



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 Dave Melby at 5:00 PM on Tuesday March 11, 2025 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, Secretary	Eric Gulbransen	Jim Smith, NRCS	Adrienne Gransee
Dan Hansen, Vice Chair	Adam Arndt	Lezlie Sorensen, NRCS	
Dave Melby, Chairman	Ian Pringle	James Brady, County Commissioner	
Brad Hagen, Treasurer	Alan Krause	Scott Fluegel	
Mark Ditlevson, PR&I			

The March agenda was reviewed and the following changes were made; 2 bills were added for the peer-to-peer soil health event, the NRCS local workgroup was added, the agreement between Chad Bilat and the District was added, and the PRAP was added to the agenda. Motion to was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hansen to approve the additions. Motion was carried by voice vote.

The February minutes were distributed to the Supervisors prior to the meeting. Dan Hansen noted that Roger Wacek was not listed as being present at the meeting when he did attend. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hanen, to approve the minutes with the noted correction. Motion carried by voice vote.

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

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

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Meeting Reports – Brad Hagen spoke about the soil health event held at Tom Polacek’s farm. He was particularly interested in the microscopic organisms that they were able to view in the soil sample.

Dave Melby and Dan Hansen reported on the soil health meeting held at Torey’s restaurant. Hansen commented on the quality of the presenters and hopes to see small grains planting expand in our region.

2. Day at the Capital - Dave Melby, Dan Hansen, Mark Ihlenfeld, and Adam Arndt attended the Day at the Capital event. They met with Representatives Thomas Sexton and Patricia Muller and Senators Gene Dornik and John Jasinski. They made the request that there be support for having 22 million in the budget to help fund SWCDs but were told that it is more realistic that it will be 12-15 million. Most of the legislators were open to the message and it seemed to be well received.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Enviro Show Booth – May 10, 9am-5pm – Gulbransen presented the information about the show and the booth rental. The rental fee is \$100 for the event. There is the possibility of having a root pull display for the event. Adrienne Gransee is checking with Olmsted SWCD to see if it would be available for the event. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve paying the cost for the booth. Motion carried by voice vote.
2. Area Employee Meeting – March 26 – Harmony MN - \$20 registration – Gulbransen presented the information for the event. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Hagen, to approve staff attending and for the District to cover the registration fee. Motion carried by voice vote.
3. Le Sueur River Watershed Management Plan – Resolution to Adopt – Gulbransen presented the resolution. It stated that the District will agree to be a silent but supportive adopter of the management plan. Motion was made by Ihlenfeld, seconded by Ditlevson, to approve and sign the resolution. Motion carried by voice vote.
4. Economic Impact Report – Gulbransen presented the report that was included in the Board packet.
5. RCPP Grant – Gulbransen led the discussion about which eligible practices the District wanted to promote for this program if it moves forward. The Board discussed each practice and Jim Smith helped to clarify questions on a few of the options, including the nutrient management practice.
6. Other – Chad Billat Contractor Agreement – Gulbransen reviewed the terms of the contract with the Board. It is estimated that he will be working 120 hours at a rate of \$62 per hour. The contract will be up for review annually. Motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Hagen, to approve the contract for the 2025 calendar year. Motion carried by voice vote.

NRCS Local Workgroup – Smith spoke about the local workgroup. It is an opportunity to have public input heard when NRCS is prioritizing land use concerns. The discussion will be led by Nathan Bird. The date has not been set yet.

NACD – Gulbransen presented on the Federal Executive orders that have been issued. He spoke about the USDA/NRCS staff that have been let go and that they are planning to close 58 offices.

PRAP – Gulbransen informed the Board that the District will be undergoing this review. It will include both staff and Board members.

Public Comment

Scott Fluegel, a volunteer Master Naturalist, spoke about his interest in water and soil quality and he is interested in learning about the effects of buckthorn on riparian buffers.

Agency Reports

James Brady gave an update about the construction of the roundabout near the high school. He also informed the Board that there is work for Beaver Lake scheduled for next year.

Jim Smith has been working on CSP and EQIP contracts. He has also been making site visits for potential projects. Smith spoke about the NRCS restructuring plan that is being developed with the intention of implementing it in September.

Staff Reports

Eric Gulbransen continues to be occupied by WCA and the county ditches. He also expressed that the District may want to consider options for our own building and computer system just in case co-location with the Federal agencies no longer is an option in the future.

Adam Arndt reported that the highlights of his last month were the putting together the winter workshop and accompanying the supervisors to the Day at the Capital event.

Alan Krause updated the Board on the meetings that he has had with the local farms that will be participating in the nitrogen rate trial. He also stated that he and Ian will be going out to get GPS coordinates for the plots soon.

Ian Pringle gave an update on the tree program. So far approximately 11,000 trees and shrubs have been sold. He is working with FFA to get some of the students involved with unloading and packaging orders, similar to what was done last year.

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

Respectfully Submitted by,



Adrienne Gransee,
Administrative Assistant

March Bills

Cedardale Dev. Co	March Rent		\$792.00
Spectrum	Internet		\$89.99
MN State Auditor	2023 Audit Review		\$248.00
Court Sports	Logo Apparel		\$438.00
Sign Pro	Straight River Marsh Sign		\$404.08
Elan	Gas	212.50	
	Meals	83.67	
	Hotel	219.65	
	Phone	89.29	
	Wix	53.85	
	QuickBooks Annual Payroll	819.28	
	Day at Capital Registration	535.84	\$2,014.08
		Total	\$3,986.15