

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes



October 4th, 2023

10:00am

Menominee County Annex Building

S904 Highway 41

Stephenson, MI 49887

*Conference Call-In Option

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

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

Guests: Kayla Littleton (Forest County LWCD)

Staff: Lindsay Peterson (Coordinator), Katherine Mentel (Project Manager), Tyler Norris (Project Manager)

Meeting called to order at 10:02 am by S. Goodwin.

Board of Directors Meeting

1. **Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by S. Kircher/A. McCullough. *Motion carried.*
2. **Approval of Minutes** – Meeting Minutes from the August 2nd, 2023, BOD Meeting were presented. S. Kircher/ A. McCullough moved to accept the minutes as presented. *Motion carried.*
2. **Grants & Treasurer's Report** – L. Peterson led this portion of the meeting.
 - a. The grant report format was different than previous grant reports to show the grand total and the remaining balance of all grants together. The BOD liked how the grant report looked. Essentially, all grants are on track. WRISC and the DCD are currently working on reporting and closing out three grants (MISGP 22, MEF Pathways, and the GLRI CBCW20). WRISC is still waiting for the last two grant reimbursements from the MISGP grant, which has been frustrating.
 - b. The WRISC undesignated fund saw a profit of \$356.00 and an expense of \$304.00, so in total, WRISC has a current balance of \$9,650.75. WRISC has also created a new category for WRISC's Cost-Share program, which sits just above \$1,800. Money taken into the cost-share fund this year will act as match funds for landowner payments for the cost-share program moving forward.
 - c. L. Peterson wanted to mention that in late August there was not enough money in the bank to make payroll, which is largely due to delayed reimbursements from several projects. Therefore, the DCD had to take out a short-term loan. This brings up the point that WRISC's capacity is stressing the capacity of the DCD to allow WRISC to spend money. Moving forward, this problem will hopefully be resolved. However, L. Peterson wanted to mention that this should be discussed in the December/ February BOD meeting when the discussion about the DCD/WRISC Master Agreement is talked about.
 - d. S. Kircher wanted to ask about CD3 stations and WRISC applying to get one. L. Peterson said WRISC has tried to fund a station in the past, but it fell through due to concerns with its landscape scale impact. L. Peterson and S. Kircher both agree that the trailer mounted ones could be a great option to replace WRISC's current boat washes. However, these units are very expensive, so it would require some detailed planning to justify its expense. Down the line, WRISC would still like to pursue utilizing the CD3 stations at a landscape scale (one in each county).
 - e. Motion to put the grant report on file made by S. Kircher/A. McCullough. *Motion carried.*

4. Project Updates/Reports

- a. **Events:** L. Peterson led this portion of the meeting. Since the last meeting, WRISC has attended many events. Some highlights include the Kingsford Centennial Parade and student workdays in Menominee, Marinette, and Forest counties. WRISC will be wrapping up field work in the next few weeks.
 - i. The MEF Pathways grant is closing out during this round of reporting. Everything should be on track to close out nicely.
 - ii. The MEF Purple Loosestrife grant went well this summer, but WRISC will still request an extension and budget amendment due to being underspent from 2020-2021. However, all groups were able to complete river runs and either pull plants or release beetles.
 - iii. The MEF Cost Share program is on track.
 - iv. The GLRI CBCW grant is closing out this reporting cycle but was slightly overspent in the last few weeks due to more mileage expense than anticipated. However, WRISC was able to open the other GLRI CBCW grant to cover these last few weeks.
 - v. The EFB grant was closed out in March, but WRISC just got paid.
 - vi. The EPA Phrag grant runs through next year and is on track.
 - vii. WRISC may extend the MISGP Core grant, as it was started late due to it not being set up correctly in Quick Books on time.
 - viii. WRISC is looking to apply for the next round of the MISGP Core funding.
 - ix. WRISC is potentially submitting an application for a GLRI Forest Restoration project which would focus on reforestation and forest pests.
 - x. WRISC is also applying for a GLRI CWMA proposal, which is due October 23rd. WRISC is applying for this grant as there is no match and a higher award ceiling of \$100,000.00. Since the grant funding is on a new cycle, this project won't start until next fall. This grant would cover all counties. This focuses on coordination, staffing, and acres treated. Can also include survey.
 - xi. GLRI Landscape scale restoration project is due end of November. However, the state forester approval is due October 5th.
 - xii. WRISC found flowering rush in Marinette County in two locations, so WRISC is looking at an EDRR grant through the WI DNR. One site was found at Seagull Bar, and one was found at Boat Landing 5 at High Falls Reservoir. A. McCullough asked if it extends onto state land. L. Peterson said part of the project would include a delimitation survey. A. McCullough said the property manager would be Derek Sams for the WI DNR, and he would be a good person to loop in.
 - xiii. WRISC is working on a partner proposal with the UPRC&D through NOAA. This would include treatment and restoration on all Phragmites sites throughout the UP. NOAA reached out to the UPRC&D. WRISC is also working with UPRC&D on another UP-Wide HWA project through the MISGP program. This grant may need letters of support. For this one, WRISC is trying to include more inland recreation sites. If WRISC gets the forest pest grant, they may let us tie in Wisconsin counties.
- b. **Staffing:** Seasonal staff have completed their season. However, CBCW staff have flexibility to work throughout the year. Austyn will work on some HWA work this winter for WRISC.
- c. **Outreach:** Social media is consistently growing.
- d. **Comments:** S. Kircher asked about the format for the last couple of events WRISC went to, as Forest County hopes to expand education events to include younger grade levels. J. Carlson asked about WRISC helping with the Shakey Lakes replanting due to Oak Wilt. This could be a highlight place for WRISC to include in the forest restoration grant project. J. Carlson also asked about including Hannahville in some of these current projects and said he could work with those boards to discuss these proposals.

5. Old Business

- a. **Strategic Management Plan Update:** L. Peterson presented the fully completed SMP. The only thing not included in the appendices is the priority invasive species list. However, L. Peterson has settled on an updated format taking inspiration from the BCK CISMA, which highlights the action status of the invasive species for each county. This format is comprehensive. L. Peterson would like to have the SMP approved at this meeting, as the plan is fully complete. *Motion to approve the WRISC Strategic Management Plan, with the addition of the priority invasive species list when it's done, made by S. Kircher/ S. Pethers. Motion approved.*
- b. **Cost Share Update:** WRISC's current cost-share program is being funded by the MEF Cost-Share project. This program focuses on retreatment of priority species after two years of free grant funded treatment. This is a 1:1 cost-share rate. All documents are linked on the WRISC cost-share webpage. The 2023 base rate was determined to be \$250. This covers average travel time, staff time, treatment supplies/equipment, insurance, etc., and was based on past data. This price includes the first 30 mins on site. There are additional charges for specialty sites. For everyone that tried it with WRISC this year (except Phrag) got a grandfathered 25% discount forever. There is a neighborhood discount. The program timeline will be fully started next year. This year, most of the treatments were for Phragmites, but we did have one Knotweed site and several late-season Garlic Mustard sites. People that did not want to do the program were happy to receive information on how to manage the species themselves. WRISC will develop management guides for landowners with price breakdowns. WRISC has complete paperwork for the program. There is flexibility built into the program to assist landowners who cannot physically or financially afford to treat their site. The cost-share program allows WRISC to prioritize treatments and allocate our time efficiently. S. Pethers asked if there is a restoration education component of the program. WRISC will be including native species replanting recommendations. WRISC does have a stretch goal to offer limited assistance with restoration efforts, which could be through cost-sharing. Current grants are moving in that direction. *Motion to approve the WRISC Pilot Cost-Share program made by S. Kircher/ S. Pethers. Motion approved.*
- c. **Truck Update:** The DCD did not have a BOD meeting, so there is no truck update. The direction is to buy a new truck. The Ford F150 currently needs to go in the shop for tires and has some other issues and leaks. Even if the DCD buys a new truck and the Ford is fixed, there will still be a shortage of vehicles for all DCD, WRISC, and FAP staff. S. Goodwin said he will keep an eye on Florence County vehicles. The DCD did get the payment for the broken truck and sold the old DCD bronze truck. The payment will go toward repairs and/or a new truck. There was some discussion about the age and mileage of the Ford. Ultimately, more discussion and a plan will need to be addressed regarding vehicles.

6. New Business

- a. **Wild Spotter Training –Travel Stipend:** L. Peterson was awarded a position at the Wild Spotter Training to be held in Idaho in December. The registration is \$300.00, and the hotel is \$120.00/night for four nights. The training is December 5th-7th. L. Peterson would be flying. L. Peterson is requesting a travel stipend, anywhere from \$800.00 to \$1,000.00, to help pay for hotel and registration, which would come from the WRISC undesignated funds. S. Pethers said the event looked very cool. S. Goodwin said that it should be \$1000, as WRISC has the funds. *Motion to give L. Peterson a \$1000.00 travel stipend to attend the Wild Spotter training made by S. Pethers/ S. Kircher. Motion approved.*
- b. **Staffing—yearly wage increase:** The DCD approved a yearly wage increase of 4% for all staff. At the time this decision was made, the WRISC BOD wanted to talk more about it. This is important as WRISC looks to write wage budgets for the next few years. S. Pethers asked if the WRISC BOD sets the WRISC staff

wage. L. Peterson explained that the WRISC BOD can make a formal recommendation to the DCD BOD, which is usually accepted. Overall, the percentage is meant to cover a cost-of-living increase. S. Goodwin said to go with a 4% to cover the grant budgets. The goal is to hold staff reviews and WRISC BOD review of wage changes before the DCD Budget Hearing in October 2024.

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

- a. Jeff Carlson (Menominee County): Shakey Lakes is looking for restoration measures to help with loss of oaks. He will talk with the Menominee County BOD next Tuesday to involve WRISC in some restoration efforts. The program WRISC is looking at could help provide funding. J. Carlson said he could also help with projects relating to the Menominee River as well.
- b. Nicole Schutt (US Forest Service): new Ecologist for the Forest Service in Florence County. While she has been working for the Forest Service for over 20 years, her position as Ecologist started three weeks ago. On the invasive species front, there are two new funding opportunities through the GLRI fund. One is the CWMA and the other is the forest restoration grant. She can help with questions about those.
- c. Aaron McCullough (WI DNR): there has been a draw down of the Lake Noquebay wildlife area, and they found Chinese Mystery snails. Elsewhere, staff are switching focus to CWD and deer management. WRISC helped treat a Phragmites patch at the Marinette County Forest. S. Pethers asked about how deer tag limits are set. A. McCullough encouraged S. Pethers to attend some of the deer advisory committee meetings. There is also a deer management assistance program, which helps people set specific limits for their own property (i.e., micromanaging). Nicole asked about forestry concerns being brought up at the meetings. A. McCullough said they only talk a little bit about it at the meetings but there is a county-wide concern.
- d. Sheri Denowski (Marinette County): wanted to thank the WRISC staff for helping with the EFB workday and working on Phragmites in Marinette County.
- e. Sherry Pethers (FCAL): wanted to talk about the increased presence of spongy moths this year. She has sprayed over 300 egg masses on just six acres. They defoliated over 370,000 acres of forest in WI. However, next year may be even worse as there is a crazy amount of egg masses. She is wondering if there's anything to help with the problem next spring. S. Pethers is happy to give a presentation to landowners looking for assistance. WRISC could see how this issue could be worked into the GLRI Forest Grant.
- f. Steve Kircher (Forest County): said the Phragmites patch on Hwy 8 is looking dead, which is great. The Potawatomi Environmental Group was doing fish shocking and found EWM in King Lake. WRISC also confirmed the presence of Phragmites at King Lake a few weeks ago. This was near a historic site.
- g. Scott Goodwin (Florence County): said that two construction projects went in. One was a culvert replacement and the other was a road elevation project. It would be good to look out for invasives since a large area of land was disturbed during each project. There is an erosion control project starting at Fay Lake on Monday to prevent sediment runoff. This project includes pollinator habitat and shoreline restoration. S. Goodwin's budget was approved to hire a second person for the department, but it needs to be staffed before the new year.
 - i. As for the feral pig update, the USDA-APHIS contact was up on Monday. There have been no confirmed sightings, but they know they are out there due to the damage. One farmer lost half of his hayfield. There are likely 15-20 pigs that are grouped up. They don't want them to be

hunted right now, as they could disperse and be more difficult to find. The idea is to capture the majority or the entire group. Florence LCD needs hunter data from trail cameras to show where they are. There are some cameras out through the USDA. They are likely out in the county forest eating acorns. S. Goodwin will be using the drone to look for the pigs once the trees defoliate. S. Goodwin encourages everyone to look for the pigs and report siting or damage. This area is near Homestead, WI.

- h.** K. Mentel said WRISC has found more round-leaf bittersweet. A. McCullough said the DNR has treated some past sites in Marinette and he can send over the data.
 - i.** T. Norris is currently working on a video for AIS Identification, clarifying what is native or invasive. Many people have been bringing in baggies of aquatic plants. Norris is also working on the results from the CBCW program survey, which ran from Memorial Day to Labor Day. This survey will inform future CBCW programming.
- 8. Other Business:** The next meeting will be held at the Dickinson CD Office in Kingsford, MI at 10:00am. The meeting will tentatively be rescheduled for December 13th, 2023, at the Dickinson CD Office.
- 9. Future Agenda Items:** Nothing mentioned at this time.
- 10. Adjourn.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:48am. ***Motion carried.***

Minutes compiled and submitted by Katherine Mentel & Lindsay Peterson

S.Kircher/S.Pethers moved to accept the minutes on January 3rd, 2024. Motion carried, minutes approved.