MINUTES

For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board
Tuesday, September 9th, 2025, 5:00 pm, located at MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham

Call to order: Chairman Bunce called the meeting to order at 5:02pm

Board members present: Rowan Bunce, Hillary Ludecke, James DeDecker and Hans Eriksen

Board members absent: Charlie Todd, **Associate board members absent:** Barb Isom

Staff present: Alex Kolton, Eryn Grupido, Helena Moleski, Sara Kelso

Staff absent: Misa Cady, Landen Tetil, Elise Desjarlais and Holly Wendrick-Moss

Guests: Marty Ludecke

Public comment: Grupido reported that ACD received the MI Health Endowment Fund grant, beginning Oct 1, to supplement the Farm to School grant opportunity that was withdrawn.

Helena "Lani" Moleski introduced herself to the Board as ACD's new Junior District Coordinator.

DeDecker reported that he secured a $500 Agripalooza sponsorship from Range Bank.

Correspondence: Kolton passed around correspondence received since the last regular meeting.

Approve agenda: Motion by Ludecke, seconded by DeDecker, to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor; motion carried.

Approve minutes of August 12th, 2025, regular meeting: Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen, to approve the minutes of August 12th, 2025. All in favor; motion carried.

Board and Staff Reports: review written reports

NRCS SC: Received
Kolton reported on behalf of Cady that there are 18 active NRCS agreements in Alger Co. with $340K in total cost share across 2,500 private land acres.

FAP FORESTER: Received
Kelso reported that all UP FAP forester positions are filled with Houghton/Keweenaw Cos. having their first FAP position ever filled. Funding is uncertain due to state budget proposals for cuts to the MDARD FAP grant. Kelso helped to host a local training, which was successful.

L2L CISMA: Received

ACD DD (AK): Received
Kolton reported that both ACD Deer Habitat grants are completed and closed.

ACD DC (EG): Received
Grupido reported that she met with the Village of Chatham Board, and secured a letter of support for the trail redevelopment project connecting Chatham Community Garden to UPREC via the adjacent Village property.

MDARD: Received

MAEAP: Received

PRODUCE SAFETY: Received

Meeting Reports:

Old Business:

a. Update on Scrap Tire Grant

Kolton reported that EGLE staff met and decided to not fully reimburse the ACD scrap tire grant costs due to the unanticipated increase in tire processor costs affecting several grantees. This leaves ACD with a $1,738 deficit on the project. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen, to amend the ACD project budget by $1,738 to balance this deficit. All in favor; motion carried.

b. Use or Lose PTO, DD

Kolton reported that he decided to retain the current "use or lose" PTO policy after reflecting on conversation at the last meeting. However, he proposed moving from a fiscal year to a calendar year timeline for PTO accruals. This would allow staff to use more accrued PTO in the winter, but would not apply to sick time currently. Motion by Eriksen, seconded by Ludecke, to change PTO accrual/accounting to a calendar year timeline. All in favor; motion carried. Motion by Eriksen, seconded by Ludecke, to proactively award 3 months of sick time to all ACD staff for a total of 127.5 hours. All in favor; motion carried.

c. Sign UP Whitetails Thank You Letter

Bunce sent around a Thank You letter to UP Whitetails for their recent $2,000 donation

New Business:

a. FY 2026, Appropriations Budget Approval

Bunce closed the Regular Meeting at 5:39pm and opened the Annual Appropriations Meeting.

Bunce read the Budget Appropriations Act aloud. Motion by Eriksen, seconded by DeDecker, to adopt the Budget Appropriations Act. Roll call vote to adopt Budget Appropriations Act: Eriksen, aye; Ludecke, aye; DeDecker, aye; Bunce, aye. All in favor; motion carried. Kolton presented an updated ACD budget for FY26 including additions of $17,888 for two summer interns and $2,000 for advertising. There was discussion of our next millage in 2028, when we will have the option of being on the ballot for spring or fall elections. Increasing visibility of ACD as of late will help with the millage campaign. Kolton is planning to install "county line" ACD signs. The Board discussed the planned t-shirt logo design contest to promote ACD and support growth. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by DeDecker, to approve the ACD FY26 Budget as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

Bunce closed the Annual Appropriations Meeting at 6:07pm and reopened the Regular Meeting.

b. Revised ACD Business Plan

Kolton shared a revised ACD Business Plan. Changes include addition of a new inland lake monitoring program leveraging citizen volunteers and lake associations, and reduction of cost share goals from NRCS due to staffing reductions. There was discussion of updating MAEAP references in the future to reflect the new CTAP and Regenerative Ag roles. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Eriksen, to approve the ACD Business Plan as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

c. MSU Soil Testing Kit Subsidy for Alger County Residents

Kolton proposed a new ACD program to subsidize the cost of MSU soil tests for Alger Co. resident in the amount of $6 per test. DeDecker shared that MSU is currently outsourcing soil analysis to A&L Lab and marking-up the service significantly to generate a profit. The Board decided to table this issue until the next meeting.

d. Policy Review: Safe Working Field Conditions

Kolton presented an amended policy for Workplace Safety. The Board discussed adding a Training section outlining wilderness first aid, pesticide applicator, etc. training requirements and access. We also need to add references to the ACD Active Shooter policy. It was noted that additional sections of the Workplace Safety Policy were excluded from the new draft. Kolton suggested having ACD attorney Diane H. review the safety policy. The Board tabled this issue pending further edits and legal review.

Accept Treasury Report; pay bills

Kolton presented year-end financial statements. Many line item expenses were under budget for the year. Kolton requested a $1,300 increase for the vehicle maintenance line item. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Ludecke, to accept the financial statements and pay bills. All in favor; motion carried.

Public comment

DeDecker shared his positive experience presenting on UPREC and MiFarmLink at the Dickinson Co. CD Annual Meeting, and the interest of MACD Region 1 Director Charlie Burger in connecting with districts across the UP.

Kolton reported that district staff were not invited to attend the MACD Region 1 & 2 meeting to be held following the upcoming Director Training in Marquette. Bunce, DeDecker, Ludecke and Kolton plan to attend.

Grupido shared that Sept 17 and 19 are dates held for fall stream monitoring.

Adjourn
Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen, to adjourn at 7:37pm. All in favor; motion carried.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Tuesday, October 14th at 5:00 pm

Rowan Bunce 10/14/2025