

St. Lawrence County  
Soil and Water Conservation District

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

For

May 15, 2008

Board Members Present: Robert G. Andrews, Jr., Edwin Hadlock, David Martin, Frederick Morrill, Clark Decker, Mary Rutley and Thomas Nichols arriving at 8:30 PM.

Staff and Guests Present: Dawn Howard, Katie Maloney, Raeanne Dulanski, Aaron Earl, James Pullano, NRCS, Marilyn Stephenson, NRCS and Steve Lanthier SWCC.

Robert Andrews, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:26 PM at the Soil and Water Conservation District office.

*Clark Decker made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Dave Martin seconded and all were in favor.*

*Fred Morrill made a motion to accept the March and April Treasurer Reports. Mary Rutley seconded and all were in favor.*

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – Marilyn Stephenson.**

- A copy of the draft Operational Agreement was distributed to the Board.
- Marilyn Stephenson reviewed with the Board.
  - NRCS is looking at working with every District over the next three years, to get help to cover rent expense.
  - Implementation would take place in 2009. Presentation of the Operational Agreements has started now so discussion between NRCS and SWCDs can start and SWCDs can be looking for funds if they decide not to do an agreement with NRCS.
  - At the end of the three years, NRCS would like each district to be at the local negotiation table discussing square footage and rent.
- Marilyn Stephenson directed the Board to the Operational Agreement to make a correction. \$25,412.90 should be the amount that the District is responsible for. She also asked that this correction be made throughout the document where this number is addressed.
- Marilyn Stephenson continued to discuss the Operational Agreement numbers.
- Exhibit A was shown to the Board. This document states the current rates for different activities that the District can assist with to work off their rent.
- Marilyn Stephenson restated that the \$3,000 per computer charge that had been proposed earlier, was included in this Operational Agreement. Internet, computer software, network and IT assistance is included. There will be no separate charge.
- Clark Decker asked at the end of 2010 when the St. Lawrence County lease expires, what does NRCS want the District to do?
  - Marilyn Stephenson stated that the end of the lease is either 2010 or 2011. When the end of the lease is coming close, the District should be present at the discussions about the office space and setting up their own rent situation. She stated that the

Cobleskill Field Office is the process of a lease agreement and the District is at the table and going to pay their own rent. She has not seen a copy of the current lease agreement for the Canton office yet.

- Robert G. Andrews expressed concern that the Board has regarding NRCS staff numbers in the office. He is concerned that there is not enough people located in this office for the work load.
  - Marilyn Stephenson stated that Jim is not alone here. She asked the Board to think of the team approach now. Jim has the assistance that he needs. There are people out there to help with the workload. She said that Jim needs to become more open and accepting of the help.
  - Further discussion was held on NRCS staffing.
- Steve Lanthier asked why, with the new regional/team approach, is the new engineer going to be located in Plattsburg and not in Franklin County which is the center of the team?
  - Marilyn Stephenson stated that driving is not an issues here. Employees have credit cards and will be staying the night when they are working here. They will probably be staying here three days at a time when they are here to work.
- Robert G. Andrews expressed concern that he has about regionalization to Marilyn Stephenson. He stated that historically regionalization in St. Lawrence County has not worked.
- Marilyn Stephenson told the Board that they are not considering closing the Canton field office. She has not seen the new Farm Bill yet, but conservation funds have been going up, and if that is the case, more people will be needed.
- Robert G Andrews asked Marilyn Stephenson if she has any cases where the District owns the space and NRCS rents from them?
  - Marilyn Stephenson said that she does have one office where the District owns the space and NRCS is paying them for their space and the District's space, but that is not going to be happening anymore.
- Marilyn Stephenson also stated that statewide there are only two Districts that have Cooperative Working Agreements with NRCS that state that the Districts will provide administration support.
- Marilyn Stephenson said that the goal of the Operational Agreements is to put things in writing and make it legal.
- Steve Lanthier stated to the Board that the Operational Agreement is only for the amount of the lease. Exhibit A will be used and that is set at the State Committee rate. Any work done beyond the Operational Agreement can be put into a Contribution Agreement which is the agreement where the District does all the work and gets paid for 50%.
- Marilyn Stephenson stated that this is not a plan to get Districts to leave. There are some that do think that is the plan though.
- The Board raised the question that if we do leave, who would be here to greet the public, answer phones, etc.?
  - Marilyn Stephenson answered that if the District decides to leave, she does not know what would happen. They do not expect Jim to do administrative duties or answer the phones. Maybe NRCS could work out an agreement with FSA to do that.
- The question was asked about the number of hours that are listed on Exhibit A. Are these a cap and will they change when the State Committee changes their rates?
  - Marilyn Stephenson said that there is no cap on the number of hours for the activities. These hours are only an average and are presented as an aid to help District plan. The

amount of time it takes to complete an activity will be based on local data numbers that are backed up with documentation.

- When the State Committee changes their rate, then Exhibit A will also change.

### **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – Jim Pullano**

- Jim Pullano reported that the construction season has started and it is anticipated that it will be a productive season. The practices being installed will be credited towards the backlog of work, which is the priority.
- Jim Pullano stated that he has been in contact with team members to request support and that as early as Friday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, Chris Reidy (Team Biologist) will be in Canton to help with WRP. Also, Jim Pullano has coordinated with Kent Frary for assistance from Malone and has spoken with Rich Redman from the Plattsburgh Office concerning efficient use of his staff. Jim expects the watershed team members to be open and willing to offer assistance to Canton on a regular basis.
- The state Civil Rights Review took place and it went very well. Jim Pullano thanked Robert Andrews for making the trip into Canton to speak to the reviewers. There were a few minor corrections that were made that day.
  - Robert Andrews enjoyed speaking with the reviewers and felt it was worth his time to come in.
- Robert Andrews asked Jim Pullano for monthly reports on the regionalization and if it is working. He stated that he knows that Jim Pullano is committed to making it work under the existing limitations.

### **Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC) – Steve Lanthier**

- Round 14 grants have been awarded. \$13 million of projects have been funded. St. Lawrence County did not receive any grants this year, but have had a successful run before. 48 projects got money. Three projects for \$3 million were awarded in his area.
- AEM has \$2.5 million from EPF. There is funding to have AEM Action Plans revised this year. There are three levels of planning for funding.
- 2006 and 2007 performance measure monies are out. 2008 project ideas are starting to be collected. There was about \$14,000 per county for 2006 and 2007 each, which was more than originally thought because New York City did not take any money.
- Performance measure standards change in 2009. There is also a change in the percent that each standard is worth. The first and second standards percents went up and the third and fourth measures percents decreased.
- Ecosystem Based Management pilot projects have started. Department of State has started and they hope that it will change how departments work together on projects. Not a lot of money in it yet, but it looks like it will be around for awhile.
- In the state budget it looks like SWCD funding will stay the same. There are staffing issues with the State Committee and the State Budget. They are hoping that this will lead to more streamlining of systems.
- Robert Andrews asked about training. Will the State Committee offer some?
  - Steve Lanthier said that they are working on a few ideas. They are hoping to get things set up so that Districts are able to meet the new requirements. They are looking at what other states have offered and hoping to create something that will

work well in New York, possibly power point presentations that can be given to Districts and have managers present them.

### **New York Associations of Conservation Districts (NYACD) – Tom Nichols**

- Tom Nichols reported that the Association meet with Donald Pettit, acting NRCS State Conservationist and talked about rent. Tom said that Don was asked if NRCS is dropping SWCDs. Don shared that this is not the wanted effect.
- Tom Nichols does not think that rental property owners want to work with SWCDs and the other agencies separately. Don said that NRCS wants SWCDs to be at the table when all the agencies meet together. FSA in most offices is the lead agency working with the property owners. Tom told Don that NRCS has a PR problem.
- Tom Nichols also questioned that there are “more boots on the ground”. Don Pettit is supposed to be looking into the number of employees.
- Discussion on the number of employees and the number of employees that are located in St. Lawrence County followed. The Board expressed that if there are employees working out of this office, they want to make sure that they are included as employees in the rent agreement. Marilyn Stephenson stated that she will review the number of employees that will be working out of this office and will look at changing the number on what is owed.
- Tom Nichols said that he is not happy with the way that things are going. He does not feel that the needs of the North Country are being met. There seems to be a trend of things moving to western NY. The offices of the North Country are too far apart for people to obtain services.
- Dawn Howard asked Marilyn Stephenson if we could move Aaron Earl into one of the two empty offices. Marilyn Stephenson said maybe and that we will look into that.
- Tom Nichols attended a State Invasive Species group meeting. He talked about St. Lawrence County’s problems. Revenue questions were discussed. The group was thinking about taxing St. Lawrence River shipping. Tom told them that was not a good idea. Other ideas included fees on permits for boat trailer licenses. Tom told them that there is no credibility. It will not work. NYS has taken the money into the General Fund too many times before.

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

- Manager Report – Dawn Howard
  - Dawn Howard made a request to pay Robert Andrews for mileage incurred traveling to the NRCS Civil Rights Review.
    - *Fred Morrill made a motion to pay Robert Andrews mileage for traveling to Canton for the NRCS Civil Rights Review on May 1, 2008. Clark Decker seconded and all were in favor.*
  - BION – The Committee has decided that they do not have enough information to make a recommendation to the Board of Legislators. Fred Morrill and Robert Andrews think that BION needs to present their goals and specifics. Robert Andrews said that an information letter is being submitted to Board of Legislators letting them know where the committee is at. At the next meeting, the group would like the DEC to do a presentation to the committee.
  - Black Lake Invasive Weed Committee (BLIWC)

- *Clark Decker made a motion to have the Black Lake Invasive Weed Committee procedure for spending funds to be that the BLIWC submit a voucher with two signatures on it, making a suggestion to the SWCD Board of Directors on how to spend the funds. Fred Morrill seconded and all were in favor.*
    - *Clark Decker made a motion to authorize Dawn Howard to pay BLIWC bills, with the proper signatures, for amounts less than \$250. Fred Morrill seconded and all were in favor.*
    - Robert Andrews asked if we have received a written letter from BLIWC requesting assistance with accounting yet. Dawn Howard stated that we had not. Robert Andrews asked Tom Nichols to please be sure that we receive that letter soon.
  - Enivrothon – Another successful year. Parishville-Hopkinton won the overall competition.
  - The Board of Legislators has requested a list of Department needs and concerns. Dawn Howard’s list includes: a trail coordinator, computer and vehicle replacements, and rent. She asked the Directors to contact her with any other ideas for things to be added to the list.
  - The Board of Legislators has a draft Code of Ethics for St. Lawrence County. Fred Morrill asked the rest of the Board to please be sure and review this. It will impact the SWCD Board. The Board expressed concern about the information that is requested by the proposed requirements. It is very personal information and once it is on record, it is understood that this information will become subject to the Freedom of Information Law. The Board feels this will have an effect on the number of people that will volunteer.
    - *Dave Martin made a motion to have Dawn Howard draft a letter to be sent to the Board of Legislators stating the SWCD Board’s position against the proposed Code of Ethics, because it is an invasion of privacy. Clark Decker seconded all and were in favor except Fred Morrill and Tom Nichols who abstained from the vote.*
- Technician Report – Katie Maloney, District Technician gave her report.
  - **AEM to EQIP Too**
    - 19 Farms in grant proposal
      - Completed Nutrient Management plans on 14 farms and reviewed with farmers.
      - One Farm still has to pay for soil samples. Plan development is stalled until payment is received.
      - Three farms withdrew. One farm hired a planner.
      - Grant deadline is March 2009. Grant will be completed this year.
  - **AEM to EQIP**
    - All plans completed except for one.
    - Grant deadline August 31, 2008.
  - **AEM YR 3**
    - Closed out year 3 before meeting. Not a successful AEM Year, but next year will be.
    - Will discuss AEM report card later on in the meeting.
  - **AEM YEAR 4**

- Annual Action Plan completed and forwarded into SWCC for approval.
    - Start date is May 7, 2007 until May 6, 2008
    - Year 4 will focus on development of Nutrient Management plans and cropland conservation, building toward a full CNMP on the seven farms in our Ag Nonpoint source grant proposal that was not funded. All farms have been contacted and are on board with work beginning this summer.
  - **Conservation Planner Certification**
    - First priority for summer is to complete three conservation plans to be reviewed by NRCS staff before certification is granted.
    - Already began working on first plan and it is about 45% complete.
    - Plans need to be completed by October 5, 2008.
      - Hoping to have them done by Aug. 1 (if not sooner) to allow for proper review time and time to make any corrections/changes.
  - **Stormwater**
    - Had meeting with DEC Region 6 today to discuss doing some construction site inspections on active sites in the county.
    - Seven sites selected. DEC would like Katie Maloney to educate contractors about the Stormwater program and permit coverage and to do an abbreviated site inspection to visually note if water quality issues are a concern.
    - Goal is to educate and protect the waters of St. Lawrence County.
- Secretary Report – Raeanne Dulanski gave her report.
  - Raeanne Dulanski reported that the District Tree program has been completed. 24,278 seedlings were sold through the program. This number is down from last year; however, we were able to save money in some areas (mail and trucking) and we did make more profit this year than last. This does not include DEC trees numbers.
  - Currently there are 32 Triploid Grass Carp ordered. Delivery date is set for June 6.
  - Raeanne Dulanski wrote and received a grant from the Agway Foundation for the county's Farm Safety program.
  - Raeanne Dulanski traveled to Watertown May 13 – 15 to attend an Introduction to Governmental Accounting class put on by the Office of the State Comptroller.
  - The Civil Rights Review and keeping the Civil Rights mailing list updated have been keeping Raeanne Dulanski busy.
  - Dawn Howard and Raeanne Dulanski went to the bank and opened the Black Lake Invasive Weed Committee bank account. Raeanne has to open the account in QuickBooks and get things set up in the office for this account.
- Forestry Report – Aaron Earl had to leave early and left his report for Dawn Howard to present.
  - Forest Management Plans are 62% complete.
  - Sale 1-2007, #12 Picketville Road, is being cleaned up this week and the bond is expected to be returned to Seaway Timber Harvesting upon completion.
  - Sale 1-2008, #9 County Route 58, is finished and the deposit will be returned to 3B Timber when they remove their equipment.
  - Sale 2-2008, # 36 in Hopkinton, is still being painted. It is a small pre-commercial White Pine sale.

- Large pulp sales are expected in order to make the county goal. Sites for sales will be in Stockholm, Colton, and Parishville ( # 11, 26, 27 and 28).
- Further sales will include Red Pine in Hermon, #10, and Parishville, #33.
- Aaron Earl attended the “Working Lands: Agroforestry Sampler” at Cornell. It included RPM Ecosystems, Forest Farming, Silvopasture, Alley Cropping, Riparian Buffer, Windbreak, and Odor Abatement.
- Other meetings Aaron Earl has attended include NYFOA and RC&D Forestry.
- Aaron Earl mentored the Current Issues station at the Envirothon.

### **General Discussion**

- Robert Andrews reported that there will be a Management of Ag Plastics meeting. He read the invitation from RC&D to attend on June 2, 2008 from 12 – 4 in Watertown. Dawn Howard said that she was planning on attending.
- Steve Lanthier shared that Clinton County is purchasing an ag plastic baler. Discussion followed about ag plastics.
- The Board had discussion on the new dam regulations.

### **New Business**

- Katie Maloney presented the Board with the AEM report card. The Board reviewed the report card and agreed that we can only improve. The AEM strategy needs to change to reflect the changes that have taken place within the program, a shift from an educational program to a planning program.

### **Old Business**

- RC&D Representatives – Dawn Howard reported that there are two people interested and four openings. Please keep this in mind.
- Employee Manual – If the Board has not taken a look at this yet, please be sure to do that. It will take some time to get through.

Robert Andrews asked Steve Lanthier to keep the Board up to date on the trainings.

**Next meeting is June 19, 2008 at 7:30 PM at the St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District office.**

Robert Andrews adjourned the meeting at 9:53 PM.

**Respectfully submitted,**

Raeanne Dulanski  
Secretary/Assistant Treasurer