

Minutes

The meeting called to order by WMA Chairman, John Kurtz at 1:32 pm.

Motion to approve the agenda. Motion made by Steve Geerts and seconded by Randy Leach. Motion Passed

Attendees: John Kurtz, *Buchanan County Supervisor*, Tori Nimrod & Ross Evelsizer, *Northeast Iowa RC&D*; Ron Lenth, *Bremer SWCD*, Trevyn Cunningham, *Central City*; Steve Geerts, *City of New Hampton*; Randy Leach, *City of Fredericksburg*; David Lehman, *Bremer County*; Michael Miller, *Black Hawk County SWCD*; Mark Bohner, *City of Tripoli*; Dana Kellogg, *Linn County*; Alex Davis, *Linn county SWCD*; Patrick Nachtman, *Delaware County SWCD*; Ritch Kurtenbach, *Black Hawk County*; Dana Kellogg, *Linn County*; Kip Ladage, *Bremer SWCD & Bremer Co.*; Steve Breitbach, *Chickasaw County*; Andrew Rust, *The Nature Conservancy*; Chad Humpal, *Chickasaw CCB*; Sean Dolan, *Buchanan County SWCD*; Matt Crayne, *Chickasaw CCB*, Dr. Martin St.Claire, *University of Iowa*.

Motion to approve the Minutes from May 1st, 2025. Motion made by Sean Dolan and seconded by Mark Bohner. Motion Passed.

New Business

Water Quality Report – Dr. Martin St. Claire, University of Iowa

Dr. Martin St.Claire presented the water sampling results for the 2025 sampling season. He summarized data that compared Upper Wapsi Watershed results with other Northeast Iowa watersheds. When compared to the Maquoketa, Middle Cedar, Turkey, and Upper Iowa River Watersheds, the Upper Wapsi Watershed has the second highest land are of row crop, which impacts the surface water quality in the watershed. The upper Wapsi had the second lowest average in nitrate concentrations and Ecoli concentrations were consistently above the recommended level for the recreation on children, which was consistent with other watershed in NE Iowa. Dr. Martin St.Claire looked further into the nitrate data and found that samples were impacted by the day of the month the sample was collected. During the course of the summer samples were collected either the day after a large rain event or the day before, which could have changed the result of the data significantly. The University of Iowa team also samples for PFAS and Neonicotinoids. Results showed very low concentrations in the beginning of the season, therefore analysis stopped in July. Neonicotinoids are the chemicals often found in seed coatings that repel bugs and fungi from eating the seed when planted. While concentrations found were measured in the parts per trillion, samples indicated levels of these substances over the EPA studied level that causes death to aquatic life with long term exposure. See attached presentation for additional information from the presentation.

Partnership Opportunity – Andrew Rust, The Nature Conservancy

Andrew Rust, The Iowa Nature Conservancy presented on an application they are putting together for a US Fish and Wildlife grant. The project aims to restore oxbow wetlands and other wetlands in northeast Iowa. Andrew requested that the WMA provide a letter of support for the project. The letter

would show general support for the project with how it aligns with the goals of the WMA. Rust did not request any financial support at this time.

Kip Ladage, Bremer County made the motion to have the Upper Wapsi WMA provide a letter of support to the Nature Conservancy for the project. Motion was seconded by Sean Dolan Buchanan County SWCD. Motion Passed.

Coordinators will draft a letter for John Kurtz to provide approval and signature.

American Flood Coalition Membership – Ross Evelsizer

The American Flood Coalition is a bipartisan, member-driven coalition working at all levels of government to scale innovative solutions to the country's toughest flood adaptation challenges. Their mission is to "*drive transformational adaptation to protect communities from higher seas, stronger storms and more frequent flooding.*" The American Flood Coalition has provided funding to northeast Iowa RC&D and the Iowa Flood Center to help demonstrate how multi-cropping can provide significant flood reduction benefits. Ross presented about this project during the WMA board meeting on January 7th, 2025 if you are interested in reviewing. Past minutes can be found on the Upper Wapsi Website <https://upperwapsi.org/watershed-management-authority/#MeetingInformation>

Ross presented the option to join their membership community by developing a resolution. It is a no cost membership and would help strengthen the WMA's voice at the State and Federal levels. Ross provided a draft resolution for the board. Discussions from the board indicated support for the membership and the need for any help they can get with speaking to legislatures. Evelsizer also explained that any entity or person can become a member if they are interested. Resolutions were passed to board members in attendance and are attached with the minutes if your entity is interested in becoming a member.

Sean Dolan, Buchanan SWCD made the motion to adopt the resolution for the Upper Wapsi WMA to become a member of the American Flood Coalition. Motion was seconded by Mark Bohner. Motion Passed.

Watershed Coordinator Update:

Grant(s) Update:

WMA Coordinators gave updates on several funding opportunities for Northeast Iowa RC&D, the Wapsi WMA, and WMA member entities.

- 1) *Northeast Iowa RC&D in partnership with Innovative Ag Services submitted an application to National Fish and Wildlife Foundations Conservation Partnership Program totaling \$500,000. This project would directly work with landowners in the Upper Wapsipinicon River Watershed to provide technical assistance to landowners for conservation adoption. This project proposes a targeted conservation strategy by utilizing the ag retail and cooperative system as a conduit for widespread adoption of regenerative agricultural principles. Through a combination of technical training and peer-to-peer education, the project builds ag retailers' capacity to deliver regenerative agronomic guidance focused on crop management and habitat enhancement. Agronomy staff will be trained in conservation planning and Farm Bill programs (EQIP, CSP), helping at least 100 farmers understand and 50 apply for cost-share programs.*

The project facilitates a farmer-led peer network and hosts multiple technical events on conservation equipment and implementation strategies. Conservation outcomes will be tracked using farmer surveys, product sales data, and water quality monitoring at

approximately 40 sites. Soil health improvements will be measured using a regional soil health index and field-level evaluations. This initiative directly supports NRCS conservation goals in Iowa, particularly in addressing local capacity gaps, and is aligned with NRCS's MRBI. Ultimately, the project aims to provide a systems-approach to farming in Northeast Iowa by improving soil health, efficiently managing water resources, enhancing wildlife habitat, and creating a scalable model for conservation delivery through ag retail systems. .- Presented in Previous meeting

Coordinators received word on Monday January 12th that this project was not awarded. They will seek feedback from grantors to see how the application could be strengthened in the future. Thus far the only feedback was there were an abundance of applications and dollars were limited.

- 2) *Northeast Iowa RC&D received an award for an application to IDALS for their Soil and Water Innovation Grant application for \$50,000 October, 2025. This project aims to evaluate and demonstrate the use of virtual fencing technology as an innovative method to facilitate adaptive grazing of cover crops in Northeast Iowa's Driftless Region. The objective is to improve soil health, enhance water quality, and expand the adoption of regenerative practices by removing key barriers to managed livestock integration on row crop fields.-Presented in Previous meeting*

This meeting project coordinators updated board members that the Cattle collars have been deployed on 23 cows (mix of mostly steers, a few cows and one bull) in Fort Atkinson, Iowa. The cattle have been training and are ready to move to cover crop fields when the spring comes. The training process was a learning curve for both the operator and cattle, but both seemed to have figured out the system after about 1-2 weeks. The operator has been great to work with and has provided positive feedback so far. Goat collars are set to be deployed soon.

WMA Coordinator Expense Report

Nimrod reported on the income and expenses during the time period from October 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2025. In summary RC&D has received \$4,310 in donations this quarter after sending donation request letters in October. Expenditures this quarter included payment to University of Iowa for water sampling analysis, and watershed coordinator time. See a more detailed breakdown of the report attached with these minutes.

Board members were reminded to talk with their entities about including a contribution to the WMA in next year's budgets. If an invoice is needed please let Tori know the amount requested and the date you want the invoice.

Partner Updates:

Next Meeting Date: Tori, will send out potential dates for the annual meeting in April, 2026

Meeting Adjourned at 2:20 Motion made by Randy Leach and seconded by Steve Breitbach. Motion Passed.