

Minutes of the State Soil Conservation Committee Meeting



February 6, 2026

Menoken Farm, 1107 171st St NE, Menoken, ND 58558

A meeting of the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order at 1:01 p.m. by David Hill, Chair.

Committee Members and guests present:

Emily Montgomery – *SSCC, Area I Supervisor (via Zoom)*
Chris Walberg – *SSCC, Area II Supervisor (via Zoom)*
David Hill – *SSCC, Area III Supervisor, Chair*
Bob Martin – *SSCC, Area IV Supervisor (via Zoom)*
Jess O’Brien – *SSCC, Area V Supervisor, 2025 Vice Chair*
Mary Podoll – *SSCC Appointee, 2026 Vice Chair*
Bruce Schmidt – *SSCC Appointee*

Carrie Johnson – *NDSU Extension Assistant Director (via Zoom)*
Lindy Berg – *Area I Program Coordinator (via Zoom)*
Paula Comeau – *NDSU Extension Program Coordinator*
Amber Fetch – *ND State Soil Conservation Committee Administrative Assistant*

Welcome from Menoken Farms & Burleigh County SCD

Introductions

2026 SSCC Elections

- Bruce motioned to nominate David to be Chair again. Jess seconded. David accepted. No further discussion. Motion carried.
- Bruce motioned to nominate Mary to be Vice Chair. Chris seconded. Mary accepted. No further discussion. Motion carried.

Review of Prior Meeting Minutes

- Bob made a motion to approve the prior meeting minutes from the 12/1/25 meeting as written. Mary seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried.

Review of Financials

- Paula gave a brief overview of the financial reports.
 - Bob asked about the budget for 2026. Same budget as last year: \$20,000.

NDSU Extension Update – Carrie Johnson:

- Carrie gave an oral report on NDSU and Extension updates.
 - NDSU president search underway. Applications accepted through March 16. Hoping to have somebody in place early summer. Dr. Flage is on the search committee.
 - Dr. Flage has announced retirement July 1, 2026. Interim Extension Director for 1 year after her retirement. Hope to have someone in place about a month before she retires.
 - SBARE working on prioritizing needs; hoping to be done next meeting, Feb. 17. All received testimony is available online. Draft strategic plan is being worked on by leadership.
 - NDSU selected for USDA civil rights compliance review. Working on that now.
 - Annual reviews due March 31, 2026. The SSCC can provide feedback for Paula and/or Amber. Email Paula for feedback on Amber; email Carrie for feedback on Paula. Please provide feedback by March 15.
 - Special legislative session to discuss Rural Health Transform. ND received \$199 million; 5-year grant program. NDSU Extension is working on a proposal to receive some of this funding.

State Program Coordinator's Report – Paula Comeau:

- Paula gave an oral report on updates since the last meeting.
- Gathering information for the civil rights audit.
- Area Coordinator position (Hannah's old position) has been posted.
 - Paula will send posting to the Committee on Monday.
 - Lots of interest from Area II. We'd ideally like Area III, IV, or V.
- Subcommittee on finding better funding for smaller districts met. Sub-subcommittee was formed to meet with potential funders (NDSU Extension, DEQ, Dept of Ag).
- Leadership Academy Level 1 & 2 next week (Feb. 12 & 13) at Lake Region State College in Devils Lake. Level 3 is in Wahpeton (Feb. 26).

Area Program Coordinator Updates:

- **Lindy, Area I:**
 - Lindy gave an oral report on her activities since the last meeting along with an infographic shared with the Committee.
 - Job description review with Ramsey County SCD.
 - Succession plan recruitment with Cavalier County SCD.
 - POW working meeting.
 - DIRT Conference booth for soil conservation.
 - Pesticide training and 319 outreach projects in the works.
 - Program Coordinator survey—hope to have results to share by next meeting.
 - Prolonged Committee discussion of Plans of Work, annual (employee) reviews, etc. across the state.

Old Business:

- DART Program Proposed Additions
 - Paula met with Sarah Tunge and Kelli Schumacher to discuss DART changes. Sarah would like to revisit the MOU between NDSU Extension/SSCC/Employees Association to get it updated, hopefully at the summer SSCC meeting. Paula will provide a copy to the SSCC within the next month.
- Towner County Issues
 - All required documents are in for 2026.
 - Employees Association & NDSU Extension will be meeting monthly to discuss issues like this.
 - David suggested the SSCC member from the Areas where districts have issues be notified in the future.
- Policy for DART Payment Pauses
 - After a prolonged discussion, the Committee decided not to have a written policy and to continue addressing these issues on a case-by-case basis. Paula can draft guidelines to share with the Committee.
 - Discussion of whether the SSCC can withhold and redirect DART funding if an SCD remains noncompliant. The disbursement letters SCDs sign indicate that funding can be withheld if they are not in compliance.

New Business:

- Proposal to Require Phone # & Email for at Least Chair & 1 Other Supervisor Going Forward
 - Jess made a motion to require phone number, email, contact information for the chair of each board and one other board member going forward. Mary seconded. Motion carried.

- Proposal to Require Minutes from SCDs Quarterly
 - Prolonged discussion of this proposed requirement, whether there is a way to enforce such a requirement, etc.
 - Mary moved to request minutes from SCDs monthly as they meet with an explanation letter to say that we are going to glean information for a quarterly section of the newsletter to share with partners. Bruce seconded. Bob asked about specifics of the language (request versus require); Committee agreed on “request” language. Motion carried.
- Proposal to Require SCDs to Send in Supervisor Statements of Interest Now that They Are Required
 - Brief discussion that the SSCC does not need this information. Committee decided against requiring this documentation.
- Subcommittee Update
 - See State Program Coordinator’s Report above for additional details.
 - Paula shared information with the subcommittee about research into how much funding SCDs could use to each fund two full-time employees.
 - Prolonged discussion of which state agency the SSCC may fit with best and next steps. Subcommittee will report to the SSCC at the next meeting.
- NASCA Annual Dues \$6,000; No Option to Pay Less
 - Bruce moved for the SSCC to take the year off from paying annual NASCA dues. Jess asked whether other agencies in the state are part of NASCA; no, they are not. Jess seconded. No further discussion. Motion carried.
- SCD Elections
 - Proposal to add a column to reorganization forms where supervisors’ election years and term-end years are noted due to changes with the Secretary of State no longer housing that information (moving to county auditors). Committee agreed, so NDSU Extension will add this going forward and notify districts about that.

Next Committee Meeting:

The next SSCC board meeting will be in June; specific date and location will be determined via Doodle poll. Details about the specific time and location will be shared via email in advance of the meeting.

Adjournment:

David called to adjourn the meeting at 3:44 p.m.