

Minutes
Dakota West RC&D
Dickinson Research Extension Center
Dickinson, N.D.
June 19, 2014

Call to order and attendance

Jim Odermann, president of Dakota West RC&D Council, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. (MDT).

Attending from Dakota West RC&D Council were Frank Hatzenbuhler, Dick Knopp, Jim Odermann, Dennis Reich, Kris Ringwall, Don Urlacher and Duane Urlacher.

Attending from Dakota Prairies RC&D Council were Susan Davis, executive director, and Dawn Martin, president.

Agenda and meeting purpose

Odermann distributed the agenda, which stated the purpose of the meeting is to explore the possibility of Dakota West RC&D and Dakota Prairies RC&D working together to achieve the vision, mission and objectives of the two organizations. The discussion centered on whether Dakota West RC&D should: 1) Merge with Dakota Prairies RC&D; 2) begin operations again and partner with Dakota Prairies on administration, grant writing and other functions; or 3) dissolve.

Dakota West history

Dakota West, established in 1992 as a non-profit 501(c)3, represents soil and water conservation districts and other entities in 10 western North Dakota counties. It has a board of 20, of which four are at-large positions. Following the federal budgets cuts to the RC&D program in 2011, Dakota West lost its coordinator (Jared Andrist) and became inactive. The office had previously been funded through NRCS and member/sponsor dues.

Odermann reported that 12 member/sponsors formerly paid \$200 in annual dues. However, member/sponsors have not been invoiced for a number of years.

Frank Hatzenbuhler reported there is approximately \$62,000 in the Dakota West checking account and another \$5,000 in a CD.

Dakota West legal status

Hatzenbuhler said he has kept the 501(c)3 annual reports through the North Dakota Secretary of State's office current. He listed the last set of officers on the forms.

Kris Ringwall, director of the Dickinson Research Extension Center, recommended a legal opinion be obtained on whether Dakota West RC&D is still a legal entity. He is concerned that the bylaws have not been followed and no activity has taken place for some time. Also, new officers have not been elected, so questioned whether this board still has authority to meet and make any decisions.

There was some discussion on whether Dakota Prairies RC&D could undertake this legal opinion on behalf of Dakota West. However, by consensus the group decided that this should be led by and paid for by Dakota West.

319 funding program

Susan Davis and Dawn Martin reported the new grant application through the North Dakota Department of Health's 319 water quality program is due Oct. 1, 2014. Greg Sandness with the North Dakota Department of Health (Water Quality Division) has encouraged Dakota Prairies to either merge or partner with Dakota West as there are growing concerns about water quality issues in western North Dakota. Also, Sandness would like to see combined and larger training and educational events as part of a new grant application.

Dakota West is currently being served with 319 project funding under Dakota Prairies RC&D's current three-year \$325,000 grant. This grant is from May 1, 2012, to June 30, 2015.

Going forward

By consensus the group decided that rather than merge with Dakota Prairies, it will remain a separate entity. They agreed it is important to keep an identity in western North Dakota and reconnect with the members. Those present indicated they want the Council to be active again and come up with a plan and direction and update the bylaws.

Also by consensus, the group decided it wants to partner with Dakota Prairies on administrative services to add efficiency and save on operating costs. There was also agreement that the two Councils should apply for funding together, especially the 319 water quality grant. Another possible funding source is the new Resource Conservation Partnership Program under the 2014 Farm Bill. Pre-proposals are due July 14, 2014.

Assignments

There was a consensus to have Odermann contact either the Stark County state's attorney or a private attorney within the next 10 days to get a legal opinion on the legal status of Dakota West RC&D.

If the legal opinion is favorable for Dakota West to continue operating, a six-member negotiating group was assigned as follows:

- *Dakota West RC&D*: Jim Odermann, Don Urlacher and Duane Urlacher
- *Prairie West RC&D*: Susan Davis, Dawn Martin and Rhonda Vetsch

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m. (MDT).