

STATE SOIL CONSERVATION & WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting, Friday, April 2nd, 2020, 10:00 A.M
Conference Call Only

Minutes for April 2nd, 2020

SSCWQC Members Called In

Kevin Pope, Colleen Miller, Paula Ellis, Dale Farnham, Sherman Lundy, Steve Hofmann, Patti Ruff

DSCWQ Staff Called in

Susan Kozak, Jake Hansen, Will Myers, Vince Sitzmann, Nicky Gubbels, Kathryn Bussanmas

Partners Present

Kurt Simon (NRCS), Jamie Benning (ISU), John Whitaker (CDI), Larry Roehl (ENG), Steve Hopkins (DNR)

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

2020-17 Miller moved to approve the agenda; Ellis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2020-18 Ellis moved to approve the February 26th, 2020 meeting minutes; Farnham seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2020-19 Lundy moved to approve the March 5th, 2020 meeting minutes; Farnham seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Bureau Chief Reports (Reports on file)

Field Services – Myers

Myers highlighted the following topics in his report;

- Field Services staff have been working with partner agencies and commissioners to discuss the impacts that COVID-19 will have on operations.
- NACD has offered SWCD's that are currently using a 2019 Technical Assistance Grant the opportunity for another year of funding, about 8 SWCD's have applied for these funds. Funding announcements are expected in the coming weeks.

Mines and Minerals – Sitzmann

Sitzmann highlighted the following topics in his report;

- 7 projects are currently moving forward with site visits and inspections.
- July 15th the Mines and Minerals Bureau is planning a field day in Marion County.

Water Resources - Hansen

Hansen highlighted the following topics in his report;

- There are 34 projects that are under development in various phases between CREP, WQI and SF12 funding.
- Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards are now taking nominations until May 4th, 2020, applications are available online. The 2020 awards ceremony will be held at the Iowa State Fair.
- Staff have still been able to work in the field using additional precautions.

Director's Report - Kozak

Kozak highlighted the following items in her report;

- Kozak updated to committee on the current work status changes due to COVID-19. All DSC staff have been moved to teleworking status. Field offices are locked and recommending customers call or email for services.
- Conference calls with staff will be set up to keep them updated on policies as they change.
- All field offices are closed, some are able to take turns coming into the office, however.
- Field work that requires little to no people contact is still being done. Only 1 person per vehicle allowed.

Partner Reports (Reports on file)

Conservation Districts of Iowa - Whitaker

- All WET positions have been filled at this time. CDI is currently working with NRCS to obtain necessary security clearance for the new hires.
- All but one of the three Private Lands Wildlife positions have been offered and accepted.

Engineers – Roehl

- Most Counties have instituted policies that limit contact with the public.
- Road workers typically work singly or in small groups with minimal public activity, so road work continues.
- High winter flows and saturated soil conditions increase the potential amount of precipitation runoff.

Iowa Department of Natural Resources – Hopkins

Hopkins highlighted the following topics in his report;

- The DNR Watershed Improvement program is soliciting requests for new project implementing funding.
- DNR reports that hunting, and fishing regulations have not changed due to COVID-19.
- All April plans/activities have been canceled.

Iowa State Extension – Benning

Benning highlighted items in her report;

- The Conservation Best Practices Manual is available online (link provided in report). This manual is designed primarily for farmers just starting out through three years of adopting conservation practices.
- All classes are online only. Any events or gatherings have been postponed or canceled, including the Iowa Water Conference. Information will be available about online resources concerning the Iowa Water Conference such as the program, virtual poster session, and select presentations.
- If you need to get ahold of an extension office, you can still call or email them.

Leopold Center – Farnham

Nothing to Report.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Simon

Verbal report only;

- All 105 offices are still open with staff either teleworking or on a rotating schedule in the office to limit contact.
- A lot of time is being spent on how to navigate operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A daily report is required at 6pm to give updates on all customer's and staff's health and work conditions.

Business

- SSCWQC Research and Demonstration Grant Updates - Gubbels
 - Gubbels shared that some grants nearing their end had concerns regarding their final field days. The committee decided to offer extensions if needed (with extension contract) and would be flexible during this time of uncertainty.
- Summer Tour Updates
 - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and not knowing when the restrictions on gatherings and events will be lifted the committee has decided to cancel this year's summer tour. The committee will still meet as usual and a joint meeting will be scheduled with CDI to review the budget.

Subcommittee Reports

- SWM Subcommittee meeting- Washington County, Long Creek Watershed application
 - The subcommittee reviewed the Long Creek Watershed application and their recommendation to the committee would be to approve their application.

2020-20 Lundy moved to approve the Washington County, Long Creek Watershed application. Hofmann seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

SSCWQC Member Reports

- Lundy-Anhydrous application has started, and we are starting to see people getting out and starting work.
- Hofmann- A lot of small rains keeping popping up, preventing field work from being done.
- Ruff- A few farmers are getting in the field. Many are practicing social distancing.
- Miller- Corn prices have gone down and some field work is being done, however are now on a winter storm watch.
- Ellis- Dry fertilizer is being applied and we are seeing some anhydrous application. Hoping everyone is staying healthy.
- Farnham- Some field work is starting, tilling, and anhydrous application. Starting to see green grass and earthworms, spring is coming!
- Pope- Some have started applying dry fertilizer; however, no field work being done yet. We have been working on tilling. Cover crops are slow coming, and we are now on a winter storm watch.

Adjournment

Pope adjourned the meeting at 10:03 a.m.