

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes



December 11th, 2024 10:00am

Dickinson Conservation District Office
420 N Hooper St
Kingsford, MI 49802

Members Present: Kayla Littleton (Forest County LWCD, virtual), Sherry Pethers (Forest County), Scott Goodwin (Florence County LCD), Amber Butterfield (Dickinson Conservation District, virtual), Larry Phelps (Menominee County, virtual) Tracy Beckman (Lumberjack RC&D, virtual), Aaron McCullough (WDNR-Marquette)

Members Absent: Sheri Denowski (Marquette County), Larry Sommer (Lumberjack RC&D), Nicole Shutt (Forest Service)

Guests: Shawna Dishaw (Florence County LCD), Mackenzie Manicki (WI DNR)

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

Meeting called to order at 10:05 am by S. Goodwin.

Board of Directors Meeting

1. **Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by S. Pethers/K. Littleton.
Motion carried.

2. **Approval of Minutes** – Meeting Minutes from the October 9th, 2024 BOD Meeting were presented. Note to change spelling error for N. Shutt’s name. S. Pethers/K. Littleton moved to accept the minutes with proposed change(s). *Motion carried.*

2. **Grants & Treasurer’s Report** – A. Butterfield led this portion of the meeting.
 - a. All grants are on track and progressing as expected, and extensions were approved last fiscal year. Deliverables are generally on track as well.
 - b. Undesignated fund balance is \$10,696.44 and Cost Share is presented as no income or expense in FY25, but L. Peterson mentioned that payments have been collected and will follow up with accounting to see why that is not included in the report.
 - c. Called for motion to place the Grant report on file. Motion to place report on file made by K. Littleton/S. Pethers. *Motion carried.*

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. L. Peterson and N. Hunding attended UMISC in November 2024, along with S. Pethers and S. Dishaw. Also led the Florence High School students on a hike at the school forest. Upcoming will be landowner trainings in Menominee County on February 1st.

 - 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. Project teams will be discussing a phase 2 project, which WE Energies is interested in supporting.

- ii. MEF Cost Share project is progressing well and will be closing out in March. Cost Share had 30 landowners sign up in 2024, still getting some of those contract payments. Primary task for winter season is developing landowner management guides for each species.
 - iii. Boatwash went well this season and is wrapping up. Looking into additional funding to cover the end of the season due to accelerated spending on GLRI funds due to the early start of this agreement in 2023.
 - iv. Public outreach project is progressing, primarily social media and online content development.
 - v. GLRI Buffer Zone project received an extension for full year, but will likely only need one quarter to wrap up in 2025.
 - vi. GLRI CWMA grant partnering with our road commissions was awarded late and will likely need to be extended. Making some headway on connecting with road commissioners.
 - vii. Phragmites project has been extended and the grant will be closing out over the winter.
 - viii. MISGP 22 extension will end in January. 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.
 - ix. MISGP 23 will need to be extended as it is underspent again due to the lack of a third full-time staff position (PM). Most deliverables are progressing well with this project though.
 - x. The UPRC&D received the HWA grant, from which WRISC will receive a subaward. Training is scheduled for December 18, and surveys will start after that.
 - xi. WRISC resubmitted a Landscape Scale Restoration project proposal. Also submitted MISGP Core funding proposal, which will include a sub-award for Menominee CD.
 - xii. 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.
 - xiii. Have not heard update on National Forest Foundation grant.
 - xiv. 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:** Looking to hire an additional staff member this winter to assist with HWA surveys and potentially project management position. Will pursue this in the new year.
 - d. **Outreach:** Outreach is consistently growing. End of season report/newsletter coming by new year.
 - e. **Questions:** N/A

5. Old Business

- a. **DEI Committee:** Meeting had to be pushed back and will take place on Dec. 17th. Committee is currently comprised of S. Goodwin, T. Beckman, and S. Denowski. L. Peterson will resend meeting related materials for review. Question of whether this is required by law was asked, L. Peterson responded that no, it is not legally required by many grants are now requiring DEI related language or plans. Having a plan or some language in writing will streamline grant proposal development in this aspect. It also has the potential to open different avenues for WRISC and for us to gain additional insights to the communities we service.
- b. **Strategic Plan Review:** L. Peterson decided to push this discussion out until the next meeting to allow time for the non-profit discussion.

6. New Business

- a. Non-Profit Discussion:** The idea of WRISC becoming an independent non-profit has been a discussion for many years. L. Peterson's thoughts are, with A. Butterfield leaving the district, WRISC should seriously consider formally pursuing this route. This is in part to the instability of associated with A. Butterfield's departure, and the inconsistencies we have seen with the bookkeeping. It would also allow WRISC to grow beyond the District's capacities. L. Peterson has met with other CISMA leaders and others who have gone through this process, such as a consultant who has been through the process as well, and will have more in-depth conversations with these folks, but feels confident that WRISC is well poised to make this transition successfully. L. Peterson has looked into what it takes to file in both MI and WI and will seek legal assistance. L. Peterson opened the floor for discussion.
- i. Great discussion was held and many questions were addressed.
 - ii. T. Beckman requested that L. Peterson provide an estimate of current administrative costs and/or the portion of WRISC funding that Dickinson CD utilizes.
 - iii. One of the bigger concerns is identifying an out-sourced accountant to manage the level of grant funding that WRISC has.
 - iv. S. Goodwin will approach Florence County board about WRISC utilizing county's corporate council to seek initial legal advisement.
 - v. Overall, the board likes the vision of WRISC's non-profit transition.
 - vi. L. Peterson requested a consensus of the board to pursue details related to the non-profit transition. Board offered consensus. L. Peterson will set up a shared Google Drive folder to share related resources.
- b. 2025 Board Meeting Schedule:** L. Peterson presented the 2025 schedule, which still requires many locations to be confirmed. A. McCullough confirms Wausaukee location for April, S. Goodwin will confirm Florence location for February, K. Littleton will confirm Crandon location for August, L. Peterson will confirm Menominee Co location for October.
- c. 2025 Annual Meeting Planning:** Meeting will be held in Menominee County, tentatively Belgiumtown Restaurant, will brainstorm other ideas as well, possibly Shakey Lakes for outdoor venue. Consensus on date – June 6th, 2025. Lunch is preferred for food option.

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

- a. Kayla Littleton (Forest Co): posted opening for technician position, taking on more land information responsibilities.
- b. Larry Phelps (Menominee Co): county board reorganization meeting in January; beach erosion being addressed at Shakey Lakes Park.
- c. Tracy Beckman (Lumberjack RC&D): No updates
- d. Sherry Pethers (Forest Co): No updates
- e. Aaron McCullough (WI DNR): Operating with less staff, open technician position; long-term equipment manager retired; post-deer season work and DMU changes

- f. Shawna Dishaw (Florence Co.): presentation at interpretive center; got a new phragmites report in Florence Co.
- g. Scott Goodwin (Florence Co): Rumor that feral hogs were harvested by hunters.

8. Other Business: The next meeting is scheduled for February 5th, 2025 in Florence, WI.

9. Future Agenda Items: Strategic Plan Review

10. Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:44am.

Minutes compiled and submitted by Natalie Hunding & Lindsay Peterson

Minutes approved February 5, 2025. Motion to accept the minutes, K. Littleton, S. Pethers. Motion carried.