

# Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District

## Board of Supervisors Meeting

January 18, 2024

Beltrami County Commissioners' Conference Room  
701 Minnesota Ave. NW  
Bemidji, MN 56601

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SERVICES IN  
BELTRAMI COUNTY**

**Members Present:** Ray Hendrickson – Vice Chair  
Ruth Trask – Treasurer  
Rachel Gray – Secretary  
Sam Christenson – Public Relations

**Members Absent:** Shane Bowe – Chair

**Others Present:** Brent Rud – District Manager  
Megan FitzGerald – ESD/SWCD  
Aly Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD  
Jody Peek – NRCS

Board Vice Chair Ray Hendrickson called the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meeting for January 18, 2024 officially to order at 9:30 a.m.

### **Additions/Corrections to the Agenda:**

**Motion by Sam Christenson to approve the January 18, 2024 agenda. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

### **Secretary's Report:**

**Motion by Rachel Gray to approve the minutes from the December 21, 2023 SWCD meeting. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Brent is in the process of the end-of-year financial reconciliation. The Treasurer's Report was tabled until the February meeting.

### **Reports:**

NRCS Report – Jody Peek

- **EQIP:** The area team had 96 applications. The assessment and ranking deadline was extended two weeks. Staff have been working on planning since mid-December.
- **CSP:** The area team has 207 active contracts. Staff have been working on payments most of the fall; so far, 180 landowners have been paid. CSP renewals were due in December. The team obligated 25 renewal contracts. January 12<sup>th</sup> was the deadline for first signup CSP applications. 169 applications were received. NRCS has changed the way applications are assessed and ranked. January 26<sup>th</sup> is the ranking deadline; NRCS staff from other counties will assist Beltrami. There will be 11 renewals for 2025 CSP, fewer than usual.
- **Staffing:** There is a non-supervisory DC position open in Bemidji. Reba, the Conservation Engineering Technician in the Bemidji office, left January 8<sup>th</sup> to take a new position; the Bemidji office will rely on other counties for engineering until the position can be backfilled. An administrative assistant position in Bemidji was posted last summer, but was not filled; the position will likely be re-posted. A Grazing Specialist position will also be posted.

- Upcoming Events: Cow-Calf Days will be held in Bagley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> at the American Legion. Hubbard Grazing Workshop will be held in Guthrie on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

District Manager – Brent Rud

- There is currently an open grant opportunity to hire soil health staff. Funding is available to fund a soil health position for four years. While Beltrami County is not ranked as a high priority for percentage of ag lands, the County does have a lot of ag acres, and it was suggested that the SWCD apply for funding. The grant application deadline is February 8<sup>th</sup>. It was suggested to work with NRCS or other SWCDs to possibly apply for a joint position.
- Staffing: Brent gave an update on staffing and interviewing. Currently working on revising the AIS Technician job description to include Keep It Clean duties.
- Brent provided an overview of 2023 grant activity.
- There are currently many grant applications open, including CWMA (could be used for buckthorn removal), multipurpose drainage management, private well testing and treatment, and wellhead protection.
- Election of Officers: **Motion by Sam Christenson to keep the same slate of officers as 2023. Motion seconded by Rachel Gray. Motion carried and approved.**
- MASWCD FY2024 Dues: The SWCD received an invoice for \$7,077.92 for FY2024 dues. This is an \$800 increase from FY2023. MASWCD provides valuable services to the SWCD. **Motion by Rachel Gray to approve and pay MASWCD dues. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**
- 2024 SWCD Budget: Brent presented the 2024 Beltrami SWCD operating budget, which is simplified and does not include grant revenue or spending. Total revenue is \$66,034.00 and expenditures total \$62,235.92. **Motion by Rachel Gray to approve and adopt the 2024 SWCD Budget. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**
- 2024 SWCD Workplan: BWSR requires SWCDs to approve and post an annual workplan on their website. Supervisors asked for clarification on the Geologic Atlas, and were supportive of hiring an intern to complete this work. **Motion by Rachel Gray to approve and adopt the 2024 Workplan. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**

Staff

- Meier Cost Share Contract Amendment: Final costs for the Meier Grant Creek culvert replacement exceed the original contract. Overruns included costs for riprap, class 5, and topsoil. The total project cost listed in the original contract was \$82,000; actual costs totaled \$84,930.60. The contract lists a 95% cost share for the SWCD, which will be paid from Enbridge grant funds. **Motion by Sam Christenson to amend the contract to reflect total project costs of \$84,930.60 with \$80,684.07 (95%) cost share. Motion seconded by Rachel Gray. Motion carried and approved.**
- Mississippi Headwaters 1W1P 2022-23 Workplan Amendment: Beltrami SWCD received \$250,000 in Enbridge grant dollars, which will be used to pay for some projects in the current Mississippi 1W1P Workplan. Because of this, the Mississippi 1W1P Steering Team has requested to move 1W1P Implementation dollars to three new stormwater projects, effectively reallocating \$55,000 from the Water Course to the Urban issue. Additionally, Hubbard SWCD is requesting to reallocate \$12,000 of their staff dollars from the Agriculture to the Environmental Sensitive Issue. Because these requests total more than \$50,000, a workplan amendment is required. The 2022-23 Amended Workplan was approved by the Policy Committee on January 8, 2024. **Motion by Rachel Gray to approve the Mississippi Headwaters 1W1P 2022-23 Workplan Amendment. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**

- Mississippi Headwaters 1W1P 2024-25 Workplan: Staff described the workplan and budget for the next round of Mississippi 1W1P Implementation Grant funds. The total grant amount is \$1,013,278, with \$360,000 slated for staff costs, \$588,278 for projects and programs, and \$65,000 for administration. Staff hopes these simplified categories will allow funds to be spent and reallocated more efficiently. **Motion by Sam Christenson to approve the Mississippi Headwaters 1W1P 2024-25 Workplan. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

Supervisors:

- Sam: Discussion of possible wastewater treatment/storage ponds east of Bemidji.

**Upcoming Meetings/Events:**

Kelliher Cattle Company Banquet on March 10<sup>th</sup> – a fundraiser for ag student grants and loans

Grazing Land Coalition GrazeHers Workshop in June

Regular Board Meetings

- February 15, 2024
- March 21, 2024
- April 18, 2024

**Motion by Ruth Trask to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Rachel Gray. Motion carried and approved. Meeting adjourned.**

# Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors Meeting

February 15, 2024

Beltrami County Commissioners' Conference Room  
701 Minnesota Ave. NW  
Bemidji, MN 56601

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SERVICES IN  
BELTRAMI COUNTY**

**Members Present:** Shane Bowe – Chair  
Ray Hendrickson – Vice Chair  
Ruth Trask – Treasurer

**Members Absent:** Rachel Gray – Secretary  
Sam Christenson – Public Relations

**Others Present:** Brent Rud – District Manager  
Megan FitzGerald – ESD/SWCD  
Aly Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD  
Strait Idso – NRCS  
Chad Severts – BWSR  
Jennifer Malinski – Red Lake DNR

Work Session: Chad provided an overview of the new Conservation Contracts grant program from BWSR. The program replaces the Erosion Control and Water Management Program (State Cost Share), and provides increased flexibility and reduced administration. Major changes include expanded eligible activities, technical assistance no longer limited to 20% of the grant amount, no longer a 10-year effective life requirement for all practices, cost share no longer limited to 75%, flat rate cost share no longer limited to certain practices, and incentives can now be utilized. Contracts are still required and technical quality assurances still apply, however there is no requirement for a grant workplan. Chad also provided a broad overview of BWSR's functions and funding sources.

Board Chair Shane Bowe called the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meeting for February 15, 2024 officially to order at 9:30 a.m.

**Additions/Corrections to the Agenda:**

**Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve the February 15, 2024 agenda. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

**Secretary's Report:**

**Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the minutes from the January 18, 2024 SWCD meeting. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Treasurer's Report:**

Brent is in the process of the end-of-year financial reconciliation. He will review the 2023 Treasurer's Report with Ruth when it is complete.

**Reports:**

NRCS Report – Strait Idso

- CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program): Application acceptance deadline was January 12<sup>th</sup>. The Bemidji CST obtained 169 CSP applications by the deadline. The Workload Prioritization Worksheet was completed on all applications by January 26<sup>th</sup>. A total of 84 applications were high priority: 9 in Koochiching; 15 in Lake of the Woods; 15 in Hubbard; 14 in Clearwater; and 31 in Bemidji. These were cut back to 15 per field office by the state office. The deadline to assess and rank applications is April 12<sup>th</sup>.
- EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program): The deadline to complete assessments and rankings on applications was January 19<sup>th</sup>. This date was extended to Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Bemidji CST had 95 applications. In total, 60 of those applications are moving forward. Preapproval of applications will be selected soon. A total of 20 applications were submitted for Beltrami County, and total of 7 applications were preapproved for funding. The goal is to have 50% of EQIP funds obligated by April 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Upcoming Workload/General Items:
  - Grazing workshop to be held by Lake of the Woods on February 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - Grazing workshop to be held by Hubbard SWCD/NRCS on March 6<sup>th</sup>.
  - Area 8 Summit to be held on March 20<sup>th</sup>.
  - Transitioning to ARC Pro. Training on this to be held on March 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### District Manager – Brent Rud

- Brent gave an update on staffing and interviewing. Katelyn Bergstrom was offered and has accepted the Clean Water Specialist position. The Aquatic Invasive Species Technician, whose duties will also include Keep It Clean, closed yesterday.
- Beltrami SWCD will be evaluated through the Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) in 2024.
- The SWCD received a proposal from Peterson Ltd. for \$4,500 to conduct the 2023 end-of-year audit. Peterson Ltd. has performed audits for Beltrami SWCD for many years. Brent recommended the Board accept the proposal and sign a contract. **Motion by Ruth Trask to hire Peterson Ltd. to conduct the 2023 end-of-year audit. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**
- Still in the process of wrapping up end-of-year financials for 2023. Brent will go over them with Ruth when they are complete and present them to the Board at the next meeting.

#### Staff

- Aly has been lining up stormwater projects to be installed in the spring and summer.
- Aly has four HELP Grant contracts ready for Board approval. Projects must occur on publicly owned properties or lands dedicated to long-term conservation.
  - Brinkman Park: The City of Bemidji received a \$36,915.00 quote for an 8-acre pollinator planting in Brinkman Park. The City is requesting \$14,457.00 in HELP Grant funds, and will provide \$4,800 in match as well as pay for project maintenance. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve \$14,457.00 in HELP Grant funds for the Brinkman Park project. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**
  - Fire Station #2: The City of Bemidji received a \$14,125.00 quote to add vegetation to an existing stormwater basin on the property. The City is requesting \$4,160.00 in HELP Grant funds, and will provide in-kind match. **Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve \$4,160.00 in HELP Grant funds for the Fire Station #2 project. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

- Diamond Point Park: Pollinator plantings were installed last year at Diamond Point Park through funding provided by the Leech Lake Band. Many of the plants have seen a low success rate. The City of Bemidji is requesting \$5,075.00 in HELP Grant funds to re-establish the vegetation at the sites. Mulch and edging, not included in the MNL quote, will be utilized to prevent drying. The City will provide labor for installation as in-kind match. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve \$5,075.00 in HELP Grant funds for the Diamond Point Park project. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**
- Lake Boulevard Buckthorn Removal: The City of Bemidji is requesting \$1,400.00 in HELP Grant funds to remove buckthorn and replant the area with native species on the stretch of property along Lake Boulevard between 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets. The area is identified as “gap” on County GIS, so Bemidji will have to work with the City Attorney to assure that the property will be maintained for the required 10-year period. **Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve \$1,400.00 in HELP Grant funds for the Lake Boulevard Buckthorn Removal project, on the condition that a maintenance agreement can be reached with the City Attorney. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

Supervisors:

- Ray: The Upper/Lower Red Lake 1W1P goals are in progress, will be moving onto actions soon.
- Ruth: Gave a recap of the February 1<sup>st</sup> MASWCD Area VIII planning meeting. Beltrami will be hosting the Area VIII meeting in March, followed by Lake of the Woods in June.

**Upcoming Meetings/Events:**

Area VIII Meeting, March 15<sup>th</sup> in the Beltrami County Board Room

Area VIII Envirothon, May 1<sup>st</sup> at Lake Bemidji State Park

Gene Dillon Water Festival, May 23<sup>rd</sup> (tentative)

Regular Board Meetings

- March 21, 2024
- April 18, 2024
- May 16, 2024

**Motion by Ray Hendrickson to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved. Meeting adjourned.**

# Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District

## Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes

March 21, 2024  
Beltrami County Board Room  
701 Minnesota Ave. NW  
Bemidji, MN 56601

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SERVICES IN BELTRAMI COUNTY**

**Members Present:** Ray Hendrickson – Vice Chair  
Ruth Trask – Treasurer  
Rachel Gray – Secretary  
Sam Christenson – Public Relations

**Members Absent:** Shane Bowe – Chair

**Others Present:** Brent Rud – District Manager  
Megan FitzGerald – ESD/SWCD  
Aly Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD  
Katelyn Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD

Board Vice Chair Ray Hendrickson called the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meeting for March 21, 2024 officially to order at 9:30 a.m.

**Additions/Corrections to the Agenda:** Addition of Item 5.c.iii. Drought Plan Discussion. **Motion by Sam Christenson to approve the amended March 21, 2024 agenda. Motion seconded by Rachel Gray. Motion carried and approved.**

**Secretary’s Report:**

**Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the minutes from the February 15, 2024 SWCD meeting. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Treasurer’s Report:**

**Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the December 2023 Treasurer’s Report. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved. Motion by Sam Christenson to approve the January 2024 Treasurer’s Report. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved. Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the February 2024 Treasurer’s Report. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Reports:**

District Manager – Brent Rud

- Brent introduced Katelyn Bergstrom, who was hired as the new Clean Water Specialist. The ESD also hired Alec Wilcox (not present) to be the AIS/Keep It Clean Technician.
- Brent provided a summary of the 2023 financial report.
- Brent reviewed a PowerPoint of 2023 SWCD activities that was also presented to the County Board.
- PRAP: Brent provided an overview of the PRAP conducted by BWSR, including the review process and performance standards worksheet. Missing elements required by BWSR include a data policy and specified website pages – staff will work on completing these elements.

Staff

- Aly provided an update on planned BSU stormwater and HELP grant projects, and a summary of the Area VIII Summit.
- Birds, Bees, and Butterflies – Bemidji Donation Request: Peter Buessler of Birds, Bees, and Butterflies – Bemidji has reached out to Aly to discuss a possible SWCD donation of plant plug kits to vegetate a newly constructed veterans’ home in Bemidji. The request consists of native plants to provide vegetation underneath 10-20 bird feeders on the veterans’ home campus, with one plant kit (36 plants) per feeder. The projected cost is \$1,100. Due to the small acreage of the planting, the project is ineligible for the HELP grant, however Supervisors discussed the potential use of Conservation Contracts or Increased Local Capacity grants to fund the project. The Board was in support of donating to the project. Staff will bring recommendations to the Board when they receive more information.
- Ag BMP Loan Program: Aly provided a background on the Ag BMP loan program, which provides borrowers with low-interest loans to purchase eligible agricultural equipment through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. She described how the program is administered as well as which requests qualify. The program has become more popular in recent years due to rising interest rates. Currently, SWCD staff review and approve requests. Aly asked if the Board would like to provide more direction in authorizing requests, or if they would like to review applications or develop a policy regarding request approvals. The Board advised they would like to see the program proceed as usual, with staff reviewing and approving requests without input from Supervisors.
- Drought Plan Discussion: Supervisors expressed concern over likely drought conditions in the upcoming months, particularly in the wake of the damage done to the local ag industry as a result of the 2021 drought. Rachel suggested holding a drought preparedness workshop for local producers, with a focus on promoting drought tolerant forage and tanks for hauling water to cattle. Centra Sota Cooperative and the Minnesota Grazing Lands Coalition both provide helpful resources to producers, and may be willing to partner with the SWCD on these efforts. Other suggestions for public information included encouraging no-till drill use, providing flyers on available resources and financial assistance, and setting aside funds for assisting with equipment purchases. Staff noted that upcoming grants will aid in addressing watering/grazing issues.

Supervisors:

- Rachel led a discussion about the possibility of Beltrami County hiring a Feedlot Inspector, or including these duties in the potential Grazing Specialist position.
- Ruth provided an overview of the TSA and Area VIII meetings.

#### **Upcoming Meetings/Events:**

Area VIII Envirothon, May 1<sup>st</sup> at Lake Bemidji State Park

Gene Dillon Water Festival, May 21<sup>st</sup>

Regular Board Meetings

- April 18, 2024
- May 16, 2024
- June 20, 2024

**Motion by Sam Christenson to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Rachel Gray. Motion carried and approved. Meeting adjourned.**



# Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors Meeting

April 18, 2024

Commissioners' Conference Room

701 Minnesota Ave. NW

Bemidji, MN 56601

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SERVICES IN  
BELTRAMI COUNTY**

**Members Present:** Shane Bowe – Chair  
Ray Hendrickson – Vice Chair  
Ruth Trask – Treasurer  
Sam Christenson – Public Relations

**Members Absent:** Rachel Gray – Secretary

**Others Present:** Brent Rud – District Manager  
Megan FitzGerald – ESD/SWCD  
Aly Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD  
Katelyn Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD  
Jody Peek – NRCS  
Alec Wilcox – ESD/SWCD

Work Session: Brent introduced Alec Wilcox, the new AIS/Keep It Clean Technician.

Board Chair Shane Bowe called the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meeting for April 18, 2024 officially to order at 9:30 a.m.

Additions to the agenda: Item 5.b.ii. Soil Health Grant and Item 5.b.iii. Soil Health Position. **Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve the April 18, 2024 agenda. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Secretary's Report:**

**Motion by Sam Christenson to approve the minutes from the March 21, 2024 SWCD meeting. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

**Treasurer's Report:**

Ruth Trask presented the IFS statement for March 2024. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the March 2024 Treasurer's Report. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Reports:**

NRCS Report – Jody Peek

CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program):

- Classic CSP screening occurred in January and the team had 82 applications that screened as high. The state conservationist made the decision to take the top 15 highs per service center as the prioritization still resulted in high numbers of applications to rank. In general, one CSP application can take around 40 hours of staff time to process. Many of the high-15 applications were older (some dated back to 2020). As a result, some of those participants have decided to cancel or defer.

- The CART deadline was last Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. In total, the Bemidji CST had 38 applications submitted. The preapproval list should be out soon.
- CSP Renewals for 2025 were mailed out in February. These would be applications that started in 2020 and expire in December 2024. In 2020 funds were tight and Beltrami only obligated three contracts. As a result, three were eligible to renew but the field office received no applications back.

#### EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program):

- The area office has been making preapprovals based on available funding. The team had 60 applications submitted as of today; 33 of 60 have been selected for funding. Beltrami applications being selected for funding are primarily for tree plantings, pollinator plantings, soil health practices (no-till and cover crops), some grazing practices, and some forest management practices (brush management for buckthorn).
- Area NE asked for an additional 20 million (mainly for farmstead funding) and the state asked for 42 million. We recently learned that 18 million in additional funds was allocated to MN. This will result in some additional preapprovals.

#### CRP (Conservation Reserve Program):

- Rental rates appear to have gone up slightly in the county. As a result, Farm Service Agency (FSA) has had some participants interested in applying for this program. FSA is the lead agency for CRP, while NRCS provides the technical assistance.
- NRCS has run suitability and feasibility for 8 tracts of land. Most inquiries have been for interest in applying for a CP23A – Wetland Restoration. To be eligible for this practice the participant must have hydric soils, so soils reports are run to determine feasibility.

#### RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program):

- New RCPP sign-up was released for 1W1P areas. This RCPP is only for five Watersheds in the state. Red Lake River is one of the eligible watersheds. A small area of the Red Lake River does fall within NW Beltrami and Northern Clearwater counties, so this could result in a couple of applications. Application sign-up deadline is April 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### Upcoming Workload/General Items:

- Set a date for the Local Work Group meeting. All meetings for all counties need to occur prior to July 12<sup>th</sup>. Counties may elect to partner with neighboring counties to do one joint meeting. The group discussed holding a joint Local Work Group meeting with Clearwater SWCD in June. Rankings will be discussed with the Beltrami SWCD Board at their regular June meeting, then staff from Beltrami and Clearwater will meet later in the month to finalize rankings.
- Jim Cramton & Jody Peek will be assisting with the Envirothon event to be held May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Strait Idso will be helping with the Gene Dillion Elementary Water Festival on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. NRCS has the rainfall simulator reserved to bring to the school for that event.
- Jody will assist with the promotion and participation for a FarmHers event at Rachel Gray's Farm June 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Potential to host a Grygla Soil Health event July 8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>. Ray Archuletta will be assisting with talks and stops along the way. Also involved would be Mark Gutierrez from the MN Soil Health Coalition and Stephanie McLain, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist.

- There will be an SWCD Governance 101 Workshop on July 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> in Alexandria for supervisors and new employees. Those interested in attending should register with Megan.
- The 2024 SWCD election guide was sent out. Staff will update the website with election materials. Both Ruth and Sam are up for election this year; Supervisors must file to run. Filing opens May 21<sup>st</sup> and closes on June 4<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. The general election will take place on November 5<sup>th</sup>.
- BWSR is still conducting their PRAP review of Beltrami SWCD.
- Brent reviewed the draft design of the new tree shack. This building will be shared with the Beltrami County Natural Resource Management Department at the County Highway Department. The County budget process begins in June, so we will need a cost estimate of the building by then. The current estimate is \$400,000. Some funds for construction will come from the Buffer Law grant.
- The BSU stormwater infiltration basin project came in over budget, so the engineering firm applied for additional funding through an MPCA grant. Under the current funding, the project would not meet future reduction goals, however the project could be phased if additional funds are not immediately available.
- At a previous meeting, the Board approved staff to apply for a Soil Health Staffing grant. Beltrami was awarded \$337,000 to fund a 65% full-time employee through the end of 2027. Brent recommended advertising the position with the current Conservation Technician job description, with a few modifications to focus on soil health and Upper/Lower Red Lake 1W1P implementation. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the Soil Health Staffing grant agreement. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved. Motion by Sam Christenson to post the position with the existing Conservation Technician job description with recommended soil health modifications. Motion seconded by Ray Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**

#### Staff

- Staff presented at the Turtle River Watershed Association meeting on April 16<sup>th</sup>. They will also attend the TRWA annual meeting in June.
- The Boys and Girls Club of Bemidji are interested in installing pollinator habitats in their former Minnesota biomes project site and existing stormwater basins. The sites are ineligible for HELP grant funding, so B&GC will be applying directly to BWSR for Pollinator Pathways Program funding, which is geared toward smaller-scale plantings with an educational component. Aly is assisting in the application process.
- BSU/DOT Contract: Aly presented a cost share contract with BSU for the installation of a stormwater basin/rain garden along Minnesota State Highway 197. The total project cost is \$30,800, with 100% cost share provided through Enbridge funds. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the contract. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**
- BSU Solar Basin Contract: Aly presented a cost share contract with BSU for stormwater basins/pollinator plantings beneath a yet-to-be-installed solar array on the BSU campus. BSU is funding the actual solar array through another source. The total project cost for the stormwater basins/pollinator plantings is \$32,459, with 100% cost share provided through Enbridge funds. **Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve the contract. Motion seconded by Sam Christenson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Supervisors' Report:**

- Shane Bowe: There will be a public meeting in Kelliher on Upper/Lower Red Lake site-specific eutrophication standards. The standard will go through, and the lakes will not be listed as impaired.
- Ruth Trask: Area VIII needs a new Treasurer; Ruth is acting as the interim Treasurer.
- Supervisors requested that new DNR PFM Lori Barrow attend the June SWCD meeting for a forestry discussion.
- Ray Hendrickson: Beltrami Commissioner Tim Sumner has declined to attend assigned committee meetings; staff should work to find a replacement for his assignments, which include the Thief River and Upper/Lower Red Lake 1W1P meetings.

**Upcoming Meetings/Events:**

Envirothon – May 1<sup>st</sup> at Lake Bemidji State Park

Tree Distribution – May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

Gene Dillon Water Festival – May 23<sup>rd</sup>

Regular Board Meetings

- May 16, 2024
- June 20, 2024
- July 18, 2024

**Motion by Sam Christenson to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved. Meeting adjourned.**

# Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors Meeting

May 16, 2024

Commissioners' Conference Room

701 Minnesota Ave. NW

Bemidji, MN 56601

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SERVICES IN  
BELTRAMI COUNTY**

**Members Present:** Shane Bowe – Chair  
Ray Hendrickson – Vice Chair  
Ruth Trask – Treasurer

**Members Absent:** Rachel Gray – Secretary  
Sam Christenson – Public Relations

**Others Present:** Brent Rud – District Manager  
Megan FitzGerald – ESD/SWCD  
Aly Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD  
Katelyn Bergstrom – ESD/SWCD  
Jim Cramton – NRCS  
Zach Thoma – Moore Engineering

Work Session: Zach Thoma from Moore Engineering provided updates on the BSU subsurface stormwater infiltration basin project. Installation is predicted to be more than double what was initially expected, so staff have applied for additional funding through an MPCA grant. Zach provided an update on the bidding process. Bids are expected to be advertised in early to mid-June, which will coincide with the additional funding notification if the MPCA grant is awarded.

Board Chair Shane Bowe called the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meeting for May 16, 2024 officially to order at 9:30 a.m.

Additions to the agenda: Item 5.c.iv. BSU/DOT Cost Share Contract Amendment. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the May 16, 2024 agenda. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Secretary's Report:**

**Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve the minutes from the April 18, 2024 SWCD meeting. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

**Treasurer's Report:**

Ruth Trask presented the IFS statement for April 2024. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the April 2024 Treasurer's Report. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**

**Reports:**

NRCS Report – Jim Cramton

CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program): Starting with 82 high-priority applications for the whole team in January, the workload was reduced to fifteen per service center by the state conservationist, making the team's total 58. After those that cancelled, deferred, or were ineligible dropped off, the team had 38 applications to assess and rank; 32 of these applications of have been preapproved for about \$1.1

million in financial assistance. Beltrami County has eight preapproved applications for about \$375,000 in financial assistance. NRCS estimates that an average CSP application takes a planner about 40 hours from their initial visit with a landowner until becoming a contract. These funded applications have a fair amount of work to be completed on them before they will become obligated contracts, including some site visits, running some planning tools, developing seed mixes with producers, soil testing, and a few other things. No CSP Classic contracts have been obligated.

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program): Originally, 33 of 60 applications were selected for funding. Since the last board report, two additional applications were selected for funding as a result of an additional \$18 million received by the state. Total financial assistance for those selected is around \$930,000. For the team, 20 applications have become obligated contracts so far, coming in at about \$840,000 in obligated financial assistance. Beltrami had eleven EQIPs selected for funding; four have been obligated for around \$150,000 in financial assistance. Applications being selected for funding are for tree plantings, pollinator plantings, soil health practices (no-till and cover crops), some grazing practices, and some forest management practices (brush management for buckthorn).

CRP (Conservation Reserve Program): As a result of some increased rental rates, as well as some public outreach, there has been increased interest in CRP. FSA is the lead agency for CRP, whereas NRCS is the technical agency, providing participants with their specifications to follow:

- NRCS has run suitability and feasibility for nine tracts of land.
- Most inquiries have been for a CP23A - Wetland Restoration - scenario. To be eligible for this practice, the participant must have hydric soils, so soils reports are run to determine feasibility.
- Most of those interested in CRP have desired putting their whole fields into conservation ranging from 30-80 acres, while many had only a small fraction of that area eligible for wetland restoration. Conversations around these requirements have resulted in explanations about NRCS programs and what landowners might qualify for under one.

RCP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program): The new RCP 1W1P signup, which closed in late April, did not result in any applications.

#### General Items:

- Jody and Jim assisted with the Envirothon at Lake Bemidji State Park. Jody judged oral presentations and Jim assisted with the soil formation station.
- NRCS would like to set a date for the local work group meeting; all meetings for all counties need to occur prior to July 12<sup>th</sup>. Counties may elect to partner with neighboring counties to do one joint meeting. Megan spoke with Chester at Clearwater SWCD, and they settled on June 6<sup>th</sup> at 10am for the meeting to be held at the Beltrami County Administration Building.
- Strait Idso will be helping with the Gene Dillion Elementary Water Festival on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. NRCS has the rainfall simulator reserved to bring to the school for that event.
- Interest in NRCS programs remains high. They get two to four calls a week from landowners asking what assistance there is for them to change their management, pointed questions about specific problems, and general questions that may or may not be related to an NRCS program.
- Jody will assist with the promotion and participation for a FarmHers event at Rachel Gray's farm on June 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>.
- The Grygla Soil Health Event will be held on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Ray Archuleta will be assisting with talks and stops along the way. Mark Gutierrez from the MN Soil Health Coalition and Stephanie McLain, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist, will assist landowners in conducting soil health assessments and interpreting their results.

- Aly has accepted a Soil Health Conservation Technician position at Cass SWCD. Her last day will be Friday, May 31<sup>st</sup>. Brent may use the list of applicants for the Beltrami Soil Health Conservation Technician position, which closed yesterday, to fill her position.
- There will be an SWCD Governance 101 Workshop on July 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> in Alexandria for supervisors and new employees. Those interested in attending should register with Megan.
- There is a need to revisit and update the no-till drill rental agreement for the drill housed at the Blackduck Co-op.
- The Mississippi High Banks shoreline restoration projects require two pre-construction meetings, and will require an additional contract with Karvako. Brent estimates the cost of these meetings to be below \$5,000. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve a contract with Karvako up to \$5,000 for them two host the pre-construction meetings. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**
- BWSR has conducted their PRAP review of Beltrami SWCD. Brent presented key findings and required actions and recommendations, including the materials required to be featured on the SWCD's website and a data practices policy. Brent needs to send a response letter to BWSR. Don Bajumpaa from BWSR will be at the June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the PRAP findings.
- The SWCD is in the process of completing a Geologic Atlas for the county, however staff do not have enough time to complete the work. Brent suggested hiring a temporary worker through Always There Staffing to expedite the process of hiring and getting the Geologic Atlas done. He suggested hiring the worker at \$17 per hour for twelve weeks with an overall pay cap of \$15,000. Staffing funds will come from the Increase Local Capacity and Mississippi 1W1P Implementation Grants. **Motion by Ray Hendrickson to contract with Always There Staffing to hire the temporary worker at \$17 per hour for up to twelve weeks with a cap of \$15,000. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**
- Staff have been getting requests to write forest stewardship plans for landowners as the private sector plan writers are in short supply. Brent suggested that the SWCD adjust their rates to match the DNR plan writing rates, which are deliberately set higher to avoid competing with private businesses. **Motion by Ruth Trask to match forest stewardship planning rates with those of the DNR. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**
- Lori Barrow, the area DNR PFM, and Don Bajumpaa from BWSR will both attend the June 20<sup>th</sup> SWCD meeting.

#### Staff

- BSU/DOT Contract Amendment: The Board approved the BSU/DOT cost share contract at the April meeting, however the contract did not include prevailing wages for Hill's Country Greenhouse. Aly presented a cost share contract amendment that includes prevailing wages, which raises the total project cost from \$30,800 to \$35,530. Project costs are covered 100% through Enbridge grant funds. **Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve the contract amendment. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**
- Megan presented a donation request from the Indigenous Environmental Network for 75 chokecherry trees for their Roots, Shoots, and Seeds event. The event encourages the public to plant native seeds and plants. The SWCD has leftover chokecherry trees from the tree sale that were not purchased. **Motion by Ruth Trask to approve the donation request for 75 chokecherry trees. Motion seconded by Ray Hendrickson. Motion carried and approved.**

- **BSU Subsurface Infiltration Basin: Motion by Ray Hendrickson to approve and move forward with the construction bidding process for the project as outlined by Zach Thoma during the work session. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved.**

**Supervisors' Report:**

- Shane Bowe: Red Lake DNR is hiring for two positions. Shane also provided information about the upcoming restoration of a rock dam on the Red Lake River.
- Ruth Trask: Ruth provided an update on the results of the Envirothon.
- Beltrami Commissioner Tim Sumner has declined to attend assigned committee meetings. His committee assignments have been reassigned to other commissioners.

**Upcoming Meetings/Events:**

Gene Dillon Water Festival – May 23<sup>rd</sup>

SWCD Candidate Filing Period Ends June 4<sup>th</sup> at 5pm

Area VIII Quarterly Meeting, June 7<sup>th</sup> in the Beltrami County Board Room

SWCD Governance 101 Workshop, July 16-17<sup>th</sup> in Alexandria

Regular Board Meetings

- June 20, 2024
- July 18, 2024
- August 15, 2024

**Motion by Ray Hendrickson to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Ruth Trask. Motion carried and approved. Meeting adjourned.**