

St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES For May 17, 2007

Board Members Present: Robert G. Andrews, Jr., Edwin Hadlock, David Martin, Frederick Morrill, Clark Decker, Mary Rutley and Thomas Nichols.

Staff Present: Dawn Howard, Katie Maloney, Raeanne Dulanski, James Pullano, NRCS, Leslie Wilson, SWCD RC&D Representative, and Bruce Hopkins, NRCS Area Conservationist

The meeting was called to order by Robert G. Andrews, Jr. at 7:43 PM.

Introductions were made of Leslie Wilson, Bruce Hopkins and Raeanne Dulanski.

Dave Martin made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 8th meeting as written. Clark Decker seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Frederick Morrill made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Reports for March and April 2007. Edwin Hadlock seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) – Bruce Hopkins

- Robert Andrews accepted a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the Soil and Water Conservation District from Arlen L. Lancaster, the Chief of NRCS, for 50 years of work.
- Bruce Hopkins was presented with a 50th Anniversary hat and pens by Robert Andrews because Bruce had not been able to attend the 50th Luncheon due to weather.
- Bruce Hopkins gave a report:
 - NRCS is going through a state reorganization, in New York and across the United States.
 - Draft plan calls for going from four NY administrative areas to three. This means that Bruce will no longer have St. Lawrence County. St. Lawrence County is going to be administered with the Northeast counties out of the Albany Area Office.
 - There are also going to be multi-county teams. The state is going to be split into seven multi-county team areas. St. Lawrence County is in a team with Franklin, Clinton and Essex in the draft plan. These counties are going to be working together closely towards a common mission.
 - The draft plan also calls for a reduction in NRCS presence in some of the smaller counties.
 - This means that there may not be a physical field office any more, but does not mean a reduction in the field work that is being done.

- Thomas Nichols added to the discussion about not all counties having a field office, offering “boots on the ground” as the NRCS goal.
 - The draft plan calls for NRCS to start working with Soil and Water Districts regarding overhead costs, a more business perceptive, and more shared costs. This plan does not state that these costs have to be paid in cash. Arrangements can be made to allot work as payment too.
 - The draft plan was submitted to the national headquarters about three weeks ago. Nothing has been heard back yet. June is the deadline to have the plan in place, October to start implementing the plan, and the plan completely implemented by 2010.
 - FSA and RD are working on similar plans for their agencies, and paying close attention to what NRCS is doing.
- NRCS is going to be getting out and checking on the program contracts that are currently in place. They are going to make sure that the contracts are being fulfilled and worked on, or contracts are going to be cancelled. There is going to be tighter administration on projects and some work done on the back load that currently exists.
- Congress is formulating the appropriation packages. Numbers are expected to be seen in the next few weeks about how much money for the different programs.
- The new Farm Bill is being worked on. Bruce expects this to start quickly, before September is possible. A few things that are expected to affect the new Farm Bill this year are a new Congress with a new majority, the war in Iraq, the presidential election and the energy situation.
- Tom Nichols started a discussion on the current RC&D situation. Bruce said that they are aware of our need for a coordinator; however, there is no funding and they are being told to hold the line on that budget.
- Bruce thanked the NRCS guys, Greg Hayes, Kent Frary and Jim Pullano for all their work and the great job that they are doing.

RC&D – Leslie Wilson

- Leslie Wilson is the new SWCD RC&D representative. She gave a quick background of her agriculture history. Currently she and her husband are operating a small sheep farm.
- Leslie had a handout with lists of challenges, opportunities, risks and threats to agriculture in St. Lawrence County. This list was shown to RC&D as a way to start conversations and generate ideas for projects that the group could work on.
- The one project that Leslie has decided that she wants work to be done on is tire recycling. She has started making phone calls and gathering information.
- Discussion followed on some of the challenges that are on Leslie’s list.
- Robert Andrews suggested to Leslie that if she has completed a lot of the work and can not get the support that she needs from RC&D to finish the project, that she approach the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board for help.

NRCS – James Pullano

- James Pullano reported that NRCS is administering alot of programs right now. They are getting in touch with contract holders and putting those people in contact with contractors. They are expecting a big construction year.

- EQIP – This year they have 27 new contracts worth \$880,000 in St. Lawrence County, putting the county at the top of the state. They have a very big work load, and New York State should look at bringing more people up to this area.
- They are continuing to work with Katie Maloney on the Nutrient Management Plans and feel she is doing a really good job on them.

New York Association of Conservation Districts – Thomas Nichols

- Tom Nichols will be going to Cobleskill next week for the next meeting.
- May 29th in Syracuse is the next meeting with NRCS. The agency is taking input from him very well and they are having good discussions. There is more work and progress to be made, but the process is going well. Local concerns are being brought forward.

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

- CD of the 50th Anniversary interview that was aired 4/20/07 on North Country Public Radio was played for the board and guests to hear.
- Dawn handed out copies of The Saint Lawrence River Valley and Chemung County Soil & Water Conservation District Stream Processes A Guide to Living In Harmony with Streams to the board members.
- RC&D – Dawn gave a report on the struggling RC&D group.
 - They need a coordinator and have a new chairperson. There is no money from NRCS for staff. Money is needed for projects too.
 - Bruce Hopkins said that he would relay the message to Ron Alverado; however, RC&D is being “turned over” to local people, so there will be no money.
- Kathleen Deugaw resigned her position May 9, 2007.
- Katie Maloney, Conservation District Technician reported:
 - Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Strategy -
 - Year 2- Upper Grass River-
 - Finished Year 2 final report earning the full \$30,000 available to us.
 - Completed 32 Tier 1’s, 17 Tier 2’s and 20 Tier 3a’s.
 - Tier 3a is conservation plan that identifying the priority environmental concern on the farm and options to remedy the concern.
 - AEM to EQIP
 - Still working with Jim on completing Nutrient Management plans for 8 farms she sampled last summer and fall.
 - AEM to EQIP Too
 - 16 farms need to have soil samples pulled and nutrient management plans developed for this grant. Will begin as soon as the other plans are completed.
 - Stormwater

- Meeting with Rebecca Storrings, Environmental Engineer Region 6 on Monday, May 21st.
 - Going to stormwater projects that are currently underway in St. Lawrence County and conducting some stormwater site inspections.
 - Expecting to go out with Rebecca somewhat regularly this construction season and eventually going out and doing inspections on behalf of the DEC for reimbursement.
- RIBS – Rotating Integrated Basin Studies
 - Water Sampling at the Massena power dam began yesterday, May 16th.
 - Water Sampling with Tom Voss, DEC Region 6 again this year, once per month until October.
- Dawn Howard gave Aaron Earl, Conservation District Forester’s report:
 - Timber sale add on of 138 trees at 17,154 board feet. \$0.16 per board foot equals \$2,744.64 in additional revenue to the county for sale 3-2006. Hawks nest was the reason for the initial exclusion of additional timber. The nest is vacant this year and since the harvest is still in motion, Aaron included the trees into the current contract at the bid price.
 - Area 12 in Parishville sale near completion of marking and will be submitted to St. Lawrence County Purchasing by the end of next week.
 - Seaway Logging (Curran) is looking for access to a private landowner parcel via County property 12 in Parishville. A temporary Revocable permit will likely be issued.
 - Discussion followed about a rate for Seaway Logging to use county land to access the private land sale. Board would like to set a size limit for a fee for future sales as well as this one, so that there is something that everyone pays. The fee could be based on the acre size of the sale, 100 acres was a suggestion, or the dollar value of the sale. More research is needed and then have a proposal mailed to the board. A special meeting may be called to discuss the proposal if deemed necessary.
 - Aaron helped at the Envirothon and had a good experience. Things went very well.
 - Aaron is also looking to do more youth related work by doing the Conservation Field Days at Brasher Falls on June 8th.
 - On August 18th Aaron will be occupying the Forest Practice Board Booth at the Woodmen’s Field Days in Boonville.
 - Aaron would like to address the Legislators regarding the feasibility of current logging revenue goals when time can be arranged. This could be done either in session or in smaller groups on their own time at representative parcels, to discuss why the goal is unsustainable.
 - Robert Andrews clarified that St. Lawrence County and the SWCD Forestry staff have no responsibility for the woodlot of Cooperative Extension. Discussion followed and the board would like Aaron to volunteer his services to Cooperative Extension for their woodlot management.
- Dawn Howard gave the rest of her Manager Report

- Dawn presented the board with a bill for \$125 from the NYS Conservation District Employees' Association for a Soil & Water commercial to run at prime time on ABC. Discussion followed about whether the board should pay or not. Dawn was asked to get a copy of the ad for the board to view at the next meeting. *Fred Morrill made a motion to pay for the commercial. Mary Rutley seconded. Robert G. Andrews, Edwin Hadlock, Mary Rutley and Thomas Nichols were in favor. Motion passed.*
- The board was informed of the BION beef farm operation that is purposed for St. Lawrence County.
 - It will be a four prong industry, with a transportation department, methane processes, beef farm and ethanol production.
 - The farm plans on having 84,000 head.
 - May purchase 20% of their corn needs locally.
 - Purchasing all of their hay locally.
 - They are not looking at Hopkinton as a site for the farm. They need to be close to the Seaway and are looking near Massena and Ogdensburg.
 - There was discussion on where the company was going to find the land for this operation. Six units of 14,000 cows each plus support facilities.
- The new AEM signs were shown to the board. St. Lawrence County received 25 signs to give farms that are enrolled in AEM, and are top farms. The board will have the final say on what farms get these signs, but have asked that Dawn and Katie help them by giving them a list of which farms they think should receive the signs.

Old and New Business

- RC&D Representation
 - More names for representatives are needed. The board came up with Brain Cruickshank, Ruth Hostetter, Don Daig, Kermit Morgan, or possibly a SLC Planning Board member, AVTer or someone from Economic Development.
- SWCD 50th Anniversary
 - Dawn Howard gave copies of the New York State Resolution recognizing us to all the board members and is going to give 15 to the SLC Legislators.
 - The County Board of Legislators is going to get a resolution ready to present the SWCD.
 - Dawn Howard showed the plaque that the SWCD received from the Grange to the board.
 - Robert Andrews asked that the board give per diem and mileage to Edwin Hadlock and David Martin for attending the luncheon. *Tom Nichols made the motion to pay Robert Andrews, Edwin Hadlock, and Dave Martin per diem and mileage for going to the 50th Anniversary lunch. Mary seconded. All were in favor.*
- Mary Rutley reported that she had finally finished reviewing the Employee Handbook. She asked that the three pages of the table of contents be sent out for the board to see. She is going to compare the SWCD handbook to a copy of the Town and State Employee Handbooks once she receives them.
- Farm Safety

- Sharron Scofield from NYCAMH is going to be coming up June 12th to be the coordinator the first Farm Safety Day Camp Date.
- Erica Schreiner the Conservation Educator for Oswego County SWCD is going to be the coordinator for the June 14th Day Camp.
- *Clark Decker made the motion to pay for lodging and board for Sharron Scofield, volunteer coordinator if nothing is donated. Mary Rutley seconded. All were in favor.*
- County Legislators – Fred Morrill
 - Fred Morrill reported that the hiring of the new county administrator is down to two people. Recommendations are expected to be made May 21st.
 - The jail is being built, with May 21st at 4:30 PM the ground breaking.
 - The Chamber of Commerce is using money from the Legislators for tourism. They are putting up signs at all ten main entrances to the county.

Dave Martin made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:40PM, Fred Morrill seconded. All were in favor. Clark Decker did not go into Executive Session.

The board came out of Executive Session at 10:18 PM.

Tom Nichols made the motion to hire Raeanne Dulanski as St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District Secretary/Assistant Treasurer at a \$25,000 starting salary. Dave Martin seconded. All were in favor.

Edwin Hadlock make the motion to end Aaron Earl's probational period May 21, 2007 and to have a pay rise to \$26,500. Fred Morill seconded. All were in favor.

At the next meeting the board will review the new Forestry truck.

Robert Andrews asked that any opinions on the budget be given to Dawn before the next board meeting.

Frederick Morrill made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:23PM. David Martin seconded the motion and all were in favor.

The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, July 19th 2007 at 7:30 PM at the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Respectfully submitted,

Raeanne Dulanski
Secretary/Asst. Treasurer