

AGENDA

For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board
Tuesday, June 11th, 2024, 5:00 pm * MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham

Call to order:

A regular meeting of ACD was held on the above date. The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm by Chair John Highlen.

Board members present:

Staff present:

Board members present at roll call: John Highlen, Rowan Bunce, James DeDecker, Hilary Ludecke. Board members absent: Hans Eriksen. Associate board members present: Barb Isom. Associate board members absent: Charlie Todd. Staff present: Matt Watkeys, Alex Kolton, Misa Cady, Sara Kelso, Eryn Grupido and Helena Moleski. Staff absent: Elise Desjarlais, Amy Frye, Landen Tetil and Holly Wendrick-Moss.

Board members absent:

Staff absent:

Guests: Alger Co. Commissioner Mickey Rondeau

Public comment: Commissioner Rondeau shared that Alger Co. has seen controversy over the H-58 snowmobile trail. Part of the trail is now under conservancy and can no longer be accessed/used. The trail was previously used to access Miner's Castle in Pictured Rocks, but is now detoured to the road, which is causing damage.

Bunce reported that Rock River Township had a cleanup day with lots of people bringing tires, which had to be turned away. Watkeys confirmed that scrap tires can be brought to the upcoming ACD Chatham collection event.

Correspondence: Watkeys passed around correspondence received since the last regular meeting, including documentation of the H-58 trail closure issue noted above.

Approve agenda:

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

Approve minutes of May 14, 2024 regular meeting:

Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke, to approve the minutes of 5/14/24. All in favor; motion carried.

Introductions to meet Eryn and Lani

Board members and staff in attendance introduced themselves to Eryn and Lani, and vice versa.

Board and Staff Reports: review written reports:

Written reports were reviewed by the board and highlighted by staff.

a. NRCS DC: Report received.

Cady shared a summary of Alger Co. NRCS conservation plans. Fourteen Alger Co. landowners are currently under contract, totaling 450 acres and \$104,000 of cost share. The primary practices funded by NRCS in Alger Co. are forest management plans, high tunnels, timber harvest and livestock waste storage.

(Cady added to her report by email after the meeting: "Hello everyone, Rowan asked about the high tunnel and forest management plan numbers for Alger County in last night's meeting.

These NRCS conservation practices became available in 2009. Since that time, the local NRCS office has underwritten and provided funding for 34 high tunnel structures and 73 Forest Management Plans. The forest management plans have covered 8,230 acres of non-industrial private forestland.”)

b. **NRCS SC: Report received.**

c. **FAP FORESTER: Report received.**

Kelso reported that the recent Forestry for Birds workshop only attracted one participant, perhaps due to timing, location or weather.

d. **PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.**

e. **L2L CISMA: Report received.**

f. **ACD DM: Report received.**

g. **ACD PC: Report received.**

h. **MDARD: Report received.**

i. **MAEAP: Report received.**

Meeting Reports:

- DeDecker and Highlen reported that stream sampling on the Slap Neck and Bohemian Creeks at UPREC in Chatham was successful last Thursday, despite high water levels and lab supplies arriving later in the day.

Old Business:

a. **Native Grass and Wildflower Sale recap**

Watkeys reported that the native plant sale resulted in just over \$2,800 in sales this year, under the \$3,500 in income we budgeted for. One-and-a-half flats were returned to the supplier. Our only expense was \$130 in advertising.

b. **SESC Draft Contract review**

Watkeys reported that he had former ACD board member Diane Hogeume (sp?) review a draft contract between ACD and Alger Co. for administration of the Soil and Sedimentation program, at a cost of \$150, which she approved. DeDecker shared input from the Presque Isle Co. CD administrator regarding their negative experience running the county soil program, including being sued over alleged trespass. Watkeys sent a general inquiry to the CD admins listserv and received more negative than positive feedback (60:40). Public comment: Commissioner Rondeau reminded the board about the difference of moving into a regulatory role, vs education, and asked the board for a final decision. The board agreed that we can still assist with permit holder education regardless of taking on administration of the soil program. After discussion, the board agreed to no longer pursue administration of the Alger Co. Soil and Sedimentation program at this time. Watkeys will update the Alger Co. board of our consensus decision at next Monday's regular meeting.

c. **Agripalooza, 9/27/24**

Planning for Agripalooza is underway with Marquette CD. DeDecker will double-check the date with UPREC staff.

d. **CD Region 2 meeting**

ACD will host the CD Region 2 meeting this year, targeting Aug 1 or Aug 29, 9:30am-3:30pm. We had originally planned to use the Grange building at the UPREC North Farm, anticipating 30-40 people. The agenda will consist of morning updates with discussion, a potluck lunch and afternoon field trips, perhaps to UPREC, Rock River Farm and/or the ACD Chatham Community Garden.

New Business

a. 2024 ACD Audit proposal

Watkeys reported that he contacted two CPAs for audit quotes, Schulze, Oswald, Miller & Edwards PC (SOME) and Gabridge and Co. SOME's quote was much less than Gabridge. Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke, to accept the SOME proposal at \$2,975. All in favor; motion carried.

b. Water Equals Life Coalition

Watkeys reported that he was approached to join a Coalition focused on affordable water for Michiganders. Highlen suggested that this is an access issue, not a conservation issue, and thus off-mission for ACD. The board agreed to decline joining the coalition.

c. Grants Consultant discussion

After not receiving GLRI funding for two years in a row, Watkeys and Kolton reported that they are considering hiring a grant support agency. Watkeys was referred to Natural Resource Connections LLC by other CDs, who has experience with GLRI and similar grant programs. Their support would be entirely pre-award as proposed, but DeDecker inquired about post-award support and Watkeys/Kolton will ask the agency. Ludecke suggested estimating and comparing our current grant admin costs with the proposal and potential ROI to compare. This issue was tabled until the new budget year conversations this Sept-Oct.

d. Approve NRCS Conservation Plans

Cady presented seven new conservation plans for board approval, including high tunnels and forest management plans. The board reviewed and signed the conservation plans.

Accept Treasury Report; pay bills:

Watkeys shared current financial statements as of May 31st, 2024. He highlighted a negative balance in Accounts Receivable, which he will look into. We are currently over budget in rent and utilities due to paying a whole year in advance from millage funds. We are still paying unemployment on a past seasonal employee, perhaps for another year. ACD purchased a 7'X12' aluminum flatbed trailer through the Fisheries Habitat grant. Scrap tire grant expenses have started to process. Donations from local contributions are happily over budget. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by DeDecker, to accept the Treasury Report and pay bills. All in favor; motion carried.

Public comment

Watkeys reported that the Munising Bay Overlook Community Forest proposal was recently approved by the City of Munising for \$600,000 from the DNR Trust Fund grant program. The Munising City Manager has been asked to present before DNR. The project will protect 370 acres of the Munising Bay Overlook property currently owned by Lyme Timber. The property will be removed from the Commercial Forest program, resulting in ~\$90K in tax revenue to Munising Township.

Adjourn

Highlen shared that he will be absent from the July regular meeting. Bunce agreed to run the meeting in his absence.

Motion by Bunce, seconded by DeDecker to adjourn at 6:40 pm. All in favor; motion carried.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: July 9, 2024, 5:00 pm

Submitted by James DeDecker, Secretary

These minutes are subject to approval until signed below

APPROVED:  _____ Date: 7/15/24

John Highlen, Chairman

OR

James DeDecker, Secretary