



# Clinton County Soil & Water Conservation District

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## Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

The Board of Directors of the Clinton County Soil and Water Conservation District met for their monthly meeting on June 28th, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at the Breese USDA Building.

Chairman, Tim Wesselmann, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Those present for the meeting were:

### Clinton County SWCD Directors:

Tim Wesselmann  
Cliff Schuette  
Paul Hustedde  
Clinton Michael  
Brent Kalmer

### Clinton County SWCD Associate Director(s):

#### Clinton County SWCD Staff:

Administrative Coordinator: Emily Gaddis  
Survey Aide: Olivia Walker  
Resource Conservationist: Leeann Singer German

### Guest(s) NA

Absent from the meeting: Associate Director: Ken Knolhoff, Ray Krausz, NRCS District Conservationist: Gary Gaubatz

#### • Open Tasks

1. Hiring Process. Gaddis recommended selecting from the resumes that NRCS had reviewed and choosing up to 5 for each role and scheduling interviews for the top candidates
2. Grant Reports Due: IDOA (7/11), NACD (7/20), NRCS Survey Aid (7/29): Gaddis will complete the reports due at the quarter's end, however new staff will need assistance to complete these reports for the first time and can reach out to neighboring SWCDs and IDOA. The binders "Survey Aide" and "NACD Grant" will provide guidance in addition to the documentation in Clinton County OneDrive. Monitoring grant deliverables for progress reporting and closing the NACD grant are of huge importance.
3. Surface Mining Report: Staff informed the board that the SWCD Chairman and NRCS DC signatures are required, and the report needs to be emailed by 8/15.
4. RC Verification Report: Staff provided an update that this form needs SWCD Chairman signature and must be submitted the IDOa by 8/1.
5. PFC: Singer German provided an update that there are three signed contracts for FY23
  - Need NRCS to review/approve #449
  - #471 and #472 are not yet completed, construction set to begin late summer
  - There is still \$\$ for FY23; RC selected a potential cover crop contract to use remaining funding (#483)
  - However, none of the applications have had Board approval yet. This will need to be documented in Board Meeting Minutes at the next Board Meeting.
  - Another option is that the Board sends back the remaining FY23 funding due to lack of staff and waits to use FY24 funding until next year. CCSWCD can keep applications on file, but w/o technical personnel in the office, it seems unlikely the District will be able to complete the contracts this year.

6. NRIs: Singer German provided an update that NRIs are required by law and that the District must fulfill its obligation to carry out these reports by staff or potentially a contractor.
7. CREP: Staff provided notice that the invoice submitted annually and is due on 12/31/24. Documents available at <https://dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/crep/8675309swcd/docs.html>. New staff will need to contact DNR for CREP Assistance. There are 2 CREP contracts in Clinton Co and the folders are accessible via the file cabinets.
8. Upcoming Events: Staff provided an update on upcoming events:

*AISWCD Summer Conference:* As no staff are attending, it may be in the best interest of the Board to send at least one representative to the conference. Registration information is in the Gmail and available online at [aiswcd.org](http://aiswcd.org)

*AFT Soil Health Field Day-* this grant may need to be declined due to lack of staffing and limited time to plan.

*Local Led Conservation Summit* – the summit should be postponed as the tentative 8/12 date is too soon to execute given staffing issues. An in-person local-led meeting needs to be held at some point this calendar year. CCSWD will discuss with NRCS if the District is unable to complete this and it becomes NRCS responsibility to conduct this meeting.

*Fish Sale:* Andry's emailed the [clintoncoswcd@gmail.com](mailto:clintoncoswcd@gmail.com) email address on 6/28/24 to confirm that date for the fall fish sale. Board will need to vote at the next board meeting or subsequent on date and pricing.

9. NRCS Administrative Assistance Agreement and MOU: Singer German recommended the Board needs to arrange a meeting with new staff and NRCS to ***clearly establish*** expectations and ***ensure that all new staff have the capability to complete NRCS tasks***. This requires access to government computers and permissions and access to reach the necessary files.
10. Staff and Board Roles & Expectations: Staff provided feedback on the need for ***roles need to be clearly defined for the staff and recommended that the board undertake an analysis of staffing needs to best serve the needs of the district moving forward***. Staff believe the AC role would be better reclassified as an Executive Director to implement supervisory duties, liaise with the board and pursue funding and collaboration opportunities in the county and region to advance the mission of SWCD. Exiting staff created job aids to provide some guidance into performing existing roles. Some tasks include more collaboration than others, and staff recommended setting a weekly schedule with remote access and a shared desk schedule for the limited government computer necessary for completing NRIs and NRCS admin assistance.
11. Board involvement: Staff would like to see the board be more involved with the organization and collaborate to advance the mission of CCSWD. More in-depth quarterly meetings to review financials and forming subcommittees would be helpful.

12. **Benefits and Compensation:** Staff explained how competition is increasing from the private sector, NRCS and FSA continue to provide more attractive compensation packages which contributes to high staff turnover. Staff recommend competing by offering more benefits that are in alignment with benefits offered by federal hobs and the private sector which include: increased leave-17.5 hours vacation is national average for non-profits, new trend is 2 weeks off for all staff 1 in summer and 1 in winter. Retirement contributions and promotion of student loans forgiveness eligibility – if positions require staff with degrees, then a student loan repayment option, even if only a set dollar amount, would attract qualified candidates. Positions at 30 hours allow staff to qualify for PSLF program.
13. **Job Security:** Staff explained that the budget cut of 50% to operations funding proved to be a point of concern for many people. They want to see the board of directors prioritize fundraising and grant writing to pursue the goal of becoming self-funded, which would create job security. Language in annual contracts specifying performance-based raises with regular employee feedback would provide more job security in addition to a consistent COLA and incentive pay for conservation planners level 1 and 3 attainments would be helpful to attract and retain staff. Given that the CCSWCD has reserve funds, this language in employee contracts would go a long way to making staff feel valued and inspiring them to invest the necessary years to be trained in the technical content necessary to thrive in these roles.

Kalmer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:49 a.m. and Clinton Michael seconded the motion. Motion carried. The next Board meeting is scheduled for July 9<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. at the Breese USDA Service Center.

  
**Brent Kalmer, Secretary**

