



Missouri Department of Natural Resources

MINUTES MISSOURI SOIL AND WATER DISTRICTS COMMISSION Lewis and Clark State Office Building Jefferson City, Missouri February 11, 2015

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS: RICHARD FORDYCE, DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE: Judy Grundler and Darryl Chatman; BOB ZIEHMER, DEPT. OF CONSERVATION: Lisa Potter, SARA PARKER PAULEY, DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES: Joe Engeln and Todd Sampsell; DEAN THOMAS PAYNE, UNIV. OF MISSOURI: David Baker

ADVISORY MEMBERS PRESENT: SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM: Colleen Meredith; NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS): J.R. Flores; MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (MASWCD): Kenny Lovelace; ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE: Tim Duggan

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Van Beydler, Jim Boschert, April Brandt, Matt Elliott, John Johnson, Theresa Mueller, Darlene Schaben, Jim Plassmeyer, Judy Stinson, Cody Tebbenkamp, Leon Thompson, Colette Weckenborg, Bill Wilson

OTHERS PRESENT: DISTRICTS: HOWARD: Bev Dometrorch; JEFFERSON: George Engelbach; LIVINGSTON: David Morris; OREGON: David Stubblefield; MISSOURI FARM BUREAU: Leslie Holloway and Kelly Smith; MISSOURI SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (MSWCDEA): Sandy Stratman; MISSOURI CORN GROWERS and SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION: Darrick Steen, USDA-ARS: Claire Baffaut; UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI: John Lory, Amomaa Senaviratne;

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gary Vandiver called the meeting to order in Jefferson City, Missouri, at 9:36 a.m. Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver were present, which made a quorum.

Chairman Gary Vandiver welcomed and introduced Jeff Lance as a new member to the Commission.

Jeff Lance stated he was from Savannah, in Northwest Missouri, and looking forward to being on the Commission.

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B. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2014, Commission Meeting. Charles Ausfahl seconded the motion. When asked by the Chair, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

C. DEPARTMENT OF NAURAL RESOURCES

1. Election of Commission Chair and Vice-Chair

Joe Engeln opened the floor for nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice-chair. Charles Ausfahl made a motion to reelect the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and to be elected by acclamation. Jeff Lance seconded the motion. When polled, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Regional Conservation Partnership Program Award

Kurt Boeckmann presented a brief update on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). He stated the project received a \$6,000,000 award from NRCS; the partner match will be approximately \$15,600,000. He stated the Department of Natural Resources' (Department) project title is Our Missouri Waters (OMW) Targeted Conservation. The project will demonstrate the partners' commitment through assistance in providing cost-share funding through NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to reduce nutrient sediment and pesticide loss from agriculture fields which will improve water quality. The Department will use OMW as the framework for the project to select six to eight watersheds in the first year. Some of the watersheds have partners already engaged through the OMW process. After the watersheds are selected, conservation practices will be selected that are the most effective using both federal and state programs. He stated a secondary benefit of the project is fish and wildlife habitat improvement. He pointed out that RCPP is intended to develop better partnerships with those involved with the project; partners support technical, financial and water quality monitoring within the watersheds.

Mr. Boeckmann listed the many partners that are involved with the project. He stated the agriculture partners represented the largest stakeholder group. He reiterated that in the next few months the watersheds will be chosen, a decision made on practices to be offered and ranking criteria developed. Once the watersheds are identified, the districts within the watershed will be notified and the Department will work with NRCS, soil and water district and Missouri Department of Conservation staff in the district on the sign ups.

When asked if the \$6,000,000 was the grant award, Mr. Boeckmann stated that it was, and the \$15,600,000 is all in-kind or other matches that have been provided by the partners.

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Chairman Vandiver introduced Darryl Chatman, Deputy Director of Agriculture. Mr. Chatman stated he was from St. Louis and went to the University of Missouri and has an Animal Science among other degrees.

D. SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

1. FY15 Fund Status and Supplemental Cost-Share Allocations

April Brandt presented the fiscal year (FY) 2015 Fund Status and Supplemental Cost-Share Allocations. She said that as of February 9, 2015, approximately \$34.5 million has been allocated and of that amount, approximately \$22 million was obligated and \$10 million paid to landowners. Next Ms. Brandt provided an update on the FY15 Agriculture Nonpoint Source (AgNPS) Special Area Land Treatment (SALT) cost-share. She stated that approximately \$500,000 had been allocated to 11 projects. Of that amount approximately \$243,000 has been obligated and \$125,263 paid to landowners.

Ms. Brandt updated the Commission on the Supplemental Cost-Share Allocation parameters. She stated that for a district to be eligible for a supplemental, at least 90 percent of funds have to be obligated of the total FY15 allocation in a resource concern. An allocation amount of \$20,000 is provided in each qualifying resource concern. She reminded the Commission that the allocation process began on October 9, 2014, and a total of 11 supplemental allocations have been provided as of February 5, 2015 for a total of \$5,294,192. Districts are limited to a maximum of \$300,000 for supplemental allocations, two districts have met that maximum, and 66 percent of the districts have received at least one supplemental allocation. For FY15 regular cost-share, approximately \$34.5 million has been allocated statewide, but this amount does not include the \$500,000 set aside by the Commission for 20 eligible districts under the FEMA-4200-DR disaster declaration.

After some discussion, H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to continue the supplemental allocation process, increasing the total supplemental allocation maximum to \$500,000 and continuing bi-weekly allocations until April 2, 2015. Charles Ausfahl seconded the motion. When asked by the Chair, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Introduction of the 319 Staff

Colleen Meredith introduced the 319 Nonpoint Source Staff that joined the Soil and Water Conservation Program (SWCP). She stated the 319 staff works on voluntary nonpoint source pollution projects, like SWCP. The 319 projects can include both agricultural and urban nonpoint source issues; their funding is separate from SWCP. The 319 program links well with SWCP and several soil and water districts have benefited from 319 projects. She stated the projects are open to not-for-profit groups, cities and multiple other organizations. The 319 staff members that joined the SWCP are Darlene Schaben, John Johnson and Andrea Mayus.

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3. **FY14 District Grant Expenditures**

Jim Boschert presented a review of the FY14 District Grants Expenditures. He stated this was funding through June 2014 and the total allocation was \$11,680,570 with the largest amount, \$6.9 million supporting district personnel. He proceeded to cover the remaining grants: Other Personnel, Health Insurance, Retirement, Administrative, Info/Ed, Rent and SALT. He stated that overall 90 percent of the funds were allocated to the districts. The three highest spending amounts were 99 percent of the Personnel Grant, 95 percent for Health Insurance, and 96 percent for Retirement.

Next, Mr. Boschert updated the Commission on expenses reimbursed to the soil and water conservation districts. They are: maintenance agreements, training conference expenses for district supervisors, outsourcing payroll, Tech II testing, travel expenses, contract labor, Women, Food and Agriculture Network, Intern Program, and Plan for the Future travel. These total \$121,158 in expenses to the districts.

The FY14 District Grants total allocation was \$11,680,570; of that amount, \$10,280,869 was spent, leaving \$1,399,701. In the past, the full allocation has not been available to the districts. Mr. Boschert stated reasons for this: it is not known what the cost for health insurance will be for the entire year, funds are needed to cover new employees that choose health insurance where the previous employee did not, and some funds are held back for district employees that pass the Tech II certification. He pointed out that this year the stipend for each employee was increased by one percent to match the increase that state employees received.

4. **FY14 Cost-Share Review**

April Brandt presented a brief review of the FY14 Cost-Share. In FY14 the total allocation was approximately \$31 million, the districts received their initial allocation in July 2013 and two supplemental allocations, one in November and one in December 2013. She stated in FY14 there were just under 5,000 cost-share contracts paid for a total of almost \$23 million to landowners, and 22 active SALT projects in FY14 with approximately \$650,000 paid to landowners on 188 contracts.

Next, Ms. Brandt covered FY14 cost-share spent per resource concern. The top two resource concerns were Sheet/Rill and Gully Erosion with almost \$17 million spent and just over \$2.5 million spent in Grazing Management. She stated that approximately 120,000 acres had been served in Sheet/Rill and Gully Erosion and Grazing Management. She pointed out that the resource concern for Animal Waste is counted by animal units that the structure serves and not acres.

5. **FY15/FY16 Budget Updates**

Colette Weckenborg presented an update of the FY15/FY16 Budget. She stated that as of February 1, 2015, \$9.5 million has been spent in the Cost-Share Grant; \$122,031 for SALT Projects; \$497 in Loan Interest Share; and \$7.6 million for Grants to Districts. She said the Information Technology Services amount did not

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include the printer/scanner/copier that each district received. She stated the total appropriation authority was \$49 million for FY15 and as of February 1, 2015, \$19 million had been spent.

Next, Ms. Weckenborg updated the Commission on the FY16 Governor's Recommended Budget. She stated it was basically the same as proposed in the previous year with cost-share at \$31 million appropriation authority, district operations at \$12 million, program administration at \$3 million, SALT at \$200,000, Other at \$569,297, Federal Demo and Tech at \$1 million, Monitoring and Conservation at \$650,000 and Research at \$400,000.

6. **Plan for the Future Program Delivery and Operations Subcommittee**

Colette Weckenborg presented a report on the Plan for the Future Program Delivery and Operations Subcommittee. She stated the final Plan for the Future document is expected to be completed at the end of December 2015. She presented some recommendations from the subcommittee. One of the items discussed was district employee progression. The goal is to recruit and retain employees and be able to provide an opportunity for job progression and a better benefit package and salary. The job progression will follow a five year plan. All district employees will be classified as a District Specialist (DS) and be able to progress from levels I-IV. Ms. Weckenborg stated the subcommittee developed two plans, one for employees working in a single district and one for a shared employee between two or more districts. The following is the scenario for an employee working in a single district. A newly hired employee will start as a DS I and be hired at a base salary of up to \$13.13 per hour at the board of supervisors discretion. After one year of service and the completion of the conservation planner modules 1-8, the employee can progress to a DS II and the state stipend will increase by \$1.00 per hour. To move from a DS II to a DS III the employee will need another year of service and complete the District Specialist Certification, and the state stipend will increase by \$1.00 per hour. After an additional three years, the employee will be eligible for the DS IV upon completing two out of three specialties. The specialties are: 1. Conservation Planner Module 9; 2. Nutrient Tracking Tool (NTT); 3. Grazing Certification, Nutrient Certification or pertinent engineering job approval authority from NRCS. The state stipend will increase by \$2.00 per hour. Ms. Weckenborg stated that current district staff would be grandfathered in at their existing stipend but will have the ability to follow the progression to increase their training and stipend. Next, Ms. Weckenborg covered the same schematic for shared districts. She stated that the subcommittee felt that a base salary for a newly hired DS I was sufficient, but after a six month probationary period, if decided by the board of supervisors, the state stipend could be increased by \$1.00 per hour. She pointed out that the rest of the progression was the same as the example for an employee working in a single district, with increments between steps being the same.

Ms. Weckenborg stated that the subcommittee realized that to have better pay for the district employees, something else had to give. She stated the subcommittee felt that retirement and health insurance benefits needed to be increased. The subcommittee also looked at what areas they thought could be partially decreased

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-the intern program, number of district employees, and the Administrative Grant Fund. In response, the subcommittee voted starting July 2015 (FY16) to increase the retirement benefit from 5 percent to 7 percent for all district employees from state funds. The subcommittee thought the Administrative Grant Fund could decrease, but that Info/Ed Fund needed to be increased. The subcommittee proposed combining the two grant funds and decreasing the total by \$500 per district to help offset the cost for increasing retirement. She stated this would begin in July 2015 for FY16 with the District Specialist progression to begin on January 1, 2016.

Commissioners Vandiver and Lance stated they were impressed with the work that the subcommittee has done on a hard issue. They looked at the issues not just for the members on the subcommittee, but for all the district employees.

Colleen Meredith informed the Commission that in the spring, the subcommittees will develop webinars that show how and why the decisions were made.

After some discussion, Charles Ausfahl suggested that the Administration/Info Ed Funds issue be tabled until the next meeting. It was the consensus of the Commission to table this issue.

H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to increase retirement benefit from 5 percent to 7 percent. Jeff Lance seconded the motion. When asked by the Chair, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to adopt the linear progression of specialists within the districts and adopt the criteria for each of the promotions, as well as the salaries therein set forth. Charles Ausfahl seconded the motion. When polled, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

7. **University of Missouri-Using Missouri Data to Understand Capabilities of the APEX Model to Estimate Nutrients and Sediment in Runoff**

Dr. Claire Baffaut presented an update on using Missouri data to understand capabilities of the Agricultural Policy Environmental Extender (APEX) Model to estimate nutrient and sediment loads in runoff. She informed the Commission that she has been working with Dr. John Lory and Dr. Anomaa Senaviratne from the University of Missouri on this project. She felt their group has expertise that is beneficial in responding to challenges that exist in Missouri in documenting the effectiveness of conservation practices on the ground, which is necessary for prioritization and accountability of the practices. She pointed out that the assessment of conservation programs has two elements - environmental models and economic assessment. Environmental models expand the value of monitoring data. The Nutrient Tracking Tool (NTT) uses field/farm up to a small watershed scale and has the capability to simulate physical processes that takes place on the land. It can simulate field operations and conservation practices. Ms. Baffaut pointed out that APEX was at the core of NTT which the SWCP has provided

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funds to acquire the NTT tool to evaluate practices. Ms. Baffaut covered some of the APEX projects such as defining critical areas in agricultural fields, determining the impact of grass and tree buffers, the Heartland Phosphorus Index Assessment CIG and the Mississippi River Basin Initiative Watersheds. Ms. Baffaut stated that with the Heartland Phosphorus Index Assessment they have found there is a challenge with APEX. If there is no water quality data, there is a poor APEX outcome, but with good data the APEX outcomes are good. There are indications that regionalized versions of APEX can provide acceptable results for water quality measures.

Ms. Baffaut stated the team wanted the Commission to be aware of the expertise developed over the last five years and they are available to provide technical support to MDNR in relation to NTT. In the short term they can also help with managing runoff studies, defining data requirements, defining quality assurance standards, helping identify gaps and prioritizing monitoring efforts. In the long term they are seeking opportunities to maximize the benefits of monitoring through systems to manage data, infrastructure to organize all the data in a way that it maximizes APEX modeling so that in the end there is a real quantitative assessment of conservation practices. She pointed out that they were looking for support to maintain and improve the APEX team knowledge.

Colleen Meredith stated this was brought to the Commission because districts will soon be asked to run NTT to see what the conservation practice benefits are for nutrients. She pointed out the NTT had been calibrated for Missouri using Missouri data, but would like to use the University of Missouri expertise on APEX because it is the background model for NTT and it can further validate the data.

8. Missouri Regional Grazing Schools

Dave Baker presented an update on the Missouri Regional Grazing Schools. He provided an overview of the current budget for MU Extension. He is working with faculty, Extension Councils and partners to determine what their priorities are, how they are going to staff, how to maintain their presence and how they are going to operate. Approximately half of their budget is from grants, contracts and fees. Two percent of the extension's budget each year will go toward reallocation at the campus level; they will have to generate a two percent salaries pool plus benefits. Over the next three years the agriculture and natural resources Extension program is looking at an approximately 15 percent reduction. Mr. Baker stated the university is looking at all options to diversify the funding model. One of the resulting outcomes from all this was the development of Ag and Natural Resources Fee Guidelines. Based on the Guidelines, he had charged his faculty to work with the partners to establish a state level fee for the Grazing School program. He stated they had worked with the partners and had established a \$50 per person fee. This fee will go back to Extension with the majority of it to be used to support staff and curriculum development.

Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Director, Sara Parker Pauley stated it was a pleasure working with the Commission. The Department is approximately halfway through the legislative

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budget cycle and so far it has been good. The Department is watching several bills that could be a concern later on. She thanked the Commission for their time and effort serving the state and Department.

Missouri Department of Agriculture Director Richard Fordyce stated the SWCP is highly thought of across the state not only for what the Commission does for agriculture, but also for economic development and other activities. He stated the working relationship between the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture is good and the departments work well together. He stated the Beef Summit was held on January 5th, and a member from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources sat on the panel at the summit. He reiterated the relationship between the two departments is very strong.

E. REQUEST

1. **Oregon SWCD Warm Fork of the Spring River SALT Project – Add Practice in Adjacent HUC to Meet Goals of Watershed Assessment**

Leon Thompson presented a request from Oregon Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to add a practice to a HUC adjacent to the SALT watershed area. He provided the Commission with some history on the request. He stated in June of 2013 the Commission approved \$20,000 per landowner for streambank stabilization in the Warm Fork SALT project. The approval was based on completion of a watershed assessment to determine qualifying sites that would provide the best environmental benefit. It was difficult for the Oregon SWCD to raise enough funds to complete the watershed assessment. The SWCD board and staff competed for two independent funding sources that each provided a \$5,000 grant; NRCS matched the grants for the assessment and MDC providing streambank design funds and other matching funds for additional practices.

Mr. Thompson stated the issue was: should the Commission allow Oregon SWCD Board to approve a contract for a C650 Streambank Stabilization practice in the Oregon Warm Fork SALT project that is outside the project area. He stated the project site is about 2,000 feet upstream from the SALT boundary. He reminded the Commission the policy for AgNPS Watershed Boundary states: “The SWCD can allow whole fields to be included or excluded from the project when a portion of the field is inside the watershed boundary.” Mr. Thompson introduced Chris Cash to give a presentation on the watershed assessment.

Chris Cash, the engineer that developed the stream assessment, presented an update on the Warm Fork of the Spring River stream stabilization assessment. He stated with this stream it is common to have a layer of clay and when the water is on top of the clay it wants to go horizontally into the landowner’s property. He stated the main focus of the assessment was to provide a risk assessment for understanding and management for an actively meandering stream. With the assessment they can look at different variables and develop a stability plan. Mr. Cash stated the 10 miles that they were reviewing in the request was divided into five segments. He stated the stream is meandering, it is a pool-riffle, classified as low gradient, has mobile bed/bank soils and it is very sensitive to floods and gravel. He provided information on each of the five sites in the 10 mile section.

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Colleen Meredith stated this request was for the one landowner who was not included in the watershed assessment. She stated the landowner thought his property was in the SALT area, and was one of the properties included in the assessment.

Oregon board member, David Stubbelfield answered questions for the Commission. After some discussion, H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to allow the Oregon SWCD Board to approve a contract for a C650 Streambank Stabilization Practice in the Oregon Warm Fork SALT Project that is outside the project area. Jeff Lance seconded to motion. When asked by the Chair, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

2. **University of Missouri – Support for the MU Soil Health Assessment Center**
Joe Engeln presented a request for Commission support for the Soil Health Assessment Center located at the University of Missouri which was being moved from the College of Engineering to the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources. He stated it was not yet operational and is located at South Farm. He pointed out this facility is one of only three in the country and the Department thinks this is very important because as the SWCP moves forward there will be a need for accurate measures of success. He stated the Department worked with MU to develop a budget for staff and new equipment. He stated they are asking the Commission for concurrence to spend up to \$250,000 for the next two years. NRCS is also supporting the Center. Mr. Engeln pointed out the financial commitment is short term to assist MU as they get their business plan in place where the lab would be self-sustaining based on the fees charged for the samples that are brought in for assessment for soil health.

After some discussion, Charles Ausfahl made a motion to approve \$250,000 per year for the next two years to help fund the Soil Health Assessment Center. When polled, Jeff Lance, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **Cape Girardeau SWCD Cost-Share Maintenance Violation DWP-01 Sediment Retention Structure**

Jim Boschert presented a request for assistance from Cape Girardeau on a cost-share maintenance violation on a DWP-01 Sediment Retention Structure. He stated the district was requesting assistance in the collection of repayment in the amount of \$282.85 from Jerry Shell for a maintenance violation. He stated the contract was approved by the board on September 20, 2006; the payment was approved on December 20, 2006, and paid on December 26, 2006 in the amount of \$1,131.38. He pointed out the maintenance life of the practice is 10 years.

Mr. Boschert stated that on July 14 the district technician observed that the drop pipe had been removed. Because of this, the practice was not being maintained according to the standards and specifications and Mr. Shell was notified by letter on August 19, 2014, of the violation. Then on October 31, 2014, the board issued

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a certified letter to Mr. Shell describing the violation and requested that it be repaired or repaid within 30 days of receiving the letter; the letter was received by Mr. Shell on November 4, 2014. Mr. Boschert stated that on December 1, 2014, the board of supervisors requested assistance from the program office to resolve the violation or collect the repayment of the cost-share funds. The program office sent Mr. Shell a certified letter on January 12, 2015, and it was signed for on January 17, 2015. He stated the Commission had a copy in their packet of a letter that Mr. Shell sent to the program office. The letter stated that land was sold on a lease agreement to Mr. Gary Michie and that Mr. Shell may have signed to give Mr. Michie approval to install the structure, but Mr. Shell never received any funds or had anything to do with installing the practice or agreeing to any contract or violating the contract. The letter also stated that Mr. Michie purchased the land then sold it to another landowner. Mr. Boschert stated documentation that the program office has is a landowner signature authorization where Mr. Shell gave signature authority to Mr. Michie, the cost-share forms are in Mr. Shell's name in care of Mr. Michie and with Mr. Michie's address. Mr. Boschert pointed out all of the forms are signed Jerry Shell by Gary Michie.

Mr. Boschert said that the State Code of Regulations states, "The provision of the (maintenance) agreement shall state; if the practice is removed, altered or modified so as to lessen its effectiveness, without prior approval of the district, for a period of (10) ten years.....after the date of receiving payment, the landowner or his/her heirs, assignees or other transferees, shall refund to the Cost-Share Program the prorated amount of the state cost-share payment....". Mr. Boschert informed the Commission that the program office had not received anything from Mr. Shell to show that maintenance had been transferred to another party.

After some discussion regarding the land ownership, H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to not pursue repayment of the \$285.85. Charles Ausfahl seconded the motion. When polled, H. Ralph Gaw, Charles Ausfahl, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

4. **Supervisor Requests**

a. **Ste. Genevieve SWCD**

Jim Boschert presented the Ste. Genevieve SWCD supervisor appointment request. The Ste. Genevieve SWCD Board requested the appointment of Mr. Kenneth Naeger to complete the unexpired term of Mrs. Lynn Messer due to her inability to fulfill her elected term. Mr. Naeger and the board chairman have signed the Verification of Supervisor Eligibility form verifying the candidate meets the qualifications to serve on the board.

H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Kenneth Naeger to complete the unexpired term of Mrs. Lynn Messer to the Ste. Genevieve SWCD Board of Supervisors. Charles Ausfahl seconded the motion. When asked by the Chair, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

F. SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS (CONTINUED)

1. Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) 2014 Resolution Response

Jim Boschert presented an update on the MASWCD 2014 Resolution. He stated at the MASWCD Training Conference, which was held in 2014, a resolution on health care was passed. Mr. Boschert informed the Commission that they had a copy of the resolution. The resolution asked that the Commission consider looking into other options for group health insurance coverage that is more affordable for employees and their families. Mr. Boschert pointed out the resolution was similar to the Osage SWCD letter on health insurance that was presented at the October Commission meeting. At that time, the Commission asked the Plan for the Future Program Delivery and Operation subcommittee to look into this. He reported that they had discussed this twice in the Plan for the Future subcommittee since the October Commission meeting. He stated the subcommittee felt they liked the current coverage offered through MCHCP, but the cost of dependent coverage is high and they do not believe that state funds should be used for dependent coverage. Mr. Boschert stated the subcommittee would like for the program office to look at other providers that could offer the same coverage but at a more affordable cost for dependent coverage. Mr. Boschert stated he had asked MCHCP if they could make dependent coverage more affordable, but was told the only option would be for the employer to pay some of the premium. He pointed out the subcommittee was provided information on the Affordable Care Act, but did not want to pursue this for dependent coverage. He stated the program office had not started looking at other providers but would soon. He pointed out that any potentially new health insurance provider will ask the district employees to fill out forms to determine what the new rates would be. He stated a draft letter had been composed to Kenny Lovelace regarding the resolution. Mr. Boschert proceeded to read the letter.

2. Plan for the Future Conservation Practices Subcommittee

Jim Plassmeyer presented an update on the Plan for the Future Conservation Practices Subcommittee. He stated they have met and narrowed down the process for conservation practice review and the policy review. The subcommittee has been looking at the process for conservation practice policy reviews to give all SWCDs the opportunity to provide input and not just this subcommittee. The subcommittee has been working on how to define the process and setting up a schedule of when practices will be reviewed. They also discussed issues that would merit a review outside of the regular review scheduled. He stated the subcommittee took all the practices and grouped them into five groupings so that a practice review could be done twice for every practice in a 10-year period.

Mr. Plassmeyer stated a letter was received from Nodaway requesting to evaluate the practice funding limits on the DWC-1 Water Impoundment Structure practice. He stated currently it has a \$10,000 limit per landowner per structure and the district would like to have it increased to \$15,000. He stated that was discussed

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within the subcommittee. He informed the Commission that more information from the subcommittee would be presented at the next Commission meeting.

G. REPORTS

1. University of Missouri

Dave Baker thanked the Commission for all of their work. He invited the Commission to the campus for the next meeting as well as a tour of the Soil Health Assessment Center. He stated that he has been going around the state making presentations as to where he sees the challenges in agriculture as it moves forward. He offered to present this information at a future Commission meeting.

2. Department of Conservation

Lisa Potter presented an update on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. She stated that MDC was the lead on two of the projects awarded to the state of Missouri. They have worked closely with DNR, as well as the soil and water conservation districts. She stated both projects have had pledges from DNR and the SWCDs for in-kind technical and financial assistance toward the projects. One of the two projects is in the eastern Ozarks and will focus on glade and woodland restoration; within that project they are also working in Perry County on karst habitat. The second project is part of multi-state working grasslands. The project will provide both financial and technical assistance to livestock producers to enhance production and/or operations that will benefit both production and wildlife habitat. This project was primarily located in northwest and southwest parts of the state.

Ms. Potter stated in the near future MDC will be working with Food and Ag Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) to update the economic analysis that was done in 2007 on implementing wildlife buffers on agricultural land. She stated that within the analysis they are going to be looking at the economics associated with incorporating native warm season grasses in grazing operations.

Ms. Potter informed the Commission that MDC was asking for public comments on changes to the firearm seasons for deer. They are looking to reduce the number of days during the November season from 11 to nine; they are also looking at reducing the number of days for the antlerless firearm season from 12 to three and eliminating the urban zones portion. By reducing the length of the seasons, it is a way to increase the population of deer because the majority of the state is at or below the optimal population numbers. She stated they are also looking to allow crossbows during the fall archery deer and turkey season and also reducing the number of antler deer during the archery season from two to one deer. They are hosting eight public meetings across the state. She pointed out that the public can submit their opinions and thoughts online. She stated MDC has found other instances of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in the free ranging herd and the total confirmed cases during the hunting season this year was five. The cases were in the CWD containment zone.

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Ms. Potter stated in the MDC Conservation Reserve Program Incentive program they have spent approximately \$1 million and was approved for another \$250,000 for the program. She stated the waiting list for this program will take up approximately \$150,000 of that.

3. **Department of Agriculture**

Judy Grundler stated they had received information from USDA about a possible import of disease from Guatemala called Ralstonia; which is a bacteria wilt disease. She stated they were alerted that there could have been shipments that arrived in Missouri greenhouses back in January in the St. Louis area. She stated that the bacteria can impact potatoes and tomatoes. She informed the Commission they surveyed three counties and did not find any fire ants.

Ms. Grundler stated they are also doing a plan for the future for the Pesticide Program. They are looking at different delivery methods for commercial applicators and private applicators. They are also looking at changing the testing method for certified applicators.

4. **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

J.R. Flores provided the Commission with a map of the new Missouri Field Office Service Area (FOSA) boundaries and office areas. He stated there will be fewer managers, but they have 30 district conservationists and four area conservationists. He stated it would be effective February 22, 2015.

Mr. Flores stated they are working closely with the Soil and Water Conservation Program on the boots on the ground technicians that NRCS is paying half the salary. He stated the Conservation Stewardship Program has had 900 producers sign up for approximately 500,000 acres. He pointed out they have paid out approximately \$28 million for this program. In the Environmental Quality Incentives Program the evaluation and ranking is ongoing and the deadline for ranking is March 2, 2015. He informed the Commission that they are in the final year of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative; it has been very successful program and because of that it has been decided to continue the program through FY18. Missouri will be allowed to submit five watersheds for funding. He informed the Commission that in RCPP, Jackson SWCD was awarded a project called Urban/Rural Farmer Project. The district was awarded \$800,000.

Mr. Flores stated with the 2014 Farm Bill, the Risk Management Agency sent out approximately 2,000 letters to producers in Missouri who were determined to be new to compliance and will need to have a signed AD1026 by June 1. He informed the Commission that NRCS had not received their allocation for their budget, but hoped to have it soon.

5. **Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

Kenny Lovelace stated the 2015 Envirothon is scheduled for the end of July to the first of August. The 2016 Envirothon will be in Canada and 2017 will be in

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Maryland. Mr. Lovelace invited the Commission to the March 17, 2015, Annual Legislative Seminar at 5:30 p.m. at the Capital Plaza in Jefferson City.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS

H. Ralph Gaw stated he had received a call from Ryan Britt regarding a hoop barn. He stated there is interest in this concept of backgrounding cattle in this type of facility. He stated these facilities will allow the producers in row crop areas to have the option of feeding their cattle or selling their product on the market. Mr. Gaw through this would be something the Commission will be hearing more about in the future.

Sandy Stratman informed the Commission about a program that NRCS is working on called Client Gateway. This will help district staff work better with NRCS programs. Ms. Stratman stated the National Envirothon will be in July 27 – August 1 in Springfield, Missouri on the Missouri State University Campus. She stated the employees association had a meeting scheduled for February 25 in the Lewis and Clark State Office Building.

Beverly Dometorch informed the Commission she attended a National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in New Orleans where Missouri received an award for supervisor training. She stated Kenny Lovelace was elected as the Chairman at the North Central Region meeting.

Darrick Steen, Missouri Corn Growers and Soybean Association stated these two associations are looking at the partnerships with the Department of Natural Resources, RCPP and the University of Missouri. He wanted to make the offer to the Commission that these associations want to help with environmental stewardship.

Kelly Smith, Missouri Farm Bureau, asked about the cost-share for the well drilling component. He asked what the plan was and how long it will take to get the issue resolved. Colleen Meredith replied that SWCP has been working with NRCS staff on the state average cost database that NRCS develops. She stated SWCP is trying to get a copy of the program on the district's intranet so that districts will not have to go to the NRCS computers, which may make it easier for them to enter the cost data.

H. Ralph Gaw asked Tim Duggan to clarify donations for political action committees or other political affiliations that may contact a commissioner. He stated that he had not found any statutes that bars a commissioner from making a donation. He stated there is nothing in Chapter 105 which governs lobbyists and former officials in the activities that they can or cannot engage in. He stated it is a personal decision, but suggested they consider the public impression. Mr. Gaw stated they may want to avoid making contributions in an official capacity of the Commission or board of supervisors; it is a personal decision that comes out of personal funds.

Mr. Gaw asked about responses regarding the sales tax renewal. Mr. Duggan stated that as long you do not appear to be an endorser, but merely providing information, that should be fine. He stated in the past the Department policy was to say that we are educational or informational, but we do not engage in the business of promoting or discouraging or taking an official position as a state agency. It is the voter's decision and

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we provide the information to assist them. Colleen Meredith stated the districts can provide the factual information regarding benefits of the program but cannot promote that people vote for the Parks, Soil and Water Sales Tax on work time.

Mr. Gaw stated he has seen a lot of notices from the districts, advertisements in the papers and they do not say anything about soil and water. His thought was that a letter needed to be sent to the districts stating the use of soil and water funds should be recognized.

I. ADJOURNMENT

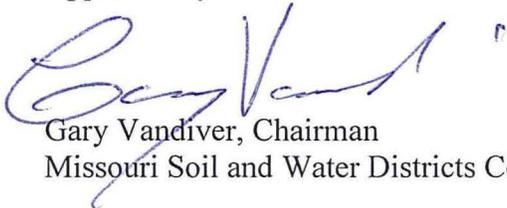
H. Ralph Gaw made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:10 p.m. Charles Ausfahl seconded the motion. When asked by the Chair, Charles Ausfahl, H. Ralph Gaw, Jeff Lance and Gary Vandiver voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Colleen Meredith, Director
Soil and Water Conservation Program

Approved by:



Gary Vandiver, Chairman
Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission

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