



211 N. Appleton Road

Belvidere, IL 6108

815-544-3465 ext. 3

Boone County SWCD Board

Present

Bill Hall.....Chairman

Aaron Brahmstedt.....Director

Jack Ratcliffe.....Secretary/Treasurer

Todd Aves.....Director

Mike Frank.....Vice-Chairman

Absent

Attendees

Heather VanTilburg.....SWCD

Jennifer Becker.....NRCS

Josh Franks.....NRCS

Rebecca Olson.....A3 Environmental Consultants

Alan Branhagen.....Natural Land Institute

SWCD Meeting 04/01/2026

Bill Hall called the meeting to order at 8:03 A.M.

Minutes

The March meeting minutes were approved by Mike Frank and seconded by Todd Aves.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Ag Easement Discussion from NLI

Rebecca Olson and Alan Branhagen began a discussion at the meeting regarding opportunities for agricultural easements in Boone County. Ms. Olson said that there are opportunities specifically for Boone County to put land into easements. Mr. Branhagen mentioned that NLI currently has about 4500 acres in easements, mostly in Northern IL. Ms. Olson provided some information and discussed how easements are administered and ways to enter into one as a landowner. There was some discussion as

well regarding NRCS's ACEP-ALE program that pays 50% of the value of the development rights for these easements. Ms. Olson mentioned that much of the current funding through NLI would go towards the administrative costs to establish an easement but can sometimes also help find funding to fill in the actual costs of the easement outside of NRCS programs. The board asked several questions regarding real estate values and the process of assessment involved. NRCS staff also participated in the conversation giving more context to some of their easement scenarios.

Finance Report

Heather VanTilburg gave the finance report. Current funds are \$250, 888.56 in Midland checking account and \$15062.95 in Midland savings. The Illinois Funds account is \$267,739.03. 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. She reported that the application for FY26 grants with IDOA are open and that she will begin with the district's application this week. Ms. VanTilburg announced that the district's road signs would be installed by IDOT in the next few weeks and that Summer Training registration would also be coming soon from AISWCD.

She gave a brief overview of the committee meetings from last month; development team discussed recent state legislation regarding solar and wind projects, stormwater met for the second time and are working on setting up the foundation of the group, groundwater discussed the Farm Breakfast on June 27th at Fitzgerald farm and using some allocations to repair/replace some of the groundwater models used in educational outreach. She concluded with a report of the recent Envirothon event and provided tentative dates for 2027 at Morton Arboretum.

Ms. VanTilburg discussed PFC cost share and other agreements. She reported that Jo Daviess County would be transferring \$2430.87 to Boone County so that projects could be ranked and pre-approved. There are 3 open applications, two of which are grassed waterways and one pollinator. Ms. VanTilburg said that if the board approves ranking today, she would need to request an additional \$6,000 to cover the cost of the pollinator application provided the applicant is still interested in assistance. She discussed other cost share programs through IDOA currently, CPRG and I-Cover, stating that work had begun on CPRG and contracts would need to be signed by May 1st and that open sign up for I-Cover would begin April 15th with IDOA (preapplication opens today, April 1st). Ms. VanTilburg also completed one spot check assigned by IDOA for their Fall Covers for Spring Savings program. She wrapped up with the open administrative assistance balance for the NRCS agreement, which is \$6,675 (Q1 & Q2 invoices) and that all of the FY25 invoices have been paid. She said there has not been much work for this agreement currently but depending on ranking decisions there may be some work coming with EQIP and CSP obligations.

Ms. VanTilburg concluded her staff report with an update on erosion and sediment control inspections, regular inspections were completed and an additional inspection was requested by the County Highway

Department to assist with some complaints regarding a housing development project on Spring Creek Rd. She also had a couple of calls regarding flooding/water issues and addressed those concerns with the landowners. Lastly, she gave a quick update on tree and fish sales, there were 12 tree orders totaling \$1,020 and 10 fish orders totaling \$1,918.80 with one more expected today for the deadline.

Jennifer Becker and Josh Franks gave the NRCS report. Ms. Becker reported that the deadline for EQIP ranking is this Friday, April 3rd and they're just finishing up a few details for some Boone applicants. She also mentioned that the CRP deadline has closed and that they are now gearing up for CSP field checks and application ranking. Josh Franks gave an update on staffing. He said that a new Pheasants Forever Biologist will be starting in the Rockford office, but that the area of coverage is also Boone, McHenry and most of the area west of Winnebago County. Mr. Franks also reported that they are out of a hiring freeze, but the critical vacancies for Illinois are only few so they may not see much of a difference in staffing quite yet. Most district groups and areas have been leveraging staffing resources to help each other complete work on programs as needed, so some employees may spend time in other areas to help with workload.

PFC Ranking

Heather VanTilburg presented the ranking spreadsheet for current PFC applications. Funds to be spent this year total \$15,901.21 after the payment transfer is received from Jo Daviess County. The two top ranked applications for grassed waterways can be covered by this amount but an additional \$6,123.48 would need to be requested from IDOA to cover the cost of the pollinator if the applicant still wishes to proceed. A motion was made by Todd Aves, seconded by Jack Ratcliffe to accept the projects and ranking with available funds. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Todd Aves made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mike Frank. The motion carried.