

**Meeting Agenda  
Bois de Sioux Watershed  
North Ottawa Project Team Meeting  
December 20, 2023 at 10:00 am  
Wendell Community Center**

**Project Team Members**

SWCD Representative	Randy Larson	
Landowners	Dominic Blume <b>[Absent]</b> & Jordan Schneeberger <b>[Absent]</b>	
County Commissioners	Eric Klindt	Bill LaValley
DNR Representatives	Nick Brown	Christine Herwig (online)
Bois de Sioux Watershed District Board Managers	Ben Brutlag	John Kappahn

**Also Present:**

Theresa Ebbenga, DNR Regional Director **[Absent]**  
Linda Vavra, BdSWD Board President and Alternate  
Jason Beyer, BdSWD Board Manager and Alternate **[Absent]**  
Troy Fridgen, BdSWD Engineer Technician  
Lukas Croaker, BdSWD District Attorney  
Jamie Beyer, BdSWD Administrator  
Nathan Kosbau, Kosbau Brothers Farms  
Truman Raguse, Raguse Family Partnership (arrived later)

**1. Comments from the Public (none received)**

**2. Wild Rice Production**

Nathan Kosbau presented a CULTIVATED WILDRICE PROPOSAL detailing Fall 2024 cell preparations and Spring-Summer 2025 water level needs. Wild rice would provide weed and cattail control which saves the District time and resources in chemical and chemical application, in addition to offering NRE benefits. Kosbau requested a lease term that includes two growing seasons following Fall 2024 seed-bed preparation. Larson requested agronomic/water quality testing at the inlet and outlet of the selected cell. Kosbau stated there is a crop failure risk associated with high winds in this area. Kosbau stated that if the production doesn't work, the crop can be destroyed with tillage Fall 2026. Project team members discussed which cells would be operationally feasible for wild rice production. A4 and B4 have uneven topography, and with their dense cattail mats, seem to be impossible to dry-out and till. B3 is easy to flood – A4, B4, and the Collection Channel will provide water necessary for wild rice production. Wild rice seed is controlled by licenses so the District would need to sign a U of M license agreement that states that unprocessed seed cannot leave the facility without permission. Because of this requirement, Kosbau needs District approval prior to July 2024, in addition to a letter of intent from the District on or before March 1, 2024. Kosbau stated that water levels could be dropped by evapotranspiration or small stop logs, and that Kosbau would keep his own camera on the selected cell. The proposal could result in additional trips by District staff to operate gates. Brown offered to serve as Fridgen's backup if District staff are unavailable to manage water levels in the selected cell. Fridgen stated that a gage would need to be installed on the selected cell. Kosbau stated that average rent for wild rice production in northern Minnesota is \$50/acre. The Project Team will continue discussion of the proposal on January 23, 2024.

**3. DNR Agreement and Ag Lease Terms**

Administrator Beyer offered copies of the NORTH OTTAWA FLOOD IMPOUNDMENT PROJECT OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT – the 10-year agreement between the District and the DNR that details cell use restrictions. For operations in 2023, Raguse Family Partnership was unable to harvest corn silage in restricted cells, harvesting a traditional corn crop instead. Beyer stated that the flexibility of the agreement is in its designation of cells – three cells revenue generation and two cells restricted, as reflected in the current ag lease. Corn silage was presented by the lessee as an early-harvested crop alternative to small grains. Project Team members discussed the need to have the crop removed in restricted cells prior to fall migration. Brown stated that he believes there is more grain left in the field for wildlife to eat following a combine vs. silage equipment, and for that reason, combining is preferred. Raguse offered an early maturity corn variety that could be harvested mid-to-late September. Project Team members were supportive of early maturity corn in the restricted cells – Cells B2 and B3. Raguse intends on planting sugar beets or corn in the unrestricted cells – Cells B1, A1, and A2. Because of the potential wild rice production in Cell B3, Truman agreed to farm Cell A3 in-lieu-of B3 in 2025, if wild rice production is approved by the District’s Board of Managers.

Herwig stated that the burrows are an important feature of the impoundment from an NRE standpoint, as they provide rare shallow, muddy habitat. She stated that shorebirds move based on the weather, and can move through at night. Fridgen stated that Cell C, depending on depth, can provide similar habitat.

#### **4. Impoundment Miscellany**

The Project Team discussed whether permits should be required to allow mobility impaired individuals to access the impoundment. The Project Team felt like this would create an administrative burden on the District and create an enforcement issue so they decided not to pursue access permits.

The Project Team then discussed the importance of installing dead-end signage on the impoundment road(s). Fridgen will acquire the signs and have them installed on the roads this spring/summer.

Beyer discussed the installation of a portable toilet at the impoundment to be installed.