



Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

MASWCD MINUTES Regular Meeting Capitol Plaza Hotel Jefferson City, Missouri March 2, 2011

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Present

Steve Radcliff, President
Bruce Biermann, Area I
Tom Lambert, Area II
Kenny Lovelace, Area III
Beverly Dometrorch, Area IV
George Engelbach, Area V
David Hale, Area VI Alternate
Dan Greeson, Area VII
Mike Kelley, Area VIII
David Dix, Treasurer
Peggy Lemons, Executive Director

Not Present

Fred Feldmann, Past President
Ben Gorden, Area VI Director

J. R. Flores, NRCS State Conservationist
Bryan Hopkins, DNR SWCP Director
Bill Wilson, DNR Soil & Water Program
John Knudsen, MDC
Kelly Smith, Farm Bureau
Kathryn Braden, Taney SWCD/SWCD
Richard Hoelscher, St. Louis SWCD
Melvin Dickmeyer, Jackson SWCD
Sandy Hutchison, Employees Association
Denise Yamnitz, Cape Girardeau SWCD
Alisa Evans, Livingston SWCD
Tonya Tietmeyer, Livingston SWCD
Melissa White, Stone SWCD
Tina Hovendick, Benton SWCD
Jamie Henderson, Benton SWCD
Jim Freeburger, Benton SWCD
Don Hicks, Jackson SWCD

President Steve Radcliff welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Introductions were made around the room. Quorum established by roll call.

The minutes from the November 29, 2010 meeting and the February 10, 2011 conference were approved as presented. Motion for approval made by Tom Lambert, Beverly Dometrorch seconded. Motion carried unanimously (8-0).

A treasurer report was given by David Dix. As of 2-25-2011, 85 Districts have paid their MASWCD dues in full and 1 has paid partial dues. One area is paid at 100%. David stated the interest rates had not changed recently. Bruce Biermann motioned the report be approved and filed for audit. Kenny Lovelace seconded. Motion carried unanimously (8-0).

MDC Report: John Knudsen reported he had been in the field earlier today at the Bradford Farm in Columbia. MDC will be hosting the Commission meeting

next week at the central headquarters auditorium. John reported he has changed jobs within the Department and is now the regional supervisor in the Central Region for the Private Lands Section. Once his old position is filled, that person will be attending the MASWCD meetings. George Engelbach asked how many offices had computer or telephone lines tied into the MDC lines in the field offices. John stated he was not sure. George relayed the situation of the MDC line being disconnected due to the Private Lands person not being in that office full time which resulted in the district computer lines being disconnected as well. They are in the process of getting a new line for the district installed, but would have been better prepared had they known about the connection to the MDC line. Beverly Dometorch stated she had heard on the radio that MDC will not be held responsible if someone hits an elk. John Knudsen stated they are not held responsible for deer either.

NRCS Report: J. R. Flores distributed handouts containing information on the federal programs for FY2011. This included the funds received for each program and information from the most recent sign-up. There was also information on the MRBI and CCPI proposals. J. R. stated the Senate has agreed to a 2-week extension of the continuing resolution the federal government is currently working under. There is concern as to how a government shut-down would affect the soil and water districts located in the federal offices. He stated he is checking on the impact to the districts and MDC. George Engelbach asked about funding for a watershed structure near Elsberry. J.R. stated there is no funding in place for that right now. George also commented on how you would get approved for funding if you did the project on your own, J.R. stated it would involve the Corps of Engineers but would pass through DNR as well. A short discussion followed on the MFA biomass projects, mostly watching these projects to see where to go next.

Commission Report: Bryan Hopkins stated he would like to answer questions about the time-sheet program and MASWCD's interest in Mr. Henke's report. George Engelbach asked what happens to the districts if there is a federal shut down. Bryan responded saying that we don't even know if there will be a shut down, he feels that everyone involved would consider it a paid furlough, but has no idea. He said it is kind of a wait and see issue. Bryan said the decision about working from home, etc., should be left to the local board. He stated he was not comfortable with the confrontational atmosphere right now, it is certainly a step back from where he thought we were. He questioned why the MASWCD was opposed to the time sheet program. He stated we are in the peak delivery of the program and we should be okay with what's best for the landowners. Changes will involve belt-tightening (need to bring expenses down to revenue). He stated seemed to him that we want to stay as is which centers around employees. He stated we need to focus on delivering cost-share. Cross-training of staff and the new time-sheet program will help with the efficiency of delivering the cost-share. Bryan Hopkins also stated that the Program Office is getting started on an audit by the State Auditor's office. This audit will be a performance-grade audit and he stated he felt it could affect the renewal of the sales tax. Accountability and transparency are important. Tom Lambert questioned as to why so afraid of an audit. He stated school boards seem to be able to spend funds in areas where districts cannot. Bryan Hopkins stated that the state is in a highly political attitude right now. He stated he felt the needs assessment has been beneficial to districts, allowing them to establish priorities. Beverly Dometorch questioned as to why districts have to wait to fill a vacancy, aren't the funds for that position set up for the entire year. Bryan stated that they did not expand the budget to cover higher health costs, those are being recouped from other savings such as waiting to fill positions. He stated we need to

recognize the amount of staff paid by local funds and principally understand the salary issues. He stated that the positions were originally set at some level of college, but the associations did not want to implement a college degree requirement. Bryan stated he will never get paid what J. R. Flores gets paid by NRCS, but has come to accept that fact. District employees see what state and federal employees get paid and want more equality. He stated if all district employees were state employees he would be able to offer professional development opportunities, but they would not be supervised by the local board any longer. State employees have advancement opportunities, not raises. Sandy Hutchison asked why the state employees have to advance to a higher level, Bryan answered that the state merit system has automatic time-frame advancements. Sandy also stated that if the district employees had received a small increase instead of being frozen, they would not be so upset. Bryan Hopkins stated he is talking to some districts about sharing technicians. Bruce Biermann stated that there is a lack of trust and respect, district employees put their trust in their supervisors. Bruce stated that he felt Bryan Hopkins needed to put himself in a district spot and look at it from the view of how to respond to employees and explain why timesheets are needed for accountability when district boards already know what their employees do. Mike Kelley stated that the districts want the timesheets to remain within the districts. Bryan stated the timesheets need to be proper to account for employees' time and properly track the Fair Labor Law leave rules, and also let us know what employees are spending their time on. He stated he needed both associations engaged on this.

Kathryn Braden expressed again her thanks for the recognition she received at the Training Conference. She stated she had never received such an honor. She stated the Commission needed to take everyone's comments seriously. Cost-share is probably 2/3 or less of what her district's workload. Her staff feels it would be hard to share technicians because they need to develop trust from the landowners. Steve Radcliff questioned why the Commission didn't address the districts where there were timesheet issues and leave everyone else alone. Steve also stated he felt outsourcing payroll is one more step toward making the district employees state employees.

Kelly Smith from Farm Bureau stated this was the first time he had been able to attend the MASWCD Board meeting. He stated we need to look at what is best for everybody. Whether we like it or not, this is government. We need to do the right things for the right reasons. Keep the lines of communication open between all parties. If we can't work out our differences here and the public sees the squabbling, it will not be good for the program.

Employee Association Report: Sandy Hutchison stated they had a good meeting and training session. She said they talked about know your own turf, don't step on others toes. She stated she plans to use her personal e-mail for questionable e-mails to prevent e-mail issues.

Old Business: The Board reviewed the numbers from the Training Conference, the number registered, the number of hotel rooms used, the costs for the meals, etc. There was a question about possibly buying our own large screen projectors, but after further discussion it was decided that might not be the best idea. The evaluation summary from the Training Conference was also reviewed. One issue discussed was the new per diem rates and the need to probably do an all-inclusive registration fee instead of individual meal prices as the per diem would not be near enough to cover the hotel meal costs. This will be decided closer to the Training Conference.

Steve Radcliff, Peggy Lemons and Sandy Hutchison attended a Leadership Conference in Louisville, Kentucky last December that was sponsored by NACD. They all received a stipend for the expenses to attend this meeting so there was no cost to their respective associations. Sandy stated she used a presentation from the conference at her meeting earlier today.

The NACD North Central Regional Meeting in Chicago in January was attended by Steve Radcliff, Kenny Lovelace, Beverly Dometrorch and Peggy Lemons. There was a film shown titled "Troubled Waters" that was very concerning. This film was developed by the University of Minnesota and seemed to point the finger at agriculture as the reason for the Mississippi River problems and the hypoxia zone issues. Urban run-off was hardly mentioned. Steve Sunderland of Minnesota was re-elected as chair for the region and Jerry Snodgrass of Illinois was re-elected as the NACD Executive Board Member from the region.

The NACD National Meeting was recently held in Nashville, Tennessee. Steve Radcliff, Kenny Lovelace, Bruce Biermann, Beverly Dometrorch and Peggy Lemons attended. Sandy Hutchison also attended representing the Employees Association. NRCS Chief White spoke at the General Session and was very interesting. There were several workshops that were very educational. Missouri was one of 13 states recognized for the Supervisor training being offered to local Board Supervisors, and received a very nice plaque. The ten states who had contributed the most dollars in quota funds were recognized. Missouri was number eleven. NACD requested an estimated amount of quota dollars for the 2011 year, \$45,000 was submitted. This amount is slightly higher than the 2010 contribution, but in line with what has been contributed in previous years.

The time-sheet issues were discussed earlier during the Commission report. The employee comp time categories are dependent on the rules as specified by the Fair Labor Standard Act and seem to depend on whether employees are paid on a salaried basis or not for receiving comp time. The majority of the district employees will probably be non-exempt and should receive time and half comp time for hours worked over 40 in a week.

New Business: The agenda for the Education Seminar was reviewed. The only legislation known is the budget and a bill replacing withholding taxes with a flat sales tax. One issue of concern is that there needs to be a set funding amount preserved for dedicated taxes under such a system. The bill has had very little action so far. There is also a push to tax out-of-state Internet sales which would increase our program revenue. The evening discussion for the Seminar will include the FY-2012 budget currently in the Legislature and briefly cover the Board Training Certification.

AREA Reports: Bruce Biermann stated he had made contact with the districts in his area about the time-sheet concerns. One district wanted to know what the cost was for developing the new time sheet program. He thanked the Association for their work on this issue.

Tom Lambert stated he had received some comments on the time sheets. He attended a stream-bank workshop in his area and stated he was impressed with the workshop and thought it might be considered for a Training Conference workshop.

Kenny Lovelace stated he had contacted his districts on the time sheet concerns. He stated one of his districts had a problem with salary amounts. He also stated they are starting the 4th year of wet weather.

Beverly Dometrorch said she had contacted all her districts on the time sheet program. They had a lot of concerns about the time sheets and the comp time categories. Some stated they had to take a pay cut because they lost local funds that had supplemented their salaries received from DNR. One district questioned where the additional cost-share funds came from. Bryan Hopkins responded that they came from unobligated funds from last year. He stated we need to get in the habit of doing this instead of adding to the reserve. One of her districts stated they were told by their coordinator that if they did not send in the information for the time sheets they would loose their funding. Bryan Hopkins stated that none of the coordinators had the authority to make a statement like that.

George Engelbach stated none of his districts had called him about the time sheets, but he also stated he had not called them either. All but one in his area has paid dues for this year.

David Hale reported for Ben Gorden who couldn't attend. The time sheet program is a big issue in the area. There are still questions on the elections as well.

Dan Greeson stated he had not heard from all the counties in his area on the time sheets.

Mike Kelley said his area had a lot of questions on the time sheets. They are waiting to see what the MASWCD Board recommends. He also stated they have had a lot of issues with soil tests needing a lot of lime and fertilizer and with prices of fertilizer, some landowners are waiting to do their practices. His area has not had much rain, it is pretty dry.

Correspondence: None.

Other Business: Peggy Lemons discussed the upcoming Missouri Envirothon and also the fact that she normally attended the Canon Envirothon with the Missouri winning team. Beverly Dometrorch motioned approval to cover the expenses for Peggy to attend the Canon Envirothon. Kenny Lovelace seconded. Motion carried unanimously (8-0). After discussion Tom Lambert motioned approval of a \$500 contribution to the cost of sending the team to the Canon Envirothon. Bruce Biermann seconded. Motion carried unanimously (8-0). Mike Kelly motioned to contribute \$375 toward the Mary Burt Envirothon Scholarship Fund. Beverly Dometrorch seconded. Motion carried unanimously (8-0).

The date for the next regular meeting will be Tuesday May 10, the day before the Commission meeting on May 11, at the USDA Service Center in Jefferson City. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m. Motion for adjournment made by Mike Kelley, Bruce Biermann seconded. Motion carried unanimously (8-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Lemons, Executive Director

Steve Radcliff, President