MILLE LACS SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Mille Lacs County Historic Courthouse
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Milaca, MN 53535

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BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District

Wednesday, July 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
Tim Braun, District 3 - Secretary

Staff Present

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

Members Absent

Robert Hoefert, District 5
Andre LaSalle, District 4 – Treasurer

Others Present

Jay Munson – MLC Commissioner
Barb Zeroth – NRCS, District Conservationist

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

Motion by Braun to approve the agenda as presented.
Seconded by Campbell.
Approved: Braun, Campbell, Janski. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

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 Campbell to approve the items included in the consent agenda packet. Items included:

June 10, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
RRWP FY27 WBIF Work Plan Summary – courtesy review (comments due by July 29)
Local Government Round Table memo and letter to the Clean Water Council
City of Milaca – Wellhead Protection Plan notification
Supervisor 2nd quarter compensation report
2026 Organizational Strategic plan
Jay Carlson recognition – news release

Seconded by Braun.
Approved: Braun, Campbell, Janski. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Internal Operational Committees

Personnel Committee (Janski/LaSalle)
Janski and LaSalle met with the District Administrator to review the job posting, discuss staffing, and conduct the District Administrator's performance review.

PRAP Grant project - Employee handbook policy update
The draft Employee Personnel Policy Handbook was received from the law firm. The Personnel Committee will review the document. It was recommended that payment of the invoice be made upon Shaw's completion of the review.

Motion by Braun to approve payment of Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney Invoice #2957 in the amount of $5,155.00 for eligible work completed under PRAP Grant C26-0092, pending completion of Shaw's review of the Employee Personnel Policy Handbook.

Seconded by Braun.
Approved: Braun, Campbell, Janski. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Hiring Update Process
A draft of the updated Resource Conservationist job description will be provided to staff for review and feedback. The goal is to present the finalized job description to the Board at the August meeting, where it will coincide with budget discussions to support the hiring process.

General Supervisor updates
Braun shared with the board that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture has installed a new weather station at his Farm, providing more precise, localized weather and soil data for farmers and the broader community. Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Tom Petersen attended the installation.

The weather station is part of the Minnesota Ag Weather Network (MAWN), which supplies real-time weather and soil information to help farmers make decisions about irrigation, crop

management, and water conservation. Data from the station is publicly available through the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN).

Finance Committee (LaSalle/Hoefert)
Reconciliation of Bank Statements (Treasurer)
Shaw noted LaSalle reconciled the June bank statements and reported everything looked good.

Fiscal Capacity

Kuhn provided an overview of the June transactions report and June treasurer's report.

> **Motion** by Campbell to approve the treasurer's report and monthly transactions report which include electronic transfer's #E26-129 through E26-154, credit card fees and checks written #8319-8326, totaling $65,540.39 and subject to audit.
> **Seconded** by Braun.
> **Approved:** Braun, Campbell, Janski. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Quarterly Budget to Actual
Kuhn provided an overview of the 2nd Quarter Profit & Loss vs. Actual report provided in board packet. Discussion held.

2027 budget process update
Shaw reported that the 2027 budgeting process is currently underway. As in previous years, personnel costs remain the MLSWCD's largest expense.

Shaw has also been in contact with Doug Hanson, County Administrator with Mille Lacs County regarding budgeting for the Rum Watershed Partnership Statement of Work (SOW) under the Master Project Agreement next on the agenda. The county needs to budget to incur the expense toward the project prior to cost share reimbursement from the Rum Partnership, as well as provide a $12,500 staff time in-kind match. The project is located at the Mille Lacs County Public Works facility in Milaca. The proposed $50,000 project will address stabilization, as well as treat runoff that is flowing into the adjacent wetland. Discussion held.

Joint Powers Entity Partnerships

Rum River Watershed Partnership (RRWP)
The Board reviewed and Mille Lacs County Public Works facility project discussed the Amended Statement of Work (SOW) to the Master Project Agreement between RRWP and the Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District (MLSWCD) for Request ID **WBIF FY25–Mille Lacs SWCD**, which adds **$50,000** to the agreement.

> **Motion** by Braun to approve the Amended Statement of Work to the Master Project Agreement between RRWP and MLSWCD for Request ID **WBIF FY25–Mille Lacs SWCD**, adding $50,000, and to authorize the Vice Chair to sign the amendment.
>
> **Second** by Campbell.
> **Approved:** Braun, Campbell, Janski. Opposed: None. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Tour Planning – September 24
The board reviewed plans for the upcoming tour scheduled for September 24. Members were reminded to refer to the invitation included in the meeting packet for additional details.

The RSVP deadline is September 7. Board members are encouraged to invite local legislators and county commissioners to attend the tour. Janski will be responsible for contacting legislators.

Snake River Watershed Planning Partnership (SRWPP)
Braun reported there were no notable updates to share. The SRWPP will be holding a special meeting on July 13 to approve a letter of support for the Minnesota Department of Health application for Private Well Protection Grant. A forester led a discussion on the emerald ash borer, including forestry concerns and potential impacts.

SWCD Engineering Technical Service Area 3 (LaSalle/Hoefert)
Tabled to August board meeting.

Collaborative Partnerships (voting role)

MN Assn of Conservation Districts (MASWCD) (Janski - ex officio)
Janski noted that he will be chairing the MASWCD nominating committee and that supervisors should consider their own interest or potential nominees for association roles.

Janski informed the Board that Awards Nominations are now open, with a submission deadline of September 4, and encouraged the Mille Lacs SWCD to be represented. Janski also reviewed the MASWCD Board of Directors positions currently open for nominations. Additionally, Janski asked Board members to consider their own role in bringing forward nominations for MASWCD awards, and to contact staff before the August meeting if they have a nominee for the Outstanding Conservationist of the Year Award

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

Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group – (Janski/LaSalle)
Janski discussed the current status and future of the Compass program, including the anticipated sunset of the program and the potential impacts on ongoing lake and river stewardship efforts throughout Minnesota.

The group discussed the importance of maintaining support for landowners and communities involved in water resource protection after Compass concludes. The Watershed group decided to partner with Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR) to set up information on the MLR website to make requests to have someone from SWCD to come out and evaluate their shoreline as per the Lake Steward program by MLR.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Zeroth noted that additional funding has been made available for EQIP contracts. A picture of an alligator observed in Greenbush Township was shared with the group.

Mille Lacs County (Commissioner Liaison Munson)
Commissioner Munson reported that the Financial Officer has resigned. Discussion held. Ditch 14 Flyer was shared.

6. STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

Groundwater/Drinking Water Safety

RRWP Well sealing (SOW 2023 well sealing & groundwater PD)
Staff report provided in the board packet.

MDH Well water testing grant FY25
Staff report provided in the board packet.

RRWP coordination on FY27 well water testing grant applications
The Rum River Watershed Partnership supported SWCD to put in an application.

DNR Observation Well Monitoring
SWIFT Contract #291924, effective **July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027**, provides for reimbursement in an amount **not to exceed $3,840.00** for groundwater measurements.

In accordance with Board Policy 2025-20, the District Administrator has delegated authority to execute this contract without further Board approval. The District Administrator has signed and executed the contract pursuant to that policy.

County Geologic Atlas
Shaw informed the Board that the Minnesota Geological Survey will hold a presentation and training session for commissioners and MLSWCD supervisors on September 15.

Stormwater

Wetlands Conservation Act
Staff report provided in the board packet.

Agriculture/Soil Health

County Public Ditch System inspection
Staff report provided in the board packet.

Storm discussed with the board recent changes to the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) which affect how Public Ditch System maintenance is done. What was formerly exempt is now regulated.

Storm and Shaw will be conducting 2 ditch sessions to gather public input on these issues for ditch 4 and ditch 13. Staff will prepare a Questions and Answers (Q&A) document to address common concerns, explain the current WCA requirements, clarify recent rule changes, and provide guidance to landowners on how the regulations may apply to specific situations.

Forests

RRWP Forestry Stewardship Coordination (SOW EI-4)
Staff report provided in the board packet.

RRWP Private lands easements
Staff report provided in the board packet

LCCMR Tree Planting Grant (ID 2022-260)

Contract P23-2942-WSP-26

> **Motion** by Braun to authorize creation of contract P23-2942-WSP-26 with Jesse Morton 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 Campbell.
> **Approved:** Braun, Campbell, Janski. Opposed: none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Residential Forest "Let's Grow Together" Tree sale
Shaw noted that staff have begun meeting to prepare the authorization to incur debt on trees for the 2027 tree sale and will be brought to the August board meeting. Shaw asked how involved the Board would like to be in the process. The Board indicated that it would like the process to continue as it has been handled in the past. Shaw presented the ash tree replacement packet that will be offered in 2027. Following the discussion, the Board expressed its support for the ash tree replacement packet. Janski thought it would be a good idea to reach out to neighboring districts to be aware of what species are being ordered.

Shoreland

BWSR WBIF RRWP (Type B outreach grant #)
Civic Partnership Development - Natural Shorelines Public Dialogue - Staff report provided in the board packet

Program Support Activities
Staff report provided in the board packet

7. APPROVED SWCD MEETINGS & EVENTS **ACTION**

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	LaSalle/Campbell as temporary alternate	TBD
Statement reconciliation	LaSalle	LaSalle	monthly
Personnel	Janski and LaSalle	Janski and LaSalle	July 8 + Aug TBD
Conservation/Public Outreach	Braun and Campbell	NA	
Equipment Liaison	Braun	NA	

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
Government Relations	Janski and Braun	NA	
One on one meetings with Administrator	All Supervisors		as needed

Joint Powers Entity Partnerships (voting role)

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
Rum River Watershed Partnership Board	Janski and Braun	Save the date	Sept 24 at 4:30pm
Rum Implementation Planning Committee	Janski (liaison)	Janski	July 13 at 12:30
Snake River Watershed Partnership Bd	Hoefert and Braun	Braun	July 27 at 9:30
Mississippi River-St. Cloud Watershed	Campbell and Braun	Campbell	Aug 6 at 11:30AM
Technical Service Area 3	LaSalle and Hoefert	Save the date	Sept 23 at 10AM

Collaborative Partnerships (non-voting role)

Meeting	Members	Authorized Rep	Meeting date
NE Area 3 Fall Meeting – Two Harbors	Janski and Braun	Save the date	September 30
MN SWCD Forestry Association	Hoefert	Janski (as liaison)	July 16 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	July 13, 2026
Public Ditch System Listening Session – CD14 Princeton Town Hall	Campbell	Braun/ Campbell	July 14, 5-8PM
Public Ditch System Listening Session – CD4 Princeton Town Hall	Campbell and Braun	Campbell /Braun	July 16, 5-8PM

Seconded by Campbell.
Approved: Braun, Campbell, Janski. Opposed: none. **Motion carried.**

8. EVALUATE THE MEETING

Cadence and structure?

Nice Flow.

Did the content of the meeting advance our strategic goals?

No comments were made.

9. NEXT REGULAR MEETING

August 12, 5PM, Historic Courthouse, Conference Rm D w/public remote option.

10. ADJOURN

Chair Janski adjourned the meeting at 6:24 PM

Submitted by: Pam Kuhn, Financial Specialist

Reviewed by: Tim Braun, Board Secretary

Approved by the board on: August 12, 2026

Board Secretary signature:

Date: 8/12/26