

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes



October 9th, 2024 10:00am

Menominee County Annex Building
S904 Highway 41
Stephenson, MI 49887

Members Present: Kayla Littleton (Forest County LWCD, virtual), Sherry Pethers (Forest County, virtual) Scott Goodwin (Florence County LCD), Sheri Denowski (Marinette County), Amber Butterfield (Dickinson Conservation District, virtual), Larry Sommer (Lumberjack RC&D), Larry Phelps (Menominee County)

Members Absent: Tracy Beckman (Lumberjack RC&D), Aaron McCullough (WDNR-Marinette), Nicole Shutt (Forest Service)

Guests: Shawna Dishaw (Florence County LCD)

Staff: Lindsay Peterson (Coordinator), Natalie Hunding (Project Manager)

Meeting called to order at 10:00 am by S. Goodwin.

Board of Directors Meeting

1. **Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by L. Sommer/S. Denowski.
Motion carried.

2. **Approval of Minutes** – Meeting Minutes from the June 5th, 2024 BOD Meeting were presented. S. Denowski/L. Sommer moved to accept the minutes as presented. *Motion carried.*

2. **Grants & Treasurer's Report** – L. Peterson led this portion of the meeting.
 - a. Grants and spending are on generally track, with a few exceptions. Extensions are expected for MISGP Core 22 and 23, and GLRI Buffer zone projects. Amber received the modification agreement for the buffer zone project, awaiting final signature.
There was an accounting error in tracking the EPA Phragmites sub-award resulting in that project being overspent. In talks with UPRCD and project partners to rectify, potential to share unspent funds from Iron-Baraga/WePIC.
Deliverables are generally on track as well. Most behind on podcast, but the grant will be extended and this will be a priority this winter. Due to the late agreement for the GLRI roadside pollinator project site selection and fall prep were not accomplished this year. Will look at spring site prep if site selection can be finalized with road commissions over the winter.
 - b. Called for motion to place the Grant report on file. There was a question about the Sawyer Lake contract showing up as \$0 under "Grants." L. Peterson explained this was a contract awaiting payment and there was the suggestion to put this under the "Undesignated" fund account. Motion to place report on file with suggested change made by S. Denowski/L. Sommer. Motion carried.
 - c. L. Peterson added that the current fund balance for the Donation fund was \$11,0076.44 and the Cost-Share fund was \$7,163.75, with several payments still pending. L. Peterson is still awaiting reimbursement of her \$1000 travel stipend, which will show as an expense in the next report.

4. **Project Updates/Reports**
 - a. **Events:** Peterson led this portion of the meeting. Since the last BOD meeting, WRISC attended several events. Overall, all events were successful. Of note were the Landowner Training L. Peterson led for the Town of Wagner on Sept. 14th, several Environmental Field Days for students, and the NAISMA Conference at which L. Peterson presented. Upcoming events of note include

school forest workdays, WI CISMA Fall Meeting, and UMISC in mid-November. WRISC will be pulling back on event participation this fall/winter to focus on staff training and other project priorities.

b. Grants:

- i. Project teams are making progress on river runs this season and several group runs with partners have occurred on the upper river stretches. Lake 2 Lake did release more beetles on the river.
 - ii. MEF Cost Share project is progressing well and the details are being ironed out for the cost share program. Big push this winter will be the development of outreach materials to landowners. Biocontrol beetles did well this year. Experimenting with overwinter a stock population so did not do any field releases this year.
 - iii. Boatwash went well this season and is wrapping up. Staff worked a few weekends past Labor Day due to the nice weather. Since the spring GLRI application was missed, MISGP may be a grant source for additional funds to supplement 2025 budget.
 - iv. GLRI Buffer Zone project saw increased survey and treatment efforts this year.
 - v. MISGP 22 extension will end in December. Still some budget categories underspent due to the lack of an additional project manager position. May do short-term extension through the spring to reduce the remaining funds.
 - vi. WRISC will need to extend this grant as it is underspent again due to the lack of a third full-time staff position (PM).
 - vii. The UPRC&D received the HWA grant, from which WRISC will receive a subaward. However, they received much less than requested, which will impact the amount of work done on the project. Training in lower Michigan in December.
 - viii. WRISC is resubmitting a Landscape Scale Restoration project proposal. When the ranking list was sent out, WRISC was ranked in the middle for the LSR grant and missed out on funding by one or two spots, so we feel confident on re-applying this year, incorporating feedback received from reviewers.
 - ix. May submit for an early detection rapid response project for flowering rush found at High Falls Reservoir. Bio Control being approved next year for Flowering Rush and may make sense to piggyback on L2L/Marquette's efforts in pursuing bio control as well.
 - x. UPRC&D did not receive the NOAA Phragmites Restoration grant.
 - xi. Applied for National Forest Foundation Collaborative Capacity grant with Forest County Potawatomi to develop their own invasive species program within the tribe. Waiting to hear back about that. In planning stages with Forest County Potawatomi for a landscape scale restoration project for next year.
 - xii. Working with MI DNR and UPRC&D for an EPA funded U.P. wide AIS early detection project, \$800,000. Flexible grant and could include Wisconsin counties as well, and subaward for EFB. Do not know when we will hear back on this.
- c. **Hiring:** Katherine has taken a new position with Downtown Iron Mountain. Natalie was hired on as a new project manager, and will effectively take over many of Katherine's responsibilities. May pursue winter hiring for other project manager position but not decided yet.
- d. **Outreach:** Outreach is consistently growing. Social media reached a total of 13,000 people over the last two months. End of season report/newsletter coming towards end of the year.
- e. **Questions:** S. Goodwin asked about billboard campaigns and if WRISC could rent space on the one in Florence County. L. Peterson requested the contact information from S. Goodwin or S. Dishaw and will reach out to get a flight booked. Consensus that it was a high priority for WRISC to attend county board meetings with end of year reports about what WRISC is doing in each county.

5. Old Business

- a. **Board Member Reassignment:** K. Littleton has officially taken over S. Kircher's role at Forest County Land and Water Conservation Department. K. Littleton was designated as S. Kircher's alternate already, and while there was some discussion about this, the vote was to allow K. Littleton to occupy the board member seat until the end of the term. Motion to assign K. Littleton to S. Kircher's remaining board seat term was made by S. Pethers / S. Denowski. ***Motion carried.***
- b. **Contract Work:** Previously discussed in August, however no quorum at that meeting and no decisions were made. Providing additional discussion opportunity on the matter of WRISC being more frequently requested to offer work not covered grants, which could be pursued as contracts. Discussion involved questions regarding competition with other contractors in the region and if there was any language in the Bylaws that would explicitly allow or prohibit contract work. L. Peterson assured there was nothing in the bylaws regarding contract work, and state that other CISMAs often engage in contractual work. WRISC will not undersell contracts and will be comparable to private companies.
Consensus was to allow WRISC Coordinator to review opportunities/requests and judiciously select which are doable given current workloads, staff availability, etc. WRISC Coordinator will then send vetted contracts to the WRISC Board for approval/consensus.

6. New Business

- a. **Staff Wage Adjustments:** Dickinson CD Board approved a cost of living increase of 5% for all staff. Effective as of new fiscal year, October 1st, 2025. Staff reviews were held in August. This increase is reviewed every year based on staff performance reviews and budget assessment.
- b. **DEI Committee:** With DEI incentives becoming a larger required component for grant applications, L. Peterson would like to initiate a DEI committee to develop a DEI strategy and review/update the strategic plan from this perspective. L. Peterson asked which board members would be interested in participating. S. Denowski, S. Goodwin, and T. Beckman all volunteered. L. Peterson will reach out to schedule a committee meeting in the coming month.
- c. **Strategic Plan Review:** This will be a focus of the December meeting. L. Peterson will send out review information in November.

7. Round Robin (Chance for WRISC partners to share updates)

- a. Kayla Littleton (Forest Co): Purple loosestrife beetle cage is being relocated; Seagull Bar was a good location for source plants. Looking to hire a full time technician.
- b. Sherry Pethers (Forest Co): No update.
- c. Amber Butterfield (Dickinson Co): Working on developing a QAPP for the EGLE stormwater grant. Josh (forester) hosted a youth activity booth at Iron Mountain's Oktoberfest.
- d. Larry Sommer (Forest Co): Upcoming Lumberjack RC&D meeting in Argonne; Adjusted the grant process this year and confident it will improve for applicants, received five county requests.

- e. Scott Goodwin (Florence Co): Rumor that feral hogs were harvested by hunters. Culvert replacement at Hendrik's Creek will need an IS survey in 2025.
 - f. Sheri Denowski (Marinette Co): Wrapped up EFB work; DNR deciding on priority of inland site. Chuck working with Eagle and Thunder Lakes developing AIS management plans. Looking to hire 2 LTEs in 2025. Hired a Conservation Specialist mainly for agricultural land; Prescribed burn planned for Oct-Nov depending on weather.
 - g. Larry Phelps (Menominee Co): Plan to connect with L. Peterson regarding roadside phragmites management in priority areas.
 - h. Shawna Dishaw (Florence Co.): Update on EWM in Keyes Lake; wrapped up lake surveys; will be posting water quality data on website; submitted additional proposals.
- 8. Other Business:** The next meeting is scheduled for December 4th, 2024 in Kingsford. Likely that L. Peterson and N. Hunding will be downstate for HWA training. S. Denowski also unavailable. Look to reschedule, likely for December 11th.
- 9. Future Agenda Items:** Strategic Plan Review
- 10. Adjourn.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:42am.

Minutes compiled and submitted by Natalie Hunding & Lindsay Peterson

Minutes approved with minor correction (name spelling) December 11, 2024. Motion to accept with changes, S. Pethers/K. Littleton, Motion Carried.