

**KOOCHICHING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 4, 2026**

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

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: None.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Pam Tomevi, Jolen Simon, James Aasen, Austin Wallin, Austin Vinar, Madelyn Swanson (SWCD), Jody Peek (NRCS), Chad Severts (BWSR).

OTHERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Michael (last name unknown)

Chair Reller called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

2026/5-1 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt to approve consent agenda items: 5/4/2026 Agenda with one addition, 4/6/2026 Minutes as presented, Ratification of paid bills for March 2026 totaling \$68,914.02, Treasurer Report ending 3/31/2026, and to allow payment of ordinary and necessary bills not to exceed budget.
Voting yes: Lewis, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Absent for Vote: Aitchison. Motion carried.

Guest Introductions:

None.

Supervisor Reports

Voigt reported on his attendance at the Northern Landscape Committee meeting where biomass was discussed; met with Senator Hauschild and discussed SWCD funding and SFIA.

Committee Reports:

None.

NRCS District Conservationist Report

Peek reported on a funding increase for CSP and EQIP. There were nine CSP and one EQIP pre-approvals in Koochiching County; local work group meeting will need to be scheduled by June 26th; attended a summit put together by Area VIII technical team regarding JAA and tree planting.

District Administrator Report

Discussion included the following: coordinated Steering and Advisory Committee meetings for the Little Fork River Watershed 1W1P; worked with DDA consultant on updated job descriptions; weekly International Joint Commission (IJC) Water Levels Committee meetings to review basin conditions and set/revise water level targets within the rule curve band; calls and visits from landowners re: dam operations and May water level targets; tree program assistance (orders / payments / forms / labels); MN Unemployment and Paid Leave - Q1 2026 reporting/payments; Orders for logo clothing (Tilson Bay and Hasbargen Customs); Phase 2 workplan review/billing rates for EPA 319 grant; Staff oversight (staff meetings/workload updates/cost-share contracts); Finances (invoicing, accounts payable, bank deposits, Q1 2026 reports, etc.); MCIT Reports (EDP/Payroll estimates); Board reports and meeting packets; Misc. computer issues/updates

Program Coordinator

Discussion included assisting with Little Fork River Watershed 1W1P meetings; Attended Big Fork River Board Meeting where it was reported that no requests for funds will be sent out for 2026 as current account balance is sufficient. There is an interest in writing an update to the plan; eLINK data entry for

match time from Voyageurs National Park for the Keep It Clean Program; 25.5 bags of garbage were collected from January through March equaling 6.94 cubic yards.

Clean Water Forester Report

Discussion included water sampling five times, forest plan writing, drone seeding, live staking planting project, buckthorn herbicide treatment, Area VIII technical training, Northern Landscape Committee attendance, tree sales

Watershed Coordinator Report

Discussion included the tree sale which had 80 pre-orders and 13,545 trees sold; Organized and led Northern Landscape Committee Meeting; Began organizing the Koochiching Cooperative Weed Management Area Meeting for May 13th; Developed the Phase #2 EPA Rat Root 319 Grant work plan; Met with engineer to continue developing Black River piling removal project; Tree Planting Cost-Share Contracts and technical assistance; Presented at the TSA 8 Training Team Meeting in Bemidji.

Resource Conservationist Report

Discussion included Rainy River shoreline lidar flights; Rat Root bridge removals survey; Native plant sale orders and pop-up sale; TSA 8 technical staff meeting and creating presentations/educational videos; Little Fork sedimentation meetings to determine any possible projects for sediment reduction; Aerial seeding; Wetland Visit.

OLD BUSINESS

The District Administrator reported that the Clean Water Forester has successfully met and/or exceeded job performance expectations during his 6-month mandatory probation period which began 10/6/2025 and recommended his status be changed to permanent full-time effective 4/6/2026.

2026/5-2 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt to approve the change in employment status of the Clean Water Forester from probationary to permanent full-time as of 4/6/2026. Voting yes: Lewis, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Absent for Vote: Aitchison. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Local Working Group

2026/5-3 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Voigt to hold the Local Working Group Meeting on Monday, June 1st at 10:00 a.m. at the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites. Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Motion carried.

SWCD Service Rates

The District Administrator described the need to set mileage rates for drone services performed outside the County boundary to offset the increase in expenses not factored into the original cost estimates for service distance.

2026/5-4 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Lewis approving mileage rates for drone work at \$6 per mile from the SWCD office to the site location for requests outside of Koochiching County boundaries. Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Motion carried.

2026/5-5 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Lewis authorizing staff to apply for the BWSR Managing Invasives for the Resilient Landscape (MIRL) grant and to authorize the District Administrator as the authorized representatives. Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Motion carried.

Designate Technical Approval Authority for Standard Ecological Practices

**2026/5-6 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Voigt to designate Technical Approval Authority (TAA) for ecological practices to existing technical staff as follows: 612-Tree and Shrub Establishment (James Aasen and Austin Vinar), 327-Conservation Cover (Austin Vinar and Austin Wallin); 512-Hay and Pasture (Austin Wallin); and 342 Critical Area Planting (Austin Wallin).
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Motion carried.**

Education/Public Relations Committee

The District Administrator proposed changing the name of the Board’s Education/Public Relations Committee to the “Education/Community Outreach Committee” and noted that staff would like to discuss new public outreach ideas with the committee.

**2026/5-7 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Aitchison to change the name of the “Education/Public Relations Committee” to the “Education/Community Outreach Committee”.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Motion carried.**

Upcoming Meetings:

Area VIII Resolution Meeting in Bemidji on Friday, June 26th.

**2026/5-8 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Lewis authorizing all Supervisors and staff to attend the Area VIII meeting on Friday, June 26th in Bemidji.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller, Becker. Motion carried.**

Permits:

None.

General Business:

The District Administrator reported that filing dates for the 2026 Elections is May 19 – June 2 and Supervisor Districts up for election this year include District I (Lewis), VI (Becker), and V (Reller).

Call for Resolutions

The District Administrator reported that any proposed resolutions need to be submitted by the June 1 Board meeting for action prior to being forwarded to Area VIII.

Notice of ADA Compliance deadline extension for web content and mobile app accessibility

The deadline for website ADA compliance has been extended by one year to April 24, 2028.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

Confirm Next Meeting Date:

The next regular board meeting of the Koochiching SWCD will be held on **Monday, June 1, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. at the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites and the Local Working Group meeting to follow at 10:00 a.m. in the same location.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Approved:

_____ **Chair, Jody Reller**

_____ **Date**