

**KOOCHICHING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2025**

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

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Reller.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Pam Tomevi, Jolen Simon, James Aasen, Austin Wallin, Austin Vinar (SWCD).

OTHERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Jody Peek (NRCS)

Chair Voigt called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

2025/12-1 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Aitchison to approve consent agenda items as presented: 12/8/2025 Agenda with one addition (permit), 11/3/2025 Minutes, Ratification of paid bills for October 2025 totaling \$56,874.31, Treasurer Report ending 10/31/2025, and to allow payment of ordinary and necessary bills not to exceed budget.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller. Motion carried.

Guest Introductions:

None.

Supervisor Reports

Voigt reported on his attendance at the MASWCD Convention, passing around a booklet from the event. The SFIA resolution was passed in a final vote, despite initially showing lower than expected approval. Voigt is applying for a BWSR Board position. He presented a letter of support to be approved by the SWCD Board.

2025/12-2 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Aitchison authorizing the Vice Chair's signature on the letter of support for Supervisor Voigt to apply for a BWSR Board position.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Reller. Abstain: Voigt. Motion carried.

Committee Reports:

None. The District Administrator noted that the Budget and Personnel Committees will need to meet before the January Board Meeting.

NRCS District Conservationist Report

The federal government shutdown affected NRCS and all were furloughed during this time. CSP and EQIP payments are now being processed for those who opted for payments in 2025. New EQIP applications are currently on hold so that CSP and EQIP payments can be prioritized.

Announcements: Steve Cole, Assistant State Conservationist, is retiring December 31st. Area Engineer, Craig Peterson, retiring December 31st. Although these vacancies will be present, it was clarified that there will still be someone to process Job Approval Authority (JAA) requests. Requests should be sent to the Team Lead (Jody Peek) who will route them to the appropriate staff and follow up as needed.

Program Coordinator

Highlights included an update on the Keep it Clean proposal. While Koochiching SWCD was not chosen for the BWSR Keep It Clean grant due to a high volume of applications, staff is working to fund some of the work for the program through the Rainy River-Rainy Lake One Watershed, One Plan WBIF. Updates to follow.

It was recently learned that the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa intern will begin work on April 1st. Planning began for education events including the 2026 Envirothon and a school cone collection.

Resource Conservationist Report

Discussion included an increase in wood ash permits; assisted Environmental Services with the hauling of the decontamination unit for AIS and data analysis, trained for chemical spraying; compiled paperwork for JAA; completed shoreline flights with the Clean Water Forester; discussed aerial seeding and spraying.

Clean Water Forester Report

Discussion included forest stewardship plan writing with more plans to write; WPLMN water sampling with the Resource Conservationist; drone pilot training; training on various district projects.

Watershed Coordinator Report

Discussion included training the Clean Water Forester on forest stewardship plan writing and field work; there are more plan requests coming in than usual; tracking watershed plans and committed projects, including partners who have committed to projects; the City of International Falls will need assistance due to staff turnover and Aasen will join the Public Works subcommittee meetings periodically to keep the City of International Falls updated; met with Mike Kennedy (MPCA) and the head of maintenance at Rainy Lake Medical Center regarding storm water for the new hospital building as there is money through MPCA for storm water and green infrastructure; attended the SWCD Forestry Association meeting; tree planting planning is in progress; funding remained in the Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) grant due to the loss of CCMI assistance from federal cuts earlier in the year; staff was able to contract with a local contractor for late season buckthorn cutting under the remaining CWMA grant; requests for bid and working with DNR for the bridge on the Rat Root River that will be removed through 319 grant funding; the DNR PFM Division has awarded the SWCD a grant for staff time working on forestry related activities.

District Administrator Report

Discussion included coordinating with staff on main projects and gearing up for year-end; attended MASWCD State Convention and attended the Manager/Chair meeting; the PRAP grant has been submitted and is being reviewed with a decision made by the end of December; SWCD Board support is being sought to contract with David Drown Associates (DDA) for services as outlined in the PRAP grant if approved.

2025/12-3 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt authorizing the District Administrator to contract with DDA for services as outlined in the PRAP grant if approved.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Review Draft Cost Share Policy

The District Administrator discussed progress reviewing other policies for research and planning- discussion included what other items might be added in the future. Staff will complete the draft policy and present for review by the Board.

NEW BUSINESS:

Service Rates

Forest Stewardship Plan Writing Cost Share Rate

2025/12-4 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Aitchison approving the new Forest Stewardship Plan Writing Cost Share Rate as presented. Details on file.

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

Aerial Seeding/Herbicide Application Rates

Wallin described the calculated seeding and herbicide rates, with variations factoring in insurance; this will be brought back in January to discuss further.

Cost Share

The Board recognizes that in-kind contributions by the landowner on CCCS24-1 reflect his contractor rate. The Karvakko engineer has noted that he is comfortable with the project as installed and is ready to sign the voucher.

2025/12-5 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Lewis authorizing payment for Conservation Contract Cost Share Project CCCS24-1 in the amount of \$18,000 pending landowner and engineering signoff.

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

Engineering

2025/12-6 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt authorizing the District Administrator’s signature for engineering services on contracts B25107 and B25089 through Karvakko Engineering.

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

2026 NACD Membership Dues

2025/12-7 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt authorizing NACD Membership Dues for 2026 in the amount of \$775.

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

Upcoming Meetings:

Discussion included upcoming SWCD Board Meetings and a decision to keep meetings at the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites meeting room.

Permits:

Permit application 2025-2986 International Falls LPOE was reviewed where the purpose of the project is to construct a larger, more secure land port of entry crossing to facilitate the passage of traveler and goods between the border of the US and Canada. Wallin explained the project will include rerouting First Creek No official comments.

General Business:

- Notice that monthly office rent is going from \$770 to \$790 beginning 1-1-2026
- New storage unit has been secured.
- Supervisor vacancy: Approving redistricting requires reassurance that there is no local objection. Notice has been sent to the City of Big Falls and Koochiching County and they will respond as of their next official meetings.

Confirm Next Meeting Date:

The next regular board meeting of the Koochiching SWCD will be held on **Monday, January 5, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. at the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites.**

Meeting Adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Approved:

_____ **Chair, Eldon Voigt**

_____ **Date**