

Minutes
State Soil Conservation Board
June 10, 2025
MADE@Plainfield 1610 Reeves Rd, Plainfield, IN 46168

Attendees

Gene Schmidt (Chair)
Jane Hardisty (Vice Chair)
Brad Dawson (Member)
Jewel Wise (Member)
Kenny Cain (Member)
Jennifer Thum
Tara Wesseler-Henry
Breegan Andersen
Mike Johnson
Holden Abrell
Sandra Hoffarth
Jared Thomas
Jared Chew
Liz Rice

Angie Alexander
David Bausman
Ophelia Norman
Julie Harrold
Martha Miller
Brandi Frazier
Ray Chattin

Attendees, via Teams

Allison McKain
John Hazlett
Leah Walthery
Randy M
Nathaniel Warenski
Terry
Mary Watson

Cheryl Jarret
E.B. Rawles
Laura Fribley
Amy Work
Colson Doyle
Megal Malott
Meg Leader
Andrea Gogel
Leah Harmon
Heath Hurst
Sara Campfield
Julie Good
Jennifer Rowland
Julie Golliher
Julie Morris
Mellie Peffley

Gene called the meeting to order at 9:03 am. Gene asked everyone to go around the room for introductions for in-person attendees. Gene announced that the meeting was being recorded.

Kenny moved to approve the previous minutes. Seconded by Brad. Motion approved.

Clean Water Indiana Budget

Jennifer introduced the CWI proposed budget. Draft proposed budget was provided. She went through each category of the budget. Discussion ensued around those budget categories and line items that make up those categories. Jane asked for clarification on budget documents provided. Jennifer provided additional context about the ICP mentor program idea, the additional SWCD support for training and development, and why CREP budget was less than previous years.

Jennifer shared that we've requested a fund reserve exemption to the Governor's administration. She shared there is no guarantee that the exemption will be accepted. However, if the exemption is approved the funds will be brought to the board for use discussion.

There were no questions.

Jennifer invited Holden to present the proposed cost-share program concept.

Cost-Share Presentation

Presentation was given by Holden Abrell regarding the proposed cost-share program funded by CWI. The presentation is provided. Holden introduced himself and how he developed this concept using his interactions with his SWCD. He shared he wanted to understand which conservation practices have been installed, barriers to adopting conservation practices, and problems facing agriculture within his counties of coverage.

Holden provided additional information about the program opportunity, the need, proposed funding structure, potential conservation practices, and history of success at the SWCD level.

Holden answered questions and clarified various topics presented including discussion around:

- Eligible practices
- Technical assistance
- Cost-share agreements and liability
 - Examples provided about how this could potentially be addressed with a statement in the landowner agreement
- Funding structure concerns
- Perception of competing with local programs
- Tracking progress and success
- The need for more guidance or a more developed framework for implementation

Continuation of Clean Water Indiana Budget

Brad commented about the need to consider moving the cost-share program to a different line item.

Gene asked, do we have the ability to gather information of all the dollars we are providing in district support? Jennifer mentioned this is something we can do. Kenny asked if we could tease out the responsibility of gathering this data? Jennifer and other attendees mentioned there are things that districts must do and report to the state board of accounts. Jennifer mentioned ISDA can see what data already exists and identify information they feel is missing.

Jane commented it may be beneficial to have a SWCD request money and not disperse money regardless without accountability.

Kenny made a motion to review the CWI budget. Seconded by Jewel. The CWI budget is on the floor for discussion.

Brad asked what the timeline is for hearing about the funding reserve exemption. Jennifer mentioned historically it has taken about 6 months.

Brad is okay with approving budget but with extra consideration about implementing new programs. Jane commented she is okay with keeping those line items, but all need to be aware the funds can be moved if needed at future business meetings.

Gene asked for a draft implementation plan for new programs so the board can respond and provide feedback.

Kenny motioned to accept the working budget. Vote was unanimous approval.

IDOA Presentation

Angie Alexander from the Indiana Department of Administration presented an update about the RFP for the District Capacity Development Needs Assessment. She presented a timeline with outlined next steps and expectations. Angie answered questions and clarified various items.

Gene asked for public comment. No public comments, a break was called at 10:51 am. The meeting was brought back to order at 11:03 am.

Clean Water Indiana

Tara provided a report for CWI and gave an update on CWI Grants Committee activities. Report was provided in the SSCB packets. Tara brought up the AFR policy for late submissions which was tabled at the last business meeting. This topic will be further discussed with the Grants Committee and brought back to the board.

Tara presented Marion County SWCD's grant modification request. This request is asking to move \$5,000 from the demonstration category to use for workshops.

Motion to discuss. Seconded by Jewel. Motion for approval. Unanimous approval vote.

Continuation of CWI Grant Report

Tara and Jane met to discuss how to make sure that our district supervisors understand the importance of the local districts. Need to get ahead of the potential conservation issues that could be coming. There was further discussion on the district visits. The draft agenda will be revised and Jane commented that the timing of these visits is critical. Discussion included:

- SWCD visits
- Value of those visits from SSCB members
- Potential to record a video introducing SSCB members mentioning next steps, purpose of visits when invited, and listening to SWCDs.
 - IDEA would like to help with the video idea.

Tara shared that June 25th is the CWI competitive grant information session. Anyone can attend that would like more information.

State Soil Conservation Board Business

Tara provided a business plan update for the SSCB. Jasn asked for additional input or changes to make sure the plan is where we want it to be. Tara shared that Next steps and put into public document and we can go from there to share out.

Gene's Chairman's report – Gene commented he would like to have one conservation day at the SSCB meeting. Jennifer shared she thinks we could make this happen.

Soils Director Report

Jennifer shared some ISDA Soils organizational changes. Laura has moved under Breegan. Jennifer also provided a soil board vacancy update. She shared there are multiple applications for interest. Interested people don't represent our hopeful geographical representation or farming interest. Jennifer asked the board if we want to proceed with interest we have or to wait a little longer. The board commented that the vacancy is important to fill but would like to see if we can get the geographical representation wanted.

David Bausman shared he is working with the AG's office to get a legal analysis of Dual Office holding.

Public Comment(s)

Ray Chatten provided a public comment. Ray provided an update on the progress of SICIM and local invasives species removal efforts. SICIM will not receive another NRCS agreement after the expiration of their current agreement in 2027. Ray commented that SICIM wants to go to state legislature and ask for a half million increase to CWI specific to invasive species removal efforts.

Partner Reports

Jennifer shared verbal partner reports will not be provided this meeting. Jane asked NRCS about federal updates. NRCS shared the IRA funding is gone and pivoting these funds to farm bill programs rather than IRA.

Jared Thomas shared that Steve Brown has been appointed as the new Executive Director of FSA and is working on submitting names for state committee. Hoping to have a state

committee by August. Waiting on Secretaries reorganization plan. Working on getting local leadership in place to help with federal mandates.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Sandra presented SWCD temporary appointments for Dearborn, Huntington, Marshall, Fulton, Brown, and Ohio counties. Sandra provided details for these appointments to the board.

Kenny made a motion to accept the appointments. Seconded by Brad. Motion unanimously approval.

Gene asked for public comments. No public comments.

Kenny motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:28 pm. Seconded by Jewel. Motion unanimously approved.