



North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District
505 3rd St N, Ste A
Virginia MN 55792

Regular Meeting Minutes April 9, 2025

The meeting was held in person at the District office. A virtual link was available.

Supervisors Present at Roll Call: Chuck Bainter, Jerry Hovi, Frank Modich, Peggy Pearson, and Mark Peterson were present in-person.

Staff Present: Anita Provinzino, District Administrator; Ben Kielar, Program Technician; Amina Kovacevic; Program Technician were present in-person. Jake Bendel, Watershed Conservationist; Corey Denning, Resource Conservationist; Miranda Frenning, Accounting & Human Resources Specialist; Joe Murphy, Community Conservationist; Tristan Nelson, Forester; Jon Utecht, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator; and Kaela Viehman, Watershed Conservationist were present online.

Others Present: Blake Bartz and Steve Cole were present in person and Allison Praet was present online – all from Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The meeting was called to order at 10:36 a.m. by Chair, Peggy Pearson.

1. Agenda - Moved by Chuck Bainter/Mark Peterson to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Minutes of Last Meeting – Moved by Chuck Bainter/Jerry Hovi to approve the minutes as written. Motion carried unanimously.
3. Financial Reports & Program Summary – Moved by Frank Modich/Chuck Bainter to accept the financial reports and program summary. Motion carried unanimously.
4. Accounts Receivable and Payable – Moved by Jerry Hovi/Chuck Bainter to approve the accounts payable and accounts receivable as updated 04/09/25. Motion carried unanimously.
5. Guest Introductions and Comments –
 - a. Introduce new forestry program technicians: Ben Kielar and Amina Kovacevic – Ben and Amina were welcomed to the District. They each gave a brief background about themselves.
 - b. Presentation on Tribal Relations Training – Joe Murphy reported on a recent training he attended on tribal relations.
 - c. Steve Cole, NRCS Area Director, was introduced and welcomed. He indicated he is visiting SWCDs across the state.

NEW BUSINESS:

6. BWSR
 - a. *Adopt-A-Drain Contract for Rainy Headwaters-Vermilion* – Moved by Frank Modich/Mark Peterson to approve the Adopt-A-Drain contract covering the Rainy Headwaters-Vermilion River watersheds and pay Hamline University for the same. Motion carried unanimously.
 - b. *St. Louis River WBIF Stormwater Cost Share Contract with Landowner* – Moved by Frank Modich/Chuck Bainter to approve a cost share contract with Jon Utecht for stormwater runoff control not to exceed \$378. Motion carried unanimously.
 - c. *Soil Health Cost Share Contract with Landowner* – Moved by Jerry Hovi/Frank Modich to approve a cost share contract with the City of Virginia for stormwater runoff control and critical area planting not to exceed \$12,990. Motion carried unanimously.
7. County Aquatic Invasive Species Contracts

- a. *Koochiching County Environmental Services (purchase inspector hours)* – Moved by Chuck Bainter/Mark Peterson to approve the agreement with Koochiching County Environmental Services for services purchased not to exceed \$26,500. Motion carried unanimously.
 - b. *Lake County SWCD (purchase inspector hours)* - Moved by Chuck Bainter/Mark Peterson to approve the agreement with Lake County SWCD for services purchased not to exceed \$3,050. Motion carried unanimously.
 - c. *White Iron Chain of Lakes Association (conduct bait bin disposal work)* – Moved by Jerry Hovi/Chuck Bainter to approve the agreement with White Iron Chain of Lakes Association for services rendered up to \$5,500. Motion carried unanimously.
 - d. *Lake County SWCD (sell inspector hours)* – Moved by Frank Modich/Mark Peterson to approve the agreement with Lake County SWCD for services rendered up to \$22,000. Motion carried unanimously.
8. Financial
- a. *Certificate of Deposit - \$300,000 Renewal (April 22, 2025)* – Moved by Chuck Bainter/Frank Modich to approve purchasing a \$250,000 certificate of deposit at the best rate and term available. Motion carried unanimously.
 - b. *Credit Cards for Ben Kielar and Amina Kovacevic (\$1,500 limit)* – Moved by Frank Modich/Chuck Bainter to approve \$1,500 credit cards for Ben Kielar and Amina Kovacevic. Motion carried unanimously.
 - c. *Policy Additions* - Moved by Chuck Bainter/Frank Modich to approve the accounting policies, electronic signature policy, and fraud prevention and awareness policy. Motion carried unanimously.
9. Human Resources
- a. *District Forester Job Description Update* – Moved by Jerry Hovi/Chuck Bainter to approve the update District Forester job description. Motion carried unanimously.
 - b. *Policy Additions & Updates* – Moved by Chuck Bainter/Frank Modich to approve the conduct principles and conflict of interest policy and remote work policy. Motion carried unanimously.
10. Upcoming Supervisor Meetings and/or Trainings
- a. *Local Work Group Meeting* – -CANCELLED - Set New Date – The local work group meeting date was rescheduled for May 14 at 1:00.
 - b. *Area 3 Resolutions Meeting – June 6 in Cloquet* – Board to let Anita know if they plan to attend by May 7, 2025.
 - c. *Other* - None
11. Other - None

Questions on REPORTS:

12. District Administrator Report – Anita Provinzino
13. Conservation Manager Report – Phil Norvitch
14. Accounting & Human Resources Specialist – Miranda Frenning
15. Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator Report – Jon Utecht
16. Community Conservationist Report- Joe Murphy
17. District Forester Report – Tristan Nelson
18. Regional Farm Bill Forester Report – John McCormick
19. Resource Conservationist Report – Corey Denning
20. Rainy Headwaters/Vermilion Watershed Conservationist Report – Jake Bendel
21. St. Louis River Watershed Conservationist Report – Kaela Veihman

22. Natural Resources Conservation Service Report – Blake Bartz indicated that IRA funding is paused. EQIP funding is mostly obligated. Staff are conducting site visits to certify and implement projects. Steve Cole indicated that there is a second round of the deferred resignation program which will be followed by a reduction in force program, before a reorganization happens at NRCS. He indicated we will feel the effects of reduced staffing. There are \$3 million in IRA funds set aside for St. Louis County, if it is released. Steve also indicated that the Arrowhead Forest Partnership has gained national attention. Troy Daniell has presented it to various states as a success model. Steve thanked Anita for keeping the focus on assisting as many people as possible. The program has significantly reduced the fire danger in the region. It is a model of success.

23. Supervisor & Committee Reports

- a. Laurentian Resource Conservation & Development – March 24 – Peggy reported that there are 3 Wadena County landowners who will receive carbon credits 1 year after their trees have been planted for the Enbridge project. The next meeting will be June 2, and the summer meeting will be at the IRRR office in Eveleth on August 7.
- b. SWCD Forestry Association – March 20 – Mark indicated presentations were given on carbon markets, the state forest nursery and the MN Forest Resources Council. The next meeting will be May 15.
- c. Technical Service Area 3 – March 26 – Chuck indicated the TSA has \$568,000 in the bank, a project report was given at the meeting, and they are re-positing for an open position.

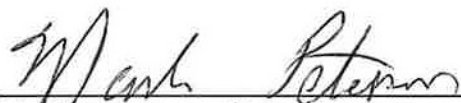
CLOSING:

24. Confirm Next Meeting – May 14, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.

25. Adjourn - Moved by Frank Modich/Chuck Bainter to adjourn the meeting at 11:49 a.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Certification of Recording Officer

I, the undersigned, hereby certify, that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the meeting minutes approved by the North St Louis SWCD Board and that I am duly authorized to make this certification.



Mark Peterson, Secretary

May 14, 2025