

St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

For

November 15, 2007

Board Members Present: Robert G. Andrews, Jr., Edwin Hadlock, Frederick Morrill, Clark Decker, David Martin, and Thomas Nichols, who arrived at 7:40 PM.

Staff Present: Dawn Howard, Katie Maloney, Aaron Earl, Raeanne Dulanski, and James Pullano, NRCS.

The meeting was called to order by Robert Andrews at 7:30 PM.

Fred Morrill made a motion to accept the minutes of the September 13th meeting as written. Dave Martin seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Clark Decker made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Reports for September and October 2007. Fred Morrill seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) – Jim Pullano.

- **Civil Rights:** Jim Pullano provided Civil Rights training to the SWCD directors and staff according to the Area III/IV - St. Lawrence/Champlain Watershed Civil Rights Action Plan and the NRCS Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery. Jim began the training with a review of the NY Outreach Plan followed by a review of the FY 2007-2008 Canton Field Office Civil Rights Assessment and Outreach Plan developed jointly by the NRCS and SWCD. Jim next discussed parity in program delivery based on parity reports. A power-point presentation was provided to all board and staff members highlighting a variety of topics including:
 - Field office requirements for posters and policy display (i.e. “And Justice for All” EEO, Sexual Harassment).
 - Title VI and Title VII.
 - How customers file a discrimination complaint.
 - How employees file a discrimination complaint.
 - Civil Rights Policy Statements
 - Sexual Harassment Policy Statement
 - Non-Discrimination Statement
 - Employee Assistance Program
 - Civil Rights Advisory Committee Members

Jim discussed and provided copies of the USDA non-discrimination statement that appears on all NRCS publications, including mailings to the public and as outlined in the MOU with the district signed on 01/09/97 and the Cooperative Working Agreement with the district signed on 12/22/97. It is required on SWCD publications. Jim also discussed the USDA Facilities Accessibility Checklist completed for the new building in March

2006, including updates in 2007. Jim followed with a brief discussion on Reasonable Accommodations and the recent training provided to Service Center staff. Jim thanked the SWCD board and staff for supporting the Civil Rights program by providing clerical support to refine the FO program to meet current agency objectives such as developing the outreach plan, accessibility plan, updating the filing system and assisting with bringing the office public areas and promotional materials into compliance, by participating in civil rights training and by providing displays and program promotion at various agricultural meetings such as Envirothon, County Fair, Farm Safety Days, workshops, Day-at-the-Farm day, Farm Bureau meetings, Grange meetings, and Ag. and Farmland Protection Board meetings. Lastly, Jim ended the presentation and training with a discussion of the importance of continuing to seek diversity on the SWCD board and other boards that members serve on. He encouraged the SWCD board members to develop a list of potential candidates from underrepresented groups in the county for board membership following vacancies. The “Board Diversity” brochure developed by the USDA-NRCS was provided.

- **Report:** Jim shared statistics that were released at the NYACD annual meeting. Color coded maps depicted a high rate of program dollar obligations to St. Lawrence County, between 2004 – 2007, which translates into a high level of conservation implementation as compared to other counties throughout NYS. St. Lawrence County has a very large EQIP and WRP program. There has not been any update on staffing in St. Lawrence County or the St. Lawrence/Champlain watershed and during the Watershed Basin meeting in October it was stated that the watershed is very close to its full time employee level staffing. The NRCS All Employee meeting will be taking place in December, at which time more information concerning the re-structuring transition may become available. There is currently no WRP allocation for FY 2008. EQIP has an allocation for 2008 and EQIP sign-ups for the year have been completed, except for the Forestry component that is still under development. This year the number of applicants has decreased.
 - Robert Andrews asked how often the Civil Rights Outreach Plan will be updated. Jim told the Board that the Civil Rights Outreach Plan is a working document that will be updated annually following an evaluation of outreach annually. The initial plan was written to cover 2007 and 2008, so when the plan was completed (it took a considerable amount of time to collect this information) the plan would not be obsolete. Robert Andrews continued on to comment that he is pleased that such a plan was created to help reach minorities that are in St. Lawrence County. He believes that with the completion of the 2010 census, we will see an increase of minorities in St. Lawrence County.

NYACD – Tom Nichols reported:

- Things are slowing down while waiting for the Farm Bill to be completed before the discussion on the closing of offices continues. There is not another committee meeting currently scheduled. Implementation is behind schedule. Have started the Watershed approach phase in.
 - Robert Andrews asked how the Watershed approach was going so far. Tom said that NRCS is currently working on phasing it in. They have to have a gradual phase in right now with the areas that the Watershed Leaders are going to be controlling, shifting to reflect the watershed. There are currently two people that Jim is responding to, his old boss and the new Watershed Leader. The old boss

has to complete the evaluation on St. Lawrence County staff and programs for last year; he is more familiar with St. Lawrence County and can better complete an evaluation on them, while the new Watershed Leader is starting to step in.

- Robert Andrews also wanted to make sure that the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District is not going to shift with the NRCS staff. They are not; they will continue to work only within the boundaries of St. Lawrence County. Jim said they would like to continue with SWCD within the county line, but will not ask the SWCD to leave the county.
- Robert Andrews also asked how big of an area the new Watershed will cover. It covers a large area over to Plattsburgh. Management will be a challenge because it will still be coming out of Albany.
- There is an item in the Farm Bill that is calling for 15 million acres to come out of production. Tom does not agree with this because it does not make sense. It would result in the increase of food prices. Corn prices are already extremely high and there is research on alternative energies with corn/soy taking place.
- At the State Conservation meeting a group meet with a representative from the Fish and Wildlife Federation. They have huge funding opportunities. There are funding opportunities in four areas; two of those being Water Quality and Environment in general. This is grant money, which means that it is free money. These funds would be wonderful to obtain and dovetail with large projects.

Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) – Dawn Howard (In addition to written report)

- Steve Lanthier was not available to give a report before the Manager's Report went out, so Dawn gave his report.
 - The Performance Measure Evaluation Worksheet – For Conservation Financial Assistance Part B, we have received the \$6,000 for the Dry Hydrant projects. Part C is the Performance Measures. Worth \$12,000 - \$14,000. We are good for 2006 and 2007, but we need to look at next year's list.
 - We have to meet the standard and then put that money towards a particular project. Looking at Directors Training Plan requirement. We will have District Law training, and maybe Ethics; the question was asked what else would the Board like to have offered?
 - Next year we also will need to have a minimum of eight meetings. It was suggested to have a meeting in February during the day, with lunch and possibly a training session.
 - There was much discussing on meetings with the thought of having a meeting with another organization.
 - Comment period on the Performance Measure Evaluation Worksheet – Conservation Financial Assistance is now open.
 - Grant proposal deadline has passed. There were 85 proposals submitted for a total of \$85 million plus being requested, making this year very competitive.
 - Don Lynch was hired by the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee to do engineering.
 - 319 money is now completely gone. This money had been used for the annual WQ meeting, and to pay some State employees as well.
 - Year 3 AEM is just starting up in many of Steve's Counties.
- Raeanne Dulanski, Conservation District Secretary/Assistant Treasurer gave her report:

- Raeanne attended the Administrative Conference in Utica. She gained information on Personnel Files, Surviving an Audit, how different counties do their Tree Program as well as a lot of general knowledge about how the other Clerk's operate in their offices.
 - Raeanne also attended the Retirement Training where she learned that a resolution needed to be in the minutes stating the standard workday of employees for the calculation of service days.
 - Farm Safety Day Coordinator Training was also attended by Raeanne. She is now a trained Coordinator.
 - Raeanne has been working on designing a new Tree Program Booklet, following a design that was handed out at the Administrative Conference.
- Aaron Earl, Conservation District Forester reported:
 - Sale # 1 is being cut now. Sale # 2 was won by Snyder and will be starting soon. Sale # 3 is half marked.
 - Aaron presented the Board with a GPS unit that he would like to purchase. It is the same style as NRCS's and Katie's personal GPS unit, so people know how to use it and it can be used on our computer system. Our old GPS is obsolete.
 - Inventory is 80% complete. Only a few small parcels are left to complete. During the winter, he will be able to go to the next step with the management plans.
 - Aaron would like to take the Certified Forester Exam. This exam is used by many other states like a licensing. The exam will cost about \$260 and 1 day for him to take.
 - *Clark Decker made a motion to approve the spending of funds on a GPS unit and the Certified Forester examination for Aaron Earl. Tom Nichols seconded the motion and all were in favor.*
 - The GPS unit is to be bought out of the Equipment Fund.
- Katie Maloney, Conservation District Technician gave her report:
 - Katie attended AEM Training for the annual update.
 - Conservation Planning Training – Phase 3 was attended by Katie was well. She now has to complete 3 CNMPs to become a Certified Nutrient Management Planner.
 - Katie attended a one-day Stormwater update training at the Conservation Skills Workshop.
 - Programs:
 - AEM to EQIP – Waiting on two farmers to finish their plans.
 - AEM to EQIP TOO – Soil sampling is complete. Now starting to bag the soil and send it to Cornell for testing.
 - Year 3 AEM – Tier 1's were sent out last Wednesday. Have received 3 back so far.
 - Stormwater – Steve Botsford, DEC Stormwater specialist, indicated that next year he would like to supply Katie with a list of sites and have her do more inspections on her own. Dawn Howard added that the DEC is moving slow. Discussion followed on the SWCD's position; we are not a regulator like the DEC. Katie explained that she hopes to be able to have a working relationship with the contractors, to be able to explain to them what practices they may not have in place or that are in place but are not working as they should. Let them know that she is there to point out

problem areas, so they have time to correct them before the DEC may inspect the site and fine/take legal action against them; however, everything that she finds will be reported to the DEC in a written report.

- Fred Morrill asked if the problem with the two interns was maybe not with them but with something that we did. Dawn Howard told him that the college intern was not asked to stop by SWCD, but rather the College pulled him. The second student had been an intern when he was with BOCES and the SWCD was asked by a relative if he could come back and intern again. He did not seem interested and did not return the second day.
- Dawn Howard reported that the Pan sold for \$1,059.
- NYACD dues came in and are \$775.
- Grange dues came in and are \$25.
 - *Tom Nichols made a motion to pay the NYACD and Grange dues. Ed Hadlock seconded the motion. All were in favor.*
- Deferred Compensation was presented to the Board by Dawn Howard. It is at no cost to the SWCD (just the Clerk's time to do the weekly process). The employees have all the choices and liabilities.

WHEREAS, the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District wishes to adopt the Deferred Compensation Plan for Employees of the State of New York and Other Participating Public Jurisdictions (the "Plan") for voluntary participation of all eligible employees; and

WHEREAS, the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District is a local public employer eligible to adopt the Plan pursuant to Section 5 of the State Finance Law*, and

WHEREAS, the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District has reviewed the Plan established in accordance with Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Code and Section 5 of the State Finance Law of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Plan is to encourage employees to make and continue careers with the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District by providing eligible employees with a convenient and tax-favored method of saving on a regular and long term basis and thereby provide for their retirement;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby:

RESOLVED, that the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District hereby adopts the Plan for the voluntary participation of all eligible employees; and it is further

* A local public employer eligible to adopt the Plan pursuant to Section 5 of the State Finance Law includes: a county, city, town, village or other political subdivision as defined in Section 131 of the retirement and Social Security law or civil division of the State; a school district or other governmental entity operating a public school, college, or university; a public improvement or special district, a public authority, commission, or public benefit corporation; or any other public corporation, agency or instrumentality or unit of government which exercises governmental powers under the laws of the State.

RESOLVED, that the appropriate officials of the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District are hereby authorized to take such actions and enter such agreements as are required or necessary for the adoption, implantation, and maintenance of the Plan; and it is further

RESOLVED, that the Administrative Services Agency is hereby authorized to file copies of these resolutions and other required documents with the President of the State of New York Civil Service Commission.

- *Fred Morrill made a motion to accept the Deferred Compensation resolution as written. Clark Decker seconded and all were in favor.*
- Tom Nichols suggested that the SWCD set up a cafeteria plan. Discussion followed on what a cafeteria plan is.
 - *Tom Nichols made a motion to authorize the creation of a cafeteria option for employees medical/vision/dental and childcare. Fred Morrill seconded and all were in favor.*
- Dawn Howard reported that the Retirement Bill was received and was less than expected.
- Dawn Howard asked the Board about Retirees Health Insurance. The Board gave Dawn permission to research the options that are available, such as having a retiree stay on the plan, but pay their own premiums.
- The Board was informed of New York State's Open Government Law, which states that the minutes of the Board of Directors meetings will be submitted to the Board of Legislators and placed on the web site within 12 days of the meeting. The Board requested that any Draft Minutes please be clearly marked as such and have a sub note that states that they have not been approved.
- The repairs to the Forestry truck from deer damage cost of \$4,663.89. The SWCD has a \$250 deductible, insurance will cover the rest.
- At the AEM Conference, it was announced that in Year 4 of the strategy changes are going to be made. The amount earned per farm is no longer going to be a standard amount. It will be hourly based. There was no discussion of the amount per hour. There was not much concrete information. There is also going to be different categories of money. Waiting for more information. Changes are also taking place in what is required in Tier 3A's.
- Black Lake Invasive Weed Control Committee
 - The committee held a meeting earlier this evening.
 - They are going to start fundraising to raise money possibly to hire a consultant, purchase a weed harvester, etc.
 - The Committee asked that the SWCD hold an account and do the accounting for them.
 - Robert Andrews said that he would like to see a small administration fee. Ed Hadlock agreed. Dawn Howard said that Clarkson University charges a large administration fee. Clark Decker suggested a 5-6% administration fee. Fred Morrill asked about an hourly rate. Dave Martin suggested keeping the interest earned on the account. More general discussion on administration fees was held. Ed Hadlock suggested that we wait and see what happens. There is no money currently. If there is a lot of time invested then an administration fee should follow.
 - *Tom Nichols made a motion to have the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District set up an account and run the funds for the*

Black Lake Invasive Weed Control Committee. Clark Decker seconded and all were in favor.

- Robert Andrews asked Dawn Howard to write a letter to the Black Lake Invasive Weed Control Committee and state that we will set up the fund (after Dawn verifies with Steve Lanthier that the SWCD is allowed to do so) and an administration fee may be applied.
- Dawn Howard reported to the Board that she will be taking vacation the last two weeks of January.
- General discussion on Bion was held.
- Discussion on the standard workday for Retirement Service Days was held
 - BE IT RESOLVED, that the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District be and hereby establishes the following as a standard workday for all employees for the purpose of determining days worked reportable to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System is five day work week, eight hour day.
 - *Tom Nichols moved to accept the Standard Workday Resolution as written. Fred Morrill seconded and all were in favor.*
- Dave Martin asked about the SWCD giving a Conservation Farmer award and presenting it at the Cooperative Extension meeting. Dawn Howard suggested awarding the AEM signs.

Clark Decker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 PM. Fred Morrill seconded and all were in favor.

Next meeting will be held January 17th at 7:30 PM at the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Respectfully submitted,

Raeanne Dulanski
Secretary/Assistant Treasurer