

# MINUTES STATE SOIL CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING

January 7, 2024

The Westin Indianapolis

MS Teams

## **PRESENT:**

Kenny Cain (Board Member)  
Ray Chattin (Board Member)  
Larry Clemens (Board Member)  
Brad Dawson (Board Member)  
Jane Hardisty (Board Member)  
Gene Schmidt (Board Member)  
Les Zimmerman  
Tammy Bingham  
Lois Mann  
Rhonda Johnson  
Nevada Wagers  
Lisa Holscher  
Meg Leader  
Kristen Latzke  
Lori Jordan  
Connie Warner  
Katelyn Smith Walker  
Autumn Knebel  
Elli Blaine  
Marian Rodriguez  
PJ Chumley  
Hans Schmitz  
Jessica Hoehn  
Lana Zimmer  
Jim Martin  
Mark Jordan

Julie Clark  
Roger Wenning  
Kylie Wheeler  
Megan Ayers  
Meg Ritterskamp  
Tina Boerner  
Liz Rice  
Danielle Waldschmidt  
Amy Work  
Rick Imel  
Rita Sharr  
Julie Loehr  
Walt Sell  
Dennis Simpson  
Kenneth Page  
Carol and Don Lode  
Marissa Whetstone  
Stephanie Young  
Susan Chattin  
Tonya Williams  
Deanna Jackson  
Becca McClellan  
Beth Williams  
Aimee Wentworth  
Taylor Simon  
Mary Lou Watson  
Lindsey Bishop

Marc Roberts  
Laura Fribley  
Trevor Laureys  
Stan Moore  
Jennifer Thum  
Leah Harmon  
Bryan Overstreet  
Sheila Schroeder  
Martha Miller  
Tracey Johnson  
Brandi Frazier  
Mercedes Clemens  
Stephen Wallpe  
Terri Theisen  
John Kruse  
Steven Crowe  
Julie Harrold

## **PRESENT VIA TEAMS:**

Cress Hizer  
Breegan Anderson  
Julie Morris  
Sandra Hoffarth  
Tara Wesseler-Henry  
Kim  
Andrea Gogel  
Colson Doyle

### **I. 3pm: Call to Order**

- a. Ray called the meeting to order at 3:03PM.

### **II. Approve Minutes of October 2024**

- a. Brad made a motion to approve the minutes, Gene seconded, all in favor, motion passed.

### **III. Clean Water Indiana**

- a. Clean Water Indiana Grants- Geneva Tyler
  1. Geneva Tyler presented the January 2024 CWI report. Highlights included Grant Services is working on the 2024 grant contracts, upcoming deadlines, grant audit selections, grant committee upcoming meeting and duties, and training funds.
- b. CWI Budget Overview- Trevor Laureys

1. Trevor Laureys presented the CWI Budget Overview. He covered FY 2024 budget, the generous bump in CWI, dedicated fund for soil conservation, cigarette tax fund, and general fund appropriations. He noted CWI is a non-reverting fund, but we effectively zeroed out this fund. Nearly half of the funds went directly to Soil and Water Conservation Districts. We doubled our match, had the largest round of competitive grants we've ever had, as well as what will come out for CREP administration. A process timeline was shared regarding State fiscal budget year. FY 2025 will be voted on at the May meeting. For the rest of FY 2024, we'll know more about CREP demands that was expanded to 38 watersheds in the state. We should have a reduced equipment need for next year, and we've essentially knocked out most of our agreements. If anyone has questions, please reach out to Trevor.

#### **IV. State Soil Conservation Board Business**

- a. Chairman's report- Ray Chattin
  1. Ray Chattin summarized what he'd been up to since the last State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB) meeting. He's been participating in Board Certification process meetings. It will be a tremendous resource to our SWCD Supervisors. There will be a roundtable tomorrow to roll the program out, and encouraged everyone to attend. It'll give everyone a chance to interact with the SSCB and bring up anything they want to talk about with us. He and Kenny participated in two CCSI oversight committee. He attended District Showcases in Kosciusko and Montgomery counties and heard Newton's was outstanding as well. He attended the Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association Annual Meeting and emphasized woodlands are a very significant natural resource component. He's been sitting in on IASWCD meetings. It's an important point in the evolution of the IASWCD. He appreciates being able to participate in Annual Conference with our meetings on Sunday afternoon. He's been participating in Soil Board strategic planning meetings and commends the board for participating in this process. They hope to finalize planning in the first quarter of the year. As a SICIM board member, he attended three SICIM meetings. The interest in invasive species has been reflected in Clean Water Indiana grant awards. Ray also thanks everyone who has participated in the SSCB meetings this year. The greater everyone's participation, the better the likelihood we can stay on the same page.
- b. Officer Elections- Ray Chattin
  1. Chair- Kenny moved that Gene Schmidt be Chair, Jane seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.
  2. Vice-Chair- Kenny entertained Jane Hardisty be Vice-Chair, Brad seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.
  3. Trevor Laureys will remain as ex-officio member.
- c. Committee Appointments
  1. CWI Grants Committee
    - a. Larry made a motion for Brad Dawson, Jane Hardisty, and Ray Chattin to serve on the CWI Committee. Kenny seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.
  2. CCSI Oversight Committee

- a. Larry made motion that Amy Burriss and Kenny Cain take on the CCSI Oversight committee. Brad seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.
3. Pathway to Water Quality- Gene Schmidt will serve.
4. The SSCB welcomes Larry as an associate after he leaves the board, and Trevor will seek appointment advisory member from the Lieutenant Governor's office. New SSCB members are appointed by the Governor's office. We can entertain new members from the Association, Purdue Extension, or Indiana State Department of Agriculture. An individual was identified, but with delays, they opted to serve on their local SWCD board instead. We are actively looking for a replacement for Larry. Trevor updated The Nature Conservancy is not on the list of groups that can serve as an advisory member. Trevor can give the Board a list of eligible agencies. Larry could still attend SSCB meetings as an interested citizen.
- d. Conservation Deliverables & Resources- Trevor Laureys
  1. Trevor presented the sheet with QR codes with conservation data deliverables.
- e. CREP Watershed Administrator Selection
  1. Julie Harrold discussed CREP. She presented the map that shows eligible watersheds after the expansion. There have been delays with environmental assessments. Our goal is to have the CREP expansion by October 1, 2024. She presented the CREP Administrator Recommendations. ISDA field staff and DSSs met to create a recommendation on who could serve as CREP Administrators. Watersheds within the expansion will be frontloaded with funds to get projects paid. Larry commented CREP will be a very important talking point about within the next State budget cycle about how much we're doing across the entire state. Julie will have a better idea closer to May about any needed appropriations. With the expansion, all ISDA Resource Specialists will help with CREP.
    - a. Kenny moved to accept the CREP Administrator recommendations. Jane seconded. All approved , motion carried.

## **V. Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

- a. SWCD Supervisor Appointments- Geneva Tyler
  1. Geneva presented the SWCD Supervisor Appointments. Gene made a motion to approve. Seconded by Larry. All in favor. Motion carried.
- b. Temporary appointments
  1. Blackford Co SWCD- presented by Kylie Wheeler.
  2. Dearborn Co SWCD- presented by Kylie Wheeler.
  3. Porter Co SWCD- presented by Sandra Hoffarth.
  4. Ohio Co SWCD- presented by Kylie Wheeler.
    - a. Union Co SWCD- presented by Kylie Wheeler.
    - b. Brad made a motion to approve these appointments. Kenny seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

## **VI. ICP Reports**

- a. ISDA
  1. Trevor

- a. Staffing opportunities include Economic Development, Grain Buyers, DSC Director, and interns. Trevor's position is posted. He highlighted the Key Performance Indicators and load reductions estimates. He encouraged the board to look at implementation and cost share for next year's CWI since we have additional boots on the ground.
  - b. Larry commented Government Holcomb made a commitment with other Great Lakes Governors and the premiers from Canada to plant 30 million trees over the next 10 years. We plant a lot of trees with CREP and that could be a discussion piece.
  - c. Jane commented we've got to keep the conservation work message going strong. Let's keep this quality and quantity of data up to date and have it readily available to show what CWI and Districts are doing. We know how to get conservation on the ground.
2. Partnerships
    - a. Jennifer Thum- she would love to brainstorm with the Board on how to get information out to ag retailers and other companies about all the conservation work being done. JT echos an appreciation to the Board. Tara's been an asset and she's been able to get Ohio's in-kind reports. iCOVER agreement with cover crops- met with Vincennes University and it's moving forward. Next one we're focusing on is Ohio River. Hoping to get a project started at the end quarter of this year.
  3. CREP and Water Quality Initiatives- Julie covered CREP accomplishments for 2023. She covered completed acres, reenrollments, graph comparisons and tables presented on the report, nutrient load reductions, and tree plantings.
  4. Nutrient Stewardship- Julie shared Breegan has been a tremendous asset. The soil sampling program has reached staff and workload capacity. It will probably reopen in the spring. Larry suggested a presentation on the Gulf of Mexico Task Force and recent data as there's been some really great progress.
  5. District Support – Laura presented the DSS report. A new supervisor training will be offered this evening. The Board Certification Program will be discussed at the roundtable and further communications will be coming. We are seeking feedback.
- b. IASWCD
    1. Liz Rice presented updates and highlights of the IASWCD. District Showcase videos will be revealed at the Awards Luncheon, and then will be live on the Association's YouTube channel. Meg Leader has been hired for Resilient Indiana program. Some Resilient Indiana staff will be hired in 2024 and then it'll ramp up, hiring the other eight folks in 2025. Liz and the Board look forward to networking with everyone. CWI Breakfast at the Statehouse- gather Tuesday morning in the Westin foyer at 7AM.
  - c. CCSI
    1. Lisa Holscher provided a summary of highlights of 2023. 45% of events happened in the first quarter and not as many events in the summertime. They are working on that. CCSI has expanded significantly- from four full-time staff to eight. Lisa introduced staff, including new hires. They anticipate hiring a machinery and equipment specialist, and a Coordinator for Purdue on the Farm. This Coordinator position is currently open.
  - d. Purdue

1. Walt Sell distributed folder packets to the SSCB. Walt recognized Hans and a committee thru Extension working on a soil health copy that is close to being done. Hans, Walt, and Brian have been working on a soil health signature program and it is expected to be finalized for rollout later this year. He gave staff and program updates including the hiring of the new Purdue Urban Soil Health Specialist, firefly study, long term studies on soil health practices vs. traditional farming practices, making crop diversity prevalent in the midwest, hellbender habitat improvement, and the completed Purdue on the Farm pilot.

e. NRCS

1. Danielle Waldschmidt presented the NRCS State Conservationist Report. Damaris Mortenson is the new Indiana State Conservationist. She covered updates on Farm Bill Programs including upcoming deadlines, the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program, and Natural Resource Inventory Data Collection.

f. IDEA

1. Martha Miller, IDEA President reported. The pilot project the SSCB helped support was incredibly successful. There are 16 people enrolled in the 2024 program. They have a 3-minute video of those that participated in the pilot program that Martha is happy to share. They had 181 IDEA members in 2023. The IDEA membership fee is \$25.

g. Other

1. Urban Soil Health Program- Elli Blaine presented the Urban Soil Health Program report. She covered outreach highlights from 2023 and services offered. She thanked the Grants Committee for investing in the program. She introduced staff. They added 11 new Conservation Districts to those local working groups in 2023. A typical customer with the program really varies. We try to serve everyone.
2. Meg Leader introduced herself. She's now working with Resilient Indiana (IASWCD). She's looking to have conversations over the next couple of days and few weeks for input, and how the program can help as it gets built from the ground up.
3. Gene Schmidt commented the SSCB is truly committed to the oversight of the investment the General Assembly made in CWI, and our expectation of it moving forward. It's going to take education on the benefits of the investment they made, and the need still ahead of us. It's a close line between education and lobbying. Ray emphasized we need to be advocates. Trevor clarified they are appointed government officials, not lobbyists. The SSCB can talk about the impacts the dollars CWI has made. There can be a fine line. If you have a question and you want advice, come talk to us. You can educate. Gene stated the SSCB is fully committed to CWI and support of Conservation Districts in this state. Education will be critical and is needed. We want to make a difference and we need your help with this. Jane commented she wants to make sure they are doing everything they can to work with Les and the State Association Board. If we could provide information and education I hope we can work that out. Trevor said the Board could directly send a letter stating impacts of CWI. There are other NGO groups that can ask for specific dollar amounts and programs. The SSCB's job is to elevate the work of the Districts, Partnerships, tell our stories, and set example for the Districts. Groups that people pay dues to can go talk with legislators.

4. Trevor's last day is February 2. Jane asked if the SSCB could be part of the interview panel, as he's secretary to the Board. Trevor will talk with hiring members. At the least, if the Board would like to directly have a discussion in advance of interviews, they'd have an ear.
5. Jane commented it would be nice to have more orientation for SSCB board members, and cover what they can/can't do, in addition to the handbook.
6. Ray stated SWCD Annual Meetings are coming up and encouraged SSCB members to attend.
7. Kenny thanked Ray for serving as Chair this year, and for his leadership.

## **VII. Public Comment**

## **VIII. 2024 Meeting Dates**

- a. January 7- The Westin, Indianapolis • March 12- Indiana Farm Bureau, Indianapolis • May 14- Indiana Farm Bureau, Indianapolis • July 9- Indiana Farm Bureau, Indianapolis • September 10- Indiana Farm Bureau, Indianapolis • October 22- TBD

**IX. Adjourn-** Brad made a motion to adjourn at 4:58PM. Kenny seconded. Motion carried.