

June 24, 2021
BUFFER COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Present: President Linda Vavra, Board Managers Allen Wold and Scott Gillespie. Absent: John Kappahn. Also present: Attorney Lukas Croaker, Engineer Technician Troy Fridgen, Administrator Jamie Beyer.

Approve Previous Meeting Minutes: Upon motion by Vavra, seconded by Wold and carried unanimously, the minutes of November 10, 2020 were approved.

Update on Redeterminations & Buffer Installations (WCD #9, JD #11, JD #6):

WCD #9: Fridgen discussed conditions on WCD #9. It is believed that a prior berm, constructed by Wilkin County, contained a large amount of gravel, impeding successful establishment of buffer grass growth on 2 – 3 miles on the drainage system after several planting attempts. Gillespie stated that it is difficult to establish grass under normal conditions, and this year's lack of precipitation has made conditions even worse. Board managers recommended that grass seeding be attempted closer to, or after Labor Day, with cooler temps and a larger possibility for precipitation. Administrator Beyer will coordinate this request with Wilkin SWCD and their grant administrator.

JD #11: Establishment of the buffer was successful on this drainage system. Board managers had recommended a grass seed mix that included rye, which grew fast and dense. Wilkin SWCD will mow the rye this summer.

JD #6: The outlet of the drainage system is mulched and seeded; another half-mile is ready to seed. The contractor is installing topsoil on the in-slope of the ditch. This additional work was not specified by the contract, but the contractor feels that this effort will help meet the 70% vegetation establishment requirement.

TCD #35: Statutory hearings for the improvement and redetermination of TCD #35 will begin in July; construction would begin in 2022.

We have been notified by the Board of Water and Soil Resources that expenses incurred on dates during a state government shutdown will not be eligible for grant reimbursement. No determination has been relayed by BWSR staff as to whether the District's local match will be recognized during the same time period.

Update on Traverse County Erosion Prevention Program: At their December 17, 2020 board meeting, Bois de Sioux Watershed District Board Managers elected to continue the Traverse County Erosion Prevention Program, budgeting \$20,000 towards the effort. Traverse SWCD staff acquire additional cost-share through other sources, execute landowner contracts and installation of concrete mats.

Fridgen and SWCD Technician Bruce Johnson identified field outlet sites on TCD #1E (sediment was recently cleaned from the system, spoils have been levelled, and a culvert is scheduled to be replaced) and on TCD #38, which will have a clean-out coordinated this year. TCD #38 was found to have a large amount of sediment in the ditch, despite having wide buffers that had been enrolled in CRP; Fridgen will follow-up with an investigation to determine whether sediment entered prior to the buffer establishment, or following buffer establishment. It is also possible that soil type has resulted in additional sedimentation of the drainage system. Gillespie reported that a recent 3" rain in the area, that downpoured in a 20-minute time span, had enough flow and force to move gravel off a road. Fridgen stated that the area might be a good candidate for a coordinated side inlet culvert project.

Board managers discussed the improvements to in-field equipment that use GPS to more precisely manage water flows; farm drainage can be implemented with greater accuracy, prevent over excavation and more subtle grades.

Fridgen has received delivery of signage to mark buffer easement acquisitions on redetermined Minn. Stat. Chap. 103E drainage systems. Discussion was held as to where signage should be placed. Board managers recommended that permanent right-of-way signage be located at the ends of quarter-lines. In cases where a shared approach has been installed on the property line, Wold recommended that a metal monument be placed in the middle of the approach and buried, so that it is easy to locate.

Update on Seeding Following Drainage System Repairs: Fridgen has utilized budgeted funds for hydroseeding, in areas that can't easily be drilled. Traverse SWCD approached BdSWD staff with a need for a small disc, to establish a better buffer following clean-outs by breaking-up chunks of relocated spoiled material (that sometimes contains cattails and willows). After consideration, Traverse SWCD purchased the equipment internally, and will now offer the discing as an additional service for buffer establishment. Fridgen targets drainage systems with the most need following his annual drainage ditch inspections.

Buffer Fund Budget & Expenses: Committee members reviewed the current budget.

Grant SWCD Notifications of Non-Compliance: Beyer received a request from BWSR for the BdSWD Buffer Committee to include in the discussion the 12 parcels identified in 2019 by Traverse SWCD. Beyer stated that the Traverse County notices were provided without signature and some unreadable text, and that she would prefer that the notices had been signed if any of the parcels ends up in a review by the court. Court initiated enforcement activities will be handled by the respective county, not BdSWD. Beyer will work with Traverse SWCD on the matter. Attorney Croaker stated that BdSWD could have decided that corrective notices from the SWCD's be sent to BWSR for enforcement, but BdSWD board managers decided that this process was not in the best interest of district landowners – this is why BdSWD elected enforcement jurisdiction, in order to work with landowners directly. Board managers requested that landowners be given an opportunity to meet with the Buffer Committee, discuss the unique characteristics of their land, and provide feedback on how the District can be of service in helping the landowner become in compliance with the Buffer Rule, possibly in promoting alternative practices. Fridgen and Beyer will schedule landowner meetings in August. Board managers discussed the available alternative practices, and how to support landowner compliance initiatives.

The meeting was then adjourned.