

Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District
July 1, 2009
Board Meeting Minutes

Directors present: Steve Stierwalt, Eleanor Blackmon, Lennie Heiser, Joe Rothermel, and Eric Suits (arriving at 5:45).

Staff present: Bruce Stickers and Renee Weitekamp.

Associate Directors present: Kenneth Kesler.

Natural Resource Conservation Service Staff present: Kevin Donoho.

Meeting was called to order at 5:25 p.m. on Wednesday, July 1, 2009.

Joe Rothermel made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2009 meeting. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried.

Joe Rothermel made the motion to approve the financial reports for May 2009 and June 2009. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried.

Old Business

Annexation of the St. Joseph Wetland – The Village Board voted on April 28th to annex the property. The annexation agreement included exemptions to the village ordinances for burning, trees, our sign and grass mowing.

Access to FSA's name and address database – Nothing new to report.

St. Joseph Wetland Restoration Plan – Nothing new to report.

CRP – The Champaign County FSA office sent out letters to owners/operators who have CRP contracts expiring September 30, 2009. After much discussion, the board decided personal phone calls would be the best way to encourage people to reenroll their contracts. Staff will see if Randall Grussing is available to help with the project; however, staff will make the first calls and work on a sheet highlighting the importance of filter strips. If an answering message is reached, we will leave a message and mention we will call back in a week if we don't hear from them before. If people voice their concerns/objections to the program, we will compile a list of concerns and pass along the information to FSA. Eric Suits made a motion to promote the re-enrollment of CRP contracts expiring September 30 by following the guidelines mentioned. Joe Rothermel seconded, motion passed. The district also received notice that the 6.1 acre filter strip on the wetland property south of Route 150 will expire. The board decided not to reenroll the filter strip due to a conflict with wetland restoration plan. The board directed staff to check if the district is eligible for EQIP, or a floodplain easement.

Wind Farms – The Champaign County Board did approve changes to the zoning ordinance allowing wind farms to be constructed in the county. One company is currently working on wetland issues and hopes to begin construction in the summer of 2010.

New Business

CPP – Staff are working on a revised plan to make sure all FY08 and FY09 monies are spent in a timely manner. The district will ask Farm Bureau and well drilling companies to identify wells that need to be decommissioned. The board suggested contacting the strip-till meeting attendees to make them aware cost share money is available for strip-till. The board directed staff to work on the FY2010 program money request and submit to Elliot by the July 15th deadline.

Salt Fork Implementation Committee – Terre Ziegler may be willing to help.

Champaign County Funding Request – A meeting with Deb Busey is scheduled for July 20th. The County asked the district to reduce the request by 6 percent. The district will work on attending more county functions including county board meetings in the future.

Champaign County Fair – The fair will be the last week of July.

FY2010 Budget – Staff will meet with Eric Suits to draft a FY2010 Budget before the meeting with the County Board on July 20th.

CIG (Conservation Innovation Grant) – The district was awarded the grant. Details will be forthcoming. The total grant is for \$132,225, including \$66,113 of match. Some of the match can be in kind services. Once details of the grant are finalized, a strip-till meeting will be held. This is a 3 year project.

319 Grant Proposal – Multiple operators are interested in buying equipment and custom applying strips for others. Staff will pursue a grant which will be revenue neutral because the farmers would pay the match. NRCS is also promoting strip-till through EQIP.

Summer Conference – Registration has been sent and staff will provide everyone with conference information by email.

Vehicle Insurance – When staff pulls the rainfall simulator with their personal vehicles, the liability insurance reverts back to the towing vehicle. The board directed staff to look into insurance options the district could provide so staff's personal insurance would not come into play.

D.C. Report - is attached.

A.C. Report - is attached.

R.C. Report – is attached.

Mark David asked for support letter for Upper Spoon Water Quality Work. At one time Mr. David mentioned the grant may include money to help pay for a watershed coordinator. Staff will talk to him more about this. Staff completed the 2009 transect survey and participated in the garden walk in an attempt to sell more rain barrels.

Committee Updates –

Strip-till Project – One idea is to hold a meeting in early September, maybe even work with seed companies to host the meeting. Perhaps a demonstration could be held if an early bean field is identified. Additional opportunities to promote strip-till may be at the Farm Progress Show and the Half Century of Progress. Identifying the steps for strip-till (fall spray, etc) is extremely important and should be highlighted in the meeting.

The AISWCD held a promotional event/open house and Kenneth Kesler was on hand to raise the flag. NRCS designed the whole project. IEPA grant monies were used for parking lot and porous pavers.

The Champaign County SWCD Board will hold the next board meeting on Wednesday, August 5, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

Eleanor Blackmon moved to adjourn the meeting. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 P.M.

Monthly Board Report
Bruce Stickers
Resource Conservationist
May 2009

Items that need board action:

- ◆ Do you want to proceed with an EPA 319 grant application for late summer?

Items for your information:

Water Quality

The signed annexation agreement was passed by the St. Joseph village board with the approval for our sign and exemptions from ordinances on weeds, trees and burning. We can burn up to 2 times per year without prior approval and more if we ask the village board.

We submitted the NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant for consideration as a state project. Joe, Steve and I refined it to hopefully make the funding list. We have no information on when the grants will be awarded.

Soil Erosion control

We completed no 22.02a requests last month. We will have a major one to do for Invenergy if the Wind Farm ordinance passes the County Board.

We have discussed trying to put together an EPA section 319 grant to offer equipment purchase cost share for strip-till application equipment with fertilizer injection systems. The grant would also offer cost share to farmers for trying strip-till and fertilizer injection on their fields. We have interest in over 3,000 acres of application at this time and people that will purchase the equipment for custom application. I believe we have a high probability of receiving funding because of previous projects that were approved. The application process will take a significant amount of time to do properly, so the board needs to vote on proceeding ahead if you want to make this part of our plan of work.

Farmland Protection

The wind farm zoning will be voted on May 21 by the County Board. Invenergy is moving ahead with the California Ridge project and we are helping them on potential wetland sites to watch for. We have a map of the project boundaries, but not actual turbine sites yet. Kevin and I met with them (there were 10 of us at the meeting) to go over the project and explain the 22.02a process. They seem quite interested in doing things right with a minimum of disruption.

Water Management

The CPP project at the I-Hotel on campus has started; this is the project where the detention basin will be transformed into a water quality treatment wetland. Fox Development is paying for most of the project. The rain garden in Scott Park is also under construction. The site is moving ahead and the sign for the project is complete. Hopefully the weather will stay dry for a few days to help them get the planting done.

Wildlife Habitat

The IDNR has designated the Vermilion River watershed in Champaign and Vermilion Counties as Conservation Opportunity Areas for the state Wildlife Action Plan. An effort to coordinate groups working in the areas was held May 13th at Homer Lake. This designation should help us obtain grants within this watershed; several foundations are providing grants for funding these plans. Prairie Rivers Network is leading the coordination effort with help from IDNR.

Education, Natural Resource Data, Public Information, and Participation

The 5:40 a.m. show this month featured Kevin talking about conservation compliance issues.

The University of Illinois will have a study at the wetland site investigation microbial activity of wetlands in relation to pollution reduction. This will be a 2-year PhD study starting this summer. We now have 2 projects like this and the site will be used for U of Illinois classes on wetland delineation. We also have one class coming through for a tour July 11th. Extension is working on a Summer Ag Institute June 17th that we will be involved with. The exact program for this teacher training class is being developed at this time.

Renee Weitekamp
Board Report
May 2009

Items that need action from the board:

Water Quality

- Completed CPP Nutrient Management Plan.
- Assisted Bruce with the first page of the Conservation Innovation Grant Application.

Soil Erosion

Prime Farmland Preservation

Water Management

Wildlife Habitat

- Prepared 50 evergreen trees for distribution during Earth Partner's after school program.

Education & Public Information

- Soil and Water Stewardship Week – Received additional order. Delivered all materials once they arrived.
- Poster Contest with Earth Partners - The response was wonderful; a total of 226 students from grades 1-4 participated. This encompassed 9 schools and 16 different classes. After all posters were received, I scheduled judging, sent 1st place posters to AISWCD for Auxiliary contest, wrote up event summary, secured gift certificates, informed teachers of results, returned posters and used information to make an office display.
- Photo Contest – 16 amazing photographs were received. Found someone from a local photography business to judge the photographs. Once judging was complete, wrote up event summary and sent photographs to the AISWCD for Auxiliary contest.
- Pond meeting – Assisted IDNR and the U of I Extension with a pond meeting on May 7, 2009. 18 people attended to learn about pesticide use, pesticide labels, aquatic plant identification and more.
- Illinois Envirothon – assisted with judging the oral presentations.
- Took the Rainfall simulator to Parkland College for a demonstration.

Watershed Management

District Operations

- Transect Survey – updated our GIS layer.
- Recons.
- Participated in the ISWCDEA (employees association) conference call meeting.
- Finally secured DUNS number and CCR registration. This information was necessary for CIG application.
- Summer Conference – initial information was released. Reserved rooms and made up questionnaires for board members.
- Revised CRP plans and CPO's due to name changes, etc.

Renee Weitekamp
Board Report
June 2009

Items that need action from the board:

Water Quality

- Completed paperwork for wells sealed under CPP.

Soil Erosion

- Working on paperwork for CPP waterway.

Prime Farmland Preservation

Water Management

Wildlife Habitat

Education & Public Information

Watershed Management

District Operations

- Attended Conservation Application III training covering structures, seeding and riparian buffers.
- Attended Area Employees meeting.
- Worked with Bruce to complete the Transect Survey and entered information into the computer program.
- Recons.
- Finalized registration and meals for Summer Conference
- Toolkit – creating files and mapping for reenrollments.