

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER - On Tuesday February 15, 2022, at 7:02 pm a zoom meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the St Joseph County SWCD was called to order by John Dooms, Chairman.

PRESENT – SWCD

John Dooms, Chair/Supervisor
Dave Vandewalle, Supervisor
Marty Lappin, Supervisor
Mike Burkholder
David Straughn

PRESENT – SWCD/NRCS

Sarah Longenecker, SWCD CC
Ally Pudlo, SWCD EEC
Debbie Knepp, NRCS DC
Jorge Lozoya, NRCS

Present - EX-OFFICIO

PRESENT – Public

ABSENT – SWCD

Sam James, Supervisor
Dave Craft
Chuck Lehman
Randy Matthys
Richard Schmidt
Dru Wrasse
Chris Matthys, Supervisor

II. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA – new business item e. Administrative Assistant, f. St Joseph County Ag Days

III. REGULAR BUSINESS

- a. **Legislative Updates** – John mentioned IASWCD’s bill tracker and asked that we get Marty on the email list to receive
- b. **Indiana Conservation Partnership Updates** – none.
- c. **Minutes January 18, 2022 board meeting** – Board Minutes were reviewed and approved as presented.
- d. **Treasurer’s Report: (1/19/2022-2/14/2022)** – Treasurer’s report was reviewed and approved as presented
- e. **Approval of Claims (1/19/2022-2/14/2022)** – A motion (Vandewalle/Lappin) was made to approve Claim Nos. 11696-11708 for a total of \$6,576.88. Motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **St. Joseph Co. Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff Reports**
 - i. **Field Office Report** – The field office report was presented to the board, reviewed & discussed. (Attached)
 - ii. **NRCS Talking Points** – Knepp presented the report to the board, reviewed & discussed (attached).
- b. **Committee Reports**
 - i. **Annual Meeting** – John did a brief recap of the annual meeting held the prior Friday evening. There has been much positive feedback on the speaker and the meeting went well. John gave the oath of office to appointed supervisor Dave Vandewalle at the board meeting.
- c. **CWI** – Sarah asked the board for approval of an application for 1 acre of pollinator habitat at a max cost share of \$750.00. A motion was made and seconded (Vandewalle/Lappin). Motion carried. Staff will provide an update on the status of the grant for the March board meeting.
- d. **Election of officers** – Tabled until March
- e. **Food Plot Seed** – Sarah provided information on prior years food plot seed giveaway (attached). After some discussion it was recommended (Burkholder) to cap the cost at \$1000 for food plot seed. Motion was made and seconded (Lappin/Vandewalle). Motion carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Schedules/ Upcoming Events / Any Related Claims** - calendars explaining upcoming special events & holiday schedules on the back of the agenda.
 - i. **Staff Comp Time Requests** – Ally informed the board that she has programs outside of normal working hours on 3/12 and 3/22 and requested approval for comp time. All present board members approved.
- b. **Administrative Assistant Interviews** – John asked the board members to choose their top 5 applicants and get them to Deb by Friday, February 18th. John is working on getting a library room to hold the interviews in. Once applicants are selected, they will set a date to conduct the interviews.
- c. **St Joseph County Ag Days** – Ally informed the board that she has only 2 volunteers for Ag Days so far (both for Friday). More are needed in order to staff the tables/booth for the weekend. She needs to know by March 1st who all is willing to assist so we will be able to let Ag Days know if we are attending all 3 days.

VI. PRIVILEGE OF FLOOR – Mike thanked the staff and board for hard work and thanked Marty for stepping up to fill the vacancy on the board.

VII. ADJOURNMENT – The board meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Longenecker
County Conservationist
St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District
2903 Gary Drive, Plymouth, IN 46563
Email: Sarah.longenecker@in.nacdnet.net
www.stjosephswcd.org

Approved by:



Supervisor



Supervisor



Supervisor

Field Office Report
January 17 – February 11, 2022

General/Miscellaneous

Office Work

- Annual Meeting prep – write-ups, financial statements, programs, tickets, set up, logistics
- Phone meeting with Jennifer Thum to discuss RCPP application and to connect her with the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi
- Administrative Assistant off Boarding – exit interview, non-disclosure agreement, etc
- Training of new NRCS employee
- 50 year drought study request

Field Work

EQIP- Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Office Work

- Processed payments for 2 producer/landowners – cover crops, Invasive Species control
- Assess and rank 12 applications
- Create contract transfer documents for signature

Field Work

- Meet with landowner to look at site for monarch habitat, wildlife shrub planting and Invasive Species control

WRE- Wetland Reserve Program

Office Work

Check seeding mixes for 3 projects – sedge meadow and 2 pollinator/monarch plantings
Prepare documents for payment for above seedings as well as Invasive Species Control

Field Work

Meet with clients to obtain signatures to process payments

CSP- Conservation Stewardship Program

Office Work

- Prepare and mail re enroll letters to 3 clients whose contracts expire in 2022

Field Work

CRP-Conservation Reserve Program

Office Work

- Provide mid contract management info for burn plan to client

Field Work

CWI- Clean Water Indiana

Office Work

- Processed application for pollinator habitat and provided seed mix after application approval

Field Work

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Wetland Determinations / Highly Erodible Land Determinations

Office Work

- Completed 1 wetland determination

Field Work

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Rule 5/ Rule 13

Office/Field Work

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Education

Age	Total # Programs/ Hours	Total # People
Youth Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science Alive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0, event cancelled
Adult Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recycling Resolutions: Composting 101 Workshop (Bendix Woods)• Recycling Resolutions: Composting 101 Workshop (North Liberty Library)• Recycling Resolutions: Rain Barrel Workshop (Bendix Woods)• Recycling Resolutions: Rain Barrel Workshop (North Liberty Library)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 adults• 4 adults• 3 adults• 11 adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finished up Recycling Resolutions series• Worked on Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy class• Booked more programs for the spring• Prepped for Annual Meeting• Worked on March-April newsletter• Attended meetings and Annual Conference		

Meetings & Trainings

Staff Meeting - 4 Program/Technology Update – 2 Conservation Desktop/Cons Assessment/Ranking Tool – 4 days SWCD Annual Meeting IASWCD Annual Confercnce	CISMA State of USDA Address Tree Planting Workshop Sec Vilsack announcement of Pilot Project for Climate Smart Ag Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy Virtual Workshops – 2 Ecological Advocacy Committee Meeting
Webinars	Dates
	Jan 17 – Office Closed

Comments from the Community

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DC Talking Points

February 2022

FARM BILL

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

Indiana NRCS has announced a second Wetland Reserve Easement funding cutoff date of February 28. Applications must be submitted to the applicant's local district conservationist to be considered for FY2022 funding.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The call for proposals for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is open through April 13. Projects can request between \$250,000 and \$10 million, and partners should bring contributions at least equal to the request for NRCS funds. Priority activities include climate-smart agriculture, urban agriculture and racial justice and equity. Proposals are competitively selected based on impact, partner contributions, innovation and capacity for successful project management.

There are two types of funding opportunities under RCPP: RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities, in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFA, partners have more flexibility in working directly with agricultural producers to support the development of new conservation structures and approaches that would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic. Project types that may be suited to AFA, as highlighted by the 2018 Farm Bill include:

- Projects that use innovative approaches to leverage the federal investment in conservation.
- Projects that deploy a pay-for-performance conservation approach.
- Projects that seek large-scale infrastructure investment that generate conservation benefits for agricultural producers and nonindustrial private forest owners.

For a copy of the Classic or AFA solicitation please contact Jill Reinhart, ASTC Partnerships at jill.reinhart@usda.gov.

ITEMS FOR ALL OFFICE STAFF TO DISCUSS WITH PRODUCERS

Farm Service Agency Documents Needed for NRCS Program Application Process

As a reminder, the following list of forms are required to be submitted to FSA for eligibility for NRCS programs. Failure to complete these forms and return them to FSA as quickly as possible could impact the staff's ability to enter all information needed prior to the eligibility deadline and may therefore render your application ineligible for consideration this year.

All applicants will need to complete the following forms with the Farm Service Agency:

- AD-2047 SCIMS Worksheet
- AD-1026 HELC/WC Certification
- CCC-941 AGI Form

- CCC 901 or 902 Farm Operating Plan (If entity- member information such as Articles of Incorporation, EIN number, and other proof of entity will be needed to complete these forms.)

Historically Underserved information

Historically Underserved participant information is now collected as part of the application process. A section asking program applicants for information regarding their potential HU designation is now included on all NRCS program applications. All office staff should be aware and explain the definition of Historically Underserved (HU) so that applicants can complete the new HU section of program applications correctly and potentially receive HU benefits.

Limited Resource Farmer

The term “Limited Resource Farmer” means a participant:

- With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
- Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.

A legal entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Farmer only if all individual members independently qualify.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer

The term “Socially Disadvantaged” means an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

These groups consist of the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics

Note: Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation programs.

Beginning Farmer

The term “Beginning Farmer” means a participant who:

- Has not operated a farm, or who has operated a farm for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of a legal entity, and
- Who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm.

In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.

In the case of a contract made with a legal entity, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm. Material and substantial participation requires that the members provide some amount of the management, or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm would be seriously impaired.

Veteran Farmer

The term "Veteran Farmer" means a farmer who:

- Served in the active military, naval, or air service, and
- Who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable, and
- Who has not operated a farm; or has operated a farm for not more than 10 consecutive years.

A legal entity or joint operation can be a veteran farmer only if all individual members independently qualify.

More Information

Information and definitions for Historically Underserved customers can be found here: [Small & Limited and Beginning Farmers & Ranchers | NRCS Indiana \(usda.gov\)](#)

RETURN TO WORKPLACE

While we continue to monitor the status of the pandemic, it is our intent to also continue our phased return to the physical workspace. There are three key components to this next phase:

- By February 11, employees will receive their notice of remote work and/or telework status and their 45-day notification of returning to office letters, subject to completion of labor relations obligations.
- On February 28, we will welcome the senior leadership cadre back to physical office spaces. This includes Political Appointees, Senior Executive Service, Senior Level, Scientific and Professional, Senior Scientific and Technological Service and Senior Foreign Service Officers.
- On March 28, Agencies and Staff Offices will begin their phased return to the physical workplace plans to welcome back employees who do not have remote work agreements.

COVID-19 FAQs

The USDA COVID-19 [Frequently Asked Questions](#) are updated regularly and include questions from supervisors, employees, and labor unions. Questions may be sent to futureofwork@usda.gov.

Return to Workplace Office Hours

The Human Resources Division is conducting biweekly "office hours" open to all FPAC employees to answer questions related to return to the workplace. Visit [myFPAC](#) to join the sessions.

GOVDELIVERY FIELD OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS

General NRCS articles can be found on SharePoint here: [Public Affairs - GovDelivery - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#).