

**NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION  
& DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

**REGULAR  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 3, 2015**

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The regular meeting of the Natural Resource Conservation & Development Board (NRCDB) was held March 3, 2015 at the conference room located at 400 Willoughby Ave., Suite 500, Juneau Alaska.

Board members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. George Woodbury, Chair  
Ms. Cheryl Thompson, Board member (telephone)  
Ms. Ina Jones, Board member  
Mr. Bernie Karl, Board member  
Mr. John Schirack, Board member

Others in attendance:

Mr. Ed Fogels, Deputy Commissioner, DNR  
Ms. Franci Havemeister, Director, Division of Agriculture  
Ms. Lora Haralson, Administrative Officer I, Division of Agriculture  
Mr. Todd Pettit, President, Alaska Association of  
Conservation Districts (AACD) (telephone)  
Ms. Dee Pond, Chief Administrative Officer, AACD (telephone)  
Ms. Becca Stenerson, Upper Susitna Soil & Water Conservation  
District (SWCD) (telephone)  
Mr. Ken Marsh, Upper Susitna, SWCD  
Ms. Marie Rice, Kodiak, SWCD  
Ms. Blythe Brown, Kodiak, SWCD (telephone)  
Ms. Joni Scharfenberg, Fairbanks, SWCD (telephone)  
Mr. Chuck Kaucic, Wasilla, SWCD (telephone)  
Ms. Ryan Stencel, Anchorage SWCD  
Ms. Heidi Chay, Kenai, SWCD (telephone)  
Mr. Jeff Smeenck, Palmer SWCD (telephone)  
Mr. Brian Maupin, AACD, Invasive Plant Program

**A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

It was determined that a quorum was present and the meeting was called to order by Chair Woodbury at 10:30 a.m.

**B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Board member Karl moved to approve the agenda.

**SECOND:** Board member Jones seconded the agenda

**VOTE:** The motion passed without objection.

**C: PUBLIC COMMENT/SESSION (three minutes per person)**

*(No members of the public were present).*

**D. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING**

**December 5, 2014 Draft Meeting Minutes**

**MOTION:** Board member Jones moved to approve the minutes of December 5, 2014.

**SECOND** Board member Karl seconded the motion.

**VOTE:** The motion passed without objection.

**E. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE**

Soil & Water Conservation Districts - Updates

Chuck Kaucic, Wasilla

- ATV Salmon stream crossing workshops are coming up with a good response from the Federal, State, local agencies and non-profits.
- The Winter Conservation Series III is averaging 30 attendees.
- Earth Day – Meadow Lakes Elem; will introduce salmon/ATV etiquette and salmon stream crossings the Mat-Su Borough (MSB) Mayor DeVilbiss will attend.
- Arbor Day the tree planting ceremony is coming up and the Mayor DeVilbiss will attend.
- On May 16, 2015 the annual Tree Sale will be held.
- Recreation Trail grants have been received with tentative approval for ATV training and Moose Range bridge construction from a State Recreation Trails grant.
- Staff and Mat-Su College students spent two days at the Plant Material Center (PCM) gathering willows gathering.

Joni Scharfenberg, Fairbanks

- Elodea eradication continues in interior Alaska. Seeking to educate our constituents about the need for aquatic herbicides to eradicate this invasive, seeking funding, permitting, etc.
- This is the International year of the soil and they the will try to incorporate soil education in all of their events and education formats this summer. Planning a soil themed display for the local home show and a soils workshop this spring.
- They are working with the City of Nenana and the Division of Forestry to produce a fire wise plan for the Nenana area.

- They are continuing their green infrastructure cost share program and seeking other green infrastructure funding.
- They are continuing natural resource education in their after school programs and promoting Ag in the classroom as well as planning AITC teacher workshops this summer in Fairbanks, Palmer, and other possible locations for those who have interest and some match support.
- They are continuing a SARE Grant cooperator agricultural assistance promotion of Alaska grown soil recommendations
- Trail improvements and green infrastructure demo projects in North Pole

Blythe Brown, Kodiak

- They are moving forward working with AFDG to purchase culverts and will install in April.
- There will be community garden local groups, with 24 beds in the garden available to provide growing space for the community gardens.
- The invasive plants issue is on-going with a PMC Canadian Thistle grant.

Becca Stenerson, Upper Susitna

- The district's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC's) was comprised of seven hard working local youth who were excited to carry out conservation projects in their community
- The YCC's on-going projects are the Talkeetna Village Flower Beds, Trail Maintenance in Talkeetna Lakes Park and Denali National Park with the AK Forest Inventory, and Invasive Plant Projects which were all a success.
- They plan to continue all of these YCC's projects again this year.
- For the NRCS project, there district surveyed, collected, and began processing data from 96 non-biased plots in the Sawmill Creek land-use area.
- This year, they plan to collect data from 15 new non-biased plots, finalize the data, and submit their land capability classification report in December.

Heidi Chay, Kenai

- With the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program funds activities conducted included the Farmers Market Roundtable with Amy Pettit and Arthur Keyes, Hay grower's workshop, Kenai Peninsula Ag Forum, etc.

- FWS Schoolyard Habitat grant has funded outdoor classrooms and trails at three schools, plus a native plant nursery to propagate willows for stream bank restoration.
- The NRCS has recognized District criteria for Soils of Local Importance. Next step will be working with Borough to show soils and private land with State agricultural covenants on a Borough parcel viewer.
- They are planning a field day and equipment demonstration on Alaska Agriculture Day.
- Their biggest concern is how to continue Weed-Free Forage and Gravel programs (and pay for basic District administration) without state funding.

Jeff Smeenk, Palmer

Grant Projects that are planned:

- AKSSF - District staff will visit numerous river systems in the South Central region and determine if juvenile salmon are present. This information will be added into the State's Anadromous Waters Catalog to assist land managers appropriately manage these sections of river.
- US Fish and Wildlife service - They are winding down a project that is mapping challenges to surface water in the MatSu region.
- USDA Rural Development - They are beginning a project where they will assist aspiring entrepreneurs interested in getting their value-added products through the regulatory hurdles and into the marketplace.
- USDA-NRCS - They are assisting NRCS staff in completing Nutrient Management Plans for their very popular High Tunnel Program. They are finishing up a demonstration project where they looked at incorporating cover crops in peony fields to decrease erosion. They are also working with NRCS to develop soil nutrient maps and using variable rate fertilizer applicators to apply the appropriate nutrient prescription to each zone of the field.

Proposals in process:

- They are developing proposals to control the invasive weed species Reed Canary Grass in local Mat-Su riparian areas. They are also completing a proposal to evaluate the possibility of using composting to dispose of invasive weeds.

Other District Projects:

- The Palmer SWCD has invested in precision agriculture equipment. The Veris soil sampler maps soil texture, soil organic matter and pH information as it travels across the fields. This information is used to develop management zones to help the producers refine their nutrient and irrigation plans.

Ryan Stencel, Anchorage

- They have an ongoing project upgrading and fixing old trails for the equestrian center which is a riding program for disabled kids.
- They finished the homestead project road and drainage upgrade toward the hillside in Anchorage. They put in 300 foot long French drainage system for a homeowner.
- The flooding project in Valdez is continuing with the City of Valdez becoming involved.
- The Peters Creek project continues this year.
- They are putting together large organic production farm with local produce and local hire for Eklutna.
- The district has three grants which are being administered for playground equipment installed at Centennial Park.

Brian Maupin, AACD, Invasive Plant Program

- Stated that permits are needed for aquatic habitats and aerial applications.
- If pesticides are applied on more than one private property a permit will be needed.
- SWCD'S are a lead in the State and sometimes herbicides are the only way to control invasive plants.
- Brian asked the NRCDB to write a letter to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regarding the permit process so they are aware of the importance of the process to change the regulations.
- Brian will email a document to the Board regarding the DEC permit regulations.

Todd Pettit, President of the AACD, stated the NRCDB has lost all financial support based on the 2016 Amended Governor Walker's Budget which affects the funds that are allocated to the SWCD each year. He understands that everyone is affected by the budget reductions however the SWCD's depend on that funding to apply for federal funds. The SWCD's have turned \$3 million into \$30 million from grants and working with the Federal government. The AACD needs the states help.

Ed Fogels, DNR Deputy Commissioner thanked the SWCD's for the updates from their districts. He stated that the State is experiencing hard times due to the oil prices. Commissioner Mark Myers is a fan of agriculture, mapping programs and fighting invasive species. The DNR leadership team has Marty Rutherford, Deputy Commissioner replacing Bob Swenson who retired. All DNR Directors were retained, the Division of Oil & Gas Director resigned.

Ed Fogels, DNR Deputy Commissioner distributed and reviewed the 2016 Amended Governor Walker's Budget and the additional recommendations for budget reductions from the DNR House Finance Budget Subcommittee. DNR will have to do their work with less money. Even though the NRCDB budget has been eliminated it does not mean that DNR doesn't support the program. However, there will be no funds for travel or for the SWCD's for FY2016.

The Board held a discussion regarding DNR's 2016 Amended budget.

Franci Havemeister, Acting Executive Director after approval from DNR she would like the remaining funds for FY2015 to be distributed to the SWCD's.

## **F. NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

### **Kenny Lake Boundary Expansion Proposal**

Franci Havemeister, Acting Director stated according to the NRCDB guidelines a public meeting will be conducted in Glennallen regarding the Kenny Lake boundary expansion proposal on Friday, March 27, 2015 and the NRCDB can take action after the meeting on the proposal.

### **State Land Sales for Forest Management**

George Woodbury, Chair discussed a handout regarding adding Forestry to the state land sales for private purposes.

## **G. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ina Jones, Board member, stated a letter of support from the Homer SWCD was sent regarding the Chirokoff cattle after test results were received from the Missouri that the cattle could have been from China and are unique and deserve their own name.

Bernie Karl, Board member stated that all citizens in Alaska need to become involved to help the State regarding these economic times.

John Schirack, Board member asked if any of the NRCDB board members attend their local SWCD's meetings. He also stated that the funding that the SWCD's receive from the state are operating funds that go towards grants and without those funds they will not be able to receive the grants due to no operating money to match.

Ina Jones, Board member, stated she attends the Homer SWCD's meetings when she can.

## **H. SET NEXT MEETING & AGENDA ITEMS**

The next NRCDB meeting will be a teleconference held on March 27, 2015 after the Kenny Lake Boundary Expansion public meeting.

The AACD will hold a conference on April 23-24, 2015 in Anchorage.

## **I. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.