

**AISWCD Board of Directors Meeting  
Meeting Minutes: March Quarterly Board  
March 14, 2017 at 8:15 am  
IDOA, Springfield, IL**

**Present:**

Steve Stierwalt, President  
Tom Beyers, Vice President  
Van Bitner, Secretary  
Dan Duval, Treasurer  
Jerry Snodgrass, Area 1 VP  
Steve Fulling, Area 4 VP  
Vern Latwesen, LUC 1  
Terry Bogner, LUC 2  
Lee Bunting, LUC 3  
Terry Davis, LUC 4  
Chuck Schafer, LUC 5  
Joe Rothermel, LUC 7  
Bruce Yingling, LUC 8  
Jason Anderson, LUC 9  
Daniel Doedtman, LUC 10  
Dale Shumaker, LUC 15  
Gerard Fabrizio, LUC 16

Kelly Thompson, AISWCD  
Kaila Long, AISWCD  
Sheryl Phillips, AISWCD  
Matt Hanauer, AISWCD  
Judy Beyers, Auxiliary  
Sondra Baker, Envirothon  
Steve Chard, IDOA  
Rick Graden, FSA  
Paul Young, LUC 1 Alt.  
Sue Davis, Christian SWCD  
Spring Duffey, ISWCDEA  
Terina Coffey, ISWCDEA  
Don Moffitt, IDOA Asst. Dir.

**Absent:**

Myron Kirby, Past President  
David McCormick, Area 2 VP  
Kenny Hawthorne, Area 3 VP  
Randy Molitoris, LUC 6  
Kody Aldrich, LUC 11  
Don Beisiegel, LUC 12  
Roger Johnson, LUC 13  
Tom Anderson, LUC 14

The meeting was called to order at 8:12 am by AISWCD President Steve Stierwalt. Van Bitner took roll.

**Approve Agenda:** 1<sup>st</sup> Jason Anderson 2<sup>nd</sup> Terry Davis Motion Carried  
**Approve December 2016 Meeting Minutes:** 1<sup>st</sup> Lee Bunting 2<sup>nd</sup> Terry Bogner Motion Carried

**Partner Reports**

**ISWCDEA-** Spring Duffey reported that the new ISWCDEA Board met for the first time in February. She mentioned that they are working on putting together a session for the employees opposite of the Director's Forum at the Summer Conference. She also shared that she has also been working with Renae Nichleson from NRCS to create awareness of the prerequisites for the NRCS Training sessions at Summer Conference. Only eight employees have been able to sign up since the prerequisite classes are held during Envirothons and Tree sales. She mentioned that next year she will try to work with Ms. Nichleson to see if the prerequisite classes can be scheduled in March or May instead of April.

**IDOA –** Steve Chard welcomed the Board to the IDOA and gave an update on the new boundaries for their regional representatives. He shared that Don Moffitt has been named the new Assistant Director for IDOA as well. He stated that all Districts should have received their FY '17 funds from the current budget and he shared that the FY '18 budget is currently set for \$2.8 million in cost share and \$2.2 million in operations. He applauded the District employees for all of their hard work with the GATA process and stated that he hopes the process is easier for them this coming year. He also highlighted the Conservation Cropping Seminar that they held in January and mentioned that they had 281 attendees and received fantastic evaluations. He shared that they will be holding these Seminars this next January in Kankakee, Peoria, and Olney. He expressed relief that the new US President has helped farmers by halting the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers. He also shared that we have our work cut out for us convincing GOMB that the SWCDs have changed and are relevant. He shared that he hopes our Strategic Plan will be a significant help for this. Steve Stierwalt shared that AISWCD is looking at

using the training funds from IDOA for the Summer Conference, and that Kelly and Van are working on drawing up a proposal for this. Mr. Chard replied that the funds must be spent before July 1<sup>st</sup>, and that they cannot be used for the conference in late July. Spring Duffey chimed in and asked if they could be vouchered for before July 1<sup>st</sup>, but still used at the conference. Mr. Chard shared that he was unsure of that, but most likely that would not be possible.

**FSA** – Rick Graden reported that there is a 24 million acre cap on the existing CP21 filter strip for denitrifying bioreactors. He also shared that the signup for this has started in January, and it is a cost-share program. He also mentioned that their grassland CRP program is through the 3<sup>rd</sup> batching process. He shared that Scherrie Giamanco has left FSA and that Sonny Purdue may take taking her place. He also announced that they have a new program for organic cost-share. Five hundred and three individuals from organic agricultural crops, livestock and processing are on the list currently. Tom Beyers asked where to send the invoices and Mr. Graden responded that they should go to the county offices. Terry Davis asked if there was a possibility that they would reinstate the CREP program and Mr. Graden shared that while they will not be reinstating the program, they are working on an alternative that will expand CRP.

**IEPA** – No report was given.

**IFA** – No report was given.

**NRCS** – No report was given.

**Envirothon** – Sondra Baker passed around a written report and spoke enthusiastically about the upcoming local and state Envirothons. She shared that all of the study material has been posted online over a month ago and she has received many compliments about the new website. She expressed that many students look forward to Envirothon and eagerly compete for the scholarship opportunities. If an LUC or District is not able to do the full competition, she said that she has created tests that the students can take so that they are not turned away from a scholarship opportunity and their hard work does not go to waste. She shared that volunteer registration is now open and she has many positions still available. Volunteering at the local and/ or state levels would be much appreciated. She shared that she would like volunteer forms and team registrations turned in as soon as possible so that she can order the t-shirts for Envirothon. She shared that the release forms for teams can be turned in later after she has ordered the shirts. She highlighted that Smithfield Foods and Pheasants Forever have been gracious donors and that she is actively seek more big business contacts for donations. The State Envirothon competition will be April 26-27, 2017 and the National Envirothon will be July 23-29, 2017 in Emmitsburg, Maryland at Mount St. Mary's University. Tom Beyers asked if she could include NLRs questions on the test, and she replied that she has already done so indirectly and may be able to add more to the fifth category.

**SWCD Insurance** – Melissa Cauble reported that she has prepared the 1095 forms for the IRS as mandated by the Affordable Care Act. The audit for the insurance was completed in February and they have a total of 48 enrolled members, five of which are directors. Three employees have left the Health Insurance plan in March, but she will be adding new members soon. She shared that our current vision policy is equal to the policy with CMS, and that in April she will be attending the CMS Rate Review where she has heard there will be more options and products available to choose from. She is hoping that additional choices will entice more members to enroll in the insurance policies, especially with the uncertain future of the Affordable Health Care Act.

**NACD North Central Region Update**– Tom Beyers reported that he attended the NACD North Central Region meeting in January with Steve Stierwalt. At the meeting they discussed the candidates for the NACD National election and reviewed resolutions. He shared that most of the resolutions came from Iowa, but a few were from Minnesota. He mentioned that they also heard campaign speeches from Tim Palmer and Kent Stucki. The Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA both made presentations at the meeting. There was also an interesting presentation about the sociology of farmer participation in programs. He reported that the group will not be going back to St. Louis again because they were charged a surprise forty six percent gratuity. Steve Stierwalt agreed and shared that Tom was very helpful at the meeting and introduced him to all of the other delegates.

**Auxiliary** – Judy Beyers reported that the ladies from the Auxiliary had a great time in Colorado at the NACD Annual Meeting. She was able to buy two quilts with the money we collected at the December

Quarterly Board and they raised \$1,100 for the NACD. She also shared that Marie helped her become the new NACD Auxiliary Vice President. The NACD Ladies Auxiliary will be having their summer meeting in Iowa in mid-July. She also thanked the Board for their support and for the check that we donated to the Auxiliary from the auction last year.

**Executive Director** – Kelly Thompson reported that because of everything that has been happening, she came back in February and jumped in with both feet instead of easing into the transition. She thanked Kaila and Sheryl for their hard work stepping up to the plate while she was gone and working on the forums. She also shared that she has been working with Becky Doyle on the Strategic Plan.

### **Old Business**

**SWCD Dues Update-** Kaila Long reported that she has created the dues invoices based on three percent of the operations money that Districts will receive. This will include the operations money that was voted on in each land use council and the operations money that was given at a flat rate to each district. She reported that she will send out invoices once she has confirmation that the Land Use Councils have dispersed the money.

### **Grant Updates**

**604B** – Matt Hanauer reported that the current 604B grant will fulfill its obligation through the end of July. He also mentioned that the big push for the 319s will be to help with implementing current plans and create a boost when applying for funds. While you may get a 319 to write a watershed plan, it will be easier to get a 319 if you are asking for funds to implement and existing plan. The Watersheds that are prioritized for implementation are the Upper Illinois, Upper Vermilion, Senachwine-Lowe Illinois, Green River, Flint-Henderson, Bear, Sny, Upper Mississippi- Cape Girardeau, and Cache. Tom Beyers asked if anyone was working with plans in these watersheds, and Matt replied that there are some. He stated that he will be available to assist anyone who would like to look at maps, and that they should contact him. Gerard Fabrizio questioned Matt about the grant changes in July, and Matt responded that the IUM portion will not be getting cut, just the watershed portion of the grant.

**NRCS** – Sheryl Phillips reported that the NRCS contribution agreement is comprised of two parts-CRP and Administrative Assistance. As part of the agreement, all of the Districts are covered under that Administrative Assistance portion, but the CRP portion is voluntary. Districts that are not able to do their own Administrative Assistance work may offer that work to a neighboring District. This is an important program to Districts and NRCS is less than satisfied with the results they are getting and they are currently deciding whether to discontinue the program. She pointed out that because of the current reporting, to NRCS it appears that they are paying hundreds of dollars an hour instead of the \$23-\$25 dollars an hour. Vern Latwesen asked how Districts could work on attaining a more reasonable cost per hour, and Sheryl Phillips explained that there are currently high, medium, and low workload districts based on the number of NRCS contracts in that District, but that they get paid whether they do one hour of work or 50 hours of work. Spring Duffey shared that many Districts may be underreporting the work they are doing. Sheryl Phillips stressed the importance of this agreement and her desire to keep such a lucrative agreement going for the Districts. Steve Stierwalt shared that he would like to see a taskforce formed for this agreement and Jason Anderson argued that NRCS should not have set up high, medium and low workload designations if they did not like how it was being used. Kelly Thompson replied that NRCS was initially unsure how to designate the differences and Myron Kirby actually came up with this idea as a trial run. However, the trail has proven there are issues that need to be addressed. She shared that Ivan Dozier wants to work with us if we can find a way to move this forward so that everyone is happy. She also mentioned that it would be crucial to have District employees on the taskforce since they deal with NRCS programs on a daily basis. Sue Davis chimed in that she would like to see the taskforce work on adjusting the reporting spreadsheets to be more user-friendly. She also mentioned that NRCS sent out bulletins on what can be counted towards as hours spent working for this agreement. Tom Beyers mentioned that it would be helpful for each Director to have a copy of the reporting spreadsheet so that they can see what their employees are working on and talking about. Paul

Young shared that we should also start addressing the Districts that are only reporting one hour of work and ask them to report more hours so that the other Districts that need this program do not lose it.

*A motion was made to create an NRCS Agreement Taskforce including the AISWCD Grant Administrator, District employees, and NRCS staff.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Gerard Fabrizius      2<sup>nd</sup> Steve Fulling      Motion Carried*

*Discussion -Terry Davis shared that while NRCS is not our only partner, we need to be proactive about this and show that we are willing to be accountable and relevant. Gerard Fabrizius shared that we also need to prove that we can work with our partners and that they will get a decent return on investment when they partner with us. Melissa Cauble highlighted the wonderful letter Rhonda Koehne sent out to Districts about the importance of reporting NRCS Contribution Agreement hours and practical suggestions for reporting said hours. Sheryl Phillips shared that that letter sparked the idea of this taskforce.*

**IL State Budget Update** – Steve Stierwalt gave a recap of the FY '18 proposed budget and shared that it would be a good idea to discuss appropriating more of the funds toward operations when speaking to Legislators for Legislative Day.

### **New Business**

**NACD-** Tom Beyers reported that the NACD elections went in our favor. He shared that they talked about programs and issues, and voted on resolutions without a lot of bickering. He shared that the speakers at the meeting were very interesting, especially the speaker for the general session. He also mentioned that they showed a documentary titled *Unbridled* on wild horses which is available on Netflix, and that NACD was able to raise about \$80,000 in their auction. Mr. Beyers also shared that they also had a panel on water rights which was different that the issues we are facing in the Midwest about water quality. He shared that new National Farm Bureau President Zippy Duval and Leonard Hardy from NRCS were also at the meeting. The new farm bill is already starting to be formulated and it includes some of the conservation issues we are interested in. He reported that NACD is requesting attendance for the fly-in event in Washington, D.C. but that we do not currently have the funds for this. He shared that instead, both Steve Stierwalt and he will speak with Representative Rodney Davis about this since Rep. Davis is on the committee and is a past Friend of Conservation. He mentioned that another interesting thing that happened at the meeting was that the parliamentarian introduced the new Roberts Rules of Order. In this new addition, instead of asking for approval and then asking for objections and then further discussion, a chairman will ask for comments, additions and objections and if none are received, the motion is approved and no further discussion is requested. He stated that the AISWCD representatives originally thought that this would not work well, but they witnessed a smoother meeting.

**Schuyler SWCD is being sued-** Bruce Yingling shared that Schuyler SWCD is being sued over some permanent CREP easements. He stated that Jami Kelly from Schuyler SWCD has gone to IDNR requesting backup but has been denied. Steve Stierwalt shared Districts signed contracts with IDNR over these easements, and that if the SWCDs go away, these issues will become exclusively IDNR's problem. Lee Bunting asked if they went to the State's Attorney, and Mr. Yingling responded that they had to hire their own lawyer. Steve Stierwalt also shared that he explained that Districts have the ability to levy taxes in instances such as these to help cover the costs of a lawsuit. Melissa Cauble shared that she went with Ms. Kelly to the meeting at IDNR after the ISWCDEA meeting. She shared that while IDNR did not want to stand behind the District, they did help her reach out to the Attorney General. Tom beyers asked how far the trial has proceeded and Melissa answered that the trial is in jury. Bruce Yingling and Tom Beyers both suggested going to NACD and the National FSA for help. Steve Stierwalt reminded them that Districts have the ability to levy real estate taxes for lawsuits and then played the Devil's Advocate and asked if the Association and Schuyler SWCD is off the hook for enforcing permanent CREP

easements if the lawsuit is won. Jason Anderson responded that this would not be that case, and Melissa Cauble shared that IDNR would most likely request the money for these easements back from the Districts. Steve Stierwalt asked the group if they would like to get involved with an attorney and several member shared that they did not think that would be necessary when we can help work with the State's Attorney. Tom Beyers shared that AISWCD needs to take some action on this and that the lawsuit is playing on the District's weakness since one of the complainants was a Director. Steve Stierwalt stated that we want to avoid bankrupting the District, but a tax increase may irritate local landowners. Many members shared that we should speak with the Attorney General about the tax increase, and Steve Stierwalt replied that it would be a good idea to go into the meeting with a proposed list of steps for protecting the District. Lee Bunting asked if this is something that would be covered by the Insurance policy, and Melissa Cauble mentioned that Schuyler SWCD did not purchase the Additional D&O insurance that would have covered this. Sue Davis chimed in and said that the IL FSA is aware of this issue because they are the ones that dropped the ball. Tom Beyers also suggested going to the US Attorney since this program may be a federal one. Terina Coffey Shared that she liked that idea and baking phones calls to people with more authority might help significantly. Steve Stierwalt shared that he will start with the State's Attorney and bring it up with the legislators. He will share that IDNR is not living up to their portion of the agreement and that this could affect other Districts.

*A motion was made for the Executive Committee to take care of speaking with the State's Attorney, and to go from there if needed.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Gerard Fabrizius*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Bruce Yingling*

*Motion Carried*

No further discussion

### **Committee Reports**

**A. Executive** –Steve Stierwalt reported that Sheryl Phillip gave an update on the NRCS agreement; Tom Beyers gave an update on both NACD meetings and the Legislative committee nomination suggestions. He also reported that we still need to find a recipient for the Outstanding Forestry Contribution award and mentioned that AISWCD will get with Dave McCormick for ideas on this.

**B. Forestry** – Terry Davis reported that they did not have a meeting. He suggests conference call meetings to encourage participation.

**C. Illinois Rivers** –Steve Fulling reported the Council has been meeting, but there is no report at this time.

### **Focus Area Committee Reports**

**A. NLRS Sub-Committee** - Steve Fulling reported on the Committee's discussed of how to move forward with NLRS. The SWCD is in a good position to lead but need to formulate direction. Our partners recognize that SWCD is the leader but they are waiting on us to take the lead. Moving forward will likely require Districts bringing resolutions forward to the AISWCD Board, such as making NLRS our #1 Priority. The Committee felt it would be beneficial to look into the \$42,000 in training available from IDOA and how it can be used for NLRS training needs.

**B. Education** – Jerry Snodgrass reported the Committee's discussion of Teacher of the Year. IDNR gives a \$200 field trip gift to each winner, but last year's winner did not meet the award criteria since she was not a certified teacher. The award has been restructured so now, if a non-certified teacher wins, the winner can nominate a fellow teacher to receive award on their behalf. The McKibben Scholarship issue was further investigated but no conclusion has yet to be reached about the family's wishes for the scholarship. For this year, the Scholarship will proceed as it did last year. The Committee is also looking into honoring former employees or Directors. It was further reported that the Envirothon is progressing but requests volunteers for the April 26 & 27 State event.

**C. Planning** – Van Bitner presented that the Committee is working on the content and details for the July 24-25 Summer Conference.

**D. Legislative** – Tom Beyers updated us on Legislative Day, March 14, which had good attendance this year. The committee discussed several bills, including HB1800 which allows counties to contract with farmers to leave standing corn in winter to act as snow breaks along highways. The amendment changes the fees that farmers can collect.

Mr. Beyers also suggested recognizing Ken Kessler who always attends the meetings. He also mentioned that Mike Hoffman was not at this meeting, and that they discussed HB1800 which promotes keeping corn rows along highways up all winter instead of pounding in fence posts.

*Motion: Support HB1800.*

1<sup>st</sup> Tom Beyers                      2<sup>nd</sup> Bruce Yingling                      Motion passed

The Committee thanked Kelly Thompson and Kaila Long for their hard work on the successful Legislative Day. Tom Beyers went on to inform the Board that the Farm Family Governor's award is on track and we have several families nominated. The Committee's nomination for Legislator of the Year is Representative Norine Hammond who was instrumental in getting FY2017 funding to the SWCD and who is involved in the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

*Motion: Nominate Norine Hammond as Legislator of the Year.*

1<sup>st</sup> Tom Beyers                      2<sup>nd</sup> Terry Snodgrass                      Motion passed

The Committee also recommends Dick Breckenridge, now retired from the IEPA and who also served as AISWCD Treasure for many years, for the Friends of Conservation Award.

*Motion: Nominate Dick Breckenridge for the Friend of Conservation Award*

1<sup>st</sup> Tom Beyers                      2<sup>nd</sup> Steve Fulling                      Motion passed

Lastly, the Committee requested that the Executive Committee discuss our options for AISWD lobbyist. This was also brought up at the March 13 Executive Committee meeting.

**E. Financials** – Dan Duval discussed the financials and a question/answer session followed. Items discussed included considering doing payroll services in house rather than contracted. Mr. Duval explained that our audit expenses are higher than usual due to increase in Federal funds received.

*Motion: Accept the Financial Statement as presented*

1<sup>st</sup> Lee Bunting;                      2<sup>nd</sup> Jerry Snodgrass                      Motion passed

A question from the floor asked about the funds for the Strategic Planning Consultant. Mr. Duval explained that a target of \$25,000 is planned, and \$22,500 has been raised by donations from the Farm Bureau, Growmark, Corn Growers, and the Council on Best Management Practices. Another \$5,000 is being sought. A second question was raised about funds available for the McKibben Scholarship. Mr. Duval indicated that approximately \$300 is available.

Mr. Duval further reported that the Committee discussed the NRCS Assistance Grant issue, and brought a motion to the table, but the motion was already addressed during Old Business. The Committee is also considering ways to reduce AISWCDs operating costs. One option is to investigate the office location. We own the building and pay no property taxes, but incur monthly expenses (utilities, propane, pest treatment, security, etc.) and the roof may need replacing.

*Motion: Conduct an analysis of keeping AISWCD office building or moving to another location.*

1<sup>st</sup> Van Bitner                      2<sup>nd</sup> Lee Bunting                      Motion passed

*Motion: Obtain a roof repair bid for AISWCD office building.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Van Bitner*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Lee Bunting*

*Motion passed*

**F. Urban Community and Conservation** – Jerry Snodgrass reported the Committee did not have a meeting.

**Area VP Reports**

**Area 1 VP** – Jerry Snodgrass reported on the attendance at the Forums.

**Area 2 VP** – No report given.

**Area 3 VP** – No report given.

**Area 4 VP** – No report given.

**Other Reports**

**Strategic Plan-** Steve Stierwalt reported that 3 of the 7 Forums have been completed. The remaining Forums will occur in the next two weeks. He asked that Board members attend and promote the Forums. The Strategic Planning gaps analysis survey has been completed with approximately 180 people responding. Mr. Stierwalt handed out a timeline for the Strategic Plan and entertained questions.

**AISWCD Foundation-** Steve Stierwalt shared that he would like to work on doing something more with the Foundation.

**Legislative Day-** Kelly Thompson gave an overview of the Legislative Day groupings, packets, and handouts.

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 12:07 pm.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Dan Doedtman**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Dan Duval**

**Motion carried**

*Minutes By: Kaila Long, and Sheryl Phillips, both AISWCD*