

DRAINAGE MEETING
MULTIPLE DISTRICTS
JUNE 23, 2021

The Drainage District Trustees of Story County met virtually in a Microsoft Teams meeting originating from the offices of Bolten & Menk, Inc. to consider a proposal for a letter (attached) to be sent on Story County Board of Supervisors letterhead requesting recipients to attend a meeting to learn about a project to create wetlands on their property within a drainage district. Members present were Lisa Heddens, chair, Latifah Faisal, and Linda Murken. Also present were Story County Engineer Darren Moon, Drainage Clerk Scott Wall, Bolton & Menk representatives Jon Rosengren and Tyler Conley, and landowner Cynthia Hildebrand.

Heddens called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Faisal moved, seconded by Murken, to approve the agenda. Motion approved unanimously (MCU).

Rosengren gave a brief background on the project. The plan is to divert water from drainage tile into a constructed wetland then redirect it back into the tile. The wetland will filter the water so it is cleaner when it reaches the tile outlet. The initial proposal is to restrict the work to land in drainage districts because there are good records of where the tiles are located. Funding is coming from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). The first projects will serve as demonstration sites to generate interest for more sites. The areas they are currently looking at are already wetter than the surrounding land and less suitable for cropping, hopefully making landowners less resistant to taking those lands out of production. Five of the seven counties in the project have had their initial landowner meetings already and Jon would like to hold Story County's meeting on July 7 in the Administration Building with a virtual link as well so people can attend live or remotely. The goal of the July 7 meeting is to gauge landowner interest. They would like at least one supervisor to attend and all three are welcome. This will assure the landowners that the county is involved in the project and will protect the owners' interests. That is also the reason behind using Board of Supervisor letterhead for the notice of the meeting.

Heddens asked about the timing of the meetings. Why are they holding them during the day instead of in the evenings?

Rosengren said they could hold evening meetings but they've had good response and attendance with morning meetings. Better than IDALS has had pitching the same project.

Heddens said landowners will likely ask who is paying for these projects.

Rosengren said all the costs are covered by state approved funding through IDALS.

Murken asked who is on the INREC staff.

Rosengren said the principals' names are at the end of the letter.

Murken said paragraph 4 on page 2 says the Supervisors will support this as the law allows. What does the law allow?

Rosengren said the drainage trustees cannot take privately owned lands to create wetlands. This is a voluntary program and landowners can agree to allow their land to be used but that request has to come from the owners.

Murken said the first time this project came up there was a proposal to put a wetland on ISU property. Has that wetland been built?

Rosengren said that wetland is in place now. They'd had to modify the project and pump water into the wetland rather than using gravity and the natural slope of the land to divert water from the tile. The project had gone ahead despite that because ISU wanted to use the wetland for research purposes. With the spring we've had it hasn't been very wet yet.

Murken said the letter is to be on Story County Board of Supervisors letterhead. Can the contact information in the letter direct landowners to INRECS? She doesn't want the board to be a clearinghouse for everyone's questions when INRECS is the holder of the information.

Rosengren said they can include the name of an INRECS contact person in the letter.

Conley asked if the Public Meeting Room was available on July 7.

Wall said he had discussed it with Conley earlier but had not reserved the room yet. He would check on it following this meeting. *(Note: The Public Meeting Room has been reserved on July 7 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for the INRECS meeting.)*

Murken asked how many sites there were in Story County. Are they just in one or two districts or are they scattered all over?

Rosengren said they have identified 23 prospective sites. They are spread across the county.

Murken asked if there was a list of landowners available. She wants to know who might be calling with questions.

Rosengren said there is a list but he does not want to release it until the landowners have received their letters.

Murken asked if there will be public meetings on this.

Rosengren said there will not be public hearings but the trustees will have to be involved to the extent that they must approve any wetlands that are constructed. Inside drainage districts.

Rosengren said all the prospective sites will be gravity fed. The ISU site uses a pump to get water from the tile to the wetland and gravity from the wetland back into the tile. The IDALS funding does not include maintenance and electricity for the pump.

Murken said if the letter is to be on Board of Supervisors letterhead should the Board approve that use at a Board meeting.

Rosengren said the intent is for the Board to act on this as drainage trustees.

Wall said the first line of the letter should read "The Board of Supervisors acting as Drainage District Trustees..."

Following some discussion as to how to refer to the Board/Trustees throughout the letter Murken said INRECS should just change "Board of Supervisors" to "we" after the first sentence.

Faisal asked how long the July 7 meeting would be.

Rosengren said they chose 10:00 a.m. as the noon hour makes a natural end time. The meetings they've held so far have run about 90 minutes but they will stay for as long as it takes if people have more questions.

Faisal said she'd asked because the letter says to show up at least 30 minutes before the end of the meeting but doesn't specify that time. The time at the top of the letter should be changed from "10:00 a.m." to "10:00-11:30 a.m."

Rosengren said they do a brief (30 minutes) presentation on what the projects entail at the start of the meeting and the rest is one on one with the attendees to answer their questions.

Murken asked how much it cost to run the pump for the ISU wetland.

Rosengren said electrical costs are estimated to be \$1,000/year. IDALS is exploring options to the utility companies, perhaps a solar power station at the wetland. It is a lot easier to make a one-time purchase than to get approval for a monthly utility bill.

Heddens asked if the trustees were okay with using Board of Supervisors' letterhead.

Murken said as long as the letter was clear that it would be the Supervisors acting as Drainage District Trustees.

Murken moved, seconded by Faisal, to approve the letter with the changes discussed here and to send it on Story County Board of Supervisor's letterhead. MCU. *(The Board of Supervisors approved the use of their letterhead at their regular meeting on June 28.)*

Conley said that he and Rosengren would both attend the July 7 meeting in person.

Murken would like to get a list of the landowners notified once the letter has been sent.

Rosengren said that would not be a problem.

Conley said they've had landowners who weren't interested in participating right now ask to be kept informed of what was happening on the project so they aren't just saying, "No, and that's final."

Murken asked if there are other wetlands besides the ISU site.

Rosengren said there are two sites between Ames and Boone that have been completed. Like the ISU site they have been mostly dry so far this year.

Murken moved, seconded by Faisal, to adjourn. MCU. Meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Scott T. Wall



STORY COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
LISA K. HEDDENS
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June 25, 2021

LANDOWNER
LANDOWNER ADDRESS
LANDOWNER CITY

APPROVED DENIED

Board Member Initials: LKN

Meeting Date: 6-29-21

Follow-up action: _____

Re: Water Quality Opportunity on Your Farm
7 Counties Water Quality Wetlands Locator Project

Your Proposed Meeting Session Time & Date: _____

July 7, 2021 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Dear Landowner:

The Board of Supervisors acting as drainage district Trustees have joined with six other county boards of supervisors to work with The Iowa Nutrient Research & Education Council (INREC), Iowa State University, and drainage engineers Bolton & Menk, Inc. (BMI) to develop a database of potential water quality wetlands projects that could be constructed in drainage districts in the seven counties. This consortium was successful in securing a grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) to in part utilize available engineering tools and drainage district records to find a number of these potential tile-zone wetland sites, primarily in drainage districts, in each county and to share conceptual designs and funding opportunities for these wetland sites with the affected landowners. The goal of the project is to provide to the IDALS a substantial list of actionable wetland sites for which informed landowners have expressed good interest in pursuing in the future.

In 2018 the Iowa legislature authorized the annual spending of \$15 million of sales tax revenue over 10 years for rural water quality improvement projects, including tile-zone water quality wetlands. This funding stream will become available to the IDALS in 2021. Over the decade that the funds will be available, the IDALS will select, and offer funding to, the better projects that have been presented for funding. It is then that the several potential wetland projects on the database that the 7 Counties Project Team intends to provide to the IDALS will be among those considered for funding. We anticipate that many of these desired wetland projects will be offered funding.

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Approximately 23 potential tile-zone wetland sites have been located by our project team in Story County. We are contacting you because all or part of one of those potential sites has been located on your property. The approximate location is shown on the enclosed map. You are invited to attend the scheduled meeting with BMI engineers, INREC staff and members of the board to learn more about this opportunity, either in person or virtually.

At this meeting there will be a brief presentation regarding the ambitious 7 Counties Project, the engineering design of tile-zone water quality wetlands, and how this supports the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy. You will be able to sit down with an engineer to discuss the details of the potential wetland on your farm and to have your questions answered. Information will also be confidentially provided regarding the potential incentive payment(s) and funding that will be available for your wetland site. The IDALS has historically provided 100% cost-share for water quality wetland construction costs along with very reasonable incentive payments to compensate for land taken out of production.

Our purpose is to give you enough information to help you decide if you would like to have your potential wetland project placed in the IDALS data base for future funding offers from the IDALS. No firm commitment will be expected of you on that day. To put your project on the IDALS data base the Project Team will need a general indication that you are interested in further considering the project. Your final decision to commit to the project will only be needed in the future should you be contacted by the IDALS. This is totally your decision with no pressure. If the site lays across a property line your neighbor's positive indication will also be needed for the site to make the IDALS data base. They have also been contacted.

Rural landowners are being asked to do more to reduce row crop farming's adverse impacts upon water quality in our counties and state. We recognize that most landowners and their tenants are well-intentioned stewards caught up in an intense production system that requires their farms to be highly productive and efficient to make a living while maintaining soil health and fertility and water quality. We also understand that not all farms are positioned to be able to take on a water quality wetland project at this time.

The Story County Board of Supervisors, acting as drainage district Trustees, advocate for and will support, as the law allows, voluntary water quality projects initiated by landowners in the

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several drainage districts in Story County. The board will also guard the drainage rights of you and your neighbors in carefully reviewing for the drainage districts all future applications for the construction of these tile-zone water quality wetlands.

The scheduled session is noted at the top of this letter. The session is intended to have a come and go format and it is not necessary for all to appear at the beginning of the session. Ideally your time there will be no more than an hour. However, all should arrange to arrive at least half an hour before the end of the session.

We hope that you will be able to meet with members of the 7 Counties Project Team and hear the details of this important opportunity. We ask every landowner to RSVP using the enclosed form. If you are interested but cannot attend the session, please let us know that you do want to meet, and we can schedule a time for you to meet with the engineers at another time at their office at no cost to you. For interested landowners who live out of the area individual telephone meetings can be arranged. If you are not interested, we ask that you so indicate and return the form.

Sincerely,

Story County Board of Supervisors,
Acting as Drainage District Trustees

Encl. Tile-Zone Wetland Conceptual Design Location Map

Scheduled 7 Counties Project Water Quality Wetlands Meeting in Story County

Meetings Location: Public Meeting Room, Story County Administration Building

Wednesday, July 7th, 2021, 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

The 7 Counties Project Team Members

- Dean Lemke and Shawn Richmond, Iowa Nutrient Research and Education Council
- Dr. Bill Crumpton, Iowa State University
- Bolton & Menk Drainage Engineers at Offices in Algona, Ames, Jefferson and Spencer
- Boards of Supervisors: Boone, Palo Alto, Hamilton, Kossuth, Clay, Pocahontas & Story Counties