

State Soil Conservation Board Meeting
March 1, 2016
TNC – Indianapolis
Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Ray Chattin
Bob Eddleman
Nola Gentry
Robert Woodling
Warren Baird

Members absent – Larry Clemens

Others in Attendance:

Jordan Seger	Trevor Laureys	Jane Hardisty	George Reger
Leah Harmon	Tara Wesseler- Henry	Ted McKinney	
Jennifer Thum	Laura Fribley	Scheryl Vaughn	
Nathan Stoelting	Walt Sell	Julie Harrold	

I. 9:30AM Call to Order – Ray Chattin

II. Draft minutes of January 2016

Ms. Gentry moved; Mr. Eddleman second. Motion carried.

III. Clean Water Indiana

a. 2015 Clean Water Indiana Grants – Leah Harmon, ISDA

The 2016 CWI grants have officially started, and the fully executed contracts have been sent back to our office. We are awaiting claim vouchers from a few SWCDs. Leah stated that she will be conducting a breakout session at each of the March region meeting on CWI. The Annual Financial Reports are due to the district's DSS by March 31st. Ten CWI reviews were conducted last year, staff will do 10 again this year. We are now implementing a standard review procedure, and a few education CWI videos have been uploaded to the ISDA's You Tube channel.

1. Late Final Report Discussion – Leah Harmon

Leah explained that she was going to present a live scenario and wanted to get the SSCB's guidance to proceed. A district received a 2013 CWI grant. They signed their grant agreement, but the lead district has yet to submit the final report. Multiple attempts were made by ISDA staff to get this report completed. This grant includes cost-share, and the lead district also still needs to enter the conservation tracking data so the grant impacts can be highlighted and shared. Nothing has been entered since April 2015. The contract says all information should be reported on time. In addition, the agreement stated the final claim must be submitted to the state after the expiration of the grant so that funds can be transferred in a timely manner. This claim was not submitted.

Leah discussed their Year 2 report, which showed that \$7,250.00 CWI funds were expended. Due to the low amount of CWI funds that were expended, their DSS expressed concern at that time. During an audit review of the project, the two DSS's in the room expressed their concern and offered some suggestions on how to spend the remaining funds.

Jordan spoke about the lack of reporting of progress and their lack of commitment to honor the contract. There is a precedent to be set; the other grantees are following the rules laid out in their contracts and the DSS crew went out of their way to ensure the lead district was aware of the process. We are looking to the SSCB for direction with this issue. ISDA suggests withholding the \$17,500 remaining as it is non-reverting funds which will go to the next round of CWI competitive funding (awarded in 2016 for the 2017 grant cycle). ISDA also suggests that the SSCB bar this district from applying for CWI funds until reporting is completed and give heavy scrutiny on any future grants that this district applies for.

The SSCB questioned Leah and Jordan about whether the chair of the SWCD has been contacted, and if ISDA and the SSCB are breaking ground on this. This is a serious matter, and in five years, Jordan cannot think of a time that we have withheld CWI funds. The DSS crew agreed with this. In the past, the money was lost, and now we can roll over the funds to future cycles (CWI is a non-reverting fund).

Nola stated that we need to withhold the funds, as it sounds like we have gone out of our way to help them and they had an audit.

Ray – We went the extra mile again and protocols are put in place to make this process successful. Enough is enough. Situations like this tend to create conflict and if we can fully document what happened then Ray will support the decision to withhold the funds.

Nola – if they are in the hole and distributed money out, we should send that once they got up to date on paperwork.

Robert is concerned if they have not sent the money to fund projects. We don't want to penalize the landowners.

Warren – We need to do something to honor our regulations and withhold their funds.

Nola – withhold funds, and for a couple years, they cannot be the lead district on a CWI grant.

Bob – Can we withhold the \$10,000 from them? What does the board think of this?

Jordan stated that we cannot withhold the \$10,000.

Ray stated that he would entertain a motion.

Bob – moved to withhold the 25% remaining of this CWI grant, in the amount of \$17,500.00. Warren seconded the motion.

All in favor, motioned carried.

Nola moved that if any district has not fulfilled their duties as a lead district be ineligible to be the lead district in the next grant cycle. Warren seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion carried.

If a district is banned from serving as the lead district in the next round of grants that does not ban them from participating in a CWI grant.

b. Vanderburgh Letter, - Jordan Seger

Vanderburgh SWCD has a CWI grant (1/1/14-12/31/16) for the construction of a two-stage ditch. ISDA received a letter from them, and it stated the two-stage ditch has not been completed yet. Jordan checked, the survey and design has been completed, and it's awaiting an engineering check. The landowners are still interested but it's matter of the final check offs. Jane Hardisty stated that it will get done.

Jordan – looking for guidance, Vanderburgh SWCD wanted to know if they can change the whole purpose of their grant if the two-stage ditch does not come to fruition. The SSCB has not permitted a district change their entire grant purpose. If they cannot complete their CWI grant as stated, the funds will revert. Then we can reallocate those funds for the next grant cycle.

Warren- We should not allow this. If this was an originally a cover crop grant, would this have scored the same way. Should we draft a letter in response to this? Would they be allowed to complete the project, but not permitted to change it to cover crops?

Ray- The district needs to follow through with this; streambank erosion is a problem in the state.

Robert- I appreciate that they are keeping the SSCB up to date and communicate things with us. If the district cannot get ditch done because of elements outside their realm, we can extend the grant, but not really change it. If it's not done by October, then they should request an extension.

Bob- let's draft a letter to them, thanking them for the status update and encourage them to complete the project and tell them that past policy would not permit us to allow them to change the total purpose of the grant because we are not sure how it would have ranked if it was originally a cover crop grant application. Notes and letter would go to Ray for final approval.

c. Clean Water Indiana Legislation

Jordan discussed that ISDA has been working with the Senate and House Natural Resources Committee to make four corrections to Indiana Code. We are updating any reference to the DNR with the Division of Soil Conservation – cigarette tax funding. Another change is we are allowing other SWCD contributions from other sources than county government to be considered to qualify for State \$10,000 CWI match. This allows SWCDs like Delaware who do not receive county funds, but receive funds from other another source, like a University, to count this contribution as their match. We also worked on language to allow a merged District to receive more than the 10k match – 10k match for each District to merge. And we are working to update/strike LARE responsibilities from DSC duties. (DNR manages LARE)

d. CWI budget update

Jordan discussed the CWI budget. The office has put together a one/two pager that is available online. It details the CWI budget, where the money comes from, the soils and ISDA budget, and individual grant reports. No other big changes are in the budget.

e. CWI grants Committee Report

Robert stated the grants committee has met twice since the SSCB January meeting and looked at responses and the surveys that were sent out. The committee met on Feb. 22nd, to discuss the CWI changes. He commended the work that the DSS team, specifically Leah, did to put our thoughts into motion, and to walk us through this. He hopes that people see that we tried to listen to them and to simplify the process and make it more transparent.

Robert turned it over to Leah to talk about the items in their board packets.

Leah- You will find four different informational sheets in your packets. Leah directed the board to look at the pamphlet titled, “what’s new in CWI.” The changes are based on feedback and suggestions internally from the DSS team, grants committee and LG grants services, which are helping ISDA streamline the process. The grants committees removed the \$75,000 award cap and are looking for targeted proposals that line up their SWCD business plan with the SSCB business plan. This could lead to districts to look at a need in their county and apply for what they need. Single district proposals are permitted and could used with a targeted watershed that falls within your county. The budget section has been simplified. We added a paragraph on grant reviews, and clarified reporting requirements.

The next form that Leah went over was the application. In the packet was a 2017 CWI grant application template. We are moving to an online application, which will be linked to the ISDA’s website. We are now allowing attachments, if they feel that there is other information to share that they cannot fit into a specific section on the application. We are looking for your approval today, so that we can send out the 2017 information and discuss the update at the March region meetings.

Robert – We did change the due date, so Sept. 15th is the new deadline. We gave them four extra months to get their applications turned in.

Ray – thanked the grants committee.

Nola moved to approve the documents as presented, Bob seconded the motion.
All in favor, motion carried.

IV. State Soil Conservation Board Business

a. SSCB Chairman’s Report-Ray Chattin

Ray- wanted to comment about the vacancy on the board. Scott has still has been a squeaky wheel. He had hoped that the nominee be appointed today. We have heard that the Governor’s office has the appointment, but it will be delayed another week. Ray stated that the board needs to make the rounds at annual meetings. It’s important to keep the eye to the ground. Ray stated that he has been well received and has gotten up to say a few words and mentioned the new SSCB business plan and that it mentions invasive species. Any success this partnership has will be on the willingness and ability to communicate our vision for Indiana’s resources. This is more than sharing of data, which is important too. Vision is sacred and his source of passion.

V. Soil and Water Conservation Districts

a. Floyd County – Laura Fribley

Laura discussed the details behind this request. It's for a vacant appointment. The district recommended that Ronald Wathen be appointed as the replacement. Bob moved to accept the appointment of Ronald Wathen to the board, seconded by Robert.

All in favor, motion carried.

b. Fountain County- Nathan Stoelting

The SWCD posted the information on SharePoint after the deadline. The person did not want to run for the SWCD, but decided that after the deadline had passed. The district then had this individual resign after their annual meeting, which would allow person to take the seat.

Nola moved to appoint Luke Davenport to the board, seconded by Bob.

All in favor, motion carried

c. Jay County – Jennifer Thum

Jennifer spoke about the health problems of Supervisor Paxson. The district recommended that Randall Fennig be appointed to fill out the remaining term. Nola moved to accept the resignation and approve the vacant appointment, Bob seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion carried.

d. Vermillion County – Nathan Stoelting

Nathan stated that one of the supervisors wanted to resign and the district recommends that Leann Lawrence to fill the vacancy position. Warrant moved to accept the resignation of Joel Wesch and approve the appointment of Leann Lawrence, seconded by Nola.

All in favor, motion carried.

VI. Ten minute break

VII. ISDA Updates

a. Director's Report- Jordan Seger

Jordan indicated that he provided a written report for both the board and audience members. He stated that he will highlight several key items, and then take any questions. First piece is Indiana's agriculture strategic plan; ISDA has been meeting with AG groups and has had good discussion. Look for that to roll out late March or early April. (now moved to June roll out) The plan will be for the next ten years, and we have had all the right people in the room.

NE Team Leader position was awarded to Jennifer Thum. She will retain most of the DSS duties and same counties as well as supervision of five RSs. The only difference is that she will not be doing some of the field work, and she is moving up to the management team.

This Thursday, we will be interviewing for our summer interns. These positions will start mid May and run through Aug. We had over 15 applications, many at the grad school level. This position will be paid out of ISDA budget.

Our Lieutenant Governor (LG), Sue Ellspermann's last day is tomorrow. Mr. Eric Holcomb will step into that role and will be Ted's new boss. For our state, the LG serves as the secretary of agriculture.

The DSSs and myself are working on improving the current SWCD business planning process. We brought in an outside consultant, to dive into the current business plan format with the SWCDs and look at where we can improve with that. This will be funded out of the ISDA budget. The group has good connections with the district folks and the consultant did leg work before we met him regarding the SWCD's.

Electric Power Research Institute Agreement – Water Quality Trading – Tara has been the lead on this project and we brought in 100k of EPRI funds for conservation practices and admin fees for SWCDs. We are working on a new agreement, phase 2, which is \$200,000 to fund conservational practices and SWCD administration. We are still looking at water trading, carbon side of this too, adding forestry practices, but this has not been finalized. We are working with NRCS, and IDNR (forestry). If the Phase 1 districts don't want to enter into Phase 2, we might have to look for SWCD partners throughout Ohio River Basin not just southeast. Avian influenza – thanks to BOAH and our state vet for handling this situation. Reminder that May 10th is the all employee partnership meeting at the Hendricks County fairgrounds.

KPI – 2015 goals all met, most exceeded. Thanks to SWCD and ISDA staff!

Ray is interested in the water trading, as within 30 miles of his home are 5 power plants. There should be opportunity for us to explore to expand and address thermal pollution as well as the emissions of the smoke stacks. Trees are getting planted to shade the water with the thermal pollution.

Tara – met with the EPRI, outside the few counties in Ohio, all power plants have to meet standards. In terms of looking ahead, they are looking at Wabash watershed. We use the Region 5 modeling program, and to look at how much N and P, a practice reduces, and how much bang we are getting for our buck. The producer(s) needs to be willing to talk with media outlets and other farmers about the project.

These stewardship credits are going towards corporate philosophy they can promote. Right now, not a lot of demand for these things because they are not tied to the permits, and EPA needs to make some of these calls. We agree it's an opportunity with the outside financial resources. Jane stated that our partners cannot rely on the federal dollars, and if the private sector is interested in conservation, this is one of the avenues for them. It's not easy as it sounds. It's fairly new. This is new for the districts, it's been successful. The market is where the future is, we need to keep our eye on the ball, and this might get stronger.

Ray – anything from Ted McKinney?

Ted stated that he is in attendance because he loves what this team is doing. He loves what's going on. It's very rewarding to hear that Indiana is being held up of as the model for collaboration. He went over the agriculture strategic plan. The agriculture leaders have met twice in person and have one more meeting. They have gone through a normal strategic plan. This plan is to be for ten years. Jordan is on the natural resources and conservation committee; the other committees are economic and development, infrastructure (roads, broadband), agriculture career development, leadership development, public relations and consumer knowledge, and innovation. This is the time we put down the action steps. If we take the model that the SSCB has set, truly demonstrated from the vision to tactical level, it's amazing what we can accomplish. We held back to let the other agriculture agencies lead the charge. Ted's role is to look at long-term and how the plan plays to the SSCB. We will have role-out meetings, with four or five locations. If anyone knows of events that are being pushed the full first week in April, let us know and maybe we can cozy up to that event.. We are after all the groups, we need help to bring this alive.

Ray thanked Ted for his leadership.

b. Technical Report- George Reger

George referenced his handouts, there are three sheets, one is report with bi-weekly stats of the RS team, and where we stand today, and bottom section is the status of the load reductions. The next sheets are stats from the NW engineering team; they break down the status of practices for the NW, and what type of work they have been doing.

George started the NW technical update, with the pie chart sheet, CRP is the largest component. They are short staffed, and they do what they can and help to serve the people. This gives breakdown and the number where things stand.

The NW does have a new hire, Jerod O'Brien. He covers Benton, Jasper, Lake, Newton, and White Counties. George talked about the rest of his team and how good they work at getting conservation in ground. He's excited for spring to get conservation on the ground.

c. Agricultural Affairs –Meg Leader

Jordan is reporting on behalf of Meg, as she is away conducting Infield Advantage meetings. Jordan went through her highlights, and wanted to congratulate her for the Infield Advantage Program. It's larger than it has been before and is now sharing the data and aerial imagery with PU. Due to the weather last year, a lot of the conversations' have evolved around the heavy rains, and there has been good discussion on that. There have been 28 meetings so far. A group of SWCD staff and three ISDA employees traveled to Iowa for the Iowa Resource Soybean conference. Jordan's take away- their state seems to have more conservation money but are still working on their partnerships.

Currently, there are 34 INFA groups in 2016. Groups in Kosciusko and Clay Counties will be reactivating with new group leaders. Warrick County will be joining the Spencer/Perry group. New groups are starting in Montgomery and Shelby counties.

For 2016, we are working with Indiana Pork to start a pilot project with growers that apply hog manure on their crop ground.

Ray – the \$4.7 billion (Iowa conservation funding proposal) is night and day when looking at our \$3.2 million. Ray hopes that Indiana does not have to experience a disaster to get that amount of money allocated towards conservation.

d. Accountability and Technology – Deb Fairhurst

Deb stated that she provided a written report to the SSCB and audience members. Deb went over the map on the first page. She compiled all the information in January and broke it down by county, 20,898 practices had been completed by December 31, 2015. The purple and blue shaded counties are the ones that are putting the most conservation onto the ground. These are mainly in the NE and SW corners. Staff has analyzed around 12,000 NRCS practices and plugged those into the Region 5 model to compile specific data.

We saved 2,984,179 pounds of nitrogen, 1,444,098 tons of sediment and 1,487,431 pounds of phosphorus. For the cumulative, we took a freight car and figured out how many freight cars, would equal the amount of sediment we saved.

The last piece is the practice cost. Shannon Zezula provided average. EQIP and CRP cost for data back to 2013. Using the lifespan of those practices, we can then determine the match of how much the farmers have put into practices and show that as well.

There was further communication between Jane and Deb about the methodology of the maps Deb will work with NRCS to ensure everything is accurate.

Ray – if you could elaborate the acres that these practices are on, if we reach the point where the practices are on every field. Would this help?

Jordan stated that during their trip to Iowa, he learned that there is an individual who traveled farm to farm to get information, and put into a software program, that would then tell him how much soil he was saving with practices with that year.

Bob –We do need this graphic, it would show us what people see and make the effort.

Jordan- We can work on this.

e. District Support-Laura Fribley

Laura stated that she provided a written report for the SSCB and the audience members. The report lists what the team has been up to, with more specific details. She mentioned that the March region meetings are coming up, and the DSS team has a new Facebook page.

Ray talked about the conflicts that are occurring with the March region meeting and the several district annual meetings. The partners need to get together earlier to set the dates of the March meetings a bit earlier than what they are currently doing.

There was discussion on the training survey that was sent to the districts. Jane stated that she is excited to see the trainings. She wondered if there were any request for more tool-kit trainings. Laura stated that was not one of the options, and there was not space dedicated for those individuals to fill-in a specific request. The SSCB suggested to add this write in space on future inventories.

f. Water Quality and CREP-Julie Harrold

Julie went over her written report. She has worked with FSA to update the CREP agreement; this is still in DC for the final approval. The CREP brochures have been updated to reflect the changes, and we have added county specific pamphlets as well. The State CREP Fact Sheet has been revised, the CREP webpage on the ISDAs website has been updated as well.

So far we have 190 acres that have been signed up, and we are looking forward to our goal.

Just over 1100 acres that are to be completed this year and on top of that, the south is having huge interest in wetlands including around 800 more acres.

Nutrient reduction strategy is now available online.

VIII. Conservation Partner Reports

a. IASWCD

Jennifer highlighted a few items; the IASWCD does have a new board member, he is from Hendricks County. Jennifer spoke about the legislation changes to allow districts to come up with their \$10,000 from another source other than the county government. The Association is working with the SBOA regarding the resolution at their conference, which would allow districts to spend money from their budget on food for field days and/or workshops. This should help out the districts.

CCSI- we have posted the director's position, Jennifer handed out the position, and stated they are taking applications through March 16th, also Ashley will leave at the end of March.

PWQ – successful to hire coordinator for that, 319 grant and additional funding to help with that and to make the improvements. Sarah Peel has been hired. Sarah is keeping everything on task. Board members plus Jane will travel to DC to meet with confessional officers, and NRCS chief White, Ann Simons and several other individuals.

b. IDEM – No Report

c. DNR – written report

d. Purdue Report – Walt Sell

Walt has handouts.

Walt stated that Purdue extension completed their 2015 annual report and the link to the website is in their handout. Walt talked about their latest move to mobile friendly information, and now they have several pamphlets that are on their website. The extension educators in the WLEB region are working to hold 4R events. There is one on March 9th at the Andersons in the evening and then at the Fort Wayne office in the afternoon.

The Purdue land use team are helping communities understand the science behind the Confined Feeding operations and their appropriate setting as well as conducting an ongoing confined feeding operations study for the State of Indiana.

Ray – thank them and the resources that Purdue brings forward.

Ted – does not know what opportunity the FFA national convention present to the SSCB.

When they are in Indianapolis, it would be neat if they could listen to the SSCB meeting, or maybe visit other locations were they could learn about AG careers. He stated that he will have Jordan work with Tami, to see what types of field trips are available, and what is involved with them. Other suggestions were for them to visit Mike Starkey's farm, Lamb's Farm in Boone County, or Cane's farm.

e. FSA- No Report

f. NRCS – Jane Hardisty

Farm Bill Program Updates.

EQIP due May 6th, CSP due March 31st,

New RCPP FY 16 projects got announced; the big partner is TNC.

One of the projects is on the reclaimed mine lands in the SW corner of the state to work on soil health. This will bring in over \$800,000 in NRCS program funds and the partners are bringing \$500,000 to the table.

Duns and SAMS, farmers have to update their SAMS information each year and if they don't then their DUNS number won't mean anything. Currently, they are looking at around 500 farmers that have DUNS numbers that need to be fixed. The Chief said we can do an express waiver for our farmers, as long as they are in compliance, the payment will get made. In our state, the first round of 200 contracts have been approved and we will make payments to them.

Avian influenza – poultry folks held meeting last week, the governor lifted the ban on this.

NRCS can now visit farms with poultry, but they are still acting like there are at a level 2 status.

Jane shared with the group that she participated in a NRCS/USDA outlook forum in DC, and the talk was on soil health. The main speaker was Howard Buffet, and it was Q and A session, and he tied everything to conservation, promoted no-till and the systems approach. He set the

stage for farmers who use those things in their operations. The evening speaker was Mitch Daniels, who stated that farmers need to share their story.

Krista Harden – stepping down as deputy director. Jane then went over the other NRCS vacancies in the State and they are hoping to fill these very soon.

Jane then discussed the all staff meeting that is slated for May 10th. The committee has been working on this and they are now working out the final details, like how this workshop will be paid for. This event will show that staff is appreciated, and it will bring all employees together. The meal and it will be served by leaders.

Ray appreciates what employees do for the State. They are very passionate about conservation, and he feels that he is in an awkward position, not sure if there are any CWI funds, or can justify CWI funds.

Jordan- ISDA is still working to help fund the speaker for this event.

Ray pledge \$200.00 of his money to match that, and encouraged that each board member to do same. Ray, Bob, Nola, Warren, Robert will match the \$200 of the funds to help. The check should be made out to IASWCD.

Warren voiced his appreciation for ISDA and other partners, the grants committee. He appreciates that DSSs are putting together all the facts and thinks they are important part of this. It's a privilege to work with all of you. We all get together to work with same goals.

g. IDEA – No Report

IX. Public comment

Ray- TNC lost some of its parking privileges. We need to stay on top of this in case we need to move the facility. Jane says we can meet at State Office, which has parking.

Warren would like to see shirts with the SSCB emblem on them. ISDA will look into this.

Ray – concerning the July 19th meeting, Ray has a conflict and cannot be here on July 19th. The new meeting date will be Friday, July 22nd.

X. Adjourn

Robert moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:30pm, Bob seconded the motion

All in favor, motion carried.