

Natural Resources Conservation & Development Board
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 8, 2011 at 9:00 a.m.

This meeting was held at 400 Willoughby Avenue, 5th floor conference room, in Juneau, Alaska and also by teleconference.

Board members in attendance:

George Woodbury
Cheryl Thompson
Carol Kenley
Bernie Karl
Al Poindexter

Others in attendance:

Ed Fogels, DNR Deputy Commissioner	Randy Rogers, ADFG Wildlife Planner
Dan Sullivan, DNR Commissioner	Joan Hope, AACD
Shana Joy, Executive Director, NRCDB	Ryan Stencel, AlaskaLink
Franci Havemeister, Director Div. of Ag.	Bryce Wrigley, Salcha Delta SWCD

1. Call to Order – Determination of Quorum

It was determined that a quorum was present and the meeting was called to order by George Woodbury at 9:05 a.m.

2. Remarks by DNR Deputy Commissioner, Ed Fogels

The Deputy Commissioner provided an update of staff changes at the Department of Natural Resources and also said that he is looking forward to working with the board to find solutions for some of the issues facing the department. He also explained to the board that the Executive Director of the NRCDB position is not finalized as the Commissioner's office is still in flux.

3. Approval of Agenda

Shana let the board know that NRCS could not participate in the meeting to speak to item #8 on the agenda. Al would like to keep that agenda item for general discussion purposes. Joan Hope was added to the agenda following item #9. Al moved to approve the agenda as amended. Carol seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. Election of Officers

Bernie nominated George Woodbury to continue serving as Chair of the board. Carol seconded the motion. The motion carried. Carol nominated Bernie Karl to continue serving as the Vice Chair of the board. George seconded the motion. The motion carried.

5. Approval of December 29, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Al moved to approve the minutes as presented. Carol seconded the motion. The motion carried.

6. Executive Director Report

Shana provided an overview of the soil and water conservation district training program which has been recently completed. Hard copies and CDs will be mailed to the districts as soon as possible as well as posting of the program on the NRCDB website. Shana also presented a draft map of the soil and water conservation district boundaries. This project is nearing completion; the updated boundaries will be available for download from the NRCDB website as a GIS file and final maps provided to the districts. A spring training conference has been planned for April 1st and 2nd in conjunction with AACD. More information will be available shortly regarding the schedule of events for the conference.

7. Wood Bison Project Update & Delta Bison Herd Management

Randy Rogers, Wildlife Planner for the AK Dept of Fish & Game, provided a presentation on the status of the wood bison reintroduction project as well as a description of the project's history. A draft 10J rule, under the Endangered Species Act, is expected to be released for public comment in the next few weeks. This 10J rule would allow reintroduction of the wood bison into the wild in Alaska as an experimental population. This rule is hoped to remove many of the roadblocks to resource development that an endangered species could cause. Also, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has recently proposed changing the wood bison's status from endangered to threatened. The board spent some time discussing the pros and cons of wood bison reintroduction; they are very interested in reviewing the draft 10J rule when it is released for comment. The overall board's sentiment regarding the project is very cautious. No action was taken at this meeting.

Randy Rogers also provided a presentation regarding the management and history of the Delta Bison Herd including current efforts by the Div of Agriculture to assess and track crop damage. The Delta bison herd crosses the Alaska Highway into farmland under production and to-date, efforts to keep them from doing so have not been successful resulting in thousands of dollars in crop damage. Several ideas for future herd management were discussed, including raising the permit fee to hunt the bison to a level which would allow reimbursement to farmers for the crop damage and reducing the herd size. It will be difficult to find a solution that will both suite the interests of farmers and hunters alike but the ADF&G will continue to look for viable solutions.

8. Tribal Conservation Districts

An NRCS representative was not able to participate in this meeting. Al explained further his concerns regarding tribal conservation districts, boundary overlap with state districts, and how the federal government, via tribal districts, could usurp the state districts authority. This topic will remain as an agenda item for future discussion. The board is interested in some type of agreement being put in place between the state and the tribal districts at least for the purposes of coordination and cooperation.

9. NACD Annual Conference Report

Carol Kenley provided comments regarding her experiences at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual conference in Nashville, TN and shared a binder of resolutions that were considered by the NACD.

- ❖ The board recessed for lunch at 12:05 p.m. and reconvened with a full quorum at 1:20 p.m.

10. Invasive Plants Program Follow up – Joan Hope

Joan Hope offered comments regarding the wrap up of the ARRA funded invasive plants program and her efforts to ensure retention of the jobs created in the local communities around the Alaska district. The board is supportive of her efforts and looks forward to hearing from the invasive plants coordinators in the Alaska district area at future meetings. .

11. Memorandum of Understanding with Soil and Water Conservation Districts

The draft MOU was discussed by the board. Al requested that a sentence be added indicating that the NRCDB may receive funds, as the 12th district – on behalf of the Alaska district, for the purposes of supporting work the organized districts may do within the Alaska district boundaries. It was clarified that the organized districts are not required to do any work under this MOU. Carol moved to approve the MOU as amended. Bernie seconded the motion. The motion carried. Shana will make the language change and distribute the MOU to the organized districts for consideration.

12. Southeast Alaska Conservation District Formation

George Woodbury spoke to this item. Gary Morrison is willing to continue working towards the formation of a SE Alaska district and signing up the remaining cooperators needed. Al requested that Gary provide a plan for completion of this project to the board for approval along with a cost estimate. George Woodbury will work with Shana to get that information to the board for consideration.

- ❖ DNR Commissioner Dan Sullivan addressed the board.

Commissioner Sullivan provided an overview of DNR's current priorities to the board including TAPS throughput, the gasline project, permitting back-log and processes, as well as affordable energy opportunities. He thanked the board for their service and listened to comments from Bernie Karl regarding heavy oil production and Al Poindexter regarding natural resource education and the Future Farmers of America program. The board thanked the Commissioner for his time.

13. Alaska Statute 41.10 Work Session

The board worked through the recommendations provided by AACD item by item, discussing each suggestion. Shana Joy noted the edits to the draft document as directed by the board and will make the requested changes and distribute the new draft to the board prior to the next meeting. The board thanked Al for his hard work on the AACD committee to put the draft together.

14. Board Comments

Bernie and Al thanked Shana for her hard work and Ed Fogels for participating in the board meeting today.

15. Public Comments

Bryce Wrigley offered comments regarding the Delta Bison Herd management in the Delta Junction area as well as provided a copy of a recent letter from the Salcha Delta district to the US Fish and Wildlife Service commenting on the proposed 10J rule under the ESA. Bryce explained how the 10J rule has worked regarding the reintroduction of other endangered species in the lower 48 and the potential pitfalls associated with the wood bison reintroduction as a whole, including the ADF&G record of managing the Delta Bison herd which is not acceptable to many farmers in that area. George Woodbury thanked Bryce for his comments and remarked that the issue is a complicated one that is not likely to be resolved any time soon.

16. Next Meeting Date and Location

The week of June 13th was tentatively chosen for the next meeting date. The meeting will be via teleconference. An earlier date may be chosen if pressing business arises.

17. Adjournment

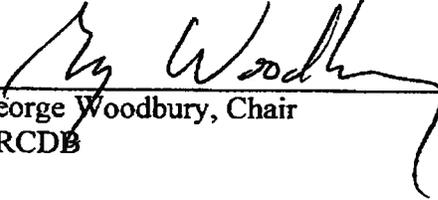
All moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:40 p.m. Bernie seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Minutes taken by:

Minutes approved by:



Shana Joy, Executive Director
NRCDB



George Woodbury, Chair
NRCDB