

AITKIN COUNTY SWCD
307 2nd STREET NW, ROOM #216
AITKIN, MN 56431

Minutes of the Aitkin County Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meeting held on Wednesday, August 20, 2025 at the Aitkin County Government Center, Board Room. Meeting was called to order by Dan Gravley, Chair at 9:00 a.m. Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Those present were:

Those absent were:

Dan Gravley, Chair
Francis Dierickx, Vice Chair
Bob Janzen, Treasurer
Frank Turnock, Secretary
Tom Fasteland, Reporter
Janet Smude, District Manager
Lori Nelson, District Secretary
Darren Mayers, MN BWSR Board Conservationist

Additions to the agenda:

-Rinta, Round Lake
Project Review, Reimbursement Request

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve the agenda with an addition. Approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Bob Janzen and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve the July 15, 2025 minutes. Approved unanimously.

TREASURERS REPORT

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Bob Janzen to accept the July financial statement. Approved unanimously.

CHECKS WRITTEN

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve the checks written. Approved unanimously.

PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Paid Family Medical Leave Act becomes effective January 1, 2026. This is paid by both employee and employer—state rate 0.88% based on gross salary. A private company MetLife offers a cheaper rate but only works with companies with at least 25 employees. They are working on an option for smaller companies. Benefit Innovations works with MetLife and we work with Benefit Innovations for health insurance and HSA.

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Frank Turnock to approve to go with Benefit Innovations (MetLife) and if this is not possible get in contact with a board supervisor to determine which way to go. Approved unanimously.

AREA III FALL MEETING

The Area III fall meeting will be held on Monday, September 8, 2025 in Mora. Dan Gravley, Tom Fasteland, Bob Janzen and Frank Turnock will attend.

BILLS OVER \$3000

MORRISON SWCD, \$10,665.25

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve payment to Morrison SWCD in the amount of \$10,665.25. Approved unanimously.

CROW WING SWCD, \$43,831.03

A motion was made by Tom Fasteland and seconded by Frank Turnock to approve payment to Crow Wing SWCD in the amount of \$43,831.03. Approved unanimously.

TODD SWCD, \$9992.29

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Francis Dierickx to approve payment to Todd SWCD in the amount of \$9992.29. Approved unanimously.

PHEASANTS FOREVER, \$3250

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve payment to Pheasants Forever in the amount of \$3250. Approved unanimously.

PROJECT PROPOSALS

KLEIN, RABBIT LAKE SHORELINE STABILIZATION/ MISS BRD 1W1P, \$3980

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Francis Dierickx to reaffirm a cost-share assistance contract for Klein, Rabbit Lake shoreline stabilization project not to exceed \$3980 or 75% of the total eligible cost, whichever is less. Approved unanimously.

ANDERSON, LAKE MINNEWAWA SHORELINE STABILIZATION/ BIG SANDY 319 GRANT, \$4427.55

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve a cost-share assistance contract for Anderson, Lake Minnewawa shoreline stabilization not to exceed \$4427.55 or 75% of the total eligible cost, whichever is less pending approval by the Big Sandy Watershed Group. Approved unanimously.

PROJECT REVIEWS/REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTS

BETH & RAUL BIRD, BIG SANDY LAKE 2025-3/MISS GR 1W1P, \$1447.19

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Frank Turnock to approve payment to Beth & Raul Bird for \$1447.19. Approved unanimously.

SUE & PAUL KNUTSON, PINE LAKE/KETTLE UPPER ST CROIX FY24 \$3120

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Tom Fastland to approve payment to Sue and Paul Knutson for \$3820. Approved unanimously.

AL & CARMEN RINTA/ROUND LAKE SHORELINE STABILIZATION MISS GR 1W1P, \$10,799.25

A motion was made by Tom Fastland and seconded by Bob Janzen to approve payment to Al & Carmen Rinta for \$10,799.25 pending approval of TSA3. Approved unanimously.

FARM BILL BIOLOGIST REPORT-Laura

- Easement update
- EQIP update
- Trainings
- Wildlife Habitat Field Day/Paynesville
- WRP monitoring
- Completed UTV/OHV training
- Attended Event Planning for Conservation Professionals webinar

SHORELINE PROJECT POLICY

Discussion. A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Francis Dierickx to withhold funds until compliance with DNR and County is met on projects and issue written communication (certified letter). Approved unanimously.

This will be added into the shoreline project policy.

BREAK

CALLED MEETING BACK TO ORDER

SALE OF SPRAYER

A motion was made by Francis Dierickx and seconded by Frank Turnock to approve sale of sprayer. Approved unanimously.

AG INSPECTOR, POTENTIAL GRANT/STAFF CHANGES

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Tom Fastland to suggest Veronica as the new Ag County Ag Inspector. Approved unanimously. This needs to go before the Aitkin County Board.

There is a potential grant available for Ag Inspector (\$10,000) with a lot more requirements and reporting.

NRCS REPORT-Tom

- 23 Conservation practices certified as complete
- Field office staff helping customers prepare to install conservation practices

- Staffing NRCS Critical Vacancy Process Phase I-Baxter didn't receive any eligible applications for the open position.
- Forage and Grassland Council Tour was held.

SNAKE RIVER REPORT-Dan

- Approved 2 part-time positions

DISTRICT MANAGER REPORT-Janet

- 1W1P update
- Big Sandy Watershed, semi-annual report was completed and sent to MPCA
- Lake Association Summit was held on July 31, 2025. Attendance was good.
- Open enrollment for health insurance
- Starry Trek was August 9, 2025 at Farm Island North
- There will be a public meeting re: outlet of Dam Lake
- Browse Blockers (10) were purchased (net goes over pine seedlings, more effective in the fall). They will be put on our website and be a part of the tree order

SENIOR TECHNICIAN-Sam

- Riparian Buffer update
- Culvert inventory update (Nordland Twp.)
- Soil Health, discussed project with landowner in Spencer Twp.
- Ag inspector
- Forestry-site visits set up with 8 landowners for Forest Stewardship Plans
- Hill City Buckthorn project
- Diversion channel inspection via canoe and drone

SOIL HEALTH SPECIALIST/OUTREACH SPECIALIST-Veronica

- Soil Health Peer Group/Planning in September/Amundson farm
- Ag Learn
- Applicator license
- Attended MN Women in Conservation Field Day
- Attended feedlot training in McGregor for the Cattlemen's Association

PROJECTS

- Big Sandy rain garden and pollinator planting

- City of Duluth/drone seeding
- Drone flight with Frank Turnock over aerial sprayed soybeans
- County Weed Inspector grant

OUTREACH

- Leadership Training
- Rivers and Lakes Fair

OTHER

- September newsletter
- Conducting check ins with landowners re: Minnewawa shoreline restoration drainage control
- AIS article written (Rusty crayfish)
- Lake Association Summit
- Training & Continuing Education
- Helping other staff in the office wherever I am able

WATERSHED MGMT./WETLAND SPECIALIST-Ellie

- Shoreline projects
- Wetlands
- BSALWMP Boat tour/Eagle Lake in Carlton
- Presentation Big Pine Lake/Hazelton Twp.
- Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group meeting
- Lake Association Summit
- Site checks on projects
- Shoreline restoration visits
- Fleming Lake-looking for evidence of wells
- Drone flight/Round Lake, Hazelton Twp.

MN BWSR CONSERVATIONIST REPORT-Darren

- SWCD Governance & Leadership Essentials
- Agroforestry/Baxter
- BWSR Academy October 21-23
- Grant extensions

TSA 3 REPORT-Tom

The next TSA 3 meeting will be held on September 24, 2025 in Duluth.

SWCD INTERN-Michael

- Well update
- Noxious Weed Inventory
- Big Sandy Planting
- Water Samples (Ripple, Horseshoe, Minnewawa)
- Lake Association Summit posters were put up throughout the county

The next SWCD Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 16, 2025. A tour will be held. Place of meeting to be determined.

A motion was made by Frank Turnock and seconded by Tom Fasteland to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Turnock
Secretary