



North Central Region Board Meeting

Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina

Coral 4 Room

February 11, 2024

1:00 pm – 2:45 pm

Draft Minutes

Board Member Attendance:

Tom Beyers, IL
Ethan Truax, IN
Roger Wenning, IN
Jeri Thornsberry, IA
Don Elsbernd, IA
Jerry Miller, MI
Ron Willis, MO
David Hutsell, MO

Kris Swartz, OH, Region Chair
Matt Peart, OH
Monte Osterman, WI
Bob Micheel, WI
Ryan Britt, Executive Board
Beth Mason, NACD Region Representative,
Recorder

Approximate audience: 25

Welcome/Introductions

Kris Swartz has all attendees in the room introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

No proposed edits, so the minutes were approved.

Region Account Update

- Updated finances – Beth Mason gave an update on the finances (see Appendix A)
- Renewal of region dues discussion – MO: Motion to keep the region dues at \$500 per state. Approved.
- Region scholarship(s) discussion – MO: Motion to continue with the scholarship program at \$500 each for 2 recipients. Approved.

Parade of States and Territories Assignments

Mason requests participation from every state to have a representative at the Parade of States and Territories for Monday morning's General Session and hands out the reminder slip.

Region MOA Ratification

Mason reviews some potential edits for the board to consider.

WI: Motion to change 1B to "The MOA will be annually ratified at the **beginning of the calendar year.**" and change 2A to "The region dues from each state association shall be set annually at the **beginning of the calendar year** by the region board of directors by a majority vote of the members present and entitled to vote." Approved.

MO: Motion to hold Executive Board elections at the 2024 NACD Summer Meeting for the upcoming 2-year term. Approved.

January Region Partner Meeting

- Review of this past meeting – what to keep, what to change, etc. – no changes were suggested.
- Decide on a location and date for 2025 – there was a review of the previous locations dating back to when the rotation first started:
 - 2015 – Chicago, IL
 - 2016 – Indianapolis, IN
 - 2017 – St. Louis, MO
 - 2018 – Grand Rapids, MI
 - 2019 – Racine, WI
 - 2020 – St. Charles, MO
 - 2021 – Virtual
 - 2022 – Lewis Center, OH
 - 2023 – Bloomington, MN
 - 2024 – Springfield, IL

From this review, it was decided to hold the 2025 meeting in Iowa. Mason will work with the host state leadership on their suggestions for location, date, and program development.

State Discussion for Region Chair Report

Followed up with each state on their responses. Stories collected from Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan, and Missouri. Swartz mentions the North Central Region Survey Report from 2021 and suggests it be part of his report to the board on Wednesday. With new Board Members and Executive Directors, Mason was requested to send out the report to the current region leadership. There was a brief mention of updating it to keep it current.

Partner Reports and Other Business/Reminders

1. NCDEA report – both an overall NCDEA report was submitted (also given verbally) and a compilation of the state district employees' associations was submitted. (see Appendix B) – Eric Shideler, NCDEA Secretary
2. NASCA report – Susan Kozak, Iowa Department of Agriculture
3. NRCS report – Troy Daniel and Associate Chief Louis Aspey
4. Fly-In reminder – Ryan Britt, Executive Board

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm

Upcoming Meetings:

- 2024 NACD Annual Meeting: February 10 – 14, San Diego, CA
- 2024 NACD Fly-In: March 20, Washington, D.C.
- 2024 NACD Summer Meeting: August 10 – 13, Boston, MA

North Central Region Financial Report

Submitted by Beth Mason, NACD North Central Region Representative

1/25/24

The Region Account Statement of Receipts and Expenditures:

- All states paid the 2023 region dues of \$500/state.
- In the 2023 calendar year there were two expenditures:
 - the 2023 January Region Meeting
 - the Indiana scholarship (only IN, OH, and IL were left in the rotation)
- Illinois claimed a scholarship but was unable to find a recipient. On 1/25/24 NACD was notified and then announced that day that the scholarship was available for any state. Indiana responded first and claimed it for another local board member.
- In the 2024 calendar year there are two expenditures:
 - the 2024 January Region Meeting
 - the Indiana scholarship claimed on 1/25/24.
- The only additional activity to expect this year is region dues, which have not been decided.
 - If they remain at the current rate, that will be an additional \$4000 to the balance (\$2936.59) for a total of \$6,936.59.
- To expect similar meeting expenses in 2025, you would want to conservatively reserve \$3500 from that total which leaves \$3436.59 for any extra expenditures such as scholarships, possible speaker expenses, etc.

The Region Scholarship update:

The current scholarship structure is that there are 2 scholarships available at \$500 each for a state to send a local board member to the NACD Summer Meeting or the NACD Annual Meeting. The scholarships are available on a first come, first serve basis, but once the state has received a scholarship, they cannot get another one until all the other states have had a chance. If by December 1, the remaining states do not claim the available scholarship(s), it opens up to all the states, regardless of how many scholarships they've received in the past. It becomes a first come, first serve for everyone after December 1.*

- Heading into the 2024 NACD Annual Meeting, only IN, IL and OH were left in the rotation for using a scholarship. IN and IL claimed them before the December 1 deadline. IL didn't have a recipient in mind at the time (they were in between Executive Directors and were hoping to figure it out in January).
- When IL said they could not find a recipient for it, an announcement went out to all states about the scholarship availability and Indiana claimed it for another local board member.
- If we continue the scholarships, IL and OH are the next two in the rotation and need to decide if they will use it by December 1, or they become available to the other states.



National
Conservation
District
Employees
Association

North Central Region Update

Date February 21, 2024

Eric Shideler, North Central Region Director (northcentralrep@ncdea.org)

Angela Warren, NC Assistant Region Director

(northcentralalternate@ncdea.org)

National Conservation District Employee Association Report

www.ncdea.us or on Facebook ([facebook.com/MYNCDEA](https://www.facebook.com/MYNCDEA)) for up-to-date information on NCDEA

NCDEA hosted business meetings and employee training at the San Diego, CA NACD Annual Conference. Officers for the 2024 term were elected.

President – Melissa Higbee, Michigan
Vice Pres – Sarah Tunge, North Dakota
Treasurer – Eric Shideler, Indiana
Secretary – Gretchen Rank, Colorado

Eric Shideler, IN, was also appointed to the National Conservation Foundation to represent NCDEA. To learn more about NCF and ways you can support their mission, visit www.nationalconservationfoundation.org

NCDEA is looking to fill the North Central Region Director position. Interested employees should send a letter of interest and resume to Eric Shideler at northcentralrep@ncdea.org for consideration by March 1, 2024. For more information on the duties and responsibilities, contact Eric.

The NACD Legislative Fly-In is March 19 & 20, 2024, in Washington, D.C.

The NACD Summer Meeting will be held August 10-13, 2024, in Boston, MA.

NCDEA will host its Mid-Year Meeting in Montana on August 21-23, 2024. The Southwest region will also host a training on August 19 & 20, 2024, in conjunction with the Mid-Year Meeting. Destination to be announced shortly. The training is open to all District Employees who wish to attend.

NCDEA has opened a YouTube channel. If you want to provide videos for the channel, please get in touch with Eric for more information.

NCDEA sponsors a scholarship for college students or District Professionals working on continuing education. The Don Aron Scholarship will be available on the NCDEA website after the first of the year. The scholarship is up to \$1000. Applications are due March 15, 2024.

NCDEA continues to sponsor “lunch and learn” webinars from Convene for members free of charge. These webinars range in topics from office management to personal management. Please continue to share those announcements with your regional staff. To access the archive, visit <https://www.convenelc.org/watch-convene-recordings/>. Use the National Conservation District Employee Association as your “Organization” during login.

If you want to become more active on the NCDEA Region or National level, please let me know, and I can help you find opportunities based on your interests!

National Conservation Planning Partnership

www.ncpp.info for up-to-date information on NCPP



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Developed as a central place for training and materials for the Partnership. NACD, NRCS, NCDEA, NASCA, and RC&D.

Emphasizing getting SWCD employees certified in conservation planning to assist in getting more conservation on the ground.

Just added great information on Local Led Meetings, including sample letters, agendas, videos, and more. Located in the "Training and Certification" section in the "Training Resources" Tab

Website, materials, and a communication plan are still being developed to keep employees informed.

North Central Region Highlights

Illinois ISWCDEA Report for 2023-2024

- We had increased attendance at our Winter Training and Annual Meeting in December 2023.
- We have a new and improved website that all employees can access. Gives information about ISWCDEA and employee resources.
- We helped the AISWCD with their booth at the Farm Progress Show in August of 2023.
- Our number of employees statewide is increasing. We had around 30 new employees come on in 2023.
- We have successful agreements with NRCS to work on administrative tasks related to CSP and EQIP and to provide technical assistance and planning for CRP.
- We are always looking for new training opportunities for our members.
- We are working on maintaining and strengthening our communication with partner agencies.
- We are looking forward to having more Level III Certified Planners to help with our NRCS workload.
- We will have at least 40 employee volunteers at our State Envirothon Competition in May of 2024.

2023 Minnesota accomplishments:

- Current membership at 330 members
- Held 4 Board meetings and One Annual Meeting in 2023
- Approved 3 New Education Grants
 - Isanti SWCD When Development Comes to Town – Education for Local Officials
 - Stearns SWCD - Regional Educational Materials to Promote Planting for Clean Water and Pollinators

- Stearns SWCD - Large-scale Private Well Testing Manual & Media Kit (Clinic in SE Stearns County)
- Completed 5 Education Grants
 - Crow Wing SWCD – Baxter Elementary School Prairie Garden
 - Swift SWCD – Swift SWCD Videography Awareness Campaign
 - Kittson SWCD – Conservation Café Chat
 - Rice SWCD – Women Caring for the Land: Conservation Conversations
 - Root SWCD – Enhancing conservation Education in Houston County
- Held a Joint Managers Meeting with State Watershed Districts Administrators
- Sent Six MACDE members to a joint leadership class with NRCS, MN Board of Water Soil Resource and SWCD's.
- Approved Two Technical Training Grants
- 2023 Area 2 Request: SWCD Sales and Services Meeting
- 2023 MAWA-SWCD Fall Meeting
 - Awarded Lance Chisholm our 2023 MACDE Extraordinary Contribution Award
 - Had 10 staff nominated throughout Minnesota
- Partnered with Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (MASWCD) for a Joint Human Resource Workgroup
- Completed a whitepaper for SWCD's
- Contributed to our State Envirothon
- Our website is a host for all state SWCD job postings

- **New for 2024**
 - Continue Efforts from the HR Workgroup Whitepaper in partnership with MASWCD
 - Hold a Statewide MACDE Admin Training in June
 - Host 2 Statewide MACDE Managers Meeting (March/September)
 - Looking to create a platform for a statewide wage and benefit survey
 - Updated our MACDE Membership Brochure
 - Continue our Education Grants (April-June)
 - Continue our Leadership Grants
 - Continue our Technical Training Grants

Indiana Report:

2023 was also a landmark year for IDEA, as we had 180 members, the highest membership to date.

In addition, in 2023, Indiana launched an extremely successful Employee Career Development Program. In the pilot year, there were 16 new and seasoned employees who agreed to walk through five individual face-to-face sessions in Administration, Technical, Educational, Communication, and Partnerships and provide feedback on what worked well and what needed adjusting.

In addition to the face-to-face session, each module had a follow-up component and resources available online. Through the amazing partnership with the Indiana Department of Ag, Division of Soil, we have a way to update and maintain this portion.

All eight Indiana District Employee Association Region Directors participated and also led various aspects of the pilot program. The response from the participants was highly positive and insightful into the areas that needed tweaking. The program is geared toward newer employees (5 years or less), providing them with resources, tools, and a network to be successful as SWCD Employees.

Moving into 2024, we already have a full class of 16 plus a waiting list to participate.

2024 is bringing exciting changes and a bright future for IDEA.

Wisconsin Report

What is going well in the region?

The Coon Creek 90th Anniversary Celebration was held in southwestern Wisconsin in Sept. 2023,

attended by hundreds of conservationists. The event celebrated the beginning of the locally-led conservation movement in 1933, with the formation of the Soil Erosion Service.

Our state association, WI Land+Water, marked several successes we are proud of in 2023: In addition to being integrated in a broad conservation network across Wisconsin as demonstrated by the 40 different groups and committees we are represented on, we launched our eight WI Land+Water committee—Health and Conservation—bringing together local health officials and conservation staff to collaborate on issues like groundwater contamination and PFAs.

We continue to look toward the future, developing a new strategic plan charts our course for the next five years.

Our organizational budget topped \$1 million, a milestone for us.

Our Conservation Training Program launched an Interagency Mentorship Program with the goal of helping conservationists develop as professionals and build a stronger community of conservation colleagues.

What challenges are you facing in the region?

We are challenged by a number of conservation issues, most notably PFAs, climate change impacts,

and increasing tension between solar farms and agricultural lands.

Conservation staff turnover (as well as lagging recruitment) continues to be a challenge. A reduction in state funding support for county conservation staff via our current state budget was another challenge.

We are still recovering from the tragic passing of NRCS State Conservationist Ty Larson, a Wisconsin native who had only been in his post at NRCS for a few months but had laid out his inspiring vision for advancing conservation in our state, integrated with state and local partners. Our next State Conservationist has not yet been named.

What can NACD do for you?

Provide a short presentation (30-second elevator speech) outlining the advantages of being involved

with NACD for us to use with less informed conservation departments and committees, as well as the general public.

Provide basic outlines with applicability points of all the federal grants available on a single document/chart which is easy to use for comparison.

Create a resolution-writing protocol with workshop and instructions.

Provide state associations with Farm Bill advocacy “cheat sheets” (updated periodically, as necessary), which can be passed along to local districts to be used in their engagement with federal

legislators in their home districts. We’re probably a bit different from other states in this regard (big

surprise!), but we don’t typically get too engaged on federal/Farm Bill issues—but we probably could, if we had a little more support.

Ohio Report:

Here is a bullet point breakdown of 2023. 2024 is going to look pretty similar, with more focus put on the HR initiative and some big improvements to our Farm Science Review space. The HR initiative in Ohio is to help give Soil and Water Board and Staff members the tools to help with everyday HR needs.

2023 Highlights:

Membership: 257 Total Staff Members

- Area 1- 72
- Area 2- 63
- Area 3- 29
- Area 4- 55
- Area 5- 38

Associate Members- 16

Awards:

Outstanding District Employee: Kenny White, Morgan SWCD

Outstanding District Board Supervisor: John Mangan, Hamilton County Conservation District

Scholarship:

- Sherry West Memorial Scholarship: Mary Thomas, daughter of Erica Thomas at Richland SWCD

Notable Achievements:

- Partnership with the HR Initiative and the Federation, which has allowed for the hiring of HR Consultant Bob Bethel.
- Association sponsorship of networking events for employees both at the Annual Partnership Meeting in February and the Educators Workshop in November.
- GIS usage and training survey, results of which provided feedback for topics covered by the ArcPro TDP Webinar.
- Continued improvements and updates to the Farm Science Review space