

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes



December 2nd, 2020 10:00am

Conference Call Only

Members Present (on phone): Bill Rice (Dickinson Conservation District), Amber Butterfield (Dickinson CD Manager), Steve Kircher (Forest County Conservation Dept.), Scott Goodwin (Florence County LCD), Dick Peterson (Lake Township, Menominee Co), Tracy Beckman (Lumberjack RC&D)

Members Absent: Aaron McCullough (WDNR-Marquette)

Guests: Nick Cassel (UPRC&D)

Tried to Join (Technical Issues): Nate Burklund (Niagara School District), Justin Bournoville (USFS)

Staff: Lindsay Peterson (Coordinator), Kyle Hafeman (Project Manager); Katherine Mentel (Project Manager)

Meeting called to order at 10:01 am by S. Goodwin.

Board of Directors Meeting

1. **Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by D. Peterson/B. Rice. **Motion carried.**
2. **Approval of Minutes** – Minutes from the October 7th, 2020 Meeting were presented. T. Beckman/ D. Peterson moved to accept the minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**
3. **Grants & Treasurer's Report** – A. Butterfield led this portion of the meeting. All of the grant reporting was completed at the end of September. WRISC has been reimbursed for all of the grant requests to date. WRISC has finalized the extension for the MISGP Strategic Management Plan, started in 2016. This grant will wrap up in July 2021. Currently, WRISC is cleaning up the GLRI EPA budget after discovering some errors and looking closely at other grants to ensure they are accurate and ready to continue forward, with specific attention to those requiring extensions. The undesignated funds sit at \$3,643.85. T. Beckman asked about an estimate for the funds remaining for the next year. A. Butterfield determined there was an estimate of about \$350,000 in funding for 2021 and reported this later during the meeting. Motion to put the grant/treasurer's report on file was made by T. Beckman/D. Peterson. **Motion carried.**
4. **Project Updates/Reports**
 - a. L. Peterson led this portion of the meeting. Since the last board meeting there have been no new events.
 - b. Grant updates
 - i. WRISC received approval to resume the MISGP Strategic Management Plan project, MISGP Core Funding project, and all other MISGP grants WRISC is partnered on. WRISC also received an extension for the MISGP SMP grant, that will run to the end of July 2021. WRISC is waiting on an advance for the grant, which will help with the cash flow since much of the remaining project work is purchasing.
 - ii. The WE Energies Expanding Communities and Collaboration grant is set to end in December 2020. WRISC is asking for an extension, as we were not able to spend what we wanted during 2020, primarily due to the lack of a full seasonal crew.
 - iii. Similarly, with the GLRI EPA grant, WRISC has applied for an extension due to setbacks from Covid-19. WRISC was unable to hire a field crew this summer, which threw off funding. WRISC will be asking for a full year extension on this grant. This funding will help with vDASH work and inland lake surveys.

- iv. The CBCW grant did well this summer. WRISC worked the first half of the summer on the GLRI-CBCW grant and helped out WI Seagrant the last half of the summer. With this additional funding, staff covered landings in northern Oconto Co. and southern Marinette Co. WRISC did about 200 hours down there and connected with many new boaters who have never heard of the program before.
 - v. The HWA grant has resumed. Staff is working on training this week via online sessions and a field refresher in Delta County. Surveys will start in the next two weeks after mailings go out. This will be some of the main work for Kyle and Katherine this winter.
 - vi. The two Life After Phrag grants went off well this year. Treatments were done at the end of September and beginning of October. Both grants will continue next year.
 - vii. The MEF Loose the Loosestrife grant had a slow start this year, as none of the partners were able to hire a crew. WRISC did a survey on our new stretch of the river and WE Energies did the lower stretch as normal. WePIC was able to run their section of river, but Lake to Lake Cisma was unable to survey their stretch. The project is a multi-year project so there are plenty of opportunities to make up for this disruption.
 - viii. The MISGP Core funding resumed, but WRISC is going to delay the start of this project until January 2021.
 - ix. The GLRI-CWMA grant is off to a slow start. Main focuses of the grant involved in person trainings and school workdays, which were unable to happen due to COVID-19. WRISC is planning alternatives for next year to get this project back on track.
 - x. WRISC also has the GLRI Pathways Education grant, which will help with outreach materials, specifically the commercial. Our videographers are working hard to wrap the project out. However this project will be delayed to better fill funding gaps (likely 2021-2023).
 - xi. Beyond the update this summer confirming this grant was awarded, L. Peterson has not heard any additional information on the WI DNR SOGL grant (which WRISC is partnered on). To refresh, WRISC would be assisting by targeting invasive species on private lands adjacent to state natural areas.
 - xii. WRISC was awarded the MEF Pathways Prevention grant that will probably start early 2021. This grant will focus on AIS and private landscape pathways, and will include several events targeting these pathways (for example, landowner management trainings, invasive trade-in days and/or a fishing tournament).
 - xiii. WRISC is working with UPRC&D to do a U.P.-wide frog bit surveying grant. This would be through the MISGP fund.
- c. Staffing—The current staff is L. Peterson, K. Hafeman, and K. Mentel. Staff is currently working through numbers from the summer, which are still impressive given the circumstances this summer. L. Peterson has been working on a work plan for when she is on maternity leave.
 - d. L. Peterson published a fall newsletter, and will work on developing an Annual Report which will be available in the new year. Also, WRISC's website and social media have been growing, and WRISC has gotten some great feedback on the new WRISC website.
 - e. T. Beckman inquired about benefits for L. Peterson and how much time she is taking off. L. Peterson mentioned that at this time she will be using vacation time, and the amount of time off is yet to be determined. There is currently no policy at the Dickinson CD that determines or guides maternity leave. A. Butterfield stated that this will be discussed with the DCD board. T. Beckman also asked if there were health benefits through the district. The DCD does not offer any benefits at the current moment.

5. Old Business

- a. **Partner Signatory Update**—L. Peterson stated that WRISC is going to take the last couple of pages WRISC has not received yet and include them with the MOU renewal. This will also help save money on postage.

- b. Winter Storage Update**—WRISC was able to store two boat washes at Shakey Lakes in exchange for a couple days of CBCW work at Shakey. This was a resolution passed by the Menominee County Board of Commissioners. The other two boat washes have covers on them and are going to be stored at the DCD office outside. They will both need maintenance in the spring. For the side by side, L. Peterson had ordered a cover for the unit, but had to cancel the order as the cover was backordered. A replacement cover will be ordered. The side by side will be stored at the DCD office as well. The vDASH is still in the storage unit and all winterized. S. Goodwin mentioned that in the future, WRISC should look into replacing some of the broken boat wash units. L. Peterson said another option would be to sell one of the units, as WRISC does not have the staff or time to run all four units at the same time.
- c. CISMA Cost-Share/For-Hire Discussion**—L. Peterson opened a discussion to address the recurring topic of WRISC incorporating a cost-share or for-hire program for the CISMA to make some additional money aside from grants. She had an opportunity to talk with some other CISMAs that run cost-share programs and received detail on what they do. There are a few different structures out there, such as just for-hire work, strictly cost-share assistance, or a mix of both cost-share and for-hire programs. In many of the groups, the Board or steering committee would then decide how the money received is spent. L. Peterson stated that the program could be applied to maintenance treatments after years two or three, which could help offset costs, especially since these re-treatments are rarely able to be funded by grant money. Some of the for-hire work other groups conducted was nondiscriminatory, so non-priority species received treatment. L. Peterson stated she is not as keen on that type of work, as our area has many large acreage plots of difficult to manage species, which would take a lot of time and labor to complete. L. Peterson also presented the idea of charging for an inventory service, which would include a short management report and property map. L. Peterson said many people ask about receiving this service, but the grant funding is usually not available since it is private land. Many of the cost-share programs have a similar setup to the Phragmites cost-share program WRISC already participates in. T. Beckman asked what the term cost-share meant, as in the landowner sharing in the cost of the treatment. WRISC would give the landowner a cost estimate and use grant funds to subsidize a portion of the work while the cost-share funding received could be used as match for grants or set aside to do additional work. T. Beckman also asked what the success with cost-share is, as landowners may not be in a rush to receive treatment. From the CISMA experiences L. Peterson gathered, most people are willing to pay and receive treatment in a certain timeframe. Cost-share can have high participation, as the cost to landowners if they were to get it privately treated would be much higher. L. Peterson does not think WRISC would lose many participants if we transition to more cost-share work. Moreover, the first few years of treatment would still be free to landowners and funded by grants. Prolonged retreatments are becoming less attractive to grant funders, so cost-share could help WRISC offer these services to landowners. L. Peterson said she would prefer WRISC to still focus on priority species. T. Beckman also asked how WRISC would run essentially two services—the cost-share and the for-hire work. L. Peterson said it depends how we would want to set it up, from the overall framework, to where the focus should be, to how much promotion we do of the services. N. Cassel mentioned that before he left Three Shores CISMA, he chatted with other groups about introducing a cost-share program as well. He said it is very doable but entails a lot of planning and consideration of many details. Overall, N. Cassel said both models have the potential to be successful for the CISMA. T. Beckman also asked about liability, and L. Peterson clarified that WRISC was covered under the DCD insurance and would have contracts with each landowner to cover liability. Moving forward, T. Beckman wanted to know what future discussion would look like, such as convening a smaller group and working through some of the questions. L. Peterson said it was up to the board and what they felt comfortable with, such as forming a subgroup to work out a framework. S. Goodwin suggested using the framework of an action team to work on this idea. T. Beckman asked what the other board members thought of the idea. D. Peterson stated that cost-share and for-hire work definitely needed to be addressed, as the problem is not going

away but grant funding is changing. D. Peterson also mentioned that this type of work can allow WRISC to work on projects or properties we may not find funding for. B. Rice agreed that the discussion should move forward but also noted that it should become a discussion point at a future DCD board meeting, being they are the fiscal agent of WRISC. L. Peterson said she will send a short survey out to the board so they can answer questions and offer feedback about how they want to move forward with this or to share their thoughts after digesting the information presented during discussion. T. Beckman also offered to help on the subcommittee/action team to work on the framework for cost-share moving forward, as she has experience working with similar programs with WHIP and TIP. S. Goodwin also suggested bringing this discussion to the full partnership at the annual meeting, as it is a change in the direction for WRISC. L. Peterson agreed and made note that a plan would be complete and presentable for the 2021 Annual Meeting.

6. New Business

- a. **MOU Renewal and Resigning Partners**— L. Peterson stated that WRISC is up for MOU renewal this year, but it was reworked last year when WRISC originally thought it was due. There were not any changes found necessary when it was last reviewed. If the board does not want to review it again, WRISC will start sending out letters and resigning pages in the new year. All partners will need to resign to the updated 2021 MOU, which is why WRISC is holding off on sending paperwork to the partners WRISC gained last year but have yet to receive signatory pages from. S. Goodwin suggested WRISC move forward with the MOU and not spend weeks on re-reviewing the MOU. Board consensus was to send out the MOU without further review. L. Peterson indicated this process will be started and renewal requests will be sent in the new year.
- b. **February Board Meeting**— L. Peterson wanted to throw out the possibility of postponing or cancelling the February meeting, as she will be on maternity leave. Based on previous February meetings, the main concerns of the meeting are usually summer staffing and normal budget/project updates. L. Peterson stated she was comfortable with her staff handling things while she is gone but does not know how comfortable they would be running and planning a board meeting. T. Beckman and B. Rice both agreed that L. Peterson should not have to worry about planning a meeting while on leave and would be open to postponing/cancelling the meeting. L. Peterson stated that A. Butterfield could still send out a grant report, so board members could still view updated financials. The board reached a formal consensus to suspend the February meeting barring any upcoming changes that may require the board to meet. The next meeting will then be in April.

7. Round Robin

- a. **S. Goodwin** said Florence Co. now has 25,000 bar coasters to promote CLMN recruitment for next year. S. Goodwin will start distributing the bar coasters when it is safe to do so. S. Goodwin also applied for the Marinette Co. Conservation District Manager position, and if he gets the job, he believes he would still serve on the WRISC board.
- b. **D. Peterson** said this whole period is a great time to be outside due to weather. Recent observations of the water table have led to excellent regeneration of shrubs and evergreens. The lakes are still a little above normal water levels, but under control.
- c. **T. Beckman** noted that LJRC&D was having an upcoming meeting. She also congratulated L. Peterson on her hard work at the UMISC conference for her presentation on the Pathways Guide. They received good feedback from UMISC and other conference participants.

- d. **S. Kircher** did not have anything to add, just waiting for ice to form.
 - e. **B. Rice** did not have anything to add, as A. Butterfield and L. Peterson covered all topics well. B. Rice did note that not having a field crew around this year did make summer work more difficult but that things seem to be looking up for 2021.
 - f. **No other updates were provided at this time**
- 8. **Other Business:** With the February Board Meeting suspended, the next WRISC board meeting will be held April 7th, 2020.
 - 9. **Future Agenda Items:** The Annual Meeting will be the next big topic of discussion. T. Beckman also wanted to add a continuation of the discussion about the cost-share/for-hire work.
 - 10. **Adjourn.** Motion by T. Beckman/D. Peterson to adjourn at 11:20AM. **Motion carried.**

Minutes compiled and submitted by Katherine Mentel & Lindsay Peterson