

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - On Tuesday April 16, 2019, at 6:35pm a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the St Joseph County SWCD at the Centre Township Branch of the St Joseph County Public Library, South Bend, IN 46614 was called to order by John Dooms, Chairman.

PRESENT – SWCD

John Dooms, Chair/Supervisor
Jeremy Cooper, Vice-Chair/Supervisor
Dave Vandewalle, Supervisor
Mike Burkholder, Supervisor
David Straughn

PRESENT – SWCD/NRCS

Sarah Longenecker, SWCD CC
Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD AA
Jane Sablich, SWCD EEC

Present - EX-OFFICIO

Rick Kennedy – Purdue Ag
Extension
PRESENT – Public

ABSENT – SWCD

Dave Craft, Supervisor
Debbie Knepp, NRCS DC
Jim LaFree
Dru Wrasse
Richard Schmidt
Randy Matthys
Chuck Lehman

- II. **ADDITIONS TO AGENDA** – Old Business Item f. Oath of Office for Mike Burkholder

III. **REGULAR BUSINESS**

- a. **Legislative Updates** –HB 1266 regarding MS4s has passed out of committee with some amendments. HB 1270 regarding the Kankakee River Basin Commission reducing the size of the commission board and adding an assessed amount charged to landowners to fund the commission passed the senate and is now back to the house to concur or dissent (leading to further discussion). (synopsis attached) IASWCD’s request for increased funding did not get added to the state budget.
- b. **Indiana Conservation Partnership Updates** – n/a
- c. **Minutes: March 19, 2019 board meeting** – Minutes were reviewed and approved as presented by motion (Cooper/Vandewalle).
- d. **Treasurer’s Report: (3/20/2019-4/16/2019)** – The treasurer’s report was reviewed and approved as submitted by motion (Vandewalle/Cooper).
- e. **Approval of Claims (3/20/2019-4/16/2019)** –A motion (Cooper/Vandewalle) was made to approve Claim Nos. 11457-11463 for a total of \$945.55 as presented. 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. (Attached)
 - ii. **NRCS Talking Points** - NRCS talking points presented to the board & reviewed. (attached).
- b. **Committee Reports**
 - i. **Education** – Cooper reported that we are picking up speed with teachers and getting more programs going. Committee is asking/needng more volunteers to move forward with different education projects throughout the year. These volunteers do not need to be on the board but willing to help with different education events.
- c. **Contractors Breakfast** – Cooper reported the information was fantastic and well received. We had a few technical problems and might need to look into hardware (speakers, computer, etc.) for future workshops. Cooper also has suggestions for people to add to our mailing list for future workshops. Cooper would like to see this offered again next year.
- d. **Landfill Inspection** – Longenecker stated that the landfill is continuing to do what needs to be done and keeping sedimentation on site. Straughn also commented that it was very interesting and informative to attend and see what all the landfill is doing to maintain the waste in the landfill.
- e. **2019 CWI Grant** – Sablich informed the board that the state soils board has approved our Ag BMP’s portion of our 2019 CWI grant application for \$65,000. This would be a 3-year grant (2019-2021) and would cover No-Till, Cover Crops, Nutrient Management, Filter Strips and Pollinator Habitat. This is a grant in collaboration with Marshall County SWCD. A motion (Cooper/Vandewalle) was made to move forward with this grant. Motion carried. A separate discussion was then held regarding the district cost share money the board last month decided to spend this year and in the upcoming years. Sablich brought to the board the idea of an Urban focus with installing raingardens with the district paying 75% up to \$3,000 like our previous CWI grant was. Kennedy informed the board that sometime this year Purdue is hoping to do a raingarden workshop at Battel Center in Mishawaka.
- f. **Oath of Office** – Dooms did the oath of office for Mike Burkholder for his elected 3-year term as supervisor since he was unable to attend the annual meeting in February.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Schedules/ Upcoming Events / Any Related Claims** - calendars were handed out explaining upcoming special events & holiday schedules on the back of the agenda.
 - i. **Natural Resources Teacher Institute, Farm Curriculum Workshop** – Sablich asked the board to attend a Farm Curriculum Workshop in Ohio on May 30th. It is a free event and she will be able to receive Elementary through High School Curriculum. Board approved Sablich to attend. Sablich also asked to attend the teacher institute July 9-14 for the advanced forestry. A motion (Cooper/Burkholder) was made to release \$50 for Sablich to attend this workshop. Motion passed.
- b. **Education Supplies** – Sablich is requesting a portable speaker and microphone at the cost of \$85, a canopy tent at the cost of \$75, a logo table runner at the cost of \$35, sandbox supplies; longer HDMI cord at the cost of \$12, sand at the cost of \$50 (whenever needed), table skirt for the cart at the cost of \$20 and cover crop seeds at the cost of \$100. A motion (Cooper/Burkholder) was made to release \$440 for the above listed supplies. Motion carried. A motion (Cooper/Burkholder) was made to release up to \$500 for materials needed for pollinator houses. Motion carried. A motion (Cooper/Burkholder) was made to release \$35 for booth fee at the Best Week Ever event. Motion passed.
- c. **Department Head updates** – Sablich updated the board that the county is holding monthly department head meetings. Some items they have been discussing have been about starting customer surveys to find better ways of servicing the community. There has also been discussion on Title VI reporting which collects demographic information from attendees at public meetings and workshops.
- d. **Capital Asset Policy** – Hoffarth informed the board that after attending the State Board of Accounts training that we need to have a policy in place that states the minimum threshold for reporting our capital assets (vehicles, equipment, etc.). Currently our district does not have a set policy and we record any all equipment regardless of cost. After some discussion the board would like to investigate this further and see if other districts already have a limit and what it is. Discussion will continue at the next board meeting.
- e. **District Van Logo** – Hoffarth brought to the board quotes for vinyl logos to be installed on the district van’s driver and passenger doors. A motion (Burkholder/Vandewalle) was made to go with Fast Signs at the cost of \$185.86. Motion passed.

VI. PRIVILEGE OF FLOOR – Sablich has been asked to do 4-H judging and has been told they can pay her \$65 and she was asking if the board would like to receive this or tell them to keep it. After some discussion, the board decided to accept it. Hoffarth informed the board that NACD Annual Report was available.

VII. ADJOURNMENT – The board meeting adjourned at 7:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Hoffarth
Administrative Assistant
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Approved by:



Supervisor



Supervisor



Supervisor



MEMORANDUM

To: KRBC Members
From: Scott D. Pelath, Executive Director
Subject: *** UPDATE *** CURRENT SUMMARY OF HB 1270 ***
Date: April 11, 2019

As I reported earlier, HB 1270 passed the Indiana Senate today by a vote of 40-5.

Yesterday, the bill was amended on the Senate floor. The key provision was a delay in any assessment fees, which would not appear on any bills until the May 2021 installment. In the interim, the Commission would have to hold sixteen public information hearings – two per county – to explain the fees and their intended application.

Now that HB 1270 has cleared the Senate, the House of Representatives can either 1) vote to concur with Senate changes, and send the bill to the Governor or 2) request the formation of a joint House-Senate conference committee to do more work on the matter. The decision primarily is in the hands of the bill's original author, State Rep. Doug Gutwein of Jasper County.

Now that the dust has settled, here is how HB 1270 stands as of this afternoon. Updated sections are in green:

1. **Regional financing.** According to the official estimate of the Legislative Services Agency, beginning in 2021 the bill would generate \$2.99 million per year for the Kankakee River Basin. Annual funds would derive from a \$1 per acre assessment on agricultural property; \$2 on undeveloped commercial parcels; a \$7 per parcel residential assessment; \$50 per parcel on commercial property, and \$360 per parcel on utility and industrial property (50% on each tax bill).
2. **County Options.** I originally reported three options for counties to participate, but there actually is a fourth that I did not deem likely to be employed. They are:
 - a. Take no action, and allow state law to impose the fee schedule;
 - b. Resolve to pay an amount equal to what would have been raised from the state fee schedule;
 - c. Enact a reduced fee schedule supplemented by other payments that total an amount equal to would the state fee schedule would have raised; or
 - d. Enact a fee schedule greater than the state fee schedule, and retain the difference between the state schedule and the county's schedule.

3. **After 2022, 10% of funds retained by those counties not using option “a”.** The amounts would have to be allocated for storage, flood control, and drainage within the basin.
4. **Mandated regulatory coordination.** The revised bill directs the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environmental Management, and other state agencies to simplify and carefully coordinate their permitting procedures for the Kankakee and Yellow Rivers.
5. **New responsibilities of the Commission.** After June 30, 2019 – unless a county must respond to an emergency -- the revised Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission would have exclusive authority to implement drainage and flood control activities within 75-feet of the Kankakee and Yellow Rivers. Powers would include:
 - a. Acquiring land and easements for the construction of levies, flood control improvements, and flood storage;
 - b. Bank stabilization;
 - c. Tree removal;
 - d. Construction and operation of sand traps;
 - e. Sediment removal;
 - f. Construction of access roads and paths; and
 - g. Any other necessary actions.
6. **Stipulations for use of assessment funds.** All assessments received by the commission must be maintained in a segregated account for improvements, acquisitions, flood control, repairs, and the repayment of bonds.
7. **Special fund for landowner reimbursements.** The bill would require the commission to create a special fund to reimburse landowners for damages related to flood storage.
8. **Bonding authority.** The commission would possess the option of using bond financing through the Indiana Finance Authority (IFA).
9. **New governance structure.** As was in the original bill, the county commission in each of the eight counties would appoint one member to the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission. A ninth member would be the DNR Director or the Director’s designee. Terms would be four years in length, although in order to create staggered terms, the initial appointment in LaPorte, Marshal, Porter, and Starke Counties would be for two years and four years thereafter. One non-voting member from Illinois could be invited to join the commission.

10. **Technical advisory committee.** In addition to the new nine-member commission, the measure would also establish a formal, nine-member advisory committee consisting of the surveyors and a regional soil and water conservation district director. If a surveyor is appointed to the commission itself, the same commissioners would appoint a member in his or her place to the advisory committee.
11. **Surveyors are “default” appointments to the commission.** If the county commissioners fail to make an appointment by September 1, then the county surveyor would be the automatic appointment to the commission.
12. **Undeveloped public lands for flood storage.** The commission and public agencies would have to coordinate to ensure that public lands maximize flood storage before other land is used.
13. **Preferences for Indiana businesses and workers.** The bill creates a preference for Indiana businesses and Indiana workers on commission projects.
14. **Sixteen public informational hearings.** Before January 21, 2021, the Commission will be required to hold two public informational meetings in each basin county. The purpose is to describe the assessments and intended projects.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 219-861-7999 or email me. The more I discuss it with others, the more I increase my own command of the material. Dialogue is important for all of us.

Rest assured that I will continue to provide updates and my best assessments as new information becomes available.

Field Office Report
March 18 – April 12, 2019

General/Miscellaneous

Office Work

- Landfill Inspection
- Mid-year review

Field Work

- Field visit with 2 different landowners on drainage/erosion problems
- Field visit with 2 different landowners for pollinator and wildlife habitat planning

EQIP- Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Office Work

- Conservation planning/documentation/ranking of 5 applications – pollinator habitat, 2 cover crop, Forage/Biomass planting, Heavy Use Area (2), Livestock pipeline (2), Animal Trail/Walkway, Prescribed Grazing (2), Fence
- Modify Invasive species Control acres in contract

Field Work

Meet with landowner to look at farm and develop grazing needs
Walk field for forage and biomass planting to develop resource inventory/plan
Walk field for pollinator habitat to develop resource inventory/plan
Initial tree survey to identify potential bat roost trees for wetland enhancement project
Field check Invasive Species Control completion

WRE- Wetland Reserve Program

Office Work

- Develop easement map for 18-acre application site
- Review restoration plan for 43-acre site with landowners
- Complete application packet for 32 ac site

Field Work

Rank 32-acre site

CRP-Conservation Reserve Program

Office Work

Met with landowner to discuss issues/options as acting DC for Marshall Co

Field Work

-

Wetland Determinations / Highly Erodible Land Determinations

Office Work

- 2 determinations completed
-

Field Work

-

Rule 5/ Rule 13

Office Work

- 2 SWPPP reviews
- Reviewed early coordination request for bridge replacement in Mishawaka

Education		
Age	Total # Programs/Hours in Program	Total # People
Youth Education	15	393
Adult Education	3 (7 hours)	84
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with City of South Bend, Cardno, and Trinity School about upcoming programs • Held a Contractors Breakfast (27) • Held a Composting Workshop (33) 		

Meetings & Trainings	
Staff Meetings – 4 Breakfast with a Forester Highly Erodible Land (HEL) offsite tool Supervisor’s meeting NAI Region 4 Meeting Youth County Leadership Meeting-2 Education Committee Meeting	Cover Crop Summit online Teleconference – 2018 Farm Bill Highly Erodible Workload process Rule 5 Plan review training State Board of Accounts (SBOA) training
Webinars	Dates
Interseeding Cover Crops in Knee High Corn Conservation Desktop – 1 Aligning Soil and Human Health Cover Crops and Slugs	

Comments from the Community

DC Talking Points

April 2019

CHIEF'S PRIORITIES

NRCS Chief Matt Lohr recently shared three priorities with employees that convey his vision for the agency – to make the agency as effective as possible for all those people we support in getting conservation on the ground and to hold them and their needs at the forefront of our work, day in and day out. To accomplish this, NRCS staff will work collaboratively to target these three priorities.

1. Implement and deliver the 2018 Farm Bill to our nation's farmers, ranchers, and private foresters.
 - Develop rules and regulations in a timely manner to efficiently and effectively deliver NRCS programs to our customers and carry out the will of Congress.
 - Solicit and respond to input from key stakeholders and tribal nations.
2. Streamline our processes and program delivery to best serve our customers.
 - Integrate conservation planning and program delivery into a seamless business process to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of field office operations.
 - Initiate IT deployment of a streamlined business practice to more efficiently develop conservation plans.
 - Continue to adjust our agency's annual program delivery cycle to mitigate the potential for carryover of national conservation investments.
 - Identify proper staffing levels, staffing locations, and staffing expectations through appropriate pre-determined metrics.
3. Better understand customer needs and improve overall customer service.
 - Clarify the expectations we have for serving our customers and build those into performance evaluations.
 - Consistently consider the individual needs of those we serve. Every action taken should be rooted in the goal of improved understanding and delivery.
 - Expand our strategic partnerships with both outside stakeholders and sister agencies within FPAC to maximize opportunities for our nation's farmers, ranchers, and private foresters.
 - Mindfully seek out opportunities to better serve young, beginning, small, minority, veteran, and other underserved producers.

INDIANA REVISED STAFFING PLAN

During the recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) listening sessions and Indiana Field Employee Council (IFEC) meetings, a concern was raised related to the absence of a career ladder for district conservationists in Indiana. The primary issue is that district conservationists no longer supervise employees and that may make them less competitive in advancing their careers.

As part of our restructuring that began in 2002 and the establishment Conservation Delivery Teams (CDT), supervisory responsibilities were removed from district conservationists' position descriptions. The intent of that decision was to free up district conservationists to allow more time for conservation planning and program management and to streamline communications, respond to shifting workloads, and provide more consistency and quality control.

In 2010, Indiana was identified as having the highest average employee grade of any state in the Midwest. Since that time, the leadership team has carefully evaluated each vacated district conservationist position's responsibilities and grade level prior to advertising to ensure it is consistent with the national job description.



In January 2019, we received word that based on the results of the 2018 National Workload Analysis, Indiana's staffing cap would be raised to 236, allowing us to add several additional positions. The decision was made that these new positions would all be filled at the field level, giving us several options to address workload and the issue of career ladders.

The plan is to add eight (8) supervisory district conservationists, titled planning team leaders. There will be one planning team leader per CDT. These positions will be supervised by the area conservationists and become a part of the Area Office Leadership Team.

Planning team leaders will be the planning counterpart to the CDT Leaders and co-located to allow for coordination of planning activities. Planning team leaders will supervise all the district conservationists within the CDT boundary. Positions for planning team leaders will be advertised agency-wide. Implementation of this plan will begin on April 1st with a target date to have all positions filled by October 1st. A summary of Q&As will be provided to all offices in the near future.

FARM BILL

What's New In 2018 Farm Bill – See attached Farm Bill Talking Points for more information

Conservation Overview

- Strengthens and expands support to producers who address significant natural resource concerns through adoption of conservation practices and activities.
- Ensures that voluntary conservation programs balance farm productivity with conservation benefits so the most fertile and productive lands remain in production while land retired for conservation purposes favors more environmentally sensitive acres.
- Supports conservation programs that ensure cost-effective financial assistance for improved soil health, water and air quality, and other natural resource benefits.
- Encourages entry into farming through increased access to land and capital for young, beginning, veteran, and underrepresented farmers.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

- Authorizes assistance to partners who pursue 'Buy-Protect-Sell' transactions.
- Requires a conservation plan for highly erodible land that will be protected by an agricultural land easement.
- Increases flexibility for partners to meet cost-share matching requirements.
- Identifies water quality as a program purpose for enrollment of wetland reserve easements.
- Expands wetland types eligible for restoration and management under wetland reserve easements.

Conservation Stewardship Program

- Increases payment rates for adoption of cover crop rotations and advanced grazing management activities.
- Authorizes contract extensions to facilitate renewal under new program authority.
- Transforms funding mechanism for program contracts, authorizing specified annual funding levels.
- Provides specific support for organic and transitioning to organic production activities.
- Includes special grassland conservation initiative for certain producers who have maintained cropland base acres.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Adds potential resource concerns related to beneficial cost-effective operation changes.



- Raises cap for organic producers to \$140,000 over six years.
- New enrollment option through incentive contracts to address priority resource concerns.
- Requires advance payment option be offered to historically underserved producers.
- Authorizes direct program assistance to irrigation districts, including acequias and other entities, for purposes of improving water use efficiencies.

Healthy Forests Reserve Program

- Expands enrollment options for Indian tribes.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- Simplifies funding authorities for program implementation.
- Authorizes Regional Conservation Partnership Program contracts rather than requiring enrollment through other program authorities.
- Expands flexibility for alternative funding arrangements with partners.
- Expands availability of watershed program authorities to projects outside critical conservation areas.

Big Pine Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Dollars are still available for farmers through the Big Pine Watershed RCPP. The watershed which includes portions of Benton, White, Warren, and Tippecanoe counties and the partnership is working with farmers in the area to increase the number of nutrient and sediment reducing practices on cropland. Applications are accepted year-round, but to be considered for this round of funding, applications must be received by June 21, 2019. RCPP is a partner-led program, with NRCS directing technical and financial assistance to priorities identified by partners.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Funding Application Deadline Announced (ACEP)

Funding is available to help landowners protect and restore key farmlands, grasslands and wetlands across Indiana. The funding is provided through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), created to protect critical water resources and wildlife habitat, and encourage private owners to maintain land for farming. Eligible entities must submit applications for the current funding pool on or before April 5, 2019. *May 10*

Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses while supporting environmental quality, wildlife habitat, historic preservation and protection of open spaces. State and local governments, non-governmental organizations and Native American Tribes that have farmland or grassland protection programs are eligible to partner with NRCS to protect farmland through easements.

Wetland reserve easements (WRE) help landowners reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater, restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife, and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program Application Deadline Announced for Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB)

EQIP dollars will be made available to farmers who want to voluntarily invest in conservation practices to improve water quality in the WLEB. These additional dollars expand on the substantial conservation efforts already underway in the basin area. NRCS plans to work with farmers to install conservation practices such as no-till, cover crops, buffers, agricultural drainage water management systems, and nutrient and pesticide management. While applications are accepted on a continuous basis, June 21 will be the cutoff date this year to be considered for funding for this program.



The eligible Indiana portion of the WLEB includes parts of Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Noble, Steuben and Wells counties. Landowners with acreage in the following watersheds may be eligible for funding: St. Joseph-Maumee, St. Mary's, Upper Maumee and Auglaize.

VEHICLE MANAGEMENT TOOL (VMT)

The VMT is a web-based tool is now in operation in Indiana (we are serving as a pilot state). This tool is used to reserve vehicles and helps track use, mileage and maintenance through the vehicle log process. All partnership staff and service center employees and volunteers are expected to use it for scheduling vehicle use. The tool is accessed using an e-auth account. Staff who missed the instructional webinar will be sent a link to view the recorded version as soon as it is available. Also, a VMT User Guide will also soon be available. The VMT is simply a reservation and tracking tool, it does not replace any established vehicle use policy.

Now that the Vehicle Management Tool (VMT) is operating and proven to be effective, you may cease using paper vehicle logs to document your use of GOVs. Information that fleet managers needed from the hard copy vehicle log is now available in the VMT. To ensure that we are capturing the data that is necessary for fleet card audits and USDA utilization reporting, it is important that every FPAC driver log their vehicle use in the VMT for every vehicle trip they make. This will be reflected in policy soon. Even though the requirement to keep paper vehicle logs has gone away, you are still required to keep fleet card receipts for owned vehicle fleet card transactions in accordance with NRCS General Manual 120-406-O (mainly for receipts under \$5 and non-fuel purchases) until further notice.

FARMERS.GOV

USDA's vision for farmers.gov is to provide farmers and foresters with online self-service applications, educational materials, engagement opportunities and business tools. USDA's Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency are collaborating with partners in the government and private sector to build farmers.gov. Work to build the website began in fall 2017, and the site launched in 2018.

New additions to the site include a [farmers.gov portal](#) for secure business transactions and a [disaster assistance discovery tool](#). The discovery tool walks producers through five questions to help them identify personalized results of what USDA disaster assistance programs meet their needs. The farmers.gov portal is the first edition of a secure dashboard for producers to manage program applications and other USDA documents. These resources are in addition to other currently available through Farmers.gov, including:

- A mobile-friendly [Service center locator](#), connecting users with USDA assistance
- Routinely updated [farmers.gov blog](#) where producers can read stories about other farmers across the nation containing insight into how other producers address challenges in running successful agricultural operations,
- A [soil health webpage](#), where producers can read about the soil health management practices
- An [online playbook](#), where people can track the latest developments of the site.

