

**KOOCHICHING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025**

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Supervisors Aitchison, Reller.

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Voigt, Lewis

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Pam Tomevi, Jolen Simon, James Aasen, Austin Wallin (SWCD); Dale Erickson (Koochiching County Commissioner)

OTHERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Jody Peek (NRCS), Bill Haugan

Chair Voigt called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

2025/4-1 Motion by Reller, seconded by Lewis to approve consent agenda items as presented: 4/7/2025 Agenda, 3/3/2025 Minutes, Ratification of paid bills for February 2025 totaling \$37,969.59, Treasurer Report ending 2/28/2025, and accounts payable in the amount of \$568.40, and to allow payment of ordinary and necessary bills not to exceed budget.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller. Motion carried.

Supervisor Reports

Lewis reported on attending the Area VIII Meeting, highlighting DNR's need for tree seed cones.

Voigt reported on attending the Area VIII Meeting and the MN SWCD Forestry Association Meeting where a resolution was drafted opposing cuts to the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) program.

Committee Reports

None.

NRCS District Conservationist Report

Peek reported on operations updates: Terminated employees have been brought back; A deferred resignation program has been put into place, allowing those employees who choose to take it to be paid through September; A reduction in force (RIF) is coming soon, where the plan for Phase I is due April 14th; Further cuts will take place in May, and staff will be shuffled within the agency; IRA funds plans are yet to be determined; One EQIP plan was received and renewals are in progress.

Program Coordinator

Highlights included preparation for the Envirothon event, STEAM event, cone collection grant with Hubbard SWCD;

Forest Resource Specialist Report

Discussion included the Northern Landscape Plan being approved; the first regular NLC meeting took place last week; a NLC field tour will take place on May 13th at Norris Camp; tree sales; tree tubes have been purchased to hold in inventory for customers to buy for their plantings; spring CWMA meeting is being organized; the Rainy River-Rainy Lake WBIF funding request is being developed; 319 implementation plans are being developed.

Resource Conservationist Report

Discussion included picking up tree tubes at Traverse SWCD and the new LIDAR drone in Wheaton the previous week.

District Administrator Report

Discussion included Rainy River Rainy Lake Watershed Implementation Based Funding (WBIF), Little Fork 1W1P, Big Fork 1W1P; Area VIII Meeting follow-up including forest health; staff hiring and job description updates.

OLD BUSINESS

District IV Supervisor Vacancy

Documents were presented declaring the vacancy for District IV and seeking applications for the remaining Supervisors to choose from to appoint a new Supervisor to District IV.

2025/4-2 Motion by Aitchison, seconded by Reller recognizing the voluntary vacancy left by District IV Supervisor Richard Dreher and authorizing the District Administrator to post the Supervisor Vacancy notice as presented.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Big Fork River One Watershed One Plan

The District Administrator described what is needed to approve the MOA and that Itasca SWCD is the fiscal agent.

2025/4-3 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Aitchison authorizing Koochiching SWCD to enter into the Big Fork River One Watershed One Plan Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan MOA and authorizing the Chair and District Administrator signatures and to designate lead (Aitchison) and alternate (Lewis) to serve as Policy Committee members.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller. Motion carried.

SFIA Resolution

Supervisor Voigt described the resolution “SFIA as a Legislative Priority” asking the MASWCD to make the SFIA program a legislative priority in years that there is a proposal that would allow landowners to opt out of the program (when payment reductions exceed statutory limits).

2025/4-4 Motion by Reller, seconded by Voigt approving the submittal of the SFIA resolution as presented.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller. Motion carried.

Envirothon Support to Teams

The Program Coordinator reviewed the 2025 registration for Koochiching County with four teams registered.

2025/4-5 Motion by Aitchison, seconded by Reller approving a total of \$600 to be distributed to the Northome Science Club for the Envirothon event, passthrough funds from local donations.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller. Motion carried.

Soil Health Cost Share Agreement

2025/4-6 Motion by Aitchison, seconded by Reller authorizing the Chair’s digital signature for SHCS25-1 and approving Soil Health Cost Share Agreement contract SHCS25-2 at 75%.

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

Upcoming Meetings:

- **All Supervisors and staff to attend the Local Working Group Meeting on May 5th at 9:30 a.m. at the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites Conference Room.**

Permits:

Permit 2024-3581 CN Bridge Modification: Wallin summarized the permit for review. Discussion included the potential for increased water flow restrictions.

2025/4-7 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Reller requesting to include comments on Permit #2024-358 that the design does not further restrict water flow, particularly during high water/flood times.

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

Permit 2005-2059 Inland Navigation Channel Excavation: Renewal - informational only.

General Business:

Aasen discussed Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) are proposed to be decreased, which would mean County levy taxes would need to increase by 20%.

Aitchison inquired about aquatic invasive species (AIS). Environmental Services has taken on this program in full for 2025. The Board requests an invitation be conveyed to Matt Gouin to attend the District's May Board meeting to discuss plans for the AIS program.

Public Comment:

None.

Confirm Next Meeting Date:

The next regular board meeting of the Koochiching SWCD will be held on **Monday, May 5, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. at the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites.**

Adjourn Meeting:

2025/4-8 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Aitchison to adjourn the meeting at 9:41 a.m.

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

Approved:

Chair, Eldon Voigt

Date