



Mille Lacs County Historic Courthouse
635 2nd Street SE
Milaca, MN 53535

PH: 320-983-2160
www.millelacsswcd.org

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District was held at the Mille Lacs County Historic Courthouse, Conference Rm D (lower level).

Members Present

Jake Janski, District 3 – Chair
Dan Campbell, District 1 – Vice Chair
Andre LaSalle, District 4 – Treasurer
Tim Braun, District 3 – Secretary
Robert Hoefert, District 5

Staff Present

Susan Shaw – District Administrator
Pam Kuhn – Financial Specialist
Siena Storm - Resource Conservationist

Members Absent

none

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Janski called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

Policy 2025-01: A conflict of interest whether actual or perceived occurs when someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests and these competing interests make it difficult to fulfill professional duties impartially.

Members were requested to identify any potential conflicts of interest they may have regarding the business of the meeting. The conflict-of-interest declaration form was provided to each for signature.

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Deletions – item #5.5.4 Quarterly budget vs. Actual

Motion by Hoefert to approve the agenda with the deletion of item #5.5.4.

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Opposed: none.

Motion carried.

4. OPEN PUBLIC FORUM

Policy 2025-02: Board policy limits public forum time for board meeting topics not scheduled within the agenda to 2 minutes per person but allows time extension by board vote.

No public comment.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS

Consent Agenda

Motion by LaSalle to approve the items included in the consent agenda packet. Items included:

- March 11, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- Supervisor 1st Quarter compensation report

Seconded by Braun

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Opposed: none.

Motion carried unanimously.

Strategic Planning – Shoreland – organizational goal

An excerpt from the September 2025 board minutes was provided as a handout to the board for reference to the past shoreland civic strategic planning exercise. Janski teed up the discussion noting that the district shoreland conservationist is retiring, so the immediate question is do we need to rehire the shoreland position. Janski posed several questions to the board for consideration:

- How would staffing a shoreline technician at our office help achieve the strategic goals of the district? Is that the only way to meet our shoreland goals? If not, what are the workload impacts?

Discussion supported the need for two MLSWCD Resource Conservationist positions, thus the need to rehire the position.

- Could having a shoreland technician office out of a different county still achieve our district's Strategic goals?

Discussion acknowledged that there are other partners like Aitkin SWCD who could backfill technical support for engineered projects or landowner DIY projects, as well as private contractors.

- What should a shoreline technician's priorities or focus areas be?

Discussion supported a broad and flexible focus for shoreland work which would include Mille Lacs Lake, the Rum River as well as its tributaries. It was suggested that tributaries might even be a higher priority than the mainstem Rum River because those tributaries carry much of the sediment and nutrients to the Rum.

Shaw indicated that job description updates and review would begin in May. Advertising and hiring might begin in June, so end of July would likely be the earliest the position could be filled.

Motion by Hoefert to rehire a Resource Conservationist position, draw up a job description and advertise the position. Also to authorize the personnel committee to approve the job description and hiring process.

Seconded by Braun.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Opposed: none.

Motion carried.

Shaw will update the job description with personnel committee input, then have the job description reviewed for placement on the pay scale.

Internal Operational Committees

Government Relations Committee (Janski/Braun)

SWCD Legislative Day at the Capitol was attended by Braun and Janski who reported they were able to have several conversations with points discussed. The MASWCD legislative briefing hosted the night before meeting with legislators provided a good opportunity for networking. Janski informed the legislators about what the district was doing, and a 2025 annual report of projects was shared. Legislators were asked if there was anything that SWCD elected officials could help with given shared constituencies. Janski encouraged Board members to keep thinking about ways to engage legislators.

Finance Committee (LaSalle/Hoefert)

Reconciliation of Bank Statements (Treasurer)

LaSalle reconciled the April bank statements and reported everything looked great.

Fiscal Capacity

Pam provided an updated treasurer's report and reviewed the transaction with the board.

Motion by Hoefert to approve the treasurer's report and monthly transactions report which include electronic transfer's #E26-45 through E26-73, credit card fees and checks written #8291-8300, totaling \$82,671.81 and subject to audit.

Seconded by LaSalle

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Opposed: none.

Motion carried.

Tree sales

Kuhn provided an update on quantity of orders, trees remaining to sell, advertising and possibility of making more packets.

Joint Powers Entity Partnerships

Rum River Watershed Partnership (RRWP)

Janski reported March was the first meeting of the year that the Board approved the 2026 schedule and set the fall tour date. The RRWP is working through FY23 money and any funds not able to be used by districts before the December 2026 deadline will go back in the pot to be redistributed to those districts who have projects that can use the funds before the grant expires. FY27 funds work plan will be reviewed in June.

Storm shared tour ideas. Shaw and Janski noted Mille Lacs SWCD will be hosting the 2027 Fall Area 3 Meeting.

SWCD Engineering Technical Service Area 3 (LaSalle/Hoefert)

LaSalle reported that the Mora office is no longer hosting a location for board members to remotely join the TSA 3 board meetings. TSA3 will be purchasing a drone. A presentation on area projects was provided. The catalytic converters were stolen out of the trucks at the St. Louis office.

Mississippi River Sartell Watershed (MRSWCE)

Shaw inquired if the Board wanted to be a part of the watershed partnership planning agreement being developed. The board consensus was not to be a part of the planning agreement because there is only a very small acreage within Mille Lacs county.

Collaborative Partnerships (voting role)

MN Assn of Conservation Districts (MASWCD) (Janski - ex officio)

Resolutions will be discussed at the Area 3 Business meeting to be held on June 5, at the Cloquet Forestry Center in Cloquet, MN.

Northeast MASWCD Area 3 Business (Janski-A3 Director ex officio)

Janski noted that he would be working with Matias the Technical Service Area 3 Engineer and SWCD managers to develop staff training breakout session for the June 5, 2026 summer meeting in Cloquet.

MN SWCD Forestry Association

Hoefert noted a forester provided a presentation and is requesting SWCD districts selling trees to consider buying stock from the Department of Natural Resources. A presentation was given on planting trees for wildlife conservation. Dues for 2026 will again be \$265.00.

MN Association of Conservation District Employees

Administrative Training

Kuhn noted she was asked to be a lead host for the MACDE 2026 statewide SWCD Administrative Staff Conference. Kuhn has roles in planning training content and selecting presenters, preparing meeting agendas, minutes, etc. The administrative planning committee is made up of individuals from each area of the state. MACDE provides \$2,000 every other year to defray some of the cost to host this conference.

Spring Managers Training

Shaw attended the spring statewide SWCD managers meeting and reported the following items were discussed: prevailing wage, health and medical insurances, and working with boards on resolutions development. A statewide SWCD manager virtual meeting will be hosted by the Anoka Conservation District manager and held on April 23. The meeting will provide an opportunity to clarify resolution purposes, evaluate impacts. If the MLSWCD board is working on any resolutions she will provide them for this discussion. Shaw will be able to share outcomes with the board.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

Shoreland

BWSR WBIF RRWP (Type B outreach grant) (Molly Clyne)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

Stormwater

Wetlands Conservation Act (Storm – lead)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

Agriculture/Soil Health

RRWP Structural Ag (SOW Rural BMP) - Schafer project #2

Storm provided an overview of the Schafer erosion control project. In-field tile is being used to reduce phosphorous. Nutrient reduction numbers were questioned as they were low compared to higher levels applied for crop production annually. The concern was whether there is a cost effective benefit to this type of project.

Motion by Braun to approve cost share assistance under contract #RWBIF23-3265-RuralBmp-2 to John Schafer for an ag field water and sediment control, sub-surface drainage conservation project. Financial assistance shall not to exceed 75% combined state and non-state funds for eligible conservation practices based on a cost estimate of \$21,159.50, and shall not exceed \$15,869.63. The practice must be installed by October 31, 2026.

Seconded by Hoefert.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Opposed: none.

Motion carried.

BWSR Soil Health Staffing grant FY24

Staff report provided in the board packet.

County Public Ditch System inspection (Siena Storm – lead)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

Forests (Molly Clyne – lead)

RRWP Forestry Stewardship Coordination (SOW EI-4)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

LCCMR Tree Planting Grant (ID 2022-260)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

Reimbursement for contract P23-2942-WSP-19:

Motion by Braun to authorize reimbursement payment to Kenneth Britz under contract P23-2942-WSP-19, at flat rate of \$300 for a Woodland Stewardship Plan written, based on not to exceed rates of \$300 for an eligible plan.

Seconded by Campbell.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Motion carried.

Reimbursement for contract P23-2942-WSP-21:

Motion by LaSalle to authorize reimbursement payments to David Lockwood under contract P23-2942-WSP-21, at flat rate of \$300 for a Woodland Stewardship Plan written, based on not to exceed rates of \$300 for an eligible plan.

Seconded by Braun.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Motion carried.

Contract application P23-2942-WSP-23:

Motion by LaSalle to authorize creation of contract P23-2942-WSP-23 with Thomas Zajac for cost assistance to have a Woodland Stewardship Plan written that would be reimbursed at a flat rate of \$300, based on a not to exceed rate of \$300 for an eligible plan.

Seconded by Braun.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Motion carried.

Contract application P23-2942-WSP-24:

Motion by LaSalle to authorize creation of contract P23-2942-WSP-24 with Dan D. Billmark for cost assistance to have a Woodland Stewardship Plan written that would be reimbursed at a flat rate of \$300, based on a not to exceed rate of \$300 for an eligible plan.

Seconded by Braun.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Motion carried.

Contract application P23-2942-WSP-25:

Motion by LaSalle to authorize creation of contract P23-2942-WSP-25 with Bonnie Meyer for cost assistance to have a Woodland Stewardship Plan written that would be reimbursed at a flat rate of \$300, based on a not to exceed rate of \$300 for an eligible plan.

Seconded by Braun.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Motion carried.

Tree planter Equipment Rental Program (Shaw)

Shaw updated the board on the condition of the 3 point hitch tree planter offered as a property transfer by Mille Lacs County. Shaw referred to the information provided in the board packet. The Board would like to accept the tree planter from Mille Lacs County. Braun will set up an inspection time with Storm.

Motion by Hoefert to accept the 3 point hitch tree planter from Mille Lacs County.

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Motion carried.

Residential Forest “Let’s Grow Together” Tree sale

Shaw referenced the outcomes of the tree sale survey provided in the board packet.

Other Programs and Grants

Noxious Weed Management - County Ag Inspector (Storm)

Staff report provided in the board packet.

Bridging Language and Culture in Conservation – grant application

Shaw reported that she had applied for a grant that could be used to improve how the SWCD shared conservation information with people who do not speak English as their first language. Shaw applied for \$45,000.00 of which \$9,500 could be used to produce marketing materials Discussion was held whether staff will have time and Shaw noted that the funding would compliment current work and could be utilized by the new staff position.

Motion by Hoefert to approve the application for the Bridging Language and Culture in Conservation Grant.

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Hoefert, Braun, Campbell, LaSalle, Janski.

Motion carried.

APPROVED SWCD MEETINGS & EVENTS

Motion by Braun to approve supervisor attendance and reimbursement for the following meetings:

Internal Operational Committees

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
Finance	Hoefert and LaSalle	NA	monthly
Statement reconciliation	LaSalle	LaSalle	
Personnel	Janski and LaSalle	NA	
Conservation/Public Outreach	Braun and Campbell	NA	
Equipment Liaison	Braun	NA	
Government Relations	Janski and Braun	NA	
One on one meetings with Administrator	All Supervisors		

Joint Powers Entity Partnerships (voting role)

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
Rum River Watershed Partnership Board	Janski and Braun	Save the date	Jun 25 at 4:30pm
Fall project tour		Save the date	Sept 24
Rum Implementation Planning Committee	Janski (liaison)	Save the date	April 13 at 12:30
Snake River Watershed Partnership Bd	Hoefert and Braun	Save the date	April 27 at 9:30

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
Mississippi River-St. Cloud Watershed	Campbell and Braun	Save the date	June 4 at 11:30AM
Technical Service Area 3	LaSalle and Hoefert	Save the date	June 24 at 10AM

Collaborative Partnerships (non-voting role)

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
NE MASWCD Area 3 Envirothon	All	Save the date	May 4
State Envirothon	All	Save the date	May 8
NE Area 3 Summer Meeting – Cloquet Forestry Center	All	Save the date	June 5
NE Area 3 Fall Meeting – Two Harbors	All	Save the date	September 30
MN SWCD Forestry Association	Hoefert	Save the date	May 21 at 10AM
Midwest Active Citizenship Initiative (MACI)	Janski	Save the date	November 19

Technical, Financial or Advisory Partnerships (non-voting role)

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group	Janski or LaSalle	Janski	April 17, 2026
Healthy Land, Healthy Lake Event	ALL	Save the Date	May 2

Seconded by LaSalle.

Approved: Hoefert, LaSalle, Janski. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

6. **EVALUATE THE MEETING**

Cadence and structure?

5:00 p.m. time is great.

Did the content of the meeting advance our strategic goals?

New Structure – agenda reform good.

7. **NEXT REGULAR MEETING**

May 13, 5:00 PM, Historic Courthouse, Conference Rm D w/public remote option.

8. **ADJOURN**

Chair Janski adjourned the meeting at 6:57PM.

Submitted by: Susan Shaw, District Administrator

Reviewed by: TBD

Approved by the board on: TBD

Board Secretary signature: _____

Date: _____