

SWCS – Empire Chapter Meeting
February 4, 2003
Meeting Minutes

Present: Henry DeMoras, Dan Dostie, Bill Keating, Rich Wildman, Jeff Carmichael, Dick Dale, Dana Chapman, Mike Dennis, Lee Telega, Julie Burger, Elaine Dalrymple

Rich Wildman called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Folks introduced themselves. Rich asked Elaine to review the minutes of the last meeting. The Annual Meeting minutes are not typed up yet. The minutes of the last regular meeting in September 2002 were reviewed. Henri moved the minutes and Dan seconded with one correction by Jeff that Rich Wildman was in attendance.

Treasurer's report: Dick Dale handed a printed summary of SWCS income and expenses for 2001-2003. This included a summary of income (approx. \$6100) and expenses (\$6300) for the Annual Meeting in December. The difference was due in part due to the cost of breaks. Julie made a motion to accept the treasurer's report, seconded by Jeff. All approved.

Annual Meeting: Rich briefly reviewed what the speakers covered. In brief, they pointed out that there are different styles of management and this affects how farmers make conservation decisions. Michael Boehlje, a professor from Purdue University and Craig Yunker, a farmer were the main speakers. Rich handed out a numerical summary of the evaluations that were filled out by participants. Julie noticed that someone commented on the cost of joining SWCS was rather high. Someone asked if we had to be part of the national society and the answer is yes. Dan said that the year he joined there was an incentive to join and he thinks that helps encourage new members. This council subsidized this. Dana would badger people. Dana said that he just got a young consultant to join. Dana said the cost is always discussed and really what we are doing is supporting the cause. Lee commented that it comes down to the value. Dana said it would be interesting to see who got the incentive and who is still a member. Rich asked Dan if he would have joined without the incentive. Dan said it used to be part of the NRCS culture but now it is not. Most people will join one organization and not another and we need to make sure it is SWCS. We need to give folks a role in the organization. Jeff said we get \$6 of the \$75 dues. Even though the fee is high, it makes a member serious about your commitment. We have received approximately \$10,000 from sale of publications, and \$5,000 from NRCS and hopefully this will continue. We are positioning ourselves to get more income even though national SWCS gets so much of the dues. There are about 6,000 members nationwide. It is important for young people to see that an investment in education may not see immediate results but it is ultimately worth it. Dana thinks we need to have a membership committee. Going to national Annual meetings are inspiring for new members. Rich asked the Chapter what they thought of the Annual Meeting. Jeff thanked Rich for putting so much work into the meeting. Jeff thought it was very worthwhile and Rich said Steve Mahcovec was happy. We have lots of ideas from the evaluation form. Dana wondered about a summer meeting. One year we went to the Plant Materials Center and had a picnic. Dana said

that if we do a summer meeting and host the regional meeting, we could get NE Chapter of the year. We need to file our reports with National that state what we accomplished and Jeff is working on this. Elaine said she thought the Annual Meeting stretched us, and met our goal of being at the forefront. Bill said it was good to have someone who could bring the national perspective especially for those that can't go to the National meeting. We also brought NRCS in. Jeff and Rich asked NRCS what we needed to do to get their support and if they aren't interested then we really aren't sure what we are doing. Steve M. said the Annual Meeting needs to have an educational component to get NRCS support. Jeff really tried to reach out to Districts to get them to the meeting. It helped to have Craig Yunker so that Soil and Water Committee is now aware of us. Julie suggested that we have our new brochures at the Water Quality Symposium. Dana said that maybe DEC would give us money to sponsor workshops.

Other related discussion: Jeff reviewed a letter from Jerry Verrigni about SWCS sponsoring training so that folks can get trained to be certified as stormwater managers. Dan commented that Jerry is not a member and we should recruit him. Henry said that the Precast Concrete Assoc. of NY requested our mailing list so that they can promote their programs. We could put it on our website. Dana commented that we used to sponsor a minimum tillage conference and maybe we could substitute a program on stormwater including a trade show. If we continue to generate income then we can pour it back into the membership.

2003 NE Regional Workshop: Purpose is to bring chapter leaderships of NE states together. The location will be The Inn and Meeting Place at Rensselaerville. Lee commented that this is a retreat spot and has wonderful food. It is a good environment for this type of conference since the mission of Rensselaerville is to promote and empower communities. Dana gave an update on the planning and handed out a draft agenda for discussion. Chapter presentations are updates on the activities of the chapters and should include handouts. There are 8 Northeast chapters so each presentation should be 10-15 minutes. Jeff said we should challenge the chapters to focus in on one topic that they want to share that will help other chapters. PowerPoint presentations that give the chapter a chance to shine and provide a teaching opportunity to help other chapters are what he envisions.

Rich suggested an evening session on March 6th to start to develop a Regional Strategic Plan. There has never been such a plan and Dana said there is no official regional group now but the idea is to develop one. Joe DiMura will be coming and his talk could phase into a strategic session. We need to give Joe a structure for his talk. Dana thought he would talk about the new stormwater regulations and lead into how the chapters might address the opportunities that will exist and also what the needs are. He also might talk about what the State and Federal policies are and the process of implementation. Someone commented that we should talk about the opportunities but also talk about what this means for us as professionals and as chapters. We can also see what other states are doing. Rich asked if we could add another topic such as CAFO but both stormwater and CAFO topics should stimulate thought. Lee suggested that we get a speaker from another state to talk about stormwater. Rich commented that the only risk is that we don't know the quality of the speaker. One topic might include regional EPA

issues and what the State's role is. Dan suggested having someone from the national SWCS office come and address a topic that would be discussed at the national meeting. Dana said he is inviting someone from national. Jeff suggested the topic of odor concerns and Lee said he knows someone who is a good speaker on this topic. Jeff said he also knows someone at NACD, the Northeast District person, who is a good speaker on the topic of how to be a better manager. Rich asked if we wanted a technical talk and his feeling is no. He asked about the history of these regional meetings. Dana says it has been broad range but we need topics that feed into the development of a strategic plan. Julie commented that she is not sure that we should bring in a whole new topic in that Dana needs to get the agenda sent out. Dick suggested a topic that will make it clear what the mission of the meeting is. Rich said the mission would be to have a strategic plan completed.

Another possible topic suggested by Rich was the issue of third party vendors now called technical service providers (TSP). Lee said that there was a recent article in USA Today that talked about the privatization of the conservation effort and that there is too much of a workload for the government to handle. Rich wondered where the region stands on this. Dan said that TSP is different from the budget issue. One involves outsourcing (TSP) and the other involves possible downsizing. Of the 11,500 NRCS field people, 4000 are seen as inherently government and 7500 are being evaluated to be possibly outsourced. Someone asked what the involvement of the possible TSP's is in other chapters. Dana said that there is less diversity than in our Chapter such that 80% are NRCS employees. We could focus on our diversity in our chapter report. Rich commented that it could seem self-serving to discuss this topic of TSP's and maybe it should be about how we all need to work together. He added that we need to make this meeting a good learning opportunity. There was discussion about having a NY partnership panel possibly including Steve Machovec and Rick Zimmerman. Jackie Pashnik, the NE Regional rep. from Rhode Island should set up the strategy session.

Julie asked if the Council would sponsor members to go to the Regional meeting. Jeff made a motion that the Council sponsors any council or other chapter member that wants to attend. Henri seconded the motion and all were in favor. At this point about 8 council members thought they would attend. Since Lee lives nearby he would not need to pay the \$175. The meeting announcement should go to all Chapter members. Elaine will contact Ankeny and tell them who is presently on our Council.

Other SWCS National Issues: The location of the 2005 and 2006 National Annual Meetings have not been decided. Dana asked some New York cities to apply and both Rochester and Buffalo did so. A rep. from National came to Rochester but did not tell Dana ahead of time. If New York sponsors a national meeting, the chapter will not have to do as much organization work as in the past. Ankeny will take it over. They would welcome our involvement but they have not been able to get the grassroots support as in the past. Rich made a motion that we actively pursue the annual meeting in New York. Elaine seconded and all were in favor. Rich said that Rochester wants the annual meeting and he thinks having it in New York will help our membership. Rich would like to tell the NE chapters that New York is pursuing the national meeting at the regional meeting in March. National SWCS will decide where the 2005 meeting will be at their April meeting. Julie suggested that Rich as president of the Empire Chapter write to Ankeny

saying that we will help with organizing the meeting but we need to be kept informed and know what they want us to do. Jeff asked that Rich copy all of us as well as the regional rep. Everyone was in favor of writing the letter. Jeff said that National needs to have a point person to organize the annual meeting and Dana said that they already have one. Jeff nominated Rich as our chapter delegate to this year's annual meeting. Julie seconded and all were in favor. We need to let national know who our delegate is immediately.

Council Objectives: Rich expressed his opinion that a key council objective should be to represent the profession of conservation professionals. How to implement this objective is where the work is. We need a committee structure but we shouldn't over commit. We need to deliver and build credibility so our employers support what we are doing. We do not have a lot of active members and we need to deal with things successfully or we may meet our demise. It is a time of peril and opportunity and we need a smart approach to spending our time and resources. How to implement our objective is where the work is.

Established Committees: The present committees are:

Publications: Lisa Miller

Scholarship: Ellen Luchsinger

Awards: Dan Dostie

Newsletter: overseen by the President

Nominations: Past President

Formation of New Committees:

Jeff said he thinks we need a professional development committee, a membership committee and a finance committee. There was a great deal of discussion about the possible committee structure and everyone agreed that we need to bring it back to what our mission is. An outline of the roles of the possible committees was laid out on a blackboard. Dana suggested that each committee have a budget. The committees and their responsibilities were laid out as follows:

Chapter Development (President is the Chair)

- a. Professional development of members
- b. Conservation Skills workshop
- c. Forward planning/new members
- d. Annual Meeting
- e. Summer meeting (Adirondack waterfest)
- f. Regional Leadership workshop
- g. National meeting

Membership/Outreach Committee (At- large Council member is the Chair with regional council reps as members)

- a. Newsletter – 2 times per year
- b. Website
- c. New member welcome packets
- d. Member retention
- e. Nominations for Council

- f. Display at events
- g. Mini-grant program
- h. Awards
- i. Scholarship program
- j. History and Chapter documentation

Finance Committee (Past President is Chair)

- a. Income generation
- b. Publications sales
- c. Cash flow
- d. Develop budget
- e. Plan investments

Someone suggested that publications be under both the Finance Committee and the Membership/Outreach Committee because we shouldn't look at them just in terms of cash flow. Julie moved that we dissolve the other committees and make three pending By-Laws concurrence. Lee seconded and all were in favor. Elaine checked the By-Laws and we are in concurrence. Lee suggested having Co-chairs for the committees and Rich suggested having good committee members. The work should not fall entirely on the Committee Chairs. Each committee should start looking for members and Dana suggested that it is important to involve outside members besides council members on the committees. We all need to take fundamental responsibility. Jeff made a motion, seconded by Julie that we adopt the committee structure and responsibilities as listed above. All were in favor. Julie volunteered to update the volunteer handbook.

Corporate Resolution: A resolution was handed out and passed with regards to changing the name of the "SWCS -Ronald Fletcher Endowment" account to "Empire State Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society – Ronald Fletcher Endowment" account and authorizing the treasurer, currently Richard Dale, to administer this account and the other two cash management funds held by First Investors.

Lisa Miller was introduced by Dana and explained what she does for the Empire Chapter. She started off by saying that she handles phone orders for our publications. There was discussion about the discounted price given to Districts (\$20 for 10 or more) instead of \$32, which includes handling and shipping. Dana suggested that we separate out handling and shipping charges. Rich said we would identify a contact person for each type of issue related to publications. People have reported difficulty printing out the order form from the web site. Barb, the Web manager does not think it is the website causing the problem. Jeff spoke with Barb and it could cost a lot of money to get a pop up window that asks if a person has Acrobat Reader and if not they can download it here. Dana said we should get an SWCS e-mail address and Lisa needs to be able to access a special SWCS e-mail address.

Lisa handles daily publication orders, updates the inventory, mails out the orders (she had about 100 orders for the new Erosion and Sediment Control books even before they came out), she typed the By-laws and Constitution, helps with the

Treasurer's report, and does the invoices, and the checks. She receives \$10 per hour for her work and spends about 12-15 hours biweekly. Cayuga Co. pays Lisa and our contract is for professional services. She bills the council monthly. Americorps volunteers put the binders together and Cayuga County gets \$1 per book handling fee. Lisa should let us know if her work for the council affects her other responsibilities, if the way we do business is problematic, or if there are communication problems. Lisa doesn't mind doing some typing for us. She takes boxes of publications that have been ordered to a company called CASES and they bill us for postage. We talked of setting up a UPS account, which may save time and energy. Lisa will look into this and perhaps we will charge extra for a rush order. Jeff will send Lisa a logo and Rich will call Don Lake.

SWCS Mini-grant: Bill has received 7 applications, Dan handed in 3 and Julie handed in 1. We need to have ranking criteria. The Finance Committee needs to set up a budget and the applications should go to the Regional reps. We also need to set up a timeline for when grants should be received, etc. Henri asked how people are hearing about the grant. This is important for marketing it.

Website: Barb, the website manager, sent a written report. Rich didn't feel we needed to analyze the report in depth. We need to be getting stuff to her to put on the Website. K-bytes indicate how intensively the site was visited. We should get the follow-up on the Annual Meeting onto to the Website. Barb's rate of \$25 per hour to manage the website is cheap according to Lee.

Other Business: Suggestions for topics for the Conservation Skills Workshop were handed out. Rich will write to Amanda and ask if a rep. from the Empire Council can be on the planning committee and also indicate that we are willing to provide financial support again. Henri suggested that the Pre-cast concrete meeting be promoted through the web site. There was discussion about the Adirondack Waterfest and a request from the Greater Adirondack RC&D Council for a \$500 donation. Rich wondered what the Empire Chapter gets out of it. Bill said that he felt we reach potential members, get name recognition, and it is a way to do public outreach. We have been providing financial support and a booth for four years. Julie made a motion that we sponsor the Fest for \$500. Henri seconded the motion. Discussion followed. Elaine asked if our presence and display was geared to the right audience. Ronny Raindrop is there as a District Employee function. Bill said we get sponsorship credit. Jeff said it is an easy way to do a summer meeting. The fest probably does not meet the criteria of a mini-grant. The motion was tabled and it was decided that Rich will write a letter to RC&D and say that we need more information and will consider it within our committee structure. Bill let RC&D know that a letter will be forthcoming. Someone asked if we have money to help the regional reps. put on summer meetings.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be at the Regional Leadership Development Conference.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 pm.

Minutes taken by Elaine Dalrymple, Secretary