Meeting Minutes
DeKalb County
Soil and Water Conservation District

Call to order Annual Meeting

The Monthly Board Meeting of the DeKalb County SWCD was held on May 13, 2026. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul Kuhn at 7:11 p.m.

Attendees

Directors: Dan Kenney, Paul Kuhn, Lynn Martz and Anita Zurbrugg.

Associate Directors: Stan Doty

Staff: Dean Johnson, Executive Director and Brooke Watson, Administrative Coordinator.

NRCS: Aaron Seim

IDOA: Not Present

Directors not present included: Rick Bend

Approval of the agenda

Motion to approve the May 13, 2026 agenda made by Chairman Kuhn, seconded by Director Martz. Motion carried.

Approval of minutes

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 8, 2026 made by Director Kenney and seconded by Director Zurbrugg. Motion carried.

Approval of Treasurers Report

Motion to approve the Treasurers Report made by Director Zurbrugg. Chairman Kuhn seconded the motion, motion carried.

Reports

NRCS- Aaron Seim provided an update on the activities of the NRCS office for the month of April and the outlook for May. Due to an increase in applications nationally, NRCS asked for and received a funding increase from the original 15 million allocation for Illinois. An additional 20 million dollars for Illinois has been secured for EQIP, as well as updates made to the percentages of allocations in various categories. For example, livestock projects will not be required to receive 50% of funding as

in years past but a significant portion of the funding must still go towards regenerative agriculture practices. There has been discontent about how EQIP rankings were done, so there could be program changes next year. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) deadline is June 12, 2026. The annual HEL/Wetland Compliance review list was released. Tracts are randomly selected by a software program. This year, a much smaller percentage of farms have been pulled for review. NRCS DCs have unofficially been told that they will be attending this year's AISWCD Annual Conference.

NREC- No report.

Administrative Coordinator- Brooke Watson provided a written report on her activities for the month of April and the outlook for May.

Resource Conservationist- Grace Coveliers submitted a written report on her activities for the month of April and the outlook for May.

Executive Director- Dean Johnson provided a written report on his activities for the month of April and the outlook for May.

DeKalb County Watersheds Council: Dean Johnson shared the next DeKalb County Watersheds Council meeting is Wednesday, May 27 at 3 p.m. in the auditorium at the DeKalb County Farm Bureau.

Correspondence

The Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts has worked will Illinois lawmakers on two funding bills. Senate Bill 4044 seeks to set-up long-term funding by charging a $67 per acre development fee for projects that take land out of agricultural production. Some exemptions exist for solar products that utilize agrivoltaics or land trusts but it is estimated it could bring an additional $4 million in revenue for the AISWCD to distribute to local SWCDs. A call for witness slips yielded over 300 proponents of the SB 4044 and it received support from the Senate Appropriations Committee. House Bill 4755 requests $10 million in operations funding for AISWCD to distribute to local SWCDs. A call for witness slips yielded over 250 proponents of HB 4755 and received engagement and encouragement from the House Appropriations – General Services Committee. Calls for additional witness slips for future support of these bills will be forthcoming.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture reported selections for the inaugural Infield Conservation for Operationalizing Vital Ecosystem Resilience (I-COVER) Program. One producer per county was selected and announcements will be made soon about project awards.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture notified DeKalb County SWCD about resubmitting the Operations Funds grant, due to a $2,000 increase in the amount to be awarded. Adjustments were made and it was resubmitted on May, 11, 2026.

The American Farmland Trust announced dates and registration information for the 2026 *Illinois Healthy Soils Initiative Training*. At least one employee per SWCD is expected to complete all five sessions of the training. SWCD Directors and other SWCD employees are also invited to participate in all or some of the training sessions. Grace Coveliers will complete all training sessions on behalf of DeKalb County SWCD.

The Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts will host Annual Conference July 13-15 at the Embassy Suites in East Peoria. Director Martz (10 years) and Director Zurbrugg (5 years) will be recognized for their years of service milestones at the Awards Dinner July 14. Information about registration and accommodations was distributed.

Time Sheet Approval

Employee Time Sheets Reviewed and Approved By: Director Kenney

Unfinished business

None

New business

NRI #753 Town of Cortland Solar Site (ESP Cortland Solar)- Director Martz moved to approve NRI #753 Town of Cortland Solar Site (ESP Cortland Solar). Director Kenney seconded the motion, motion carried.

Strategic Plan Update - Review of a new strategic plan will be scheduled for the end of June 2026, in conjunction with the annual budget meeting. The date is TBD and will depend on Director availability.

Banking Authorizations for the Administrative Coordinator- Director Zurbrugg moved to approve authorizing banking access and financial approvals for the Administrative Coordinator, Brooke Watson, upon the conclusion of her 90-day probationary period ending May 17, 2026. Director Martz seconded the motion, motion carried.

Simonson Scholarship-Cole Gudmunson was selected from a competitive pool of applicants, as the 2026 winner of the Simonson Scholarship by DeKalb County SWCD staff. He plans on attending Waubonsee Community College and the $1,080 award will be submitted to the institution on his behalf.

Summer Event- Associate Director Stan Doty offered to host a summer event at his home in August. The evening will feature refreshments and tours of conservation practices and improvements.

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: Director Kenney moved to adjourn the meeting, and it was seconded by Director Zurbrugg.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Announcements

The next meeting of the DeKalb County SWCD will be on June 10, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at the DeKalb County Farm Bureau's Center for Agriculture in Sycamore Illinois.

Chairman	Date