



Winnebago County
The Wave of the Future

**LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (LCC) MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025**

A. Call to Order

Convene:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Farrey at 9:00am

Present:

- **LCC Members:** Bruce Bohn, Chuck Farrey, Kristl Laux, Timothy Macho, Doug Nelson, Dan Stokes & Doug Zellmer
- **LWCD Staff:** Chad Casper, Jody Bezio
- **Other(s) present:** Levi Schultz, NRCS
- **Absent:** None

B. Confirm meeting/agenda has been properly public noticed in accordance with County policy.

Chairman Farrey confirmed with Director Casper that the meeting had been properly public noticed.

C. Approval of Minutes

1. April 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes

*A **ZELLMER / STOKES** motion to approve the minutes passed 6-0 (Supervisor Macho arrived later in the meeting).*

D. Public Comments on Agenda Items

None.

E. Agency Reports

Levi Schultz, NRCS informed the committee that a lot of their funding has been decreased so only 4 out of 40 applications received for EQIP were funded this year. Schultz explained that EQIP funding is primarily from Federal Inflation Reduction Act Climate Smart funding which has been greatly reduced. Schultz reported that Merrie Schamberger (Resource Conservationist) and Lynn Szulczewski (Supervisor/District Conservationist) both retired last week. Earlier this year Pat Lake (Resource Conservationist) also retired, so Schultz is now the only NRCS staff person remaining in the Winnebago County Office. Schultz shared that 75-90 NRCS staff across the state have retired through the federal government's "deferred resignation program." Schultz reported that the NRCS is currently on a hiring freeze and is going through a major re-organization as part of the "reduction in force" efforts. Director Casper commented that the changes at NRCS put more pressure on our department as landowners look for other funding sources and technical assistance to replace the NRCS opportunities that are no longer available.

F. Director's Report

1. Lake Winnebago Land and Water Conservation Association Meeting
Director Casper reported that the spring meeting of the Lake Winnebago Land & Water Conservation Association (LWLWCA) will be held on May 16 in Adams County. The meeting will include a tour of a cranberry farm and a presentation on Nutrient and Pest Management in Central Sands. Registration is due May 9 if any of the committee members would like to attend.
2. Climate-Smart Commodities Grant
Director Casper reported that the federal government terminated the Climate Smart Commodities Grant that the LWCD was participating in with eight other counties as sub-award recipients from the Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance. The Climate Smart grant was a three-year grant that Eric Bertram was hired for a little over 1 year ago; during that time, Bertram had signed up over 2,000 acres of land with 15 producers to implement no-till and cover crop practices for soil health. Director Casper was notified on April 14 that the grant was terminated on April 12; resulting in letting go of Eric Bertram as of April 17 and notifying the 15 producers that the federal funding is no longer available. Producers are being offered the option to sign up under the Spirit Fund Program, which has a max of 100 acres (vs. 200 acres under Climate Smart) and is a 3 year program (vs. 2 year program under Climate Smart). Director Casper also reported that the administration will be offering an opportunity to re-apply for a new grant which requires that 65% of the money goes directly to farmers (under the terminated grant, 63% of the funding was going directly to farmers). Casper reported that Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance is planning to re-apply, but will not know if they get the funding until August.

G. Committee Chair's Report

Chairman Farrey reported that the new County Executive is trying to attend all committee meetings. Farrey also informed the committee that the County Executive is planning to hire a new assistant (which is already included in this year's County budget).

H. Business Items

Action may be taken on any business items.

1. Discussion on Amendments to the Land & Water Conservation Department Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP)
Chairman Farrey and Director Casper reviewed the proposed revisions to the Winnebago County Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP) policy plan with the committee. Director Casper explained that the content and the structure of the program did not change a lot. The purpose of the revisions are to clean up the language and formatting of the document to make it easier to understand, remove repetitions, remove departmental procedures from the document, and to align with the language of the Spirit Fund Program Policy Plan that was approved in January 2025. Director Casper further explained that the proposed changes primarily included aligning funding caps for specific practices and aligning the Request For Proposal (RFP) procedures to the Spirit Fund Program for ease of understanding and development of cost-share agreements. The committee reviewed all proposed revisions and a finalized draft (without mark-up) will be presented to the LCC for final approval at the June meeting.
2. Action Item - LWCD Spirit Fund Program Cost-Share Agreements (CSAs) – SFP-BMP-25-07, Charles and Constance Farrey Waterway System Project for \$1,636.60, SFP-BMP-25-08 & Gilbert Thompson Waterway System Project for \$5,472.00 & SFP-SH-25-02
*Following a review of the CSAs, a **BOHN / ZELLMER** motion to approve the LWCD Spirit Fund Program Cost-Share Agreements (CSAs) – SFP-BMP-25-07, Charles and Constance Farrey Waterway System Project for \$1,636.60, SFP-BMP-25-08 AND Gilbert Thompson Waterway System Project for \$5,472.00 & SFP-SH-25-02 **passed 6-0** (Chairman Farrey abstained).*

3. Action Item - Winnebago County Water Quality Improvement Program (CSAs) – 25-05, Charles and Constance Farrey Waterway System Project for \$5,728.10 & 25-06, Gilbert Thompson Waterway System Project for \$19,152.00
*Following a review of the CSAs, a **BOHN / NELSON** motion to approve Winnebago County Water Quality Improvement Program (CSAs) – 25-05, Charles and Constance Farrey Waterway System Project for \$5,728.10 AND 25-06, Gilbert Thompson Waterway System Project for \$19,152.00 **passed 6-0** (Chairman Farrey abstained).*
4. Review Land & Water Conservation Department Project Lists
The LCC reviewed and acknowledged the new projects on the lists.

I. **Adjourn**

*A **NELSON / MACHO** motion made to adjourn the meeting at 10:34am **passed 7-0**.*

[MIN_FOOT]