



**STEELE COUNTY**  
Soil and Water Conservation District

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Owatonna MN 55060  
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www.steeleswcd.org

The regular monthly meeting of the Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors was called to order by Mark Ditlevson at 5:00 PM on Wednesday May 8, 2024 at the Steele County SWCD Office, 235 Cedardale Drive SE, Owatonna MN, 55060.

<u>SWCD Supervisors Present:</u>	<u>SWCD Staff Present:</u>	<u>Others Present:</u>	<u>Absent:</u>
Mark Ihlenfeld, Treasurer	Eric Gulbransen	Jim Smith, NRCS	
Dan Hansen, Secretary	Adam Arndt	Rick Gnemi, County Commissioner	
Dave Melby, Vice Chair	Adrienne Gransee	Roger Wacek	
Brad Hagen, PR&I	Ian Pringle	Nathan Bird, NRCS	
Mark Ditlevson, Chairman		James Brady, County Commissioner	

The May agenda was reviewed, no changes were made.

The April minutes were distributed to the Supervisors prior to the meeting. Motion was made by Melby, seconded by Hansen, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

The April Treasurer’s Report was read by Ihlenfeld. Motion was made by Hagen, seconded by Hansen, to approve the April Treasurer’s Report. Motion was carried by voice vote.

Bills: (See attached) Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Melby, to approve paying the bills. Motion was carried by voice vote.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Meeting Reports – MN Soil Health Coalition – Brad Hagen reported on the meeting that he attended on March 25. Mitchell Hora was there talking about carbon intensity scores. There was also discussion about how to figure out your own score. There was also discussion about long range plans to produce sustainable aviation fuel, but a lot is still in flux so this is not something that will be immediately acted upon. Hagen was not impressed by the farmer panel and would have liked to see more interest and participation.

Envirothon – May 1 – Byron Sportsman and Conservation Club – Dan Hensen and Dave Melby both were judges again for this year for the oral presentations at Envirothon. They were impressed with the student teams and glad to see so many schools and students participating. The first place high school team was from Northfield, second was from Winona-Cotter and the third was from Goodhue.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Conservation Award Candidates 2025 – The Board was presented with the current list of award candidates for consideration. They were told that if they would like to make any additions they could contact the office and we would take care of gathering the needed information.
2. Leadership Institute - August 2024-August 2025 - \$5,950 per person – Eric Gulbransen gave the Board an overview of the program and when the registration would be open.
3. SWCD Governance 101 – July 16-17 – Alexandria, MN - \$250 per person – Gulbransen presented the information regarding this training. It is geared for both new and experienced board members. The goal is to better understand their role in the running on the District. Two supervisors expressed interest in attending.
4. Local Work Group Meeting – June 12 – Blooming Prairie Town Hall – The Board was informed of the meeting and the invitation to attend was extended to any interested.
5. Election Filing – May 21 to June 4 – Gulbransen reminded the Board members that are finishing their terms about the dates for election filing.
6. Administrative Training – June 25-26 – Baxter, MN - \$35 registration – Adrienne Gransee presented the agenda for this training and requested approval for attending as well as having the District cover related expenses. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Melby, to approve the request. Motion passed by voice vote.
7. Other – June 17 Resolution Meeting – There was a discussion about past resolutions that have been submitted and including one related to making buffers around surface water inlets mandatory. Gulbransen requested that if anyone had a resolution that they would like written that they contact the office.

**Public Comments**

Roger Wacek read an excerpt from the book “Rooted / How Regenerative Can Change The World”. He also suggested that it would be good to have a speaker present more detailed information about Haney soil testing at the next soil health event.

**Agency Reports**

Jim Smith introduced Nathan Bird. Bird is based in Dodge Center and assisting Jim with CSP and various other NRCS programs. Smith told the Board about the visit from Chris Oak to discuss current issues, workload and a variety of other concerns. Smith informed the Board that CSP applications are being processed and pre-approval notices should be coming in the near future.

**Agency Reports**

Rick Gnemi gave a brief update about open positions at the jail as well as an update on the construction taking place before moving the Sheriff's offices to that location.

James Brady informed the Board that the County is having difficulty finding qualified candidates for the positions that will soon be vacated. They have completed one round of interviews, but did not offer the position to anyone. The next set of interviews should be taking place in the near future.

**Staff Reports**

Eric Gulbransen reported that WCA continues to keep him busy. He is also working on getting a new sign made for the Straight River March Wetland Restoration Project. Gulbransen gave an update on the status of the shared soil health position. The grant funding the position has been executed and the position has been opened for applications.

Adam Arndt told the Board that he has been working on completing buffer inspections and has found a few new violations. He has continued to work on the tree program as well.

Adrienne Gransee gave the Board a summary of the Envirothon event; there were a total of 84 students that attended the event this year. Unfortunately, one of the top 3 teams has a conflict and will not be able to attend the State event so the committee is offering their place to the second team from Northfield, who tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the area event. She also informed the Board that the 2023 financial audit is still moving forward and will keep them updated on the progress.

Ian Pringle reported on the tree pick-up. The student involvement went very smoothly with the students assisting with unloading the trees and also receiving a brief introduction to the various species and an overview of what the SWCD does. Their instructor was pleased with how things went and open to doing it again in the future.

Motion to Adjourn: Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Hagen, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Adrienne Gransee,  
Administrative Assistant

May Bills

<b>Cedardale Dev. Co.</b>	<b>May Rent</b>		<b>\$792.00</b>
<b>Spectrum</b>	<b>Internet</b>		<b>\$89.99</b>
<b>Elan</b>	<b>Gas</b>	<b>\$198.13</b>	
	<b>Tree Supplies</b>	<b>\$14.26</b>	
	<b>Cell Phone</b>	<b>\$87.21</b>	
	<b>Tree Meals</b>	<b>\$117.30</b>	
	<b>Office Supplies</b>	<b>\$169.55</b>	
	<b>Monthly Payroll</b>	<b>\$25.77</b>	
	<b>Postage</b>	<b>\$289.12</b>	
	<b>Wix Extended Email</b>	<b>\$29.00</b>	<b>\$901.34</b>
<b>Schumacher's</b>	<b>Trees</b>	<b>\$13,016.00</b>	
	<b>Shipping</b>	<b>\$650.00</b>	<b>\$13,666.00</b>
<b>Lezlie Sorensen</b>	<b>10.75 hours @ \$15</b>		<b>\$161.25</b>
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,610.58</b>