

**KOOCHICHING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2026**

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

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: None.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Becker

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Pam Tomevi, Jolen Simon, Austin Vinar, Austin Wallin, Jody Peek (NRCS), Whitney Sims (Koochiching ESD)

OTHERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Micheal Miller

Chair Reller called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

2026/9-1 Motion by Lewis, seconded by Aitchison to approve consent agenda items: 9/14/2026 Agenda, 8/3/2026 Minutes as presented, Ratification of paid bills for July 2026 totaling \$78,935.19, and to allow payment of ordinary and necessary bills not to exceed budget.
Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt, Reller. Motion carried.

Guest Introductions:

Whitney Sims of Koochiching County Environmental Services reported on the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program. There were six inspectors through the summer and 4 inspectors will work through October 4. Because there was a sufficient amount of inspectors, inspections were completed at Ranier, Tilson and Dove Island in addition to regular sites this year.

There were 7,915 completed inspections and one decontamination, an increase from the past two years. Spiny water flea was found. Outreach materials were purchased. Communication with North St. Louis SWCD and Voyageurs National Park continues to improve. Discussion also included the projected AIS funding reduction of 50% in 2027 and how this will affect programming going forward. It is anticipated that there should be no disruption to hiring inspectors, but outreach will likely be cut. Additional discussion included vegetation management plans in partnership with ESD regarding variances, conditional use, or new building permits.

Supervisor Reports

Lewis reported on his attendance at the Area VIII Tour. Photos of the tour were shared.

Voigt reported on his attendance at Area VIII Tour and noted that the farm tour was interesting and that ash from the local mill has been helpful. It was noted at the Area VIII meeting that the GPS/tremble system owned by Area VIII is available to all Area VIII districts.

Aitchison also reported on his attendance at the Area VIII Tour noting the stormwater system that was viewed in Coleraine. Discussion also included the upcoming policy and public meetings for the 1W1P in reference to the Little Fork and Big Fork River Watersheds.

Committee Reports:

None.

NRCS District Conservationist Report

Discussion included that CSP pre-approved applications are now in obligated contracts; CSP contracts obligated including tree plantings, pollinator plantings, wood duck boxes, bat boxes, brush piles, etc.; Five CSP contracts and two EQIP contracts obligated with more recent ones coming in. A deferral letter went out to those who were not chosen. Annual payment reminders went out recently. Self-certification will be used this year more heavily. One CRP was approved recently in Koochiching County. September

11th was the CSP application deadline for the first round, but the second is still open for applications. NRCS staff met with SWCD staff re: JAA and will schedule a follow-up visit.

Watershed Coordinator Report

Discussion included a 319 grant workplan amendment and developing projects including the bridge removal; The sub agreement for the Rainy River-Rainy Lake has been drafted and there will be a meeting today at 2:00 p.m. Two ravine projects are being discussed. Communication with the partners is ongoing to ensure projects are completed on time and within budget. There will be a second workplan and budget submitted for this watershed in April 2027 and will be developed over the winter.

Working with other agencies on project to remove pilings at the mouth of the Black River; Little Fork and Big Fork 1W1P policy, steering, and advisory committee meetings have been held to plan upcoming projects; Deer protection has been popular with tree customers and different deer protection projects have been explored by SWCD staff such as wire cages; Conversations with DNR re: assistance with coordinating a Field to Forest program; The bypass road was removed by Koochiching County on North Jackfish Bay; A feasibility study was planned for erosion by the City of International Falls in the Riverview area. This will be a project in the upcoming Rainy River-Rainy Lake WBIF workplan.

Resource Conservationist Report

Discussion included field checks on cost share projects on South Jackfish where parsnip was removed and native plants were installed, and another erosion project on Rainy River; Wild rice seeding occurred at the end of August (230 lbs.). The seeding from 2025 has shown considerable growth. A third seeding is planned for 2027; Completed 38 acres of wild parsnip spraying; wetland restoration projects in progress; Wood ash permits are running low, please spread the word to any farmers you know. There has been turnover in the PCA Environmental team and discussions have been happening regarding ways to increase ash output to landowners. A new ash sample is being taken by PCA as well.

District Administrator Report

Discussion included final review of the 2025 audit, ongoing financial management, staff meetings (which have been going well), cost share contract payment vouchers, ongoing work with the Little Fork River 1W1P meetings where comments have been reviewed by the advisory committee; sub-agreement for Rainy River-Rainy Lake CWMP drafted as well as the updated budget in preparation for the Policy Committee meeting to be held today at 2:00 pm; IJC Water Levels Committee met in Fort Frances; Bereavement leave.

Program Coordinator

Well testing workshop planning has been ongoing, with the event being this Wednesday, September 16th. The well testing clinic has been postponed until the Minnesota Department of Health grant is executed so that we can offer free services for five (nitrates/bacteria, arsenic, lead, manganese parameters rather than only two (nitrates/bacteria and arsenic) at a cost to the landowner ; The CCM Apprenticeship grant was approved for a 6-month member in 2027.

Clean Water Forester Report

Completed two forest plans and worked on receiving JAA through NRCS (application completed); Completed a drone spraying for a local landowner; MDA water sampling has wrapped up; Attended 1W1P meetings; wild rice seeding, new conifer protection options (cages) are being explored; attended the Itasca SWCD Fall Tour; forestry outreach and tree planting development including a large windbreak.

OLD BUSINESS

2026 MASWCD Awards

Tomevi reported that the application period is now closed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Cost Share Payments

Tomevi reviewed Cost Share contracts ready for payment.

2026/9-2 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Aitchison approving payment for FY25 RR-RL WBIF_2026-1 in the amount of \$254.00 and FY25 RR-RL WBIF_2026-2 in the amount of \$542.00.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt. Absent for Vote: Reller. Motion carried.

2025 Financial Audit

Tomevi reviewed the draft 2025 financial audit and flagged items as questions for the auditor.

2026/9-3 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Aitchison accepting the draft 2025 Financial Audit with corrections pending with Peterson Company, LTD and authorizing the District Administrator and 2025 Chair signatures.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt. Absent for Vote: Reller. Motion carried.

Upcoming Meetings/Trainings:

- 1. Well testing workshop: 9/16/26 at the Coffee Landing in International Falls**
- 2. Well testing clinic: TBD**
- 3. BWSR Academy – October 20-22, Cragun’s in Brainerd**

2026/9-4 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Aitchison authorizing all staff members to attend the 2026 BWSR Academy.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt. Absent for Vote: Reller. Motion carried.

Permits:

None.

General Business:

Discussion included potential decals on the drone trailer including advertising of seeding/spraying on both sides.

2026/9-5 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Aitchison authorizing the District Administrator to purchase decals for the drone trailer.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt. Absent for Vote: Reller. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

Confirm Next Meeting Date:

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

2026/9-6 Motion by Voigt, seconded by Aitchison to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Voting yes: Lewis, Aitchison, Voigt. Absent for Vote: Reller. Motion carried.

Approved:

Chair, Jody Reller

Date