

November 10, 2020
BUFFER COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Present: President Linda Vavra, Board Managers Allen Wold, Scott Gillespie, John Kapphahn (by phone). Also present: Attorney Lukas Croaker, Technician Troy Fridgen, Traverse SWCD Technician Bruce Johnson, Commissioner Jay Backer (by phone/Zoom); Administrator Jamie Beyer (in person).

Approve Previous Meeting Minutes: Upon motion by Kapphahn, seconded by Wold and carried unanimously, the minutes of June 26, 2020 were approved.

Update on Redeterminations & Buffer Installations: Wilkin County SWCD & Traverse County SWCD have seeded the buffers acquired under the redeterminations of WCD #9/10 and JD #11! Hearings for the repair and redeterminations of JD #6 will start in December. Property owner reports were sent on Friday.

Update on Traverse County Erosion Prevention Program: At the October 18, 2018 board meeting, the Traverse County SWCD approached the District regarding a cost-share pilot program on TCD #31 that would involve the installation of a concrete mesh product, Shoreflex, which prevents erosion and holds sediment in-place. Traverse County SWCD would provide \$17,000 and proposed that BdSWD matches the same amount. Because of the possible benefits to stabilize ditch slopes, prevention of future erosion of field outlets, and the transfer of nutrients from soil to water, Fridgen spoke with BWSR's Pete Waller about the potential use of the District's Riparian Aid; Waller supported the idea. The Traverse County Comprehensive Local Water Plan approved using \$9,121 in grant funds to offset landowner cost-share. Installation of 29 mats on TCD #31 is complete. Traverse SWCD is looking for approval of \$2,856.25 to close-out this project. Gillespie commented that a mat installed several years ago – in a steeper, larger channel – was not properly installed, and water undercut the mat. Wold and Fridgen have inspected the mats along TCD #31 (and TCD #23 in 2018), which have been inundated many times already.

The Traverse County Comprehensive Local Water Plan has pledged \$20,191 for future mats on field outlets to legal ditches in Traverse County, and has asked if the Bois de Sioux Watershed District would be interested in matching this amount. Riparian Aid would be used. Drainage systems with a recent, or upcoming, clean-out would be targeted. Landowners voluntarily participate. This project is collaborative: landowners, BWSR, Traverse County, Traverse SWCD, and BdSWD participate. Kapphahn motioned, seconded by Wold and carried unanimously, to recommend participation.

Update on Cover Crop Program: This Bois de Sioux Watershed District grant program offers \$5,000 per year per SWCD, renewable up to three years. Wilkin and Stevens have signed grant agreements for 2020. Traverse SWCD has indicated potential interest for 2021.

Approval of Recommendation to BdSWD Board for Joint Letter: Committee members reviewed and discussed the joint informational letter drafted by Bois de Sioux Watershed District and Grant County SWCD in response to the June 26, 2020 Buffer Committee meeting. Grant SWCD would send letters 10 at a time, beginning in December or January, in order to respond to landowners individually. Committee members emphasized the Bois de Sioux Watershed's role in serving landowners to implement practices that reduce and/or prevent erosion into legal drainage systems. Wold voiced concern that alternative practices are not being applied consistently across the watershed district, varying by or within counties, and that additional alternative practices are available to landowners beyond those approved locally (heard at a recent BWSR board meeting and

according to newly published BWSR fact sheets). Attorney Croaker advised that alternative practices recognized by the Bois de Sioux Watershed District should be formally adopted; Administrator Beyer and Attorney Croaker will work on assembling a list. Gillespie motioned, seconded by Vavra and carried unanimously, to recommend to the Bois de Sioux Watershed District Board the use of the joint letter. Committee members discussed who should sign the letter, and committee members supported the current version: reference and phone number for Administrator Beyer and signature by President Linda Vavra.

Buffer Fund: Guidance from the Department of Revenue and BWSR was presented regarding the use of Riparian Aid. The District receives approximately \$54,000 every six months. There are many activities that the District completes each year to oversee the riparian protection and water quality practices required under statute – but these expenses aren't always specifically designated by the Committee or the Board to be funded by Riparian Aid. For example, the Wilkin County Side Inlet Culvert program was funded 50% by the Construction Fund and 50% by the Ditch Fund. Committee members recommended maintaining a \$100,000 fund balance in case of future legal needs. Wold requested that staff identify potential activities with the Lake Traverse Water Quality Improvement Project could be qualify. Technician Fridgen requested that ditch maintenance activities – such as reseeding – be included. Information will be presented at the next Bois de Sioux Watershed District Board Meeting.

BWSR Fact Sheets: BWSR recently published a number of fact sheets; they were reviewed.