRCS to help coordinate invasive species projects for a local landowner.

MFRC Northern Landscape Committee

- Helped facilitate and lead two climate change meetings for the Northern Landscape Planning update.
- Continue to create support documents and gather input from the committee to include in the plan update.

Cooperative Weed Management Area

- Wrote and submitted a buckthorn removal project proposal to CCMI for potential crew placement.
- Conducted conversations about wild parsnip spraying cost-share and coordination.

SWCD Tree and Native Plant Sale

- Conducted annual landowner special tree order coordination and processed regular tree orders for 2023 spring sale.

Submitted by: James Aasen

Forest Resource Specialist

Koochiching SWCD Program Coordinator Report

January 2024

Local Capacity:

- RSDP Natural Resources meeting
- eLINK data entry – year-end reporting

MPCA Big Fork WRAPS

- Review hours remaining in contract and discuss potential additional hours for contract
- Complete and submit semi-annual report
- 4th Quarter Invoice

MPCA Little Fork WRAPS

- Complete and submit semi-annual report, coordination with N. St. Louis and Itasca SWCDs
- 4th Quarter Invoice

MPCA WPLMN

- 4th Quarter Invoice

BWSR 1W1P

- Attend Policy Committee Meeting and process minutes

MFRC-Northern Landscape

- Attend Climate Change Meeting and take minutes

PCA Wood Ash

- Customer assistance
- Invoice

Conservation Delivery

- Complete Conservation Corps application
- eLINK data entry – year-end reporting

NRBG Grants

- Customer service for walk-ins
- Climatology data entry
- Begin newsletter planning
- Prep 1W1P minutes
- eLINK data entry, year-end reporting
- Coordination of Northern Landscape Committee Meeting – Climate Change
- Envirothon planning call: Event date: May 1st
 - Sent out donation requests- will be requesting to send funds to Area VIII Envirothon in March

General Administration

Board meeting prep; minutes; website maintenance; credit card tracking; eLINK reporting; bank deposit; board meeting follow up; bereavement; holiday; computer updates; update tree page on website; staff meetings

Submitted by:

Jolén Simon

Program Coordinator