

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes



December 7th, 2022 10:00am

Dickinson Conservation District
420 N Hooper St
Kingsford, MI 49802
*Conference Call-In option

Members Present: Bill Rice (Dickinson Conservation District, on phone), Steve Kircher (Forest County Conservation Dept., on phone), Jerry Piche (Menominee CO BOD), Larry Sommer (Lumberjack RC&D, on phone), J. Bournoville (USFS, on phone), Sheri Denowski (Marinette Co), Scott Goodwin (Florence County LCD),

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

Guests: Dick Peterson

Staff: Lindsay Peterson (Coordinator), Katherine Mentel (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 J. Piche/L. Sommer. **Motion carried.**
2. **Approval of Minutes** – Meeting minutes from the October 5th, 2022 meeting were presented. J. Piche/L. Sommer moved to accept the minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**
3. **Grants & Treasurer's Report** – L. Peterson led this portion of the meeting. The formatting for the grant report has been updated. It now includes a status for each grant. Both MEF Pathways, MEF PL, and the MISGP 19 grant were in yellow, but extensions have been submitted for both the MEF Pathways grant and the MISG Core 19 grant. The MEF Pathways has been extended through December 2023 and the MISG Core 19 through the end of March 2023. The MEF PL grant will eventually need an extension due to COVID related challenges early in the project. The undesignated fund is currently at \$8,107.46. Motion to put the grant report on file made by S. Denowski/ J. Piche. **Motion carried.**
4. **Project Updates/Reports**
 - a. Events:
 - i. Since the last BOD meeting, WRISC staff attended the UMISC Conference at the end of October. WRISC also hosted two school forest workdays with the area schools. Coming up, WRISC will be hosting a Forest Health Workshop on December 20th at Bay College West Campus. This event includes timber marking training. Other upcoming events are the MISC Conference at the end of January and the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention in April.
 - b. Grants: Almost all grants are on track!
 - i. An extension for the MEF Pathways grant was granted through the end of 2023. The biggest reason this grant was off track was due to less seasonal staff being hired than originally planned and overbudgeting for native plants and disposal for the invasive trade up events. Some of the adjusted funds will be used for a native seed workshop and planting kits. If any partners want to host these events, they can reach out to WRISC. These trade-up events may be more successful with more partnership.
 - ii. The MISGP Core 19 grant was also extended due to losing staff at the beginning of the grant. The remaining funding will be used to develop wild parsnip educational materials.
 - iii. The GLRI Forest Service Grant for identifying buffer zones will be starting in January

- iv. A new MEF grant will be starting in January. This includes developing our cost-share program, funding Strike Team activities and establishing a PL biocontrol beetle rearing station.
- v. WRISC also applied for new MISGP Core funding, including extra survey and treatment money for EFB, Oriental Bittersweet, and WP. Oriental Bittersweet is becoming a problem in the WRISC area, and the funds would include money to map the distribution. Some of the WP money would help fund a regional meeting to bring together regional managers to develop a plan of action for management.
- c. Outreach: WRISC will be getting back to doing newsletters. In the last 2 months, WRISC has reached 30,000+ people on social media and 2 million people from billboards this summer.
- d. Questions/Comments: S. Goodwin wanted to mention that L. Peterson had a great presentation at UMISC and shout-out to K. Mentel for helping Florence Co staff with some social media. S. Denowski wanted to know how the phragmites treatments in Marinette went this year. L. Peterson mentioned that most were addressed, but one of the sites is on the list for next year due to some permitting setbacks.

5. Old Business

- a. **DASH Subcommittee (action):** L. Peterson mentioned that at the last meeting, a committee was set up to start working on a DASH operational policy and procedures. The committee's first meeting will be December 14th 2022. S. Goodwin and S. Kircher expressed an interest in sitting on the committee. Others are welcome to join in during various parts of the development.

6. New Business

a. Annual Meeting 2023

- i. Date, Location, Format: The consensus was to plan to have the Annual Meeting June 7th, 2023. For the location, WRISC is looking at reserving the main cabin at Iron Mountain City Park at the beginning of January. J. Piche mentioned that there will be a banquet hall opening in Ingalls, MI right off US HWY 41 which could be explored for future events. As for the Annual Meeting format, there was the discussion to hold a forum with different experts in the invasive species field. People can pre-submit questions for the experts. There would be a condensed WRISC update also. We are open to different training or topic needs. Mileage could be offered for speakers. S. Denowski mentioned that talking about mapping systems would be useful. Other topics suggested included EFB and HWA.

b. 2023 Hiring & Wage Structuring

- i. L. Peterson mentioned that she and A Butterfield are lobbying for increased wages for all staff members. All DCD staff were approved for a 4% wage increase to be spread out among all staff. At the DCD's March BOD meeting, L. Peterson, and A. Butterfield will be putting together a proposal to showcase what current wages are compared to other organizations in the state of Michigan and Wisconsin. S. Goodwin volunteered to come to make a formal recommendation from the WRISC BOD at the March District Board meeting. L. Peterson will aim to have a draft of this proposal for the February WRISC meeting.
- ii. WRISC is looking forward to summer hiring. One of the big changes WRISC is making for hiring is to the CBCW program. WRISC is now looking to start a CBCW Veterans work program. The program would probably be more remote and would include regular check-ins at the WRISC office. The biggest hinderance to hiring is our lack of housing in Iron Mountain/Kingsford area. S. Denowski had the idea to ask around the courthouse. L. Peterson said we could look at renting a larger Airbnb for a bunkhouse in the future if funding allows.

- iii. WRISC is also looking to join the Spark program in Michigan to hire a GIS intern, potentially for the fall or for next season.

c. Undesignated Fund Spending Plan (discussion):

- i. L. Peterson proposed that WRISC develop a policy on spending from the undesignated fund, which is comprised primarily of donations. Overall, L. Peterson is looking for a threshold on when board approval is needed and what types of purchases the undesignated fund should be used for, as well as developing a contingency plan of sorts in case that fund needs to be utilized for staff time or in “emergency” situations. S. Goodwin mentioned that a sub-committee would be useful to come up with a policy for undesignated funding. L. Peterson is going to reach out to T. Beckman to see if she would be interested in assisting with that or what resources Lumberjack RC&D may already have. L. Peterson will also reach out to Marquette for a copy of their contingency plan.

d. Leave of Absence

- i. L. Peterson is requesting a leave of absence due to her daughter’s surgery. She will have more details about the specific dates by the end of the week as procedures are scheduled out. At this point, it is requested that she be able to take the first full week or two off, and then work remotely from home at reduced hours (20-30 hours/week) as able for approximately 6-7 weeks. The Board consensus was to allow this leave of absence and L. Peterson would provide additional details and schedule via email in the next couple of weeks.

7. Round Robin

- a. S. Denowski: Marinette County is joining the FLOW program. Had employed 3 LTE’s for frog-bit work. Marinette County had an EDR grant for EWM on Dolan Lake in Marinette. Working on the final report and monitoring for an alum treatment on Bass Lake, for phosphate management. Pete Villas no longer works for the forestry department.
- b. D. Peterson: mentioned that returning staff would be valuable for the summer crew. Some ice on the lakes and rivers in Menominee County. Water levels seem normal in most places, Shakey may be down about 6 inches.
- c. B. Rice: mentioned that the DCD is no longer having outdoor meetings as the weather changes. B. Rice said there’s been a lot of work on the start of tree sale and revamping many policies, including looking at wage structuring.
- d. S. Kircher: Derek Thorn and Rosie Paige are working on a project to raise PL biocontrol beetles. Noted that there were only a few isolated patches of PL found in Forest County this year.
- e. L. Sommer: mentioned that Lumberjack had a meeting in October. The main discussion was on improvements to the grant process. This is also the last month for grant requests and several submissions have already been received. FCAL had a meeting in October with 75 members in attendance. The DNR was there with live birds and had a good presentation. There were four student essay winners who did their presentations. Also, the forestry inventory supervisor (Paul Miller) retired.
- f. J. Piche: reported he was not reelected to the Menominee County Board this year. WRISC will need to discuss his eligibility as a board member at the next meeting.
- g. K. Mentel shared that WRISC is now on TikTok, which has come with a learning curve. The hope is to reach a younger generation of people to educate about invasives.
- h. S. Goodwin: Wrapped up the LMP and CBCW projects. Reported that they surveyed about 20 lakes and found no new aquatic invasives. The CBCW program contacted over 5,000 people and inspected over 2,500 boats. This is year 3 of no phragmites in Florence County. Currently, the county is converting their GIS system to an in-house system set up through Coleman Engineering.

8. **Other Business:** None discussed at this time.
9. **Future Agenda Items:** It is noted that the wage structuring, undesignated fund policy, DASH subcommittee, and leave of absence will require further action, including updates/action at the February meeting. Next meeting will be February 1st, 2022, at the Natural Resource Building in Florence, MI. S. Goodwin will call and schedule it.
10. **Adjourn.** Motion by S. Denowski/ J. Piche to adjourn at 11:33 AM. **Motion carried.**

Minutes compiled and submitted by Katherine Mentel & Lindsay Peterson

Minutes approved February 1, 2023. Motion to approve minutes made by S.Kircher/L.Sommer, motion carried.