



STEELE COUNTY
Soil and Water Conservation District

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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 5:05 PM on Wednesday November 13, 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	Ian Pringle
Dan Hansen, Secretary	Adam Arndt	Alan Kraus, Soil Health Outreach	
Dave Melby, Vice Chair	Adrienne Gransee	Beth Hanggi	
Mark Ditlevson, Chairman			
Brad Hagen, PR&I			

The November agenda was reviewed, two items were added.

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

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

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

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting Reports – Cannon 1W1P JPB – Dan Hansen reported on this meeting. They went over the status of current projects and talked about the increased amount that will be available for CRP incentives in the future. They also decided how to reinvest the funds from the certificate of deposit. The members watched promotional videos from Goodhue as well as the Zumbro Watershed. Hansen expressed that both were well done. They also discussed the results of long-term testing for phosphorus. Over a 20 year period there was a notable decrease.

Area 7 Fall Meeting – Eric Gulbransen, Ian Pringle, Adrienne Gransee, and Mark Ihlenfeld attended this meeting. Ihlenfeld reported on the Supervisors business meeting. The main point of their discussion was lengthening the terms for Board positions to be better able to serve. There was also discussion about the current funding sources and that dues will be increasing to \$300 for 2025. During the whole group meeting there were presentations from MPCA and the NRCS Assistant State Conservationist. The group asked the NRCS representative a lot of questions about co-located offices. There was also a round table discussion about the current options for medical insurance.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2025 Medical Insurance – Beth Hanggi gave the Board an over view of the plans that had been discussed with staff at their initial meeting. The plan that the District offered in 2024 will still be available with no change to the deductible but there is a 15% increase to the monthly premiums. There were 3 other plans presented; each had a lower monthly premium but higher deductible. All plans offered the same coverage and are HSA eligible. There was discussion amongst the Board about the cost of each and cost to the staff from increased deductibles. There was also discussion about the District contribution to the employees HSA and what maximum allowed contribution for 2025 as set by regulations. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Hagen, to continue with the current insurance policy and maintain the same funding level for the HSA. Motion passed by voice vote.
2. Cover Crop Payment – 24-1CC, \$4000 Cannon 1W1P – Adam Arndt presented the contract. The contract is for 100 acres and will be funded through the Cannon 1W1P for the duration of the 3 year contract. This payment is for the first year. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hagen, to approve payment of the contract. Motion passed by voice vote.
3. Cost Share Payment – 23-1, \$2,759.20, State Cost Share – Arndt presented this contract for payment. This is the final partial payment on this contract. The remaining waterways were completed and have been verified. Funding for this project will come from the State Cost Share grant. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hagen, to approve the payment. Motion carried by voice vote.
4. MDA Sustainable Ag Development Demonstration Grant – Alan Kraus presented information about a nitrate testing trial that he is interested in getting running. The goal is to have 3-4 farmers from Steele County and the same from number from Rice participate in a multi-year trial. The project would include soil testing, travel costs, outreach and promotion, and \$1000 to each participating farmer; with staff time making up the match for the grant. Kraus requested approval from the board to spend time getting producer commitments and writing the grant to fund this project. Motion was made by Hagen, seconded by Melby, to move forward with the application. Motion passed by voice vote.
5. Shoreline Planting Incentive Contract – 24-SC-S-01, \$500, Cannon 1W1P – Arndt presented the project. It is a streambank native planting restoration. The plan is to add native plants to help reduce the erosion into Beaver Lake. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ihlenfeld, to approve the contract. Motion carried by voice vote.
6. County Ditch Contract – 2025 – Gulbransen reviewed the 2024 contract with the Board. They discussed the changes that were made last year and what they would like to see changed for the 2025 contract. Those changes included increasing the project amount that can be authorized without having to go before the County board and increasing the hourly amount for staff. There was discussion about setting up a meeting with Rick Gnemi to discuss these changes.
7. MASWCD Convention – Dec 2-4 – Gransee got a final headcount so that she can register those interested in attending before the deadline. Gulbransen, Ihlenfeld, Melby and Hansen are planning to attend.

NEW BUSINESS:

8. Haney Test Training event – Brad Hagen is interested in attending this event December 9-11 in Iowa. It will be an in depth training for the Haney test as well as a wide variety of presenters on various topics. The cost for the registration is \$275 and the hotel is \$150 per night. Motion was made by Hensen, seconded by Melby, to approve the costs related to Hagen attending this event. Motion passed by voice vote. Brad Hagen abstained from voting.

Agency Reports

Jim Smith informed the Board that Lezlie Sorensen has been selected for the soil conservationist position in the Steele office. She will be working on CSP and cover crop contracts. Smith stated that CSP payments are being processed and the deadline for new applications is November 15. Smith has been making site visits for potential 2025 projects during the past month.

Alan Kraus reported on his most recent activities. He organized a mailing sent to select landowners with information regarding an opportunity that the District is offering to cover registration costs for upcoming workshops. He has continued to get out of the office and meet the local landowners while visiting project sites.

Staff Reports

Eric Gulbransen continues to be busy with the county ditch system and she seen an increase in WCA activity in the last month. He also continues to work with FEMA on flood damage projects.

Adam Arndt has been verifying and documenting the cover crop fields that are under contract, as well as completing buffer inspections. He reported that the buffer violations from last year are in the process of being resolved, but new ones were located. He has also been making visits to potential 2025 project sites.

Adrienne Gransee gave the Board an update on the calendar, the first proof was received and changes will be returned to the printer in order to get the second one completed. She also informed the Board about the dates that have been tentatively selected for the Envirothon competition.

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

November Bills

Cedardale Development Co.	November Rent		\$792.00
Spectrum	November Internet		\$89.99
Near North Title Group	Easement title work		\$2,405.00
Elan	Hotel	\$248.98	
	Gas	\$63.23	
	Cell Phone	\$87.43	
	Monthly Payroll	\$25.77	\$425.41
Peterson Company LTD	2023 Audit		\$5,500.00
		TOTAL	\$9,212.40