



211 N. Appleton Road
Belvidere, IL 6108
815-544-3465 ext. 3

Boone County SWCD Board

Present

Bill Hall.....Chairman	Jack Ratcliffe.....Secretary/Treasurer
Todd Aves.....Director	Aaron Brahmstedt.....Director

Absent

Mike Frank.....Vice-Chairman

Attendees

Heather VanTilburg.....SWCD	Jennifer Becker.....NRCS
Luke Trexler.....NRCS	Josh Franks.....NRCS

SWCD Meeting 12/10/2025

Bill Hall called the meeting to order at 8:07 A.M.

Minutes

The November meeting minutes were approved by Jack Ratcliffe and seconded by Aaron Brahmstedt.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Finance Report

Heather VanTilburg gave the finance report. Current funds are \$252, 282.24 in Midland checking account and \$15057.69 in Midland savings. The Illinois Funds account is \$264,359.03. There was a motion made by Todd Aves, seconded by Aaron Brahmstedt to approve the finance report. The motion passed unanimously.

Timesheets

Jack Ratcliffe approved the timesheets.

Reports

Heather VanTilburg gave the SWCD report. Ms. VanTilburg went over updates from Winter Training in Springfield, covering programs and grants with IDOA and AISWCD. She discussed that they completed the final session of soil health training for this year and advanced sessions are likely to continue covering in depth topics such as: soil biology, livestock, edge of field, and longer term rotations. Ms. VanTilburg explained that this training is a state mandate and likely will continue with appropriations, a part of the statute is requiring that each district complete a baseline soil health assessment for the county. She discussed that these reports will be due September 1, 2026 and IDOA has provided a guide to help districts find some of the information but that these are basically a more comprehensive transect survey.

Ms. VanTilburg went over program news, starting with the Fall Covers for Spring Savings open sign up period just announced. She spoke about I-Cover, IDOA announced at Winter Training that IL had secured the funding despite changes to IRA allocations and they would aim to hold a sign up in February to have time to plan Fall of 26' cover crops—SWCDs will be responsible for planning and contracting but IDOA holds the sign up. She discussed a new program, CPRG (greenhouse gas reduction grant) that districts will see next year after IDOA holds the sign up. There is \$67 million in funds for IL, \$2 million of which has been allocated to districts for technical assistance (TA)—previously no allocation existed for TA. Ms. VanTilburg reported that IDOA was unsure how those funds would be distributed but that districts could expect to see TA funds spread out over the 3 years of the program rather than a lump sum. She concluded by mentioning that the amount of money potentially flowing through districts to carry out this cost share may put some over the threshold for an official audit—which can cost between \$12-18k to complete. Todd Aves mentioned that for the township, finding an auditor willing to do one is always an issue and to consider that as we approach administering of this program. Ms. VanTilburg reported that IDOA indicated the TA funds are meant to help with the cost of an audit, but may not cover all costs.

Heather reported on news about FY26 operations and cost share grants with IDOA, they will begin on the new agreements once the PFC deadline has passed later this month. Ms. VanTilburg discussed that reporting and grant delivery will be changing for 2026, all state departments must use Amplifund for grant reporting and application—districts will begin to utilize this once IDOA inputs all grant elements to the system. She discussed that this will make reporting a lot easier, and no new log in is needed since it is connected directly to the district's GATA access. She also mentioned that IDOA has a grant manager on staff now to make this process easier and assist districts with grant related business.

Ms. VanTilburg gave a few updates from AISWCD at Winter Training—overall there is more of a push to shift workload to states and local levels, which may mean some opportunities for districts in the future. She said that payments for the 2025 local work group (LWG) meeting are in queue, they were supposed to go out Oct 1, but the shutdown delayed. 2026 meetings need to be help by April 30th, 2026 and Boone is working with Winnebago SWCD to plan a joint meeting again. She reported that NRCS administrative invoices will move to quarterly billing and that April-June invoices are processing and July-September will get processed afterward. Ms. VanTilburg discussed that Boone's unfunded cooperative agreements for office space, vehicles and other NRCS resources expires 12/31/25 and new agreements are being drafted. A quick turnaround on signatures will likely be needed to keep office space access.

Ms. VanTilburg went over committees and meetings. She reported not much new in development team but that stormwater invite letters were sent out to the municipalities and appropriate partner agencies (BCSWCD being one). Heather will sit on the technical subcommittee (advisory) but a director would be able to reserve a seat on the overall committee (policy). The Ag Preservation and Easement committee met in November, and Ms. VanTilburg is coordinating with the county planner to do a short presentation at a Grange meeting to talk about the district and how we might be of assistance in the ag community. She also said that Farm Bureau will have new plat books available this spring for purchase and would like a couple copies for the district. Heather said that no formal meetings have been called for Envirothon but talking amongst the group to move it along, there is an interested teacher for Boone County again and the SWCD is assisting with registration. The LUC16 meeting was cancelled in November, but staff will assist in ranking scholarship applications again this year. She concluded with a discussion about the recent Geologic Tour of Boone County organized by the Groundwater Committee, ISGS, BCCD and Boone County Planning. ISGS took a group of about 40 people all around the county to various geologic sites of interest and discussed some of the work being done to map out the county's water resources below the surface. Heather said that ISGS would very much like to come back in Spring and do another tour but with different sites.

Ms. VanTilburg reported on PFC and that the last FY24 fund requests were sent in to IDOA, one payment remaining and \$3668.74 of unused funds will be transferred out before the deadline to spend (12/31). The districts application for 2026 projects deadline is 12/15 and staff will begin ranking soon, additional funds will likely be requested—FY25 cost share allocations were around \$13,000.00. She also discussed erosion and sediment control, stating that inspections would slow down with the ground frozen. No new NRI requests came in since last month, but after talks at training staff will likely be bringing proposals forth to increase fees associated with full NRI reports. Ms. VanTilburg concluded her report with updates to the tree and fish sale, stating that dates are mostly set and stock pre-ordered. Staff will work on putting out a late newsletter with early access to the sale forms by the end of the calendar year and will also be visiting the county highway yard to get a look at the tree planter they're currently storing.

Josh Franks gave the NRCS report. Mr. Franks reported that NRCS and the SWCD returned to the office on November 13th after the shutdown, the current CR is good until July however ag is funded the entire fiscal year through September 30th, 2026 so field offices shouldn't see closure through that time despite any budget negotiations in the next few months. Mr. Franks reported staffing updates for the district group, the previous Winnebago County IDOA planner has taken another position, but IDOA plans to replace vacant planner seats (Boone and Winnebago). Mr. Franks discussed work being done on NRIs for USDA, which tracks land use changes on a county level (whether fields are hay, pasture, crop, etc.). The system automatically avoids non-cropland when assessing points. Bill Hall asked how often these surveys are done, Josh replied that every year they are conducted but the individual county points change each year. Heather VanTilburg asked if any of this data is public, as it may help the SWCD in their county soil health assessment due next year. Mr. Franks replied that the county report should be available, but they've never seen them, he indicated he would inquire and see if the report can be viewed.

Mr. Franks wrapped up the NRCS report with notes about CRP payments being issued and in general workload is 6 weeks behind due to the shutdown, and USDA is still in a hiring freeze that may last through 2026 as some of the regional office restructure.

PFC Project Deferral to FY26

Ms. VanTilburg discussed a previous agenda item that would require board action at this month's meeting regarding a PFC project unable to be completed in fall of 2025 where a signed contract exists. Program guidelines say the board may discuss deferral and vote to carry the contract into FY26 and use FY25 cost share allocations to fund due to FY24 expiring 12/31 and any unused must be returned to IDOA. Ms. VanTilburg explained that the area had been temporarily seeded down this last spring and will be covered until construction can commence. A motion was made by Todd Aves, seconded by Jack Ratcliffe to extend PFC contract 00700003 to 2026 to enable completion of construction.

Adjournment

Todd Aves made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Aaron Brahmstedt. The motion carried.