

# Board of Directors Meeting Minutes



February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 10:00am

Florence Natural Resource Center  
5638 Forestry Dr.  
Florence, WI 54121  
\*Conference Call-In Option

**Members Present:** Steve Kircher (Forest County LWCD), Scott Goodwin (Florence County LCD), Aaron McCullough (WDNR-Marquette, virtual), Sheri Denowski (Marquette County, virtual), Sherry Pethers (Forest County), Nicole Schutt (Forest Service), Larry Phelps (Menominee County, virtual)

**Members Absent:** Tracy Beckman (Lumberjack RC&D), Larry Sommer (Lumberjack RC&D)

**Guests:** Kayla Littleton (Forest County LWCD), Shawna Broullire (Florence County LCD)

**Staff:** Lindsay Peterson (Coordinator), Katherine Mentel (Project Manager, virtual), Amber Butterfield (Dickinson Conservation District)

**Meeting called to order** at 10:01 am by S. Goodwin.

## **Board of Directors Meeting**

1. **Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by S. Kircher/ S. Pethers.  
**Motion carried.**
2. **Approval of Minutes** – Meeting Minutes from the January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, BOD Meeting were presented. S. Denowski/ S. Kircher moved to accept the minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**
2. **Grants & Treasurer's Report** – A. Butterfield led this portion of the meeting.
  - a. Reporting was finished and all reimbursements, except MISGP, have come in. A. Butterfield reworked in the in-house budget for the MEF PL grant. This will be used to reallocate funds at the upcoming meeting with our partner CISMAS. The bottom line of the grant report is not updated, and it should read \$238,260.00.
  - b. L. Peterson added that the undesignated fund sits just below \$10,000 and the cost-share fund sits just over \$3,000.
  - c. S. Goodwin asked if WRISC will be able to spend out the remaining balance for MEF PL. L. Peterson said the plan is to extend the grant, as the pandemic and staffing shortages created work backlogs for all the CISMAS. L. Peterson also said that in conversations with WE Energies, they seemed understanding of the need to extend the project.
  - d. Motion to put the grant report on file made by S. Kircher/ N. Schutt. **Motion carried.**
4. **Project Updates/Reports**
  - a. **Events:** L. Peterson led this portion of the meeting and said that WRISC has kept fairly busy with events this winter. Highlight events include the MISC Annual Meeting, meetings with MSU Extension, the Invasive Species Collective Meeting with the Forest County Potawatomi, Region 1 meetings for the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, and the Inaugural Invasive Species and Climate Change conference hosted by the RISCC Network and NAISMA. Upcoming events include several educational presentations and the Marquette Harbor Commission meeting to discuss contract work for WRISC to manage invasive species on the islands.

**b. Grants:**

- i. As A. Butterfield mentioned, the WE Energies MEF PL grant will be extended and reworked to balance funds between the CISMAs.
- ii. The MEF Cost-Share grant has another year left. While this grant is currently on track, hiring issues in 2023 may possibly lead to an extension.
- iii. The BW 20 grant has closed out. The BW 22 grant started earlier than anticipated, so L. Peterson will be looking closely at the budget to determine how many staff can be hired this year.
- iv. WRISC closed out the SOGL DNR Buffer project.
- v. The EPA Phrag grant is focused on the Lake Superior Watershed. WRISC has more surveys and treatment to complete before it ends in September.
- vi. WRISC will be extending the current MISGP grant to complete more work on the sub-award projects.
- vii. WRISC has been working on the DNR HWA project, and no HWA has been found. However, the populations downstate are spreading.
- viii. WRISC applied for a few grants and partnered on projects that total around \$820,000.

**c. Outreach:** Outreach numbers have been consistent.

**5. Old Business**

- a. Hiring Update:** Seasonal jobs will be posted by the end of the week. Rob and Bob will be returning to their positions with CBCW and Strike Team, respectively. Rob may be the only full-time CBCW tech to prevent high mileage reimbursements that eat up the budget. Otherwise, WRISC may have a flex position, where someone works both Stike Team and CBCW. For Strike Team, WRISC is looking to hire 2-4 people, depending on which grants WRISC receives. Applications will close March 15<sup>th</sup>.
- i. T. Norris has left WRISC due to unforeseen personal circumstances. He moved back to New York and WRISC is very sad to see him go. On the organization front, this also leaves a Project Manager position open, which will throw off the budgets for the next few years. As such, WRISC will likely have to extend more projects than anticipated. WRISC would potentially fill the position with someone hired during this season. L. Peterson would like a Project Manager to have field experience to help alleviate the steep learning curve that comes with the position. If WRISC cannot hire a Project Manager from the field staff, L. Peterson will look to fill the position in the fall.
  - ii. One developing situation pertains to our HWA field staff. Very recently, A. Kirschner indicated that she is no longer able to work for WRISC. L. Peterson and K. Mentel will work on completing the remaining surveys.
  - iii. S. Goodwin asked what WRISC had done to help T. Norris. L. Peterson said WRISC covered Emergency Medical Leave through the month of January until his official leave date. He is staying in touch with WRISC and working on pleasure projects in a volunteer capacity.
  - iv. S. Pethers asked where WRISC posts the job positions, and L. Peterson said they will be posted on various job boards, including college job boards, conservation job boards, and invasive species job boards. WRISC no longer posts the jobs in the newspaper due to cost. While WRISC usually receives a good number of applications, our biggest barrier to hiring is limited housing for seasonal positions. L. Peterson will talk to the new hotel in town and see if they can offer a deal on long-term hotel stays.
- b. 2024 Annual Partner Meeting:** WRISC will be sending in the request to Iron Mountain City Council to get the fee waived for the June 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting date. L. Peterson is open to recommendations

to speakers.

## 6. New Business

- a. **Cost-Share Program – 2024 Rate:** As part of the Cost-Share Program, the rate will be set annually to reflect costs to conduction treatment. Because the program is still in the pilot stage, it is being funded by MEF. This fund will eventually fund itself. In 2023, WRISC worked with 20 landowners and learned ways to improve the program. This program was available to landowners who received at least two years of free, grant funded treatment or those with Phragmites (automatically enrolled). In 2023, the base rate was \$250, and L. Peterson proposes it stays the same or is reduced to \$200. This base rate covers the first half hour of treatment with two staff, and usually covers most treatments. S. Goodwin asked if the program was species specific, and L. Peterson said that our work focuses on the species we have been treating for years (i.e., Wild Parsnip, Invasive Knotweeds, Phragmites, Garlic Mustard, etc.). If WRISC started to do private property woody invasive species, the work would take up our entire field season.
  - i. In 2024, WRISC plans to enroll more sites into the program. We will be sending out a postcard to over 100 landowners who currently qualify. If they are interested, the entire application process can be done through the website. If WRISC gets a poor response to the initial mailing, we will try a different approach.
  - ii. Therefore, L. Peterson’s recommendation is to keep the rate at \$250. S. Denowski asked if WRISC must obtain permits and such for the work, and L. Peterson said we do if the sites require it (primarily Phragmites and Purple Loosestrife). The cost-share program also requires more paperwork and accounting, which is another reason why there is a strict timeline for the program. Moreover, the cost-share framework also accounts for extra accommodation, such as equipment or special permitting.
  - iii. S. Denowski/ S. Kircher made a motion to approve the base rate of \$250.00 for the 2024 Cost-Share Program. **Motion approved.**
- b. **Master Agreement Update – Dickinson CD:** WRISC is looking to update the Master Agreement with the DCD, since the last update was done in 2015. Updates will account for changes in the operations of both WRISC and DCD. A. Butterfield and L. Peterson have been working together to create a draft master agreement, which is not significantly different than the previous agreement. The new agreement will better outline the roles and responsibilities of each party. Additions to the agreement include overhead charges and discussions to talk about financial capacity.
  - i. A. Butterfield will present this agreement to her board next week. The WRISC Board can make a formal recommendation to the DCD Board to accept the agreement, but the DCD board must make the legal decision to enter into the agreement. S. Goodwin said he may be able to join the next DCD meeting to discuss the agreement. Either way, both DCD and WRISC must update the agreement, since the previous one expired in 2020.

7. **Other Business:** L. Peterson introduced Larry Phelps from the Menominee County Board of Commissioners. L. Phelps is the new Menominee County appointee to the WRISC BOD. Jeff Carlson was reassigned to a new committee but will remain an alternate for L. Phelps. L. Peterson will add Larry to the ballot to make the change official at the WRISC Annual Meeting. S. Goodwin said thank you and welcome aboard. L. Phelps wanted to mention that he decided to appoint himself to the WRISC board after meeting K. Mentel and the WRISC crew at Mason Park. He was impressed with their work and wanted to be a bigger part of WRISC.

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

- a. *S. Denowski*: Marinette County is only hiring two EFB LTEs, as the DNR is shifting focus from the entire coastline to specific sites, like the Peshtigo Harbor and Red Arrow Park. Hiring will start soon. S. Denowski was also happy to hear that WRISC will be working with the Marinette Harbor Commission to manage invasive species on the lower Menominee River islands. Moreover, S. Denowski is keeping in touch with the NLMGA and should know when their plant sale will be. S. Denowski presented the management plan to the Harmony Arboretum, and they were happy with it. Marinette's water resource specialist applied for two water resource grants with two lake associations that will involve some invasive species monitoring.
- b. *A. McCullough*: has been working on habitat work and taking advantage of the lack of snow. No work being done directly with invasive species.
- c. *L. Phelps*: no comment
- d. *K. Mentel*: no comment
- e. *S. Kircher*: added to L. Peterson's comments on the FCP Invasive Species Collaborative meeting and said he would like to see the creation of a collaborative map. Both L. Peterson and S. Kircher are excited to see what direction the Collaborative goes, whether that is creating an invasive species program from the ground up or applying for grant projects.
- f. *S. Pethers*: recently attended an excellent event at UW Oshkosh that was centered around restoring areas after invasive species management. The conference was sponsored by the Wild Ones: Fox Valley Chapter. S. Pethers said the speakers were phenomenal and she will send the details to L. Peterson to consider for the Annual Meeting.
- g. *N. Schutt*: looking to hire a crew leader. Previous crew leader, Casey, is currently working on Buckthorn management in the forest and looking at alternative management options, such as working with the fire lab. N. Schutt is now officially the point of contact for WRISC's grants. Additionally, N. Schutt wants to work on putting together a grant to tackle ROW management and restoration, since the towns have been clearing many of the roads. L. Peterson said that the CWMA grant WRISC submitted is along the same lines and is 100 percent on board with working with N. Schutt on another project.
- h. *A. Butterfield*: the DCD is in the midst of tree sale work, which is being handled by A. Finkel. The DCD also received a grant for vegetative plantings at Lake Antoine Park and worked with EGLE to apply for a Storm Water Monitoring grant. NACD also released an RFP for their funding, which is more agricultural-centered. Overall, DCD is working on pursuing grant projects.
- i. *S. Goodwin*: Florence County received the annual contribution from SECOLA, so they will be doing BW work for about 800 hours there. S. Goodwin started a design for a culvert project in Auora and will need to keep an eye out for invasive species there. There has been no additional word on the feral hogs. In the Spring, S. Goodwin will post more notices for people to report sightings.

**9. Other Business:** The next meeting will be held on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, at 10:00 am. The location will be the Wausaukee Ranger Station, in Wausaukee, WI.

**10. Future Agenda Items:** Master Agreement discussion/approval.

**11. Adjourn.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 am.

***Minutes compiled and submitted by Katherine Mentel & Lindsay Peterson***