

Meeting Minutes
STATE SOIL CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING
May 22, 2017
Prophetstown

Members Present:

Robert Woodling
Rex Blanton
Warren Baird
Bob Eddleman
Larry Clemens
Ray Chattin
Nola Gentry

Others Present:

Jordan Seger, ISDA
Leah Harmon, ISDA
Trevor Laureys, ISDA
Brian Wolff, IDEM
Meg Leader, ISDA
Cress Hizer, IASWCD

Jane Hardisty, NRCS
Robert Lawson, NRCS
Lisa Holscher, CCSI
Amy Work, IASWCD
Geneva Tyler, ISDA
Nathan Stoelting, ISDA

I. 9:41 A.M. Robert Woodling called the meeting to order.

II. Approve Minutes of March 2017

Nola made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Rex. Motion carried.

III. Clean Water Indiana

a. Clean Water Indiana Grants –Leah Harmon

Leah reported that she has been doing outreach for the 2018 grants. 22 districts have come to information sessions so far. Since the last meeting, Leah has conducted 1 grant review. The project finished earlier this year so no action was needed by the board. All 92 SWCDs received at least part of the \$10,000 match. All contracts have been signed and returned. Moving forward the Lieutenant Governor's office has said that we will make this payment as a direct distribution to districts rather than a grant because the process is laid out in code.

Jordan-this is a good thing and will simplify the process of getting funds to districts.

b. Clean Water Indiana Budget- Jordan Seger

ISDA is wrapping up Fiscal Year 2017 now. The CWI budget was \$4.1 million in 2017, which included some carryover from the CREP program from FY 2016. At the March meeting, the SSCB voted to use remaining funds for the 2017 CWI proposal led by Jackson County. Due to various factors, the group of districts chose not to move forward with the grant. That money will roll over to FY 2018. About \$48,000 or 1.2% of the total budget will roll over to 2018. The \$660,000 allocation to CREP for the 2018 budget has almost already been obligated. ISDA will likely pause CREP signups in the next few months and have a waiting list.

IV. State Soil Conservation Board Business

a. SSCB Chairman's Report-Robert Woodling

The Executive Committee met at the Seger farm recently. They discussed three main topics. CWI program

There was good discussion about the CWI program and what to do with SWCD grants as well as requests that come from non-SWCD entities. The SWCD let grant proposals will continue as normal. Any requests that come from outside the SWCDs are recommended to come before the full SSCB for a vote.

Bob made a motion for grant proposals that do not come from SWCDs be brought to the full SSCB for consideration. Nola seconded the motion.

Discussion- Nola asked about what the SSCB had done in the past. Previously non-SWCD funding requests have come to the full board. Jordan said this helps us to formalize the process. Jane asked when the proposals would be due. Commitment for these funds would need to be done before the competitive grant recommendations are made. Rex asked if having proposals due at the September meeting would give us enough time.

Motion carried.

Discussion continued as to what would happen to leftover funds and what those funds can be spent on. That is up to the board as long as it falls within the CWI mission. Board members agreed that we need a clear direction on timing and guidance. Any proposed projects would need to fall in line with the CWI section of Indiana Code (IC 14-32-8). Bob is hesitant to see the money go away from districts. Jane suggested that proposals may need to be regionally or statewide focused. Bob stated that CWI was a resource for SWCDs. Anything we agree to is coming out of what is available to districts. Warren sought clarification as to what has been funded before. CCSI has set a precedent of funding non-SWCD led projects. Warren stated he is not comfortable not letting districts have full access to the money moving forward. Robert asked if the grants committee would be willing to put these items together. They agreed. A committee meeting will be scheduled and a report given at the July SSCB meeting.

Funding

Given the state of the funding source and the budget, Robert wants to look into non-governmental sources of funding to supplement CWI. Robert asked for the creation of a committee to assess the feasibility of outside funding. This funding would flow through the CWI account and follow the current rules. The committee would assess the feasibility of outside funding and report back to the board at the September meeting. This funding would be used for statewide initiatives. Robert recommended Rex, Larry, and Warren to serve on this committee, with Rex serving as the chair. Larry suggested that we check with the ISDA legal counsel as to whether the SSCB can receive outside funds and check the funding and tax status of the board. Warren suggested we check with the Department of Forestry to see how their funds are set up and asked whether we needed a 501c(3).

Nola made a motion for the creation of a funding committee comprised of Rex, Larry, and Warren. Ray seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Business Plan

Jordan shared the template that Phil Anderson has been working with the DSS team on with the executive committee. After consideration, the committee determined that the template was probably most suited for SWCD but would not work well for the SSCB. Robert asked what the board wanted to do to get the ball rolling on updating the business plan. It would be better to start sooner rather than later and will be added to the July agenda. The board will also look into scheduling a day to look at the current plan and revise it. The board asked what input do they need from partners before the plan moves forward, recognizing that it is important to remain on the same page. Robert will ask the ICP leaders at their next meeting for input and the SSCB will schedule a date to look at the plan after that meeting.

V. Soil and Water Conservation Districts

a. Owen County- Nathan Stoelting

Owen County SWCD has two appointments to consider. One supervisor moved outside of Owen County and therefore had to resign. The other vacancy was created by not conducting an election

at the district's annual meeting. Corbin Abrell and Steve Fox have been recommended to be appointed to the board.

Larry moved to accept the appointments. Rex seconded. Motion carried.

VI. 10 Minute Break

VII. ISDA Updates

a. Director's Report- Jordan Seger

Legislative Session

There was no increase in the cigarette tax in the legislative session. CWI would not have seen any of the increase has it passed. The Division of Soil Conservation did get additional funding for staff in the Western Lake Erie Basin, which are currently EPA funded. There was a lot of action from SWCDs this session in the legislature, visiting legislators, etc. Indiana Grown received funding this session. There is a new sales tax exemption on field tile and some leeway for ag retailers. The additional investment in infrastructure should help rural roads and bridges.

Phil Anderson Business Planning Initiative

Jordan will share the template with the full board. Phil is meeting with the DSS team in June and will have more to report at the July meeting. Phil would like to be on the agenda for an SSCB meeting in the future to discuss his planning template.

Staffing

The Division of Soil Conservation intern starts today. A resource specialist in the SE has been hired. They will start in June.

b. Technical Report- Trevor Laureys

Trevor has a written report. He pointed out the graphs showing the status of projects. Construction is moving along.

c. Soil Health-Meg Leader

Infield Advantage registration seems to be moving more efficiently than in years past. 60 fields are already sign up. Meg is working to schedule the summer/fall training for group leaders. This year Meg is working with Geneva to formalize the protocol for the Indiana pork project. This year, each producer will be allowed to sign up one soybean field. This protocol is still being finalized. 2016 INFA results should be on the website soon.

CCSI communications articles have been picked up by SWCDs around the state. Red Gold applications are in. 46 of 48 producers applied for the program.

Larry asked if there was a conservation tie for the soybean project. It is a concern, but this also give a chance to highlight what is going on in soybean fields. Nutrient efficiency relates to the conservation message. Jordan stated that we are interested in Larry's expertise as we consider how to look at soybeans with a conservation approach.

d. Accountability and Technology- Trevor Laureys

Deb is out so Trevor is covering her report. He directed the board to the maps he provided. These maps show the fall transect results. This was the 3rd year for the fall transect. A press release will be sent soon. Overall, Indiana showed 1.18 million acres of living cover. When you look at just cover crops, it comes to 1.08 million acres, which is slightly down from last year but still a strong figure. The transect also showed that 58% of corn fields and 67% of soybean fields showed residue that was undisturbed last fall. Larry asked if we included wheat in the totals. It is included in the living cover but not in the cover crop totals. How does Indiana compare to other states. This year there will be a NASS ag census. Overall, Indiana is trending upwards, at least in part due to its approach to soil health in a cropping system. Trevor also ran load reductions for just cover crops. In 2016, ICP funded cover crops saved 1.3 million tons of sediment from Indiana's waterways which would fill 60 miles of train cars.

e. District Support-Geneva Tyler

Leah has been working with Marion County on selecting and training their new staff person. Jennifer has been assisting her districts with new staff training as well as the AFR. The DSS team is hosting a Leadership Institute session on June 9th in Jasper. So far there have been 135 responses to the Leadership Institute survey. The biggest barrier for attendance is time. A full report will be given at a future meeting.

f. Water Quality and CREP- Jordan Seger

Jordan pointed the board to Julie's written report. CREP has enrolled 734 acres so far this year. Since the program's inception CREP has received \$3.9 million for the state. This is matched \$7-10 from USDA, which totals as least \$27 million. The bulk of these practices have been bottomland timber establishment and wetland restoration. ISDA is creating story maps of the 10 major basins in the state. The Western Lake Erie Basin is done, and others will be completed by the end of the year. Larry suggested the possibility of using the remaining CWI funds for CREP this year. Jane asked which practices are most popular. Jordan said they were bottomland timber establishment and wetland restoration. Filter strips have also seen an increase. Ray stated that CREP is one of the most lucrative programs for farmers and it has been good for Knox County. The board asked if additional funds were provided, would it be new people or people currently on a wait list. Jordan said it would be new people because the program is not paused yet. With the remaining funds, we would be talking hundreds not thousands of acres. Most CRP has been funded. Rex asked if we had looked at anything else for that funding. The SSCB does have the discretion of where the carry over funds go. That decision can be made later. Is there somewhere is can have a bigger impact? Warren wants to see that funding get conservation on the land. The board does have discretion to move it later. Commitments will be made in October.

VIII. Conservation Partner Reports

a. IASWCD Report

IASWCD will send their report to the board. It is the 25th anniversary of Pathway to Water Quality. Volunteer registration begins June 1. 10 SWCDs did statehouse visits during the legislative session. The MOU between the IASWCD, Purdue, and the SSCB has been finalized and sent to SWCDs. Senator Donnelly visited Ray McCormick's farm in April. The IASWCD Annual Conference will be January 8-9, 2018. It is the 75th conference and the 50th anniversary of IASWCD. Award applications are posted on the IASWCD website.

b. IDEM Report

Julia Wickard has been hired as IDEM's ag liaison. 319 funds should be relatively the same moving forward. There are currently 25 open 319 grants and 7 open 205j grants. IDEM recommended 3 planning, 8 implementation and 2 education grants for funding this year. The Notice of Intent for this year's 319 application are due June 1 with applications due September 1.

c. DNR Report- No Report

d. Purdue Report- No Report

e. FSA Report- No Report

f. NRCS Report

Jane Thanked Robert for his efforts around the state and representing the Partnership well. She congratulated ISDA for their new funding. She also noted Senator Donnelly's visit to Ray McCormick's far. It was well received and showed cover crops at all stages. Jane noted that the Lieutenant Governor visited Mike Starkey's farm the previous week. NRCS has a crew in Salem to evaluate the recent flooding. They are looking at potential emergency watershed funding. There is a lot going on in NRCS. A hiring freeze is still in effect. NRCS employees are observing level 2 biosecurity protocols. Jane pointed out success stories in the Western Lake Erie Basin. Jane then highlighted the conservation technical assistance program. The National Conservation Partnership is implementing a standardized policy for conservation planning certification. The nutrient management strategy is moving forward and will be put on the agenda for a future meeting.

All Farm Bill dollars in Indiana have been allocated, but Jane will ask for more as other states turn in their excess funds. She encouraged districts to think about future contribution agreements.

g. CCSI Report

Lisa stated that CCSI will send reports to future meetings. CCSI is undergoing a major strategic planning process. The initiative has recently updated its training process to now include specialty crops. CCSI hosted presentation and media skill training which was attended by the National Wildlife Federation, who wants to adapt the training to their audience.

Robert asked if CCSI during their outreach efforts have thought about farm managers and landowners. Lisa stated that CCSI is developing program to address those concerns. CCSI and partners will be working this summer to create video to help farmers communicate with lenders.

h. IDEA Report- No Report

IX. Public Comment- none

X. Next Meeting:

2017 Meeting Dates

July 25- NRCS State Office

October 31- TBD

September 19- NRCS State Office

XI. Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm
