

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes



April 2nd, 2025

10:00am

Virtual Only Due to Weather

Members Present: Scott Goodwin, Shawna Dishaw (Florence County LCD), Nicole Shutt (US Forest Service), Sheri Denowski (Marinette County), Aaron McCullough (WI DNR), Kayla Littleton (Forest County LWCD), Sherry Pethers (Forest County),

Members Absent: Connie Westrich (Menominee County), Tracy Beckman (Lumberjack RC&D)

Guests: none

Staff: Lindsay Peterson (Coordinator), Natalie Hunding (Project Manager)

Meeting called to order at 10:07 am by S. Goodwin.

Board of Directors Meeting

1. **Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by S. Denowski / K. Littleton.
Motion carried.
2. **Approval of Minutes** – Meeting Minutes from the February BOD Meeting were not available within 24hrs of the board meeting. L. Peterson will email the minutes to the board for review and they can be approved in June.
2. **Grants & Treasurer's Report** – L. Peterson led this portion of the meeting.
 - a. All grants were reviewed and reported to be on track and progressing as expected, with several closeouts or extension requests in progress, including a \$22,000 close out reimbursement from the MISGP Core 22 grant. L. Peterson reported that WRISC received the Groveland Mine Habitat Project (~\$6,000 for Year 1) and another MISGP Core grant award (\$70,000) which includes a subaward for Menominee Conservation District.
 - b. Undesignated fund balance remained unchanged from the previous meeting, with a balance of \$10,696.44 and with the Cost Share fund reported at a total of \$11,479.12. L. Peterson noted there are still a few outstanding invoices from cost share participants in 2024 and she'll be following up on these again shortly.
 - c. Motion to place the report on file made by K. Littleton / A. McCullough. *Motion carried.*
4. **Project Updates/Reports**
 - a. **Events:** Peterson led this portion of the meeting. WRISC has pulled back on early season events. WRISC HWA Tech and District Forester attended an HWA training in lower Michigan. L. Peterson and N. Hunding also attended the MISGP Annual Meeting in St Ignace. For upcoming events, WI Spring Cisma meeting is on April 11, Dickinson CD's tree sale will be the third week in April and WRISC staff will be heavily involved with that project this year, but also hosting a clean-up event for earth day at Strawberry Lake Park. Invasive Trade Up Days will be the first two weeks in May and the WRISC Annual Meeting will be June 6th. More info to come!
 - b. **Grants:**
 - i. L. Peterson reported on the current status of all WRISC grant projects.
 - ii. Extension was approved for the MEF PL grant. Submitting a Phase 2 project proposal.

- iii. An extension will be requested for MEF Cost Share to help support 2025 Trade Up Days events and to alleviate budget stress due to the federal funding freeze.
- iv. It's anticipated that Rob will return for CBCW in 2025. There's some concern about the level of funding, since this project had to start earlier off-schedule and there may not be enough funds to carry staff throughout the full season. Rob's position will be supplemented by other project funds and boatwash efforts will be focused to the weekends.
- v. GLRI Pathway Education grant will include billboard campaigns and likely radio ads this summer.
- vi. GLRI Buffer Zone project received an extension for full year, but will likely only need one quarter to wrap up in 2025.
- vii. GLRI CWMA grant partnering with our road commissions was awarded late and will likely need to be extended. Making some headway on connecting with road commissioners. May be impacted by federal funding freeze. N. Shutt noted that all projects granted by the CNNF should be good to move forward.
- viii. Phragmites project has been extended and the grant will be closing out in spring 2025.
- ix. MISGP 22 has been closed out and just waiting on final reimbursement.
- x. MISGP 23 was extended through 2025. Deliverables are progressing well with this project though.
- xi. HWA UPRC&D wraps up in April. Hired an additional field staff to assist with surveys.
- xii. WRISC was awarded around \$23,000 for the Circle Power Groveland Mine Area Habitat Improvement Project.
- xiii. MISGP was awarded at \$70,000, did not receive additional funding for native plant workshops.
- xiv. UPRC&D was awarded MISGP Funds for UP Wide HWA work, but was not awarded funding for UP Wide Trade Up Days. WRISC will receive a subaward for HWA work for 2 years.
- xv. WE Energies MEF 2025 pre-proposals were submitted in March. One proposal for WRISC for three years, and another to continue purple loosestrife work on the Michigamme River for 5 years.
- xvi. Submitted a proposal to the Chequamegon-Nicolet NF for CBCW and outreach.
- xvii. Have not yet heard back on several proposals, including Landscape Scale Restoration or MI DNR EPA.
- xviii. May submit for an early detection rapid response project for flowering rush found at High Falls Reservoir, but dependent on capacity. Open request and can pursue this at any time.
- xix. Was not awarded the National Forest Foundation grant with Forest County Potawatomi. L. Peterson met with grantors for reviewer feedback. WRISC will reapply if the 2025 round is made available
- xx. UPR C&D submitting proposal for UP Wide AIS Early Detection grant through Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL). Not expecting to get this award as SOGL webpage is no longer available.
- xxi. Applied for workshop funding with TIP and WHIP, not funded, but have leads on additional funding sources.

- c. **Staffing:** Did not post seasonal jobs due to uncertainties surrounding federal funding. Got some applicants regardless and many seem qualified. Madison Hayes is intending to stay on as a Strike Team member and Bob Martonen will be joining the team again. Rob Henes will also be returning as our Watercraft Inspector for CBCW. May still try to hire an additional position.
- d. **Outreach:** Annual Report should be out soon. L. Peterson looking to include a fundraising campaign along with this report and tailoring it to each county.

Outreach growth dropped a bit this period. This is due to the paid ads that ran last quarter ending. Typically outreach stats pick up during field season.

- e. **Questions:** S. Denowski asked about the GLRI EPA project that would grant Marinette Co a sub-award for EFB management. L. Peterson has not heard any updates on this project, but is not expecting this funding given the current upheaval in federal funding. There was also a question about the reported flowering rush. L. Peterson provided an update that this species was noted at a boat landing on High Falls Reservoir and that WRISC may seek WI DNR funding to delineate the infestation given the upcoming approval in the US of biocontrol for flowering rush. The Rapid Response funds can be requested at any time, so this will be a matter of staff capacity this season.

5. Old Business

- a. **Hiring Update:** As stated earlier, may hire on another tech but this is dependent on the federal funding.
- b. **2025 Annual Partner Meeting:** Next meeting! Looking for speakers, as many contacted thus far have not been able to commit.
 - i. **Board Elections:** L. Peterson reviewed the list of board members up for re-election. Board members up for re-election include: S. Goodwin, A. McCullough, S. Pethers, K. Littleton, and L. Sommer. K. Littleton informed the board that L. Sommer had passed away recently. L. Peterson expressed her sympathy on behalf of the board and was thankful for L. Sommer's service to WRISC. L. Peterson stated that members interested in continuing will need to submit a letter of intent. An additional change to board members is the replacement of L. Phelps after the restructuring of the Menominee County Board of Commissioners, and C. Westrich will be completing L. Phelps' term as a designated alternate.
L. Peterson stated that this coming year for WRISC will be a bit more demanding with the non-profit transition and the board will become the founding board for WRISC and there will be some updates to the roles and responsibilities of directors in the near future. L. Peterson wants to encourage and cultivate a pro-active board and encourages members to reach out to those they think may be interested to join!
N. Shutt requested a correction on the Board of Directors list.
S. Pethers asked if replacement directors need to be from a certain county or organization. L. Peterson stated that any formal MOU partner member can be a director. And if there is an interested party that is not currently a partner, they can be added in at the annual meeting. L. Peterson did state that she would love to get additional representation from Dickinson or Menominee Counties.
- c. **Non-Profit Filing:** L. Peterson met with lawyer (Jacob Lynch) who agreed to provide council for free. Largest challenge will be the federal filing which needs to be conducted by an accountant. L. Peterson will be reaching out to local accounting firm to get a quote and/or discuss filing process.

6. New Business

- a. **Rebrand:** L. Peterson discussed some marketing and non-profit resources and the idea of rebranding WRISC to something a bit more pro-active and more broadly encompassing our conservation work. With the non-profit filing, now may be the best time to explore a potential rebrand for the organization. The WRISC partnership will be provided an update and opportunity for feedback regarding both the non-profit transition and the potential rebrand leading up to the

Annual Meeting. Following some discussion, the WRISC Board agreed that now would be a good time to consider this type of change and moving the name/brand to something more positive. Note to try to keep the name short. L. Peterson requested the board think on some ideas and send any suggestions her way.

- b. Contingency Plan:** In light of the federal funding freeze, L. Peterson suggested at the previous meeting that WRISC develop a contingency plan to address rapid and/or unexpected changes to funding in order to streamline decision making and allocation of funds in crisis. L. Peterson is still working on developing a draft of this plan and will work to have it available at the Annual Meeting.
- c. Field Season Planning:** L. Peterson opened up a call for survey, treatment, or event needs that partners may want WRISC to assist with. Send L. Peterson an email with anything.

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

- a.** Kayla Littleton (Forest Co): will be doing PL beetles with FLOW AIS and WHIP, prepping for tech to start June 2nd.
- b.** Sherry Pethers (Forest Co): Nothing to add, commented on the ice storm impacts
- c.** Shawna Dishaw (Florence Co.): gearing up for field season. Posted CBCW jobs. Applied for GLC CBCW grant for Landing Blitz and Healthy Lakes and Rivers Shoreline Buffer project.
- d.** Nicole Shutt (USFS): lots is up in the air, reduction in force is likely coming soon in May. Eagle-River Florence District is short staffed, and will not have an ACE crew or any interns in 2025. Pulling back on invasive species work since there is only one staff member available. Focusing on Garlic Mustard, Wild Parsnip, Garden Valerian, and yellow archangel. Submitted a GLRI proposal for Butternut Franklin Lakes for their EYELIDS project. Will be looking for additional funding for management of roadside Wild Parsnip.
- e.** Aaron McCullough (WI DNR): long-term staff member left their position, new LTE starting soon. Additional LTE completed pesticide certification to assist. Conservation Congress Spring Hearing coming up on April 14th, including Habitat Stamp. Deer management unit moving to habitat based units. May reach out for assistance with knapweed work on the barrens.
- f.** Sheri Denowski (Marinette Co.): Will not have EFB LTEs this summer, and the agronomist position is also uncertain. Hemlock Curve project moving forward. Frost seeded at Harmony Arboretum and trying to get the prescribed burn done. Hoping WRISC will be continuing work on Menominee River Island in the Lower Menominee River AOC. Also mentioned phragmites on Eagle Lake which WRISC will work to follow up on.

8. Other Business: The next meeting is scheduled for June 6th, 2025 – Annual Meeting in Stephenson, MI. Formal board meeting to follow event.

9. Future Agenda Items: Contingency plan draft and February meeting minutes

10. Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:40am.

Minutes compiled and submitted by Natalie Iwaszek & Lindsay Peterson

Minutes approved as presented on June 6, 2025 on motion by S. Goodwin / S. Denowski.