

MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District Board of Managers
June 4, 2024

The regular meeting of the Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District Board of Managers was called to order at 4:00 p.m. Present were managers Steve Bousema, Casey Ingenthron, Rolf Mahlberg, Jay Milbrandt and Jeff Rogers. Also present were: Paul Langseth, SWCD supervisor; Julie Buntjer, Globe editor/reporter and Dan Livdahl, administrator.

The May minutes were discussed. Ingenthron moved to approve the minutes. Rogers seconded the motion. Affirmative: Bousema, Ingenthron, Mahlberg, Milbrandt, Rogers. Opposed: none. Motion carried.

The Treasurer's report and bills payable were discussed. Rogers moved to approve the report and pay the bills. Milbrandt seconded the motion. Affirmative: Bousema, Ingenthron, Mahlberg, Milbrandt, Rogers. Opposed: none. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

All money spent on the Crailsheim project in the 2024 fiscal year must be reported to BWSR in eLINK by June 30th.

The dumpster placed in the Centennial Park boat ramp parking lot for the disposal of carp was removed on May 21st. No carp were put into it during the month it was there. The large volume of runoff into Lake Okabena and Whiskey ditch seems to have disrupted the lake's normal early May spawning season.

The Bella Park trails are very wet this year, especially where the DNR pond dam is overflowing onto district property. Mahlberg and Livdahl delivered and placed more bridge planks to get equipment across the stream. Something will need to be done to anchor them. Mahlberg also hauled the new picnic tables to park and has mowed the trail multiple times.

Two trail cameras were installed in the park. A StrikeForce Wireless subscription allows unlimited photo uploads and downloads. Three signs warning that cameras are in use were installed last month.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Three of the Prairie View filter bench inspection pipes are missing this spring. The water is too turbid to see what happened to them. It is hoped that the pipes got dislodged by the high water, are lying nearby on the filters, and can be reassembled when water levels recede.

Les Johnson assembled a burn crew of 6 people and 4 ATVs at Bella Park on May 13th. When Livdahl called the Sheriff's department to activate the burn permit, he was told no new fires were allowed that day due to a statewide air quality alert. Wet weather since then has prevented further attempts to do the prescribed burns on the park's prairie acres.

Jim Laffenzen and Livdahl complained to the city that their employees were cutting vegetation too close to Lake Okabena's shoreline and throwing clippings into the water. Todd Wietzema wrote in a text message that an uncut buffer will be left along the shoreline in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

Katie Jacobson picked up the 2023 financial information on May 30th. She will apply to the state for an audit extension so it can be completed after the normal due date of June 30th.

The draft Lake Ocheda Management Plan addendum was reviewed. If approved, it will allow for periodic lake level drawdowns of up to two growing seasons. DNR staff are aware that the district intends to present the proposed plan change to the lake's riparian landowners in mid-August.

The fish barrier installed at the Minnesota West stormwater pond plugs up too easily causing water to back up. Livdahl told Brian Johnson that the district will pay to repair the barrier. This will be done later this summer when water levels are lower.

PERMITS

Milbrandt moved to approve the following permit application.

Dan Wagner – to perform erosion and sediment control during construction of a new home at 960 Sterling Avenue, Worthington.

Rogers seconded the motion. Affirmative: Bousema, Ingenthron, Mahlberg, Milbrandt, Rogers. Opposed: none. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

The next regular board meeting will be held on July 2, 2024, in the Nobles County Public Works Department building conference room at 960 Diagonal Road, Worthington. Rogers moved to adjourn the meeting. Milbrandt seconded the motion. Affirmative: Bousema, Ingenthron, Mahlberg, Milbrandt, Rogers. Opposed: none. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Administrator's Report
June 4, 2024

Dredge Fill Site Wetland Birding Opportunity

Bill Keitel submitted a proposal to Worthington to create an area for bird watching at the old dredge fill site wetland. He asked me to write a letter of support for the concept. I sent him a letter saying the OOWD supports the project and would be willing to help pay for signs that educate the public about the value of protecting wetlands about floodwater storage, groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat and recreational purposes.

Phoslock

Someone suggested to Tyler Wadzinski that Phoslock may be applied to Lake Okabena to remove phosphorus and reduce nuisance algae blooms in Lake Okabena. Tyler did some research and believes the technology is effective, but expensive. Phoslock is a combination of bentonite clay and lanthanum that removes soluble reactive phosphorus and permanently sequesters it. Phoslock creates a cap on the top of the lake sediments.

I think alum may be a better product since it removes both SRP and particulate phosphorus.

Advisory Committee Volunteer

Natalie Karel called and volunteered to be on the OOWD advisory committee. I told her that advisory committee members are annually appointed by the board, but put her on the OOWD email list and invited her to attend board meetings in the meantime.

Tom Bomgaars Driveway Repair

Tom Bomgaars asked if the OOWD has any money to help pay to repair his driveway over Okabena Creek. I told him the district does not have any programs at this time. He called the SWCD for about assistance before he called me. I told him he should call the County Emergency Management Director to see if any disaster assistance will be available for private infrastructure repairs. Marj Fogelman also called about the availability of assistance for Tom's driveway.