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 April 8, 2026. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul Kuhn at 7:03 p.m.

Attendees

Directors: Rick Bend, Paul Kuhn, Lynn Martz

Associate Directors: Jim Arndt, Stan Doty and Paul Koeppen

Staff: Dean Johnson, Executive Director; Grace Coveliers, Resource Conservationist; and Brooke Watson, Administrative Coordinator.

NRCS: Aaron Seim

IDOA: Not Present

Directors not present included: Dan Kenney and Anita Zurbrugg.

Approval of the agenda

Motion to approve the April 8, 2026 agenda made by Director Bend, seconded by Director Martz. Motion carried.

Approval of minutes

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 11, 2026 made by Bend and seconded by Director Martz. Motion carried.

Approval of Treasurers Report

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

Reports

NRCS- Aaron Seim provided an update on the activities of the NRCS office for the month of March and the outlook for April. Aaron reported the EQIP deadline is April 2, 2026. Due to an increase in applications nationally, NRCS is asking for a funding increase from 15 million to 20 million dollars.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) deadline is June 12, 2026. For this application period, producers must include a regular conservation practice, not only enhancements.

NREC- No report.

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

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

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

DeKalb County Watersheds Council: Dean Johnson reported the City of Genoa promoted the adoption of the Central South Branch of the Kishwaukee River Watershed-based plan in their March newsletter, which was mailed to homes with the water bill and is also available online. There will be future opportunities to promote in their monthly newsletter again. The DeKalb County Watersheds Council is interested in a partnership with NIU students, to suggest resources and continued initiatives to provide to communities with completed watershed plans. The Marketing and Outreach Committee met with Dr. Jason Gorham, who outlined NIU College of Business programs that offer partnerships between students and local businesses or nonprofits. Two options were presented including partnering with either the Business in Action course or the Experiential Learning Center, with a timeline of Fall 2026 or Spring 2027. The Watersheds Council will continue to explore these opportunities.

Correspondence

The Illinois Department of Agriculture announced the inaugural Infield Conservation for Operationalizing Vital Ecosystem Resilience (I-COVER) Program. The intent of the program is to promote the implementation of cover crops and the adoption of new technologies to implement cover via the Partners for Conservation (PFC) Program using the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) multi-state grant. To be eligible, fields must not have received funding from any other cover crop program or must be utilizing a new technology for implementation. Applications can be submitted starting April 15, 2026 and are due by May 1, 2026. Applications will be selected and funding allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis by county.

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 will be sent out soon.

The DeKalb County Storm Water Management Committee offered their support of a 3D watershed mapping initiative. It will be on the agenda at their May meeting.

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Stewardship Week will be April 26-May 3, 2026. The 2026 NACD Stewardship Week theme, “Soil. Where It All Begins,” celebrates the incredible power of soil to support life in all its forms.

The DeKalb County Farm Bureau Center for Agriculture will be closed on Friday, May 8, 2026 for electrical repairs. DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation Staff will work remotely. [This has been postponed to a future TBD date as of May 5, 2026]

Time Sheet Approval

Employee Time Sheets Reviewed and Approved By: Director Martz

Unfinished business

None

New business

FY25 PFC Practice Component list- Director Martz moved to approve the FY25 practice component list for the PFC program, which includes three grassed waterway projects. Director Bend seconded the motion, motion carried.

Strategic Plan Update and Program Planning 2026+-Discussion took place about programming ideas for FFA students as part of DeKalb County SWCD’s Samardzija-Gutesha Family Fund grant, from the DeKalb County Community Foundation. Conversation transitioned to discussion of the District’s Strategic Plan. It was noted that years have passed, paired with the addition of new staff and program interests. Review of a new strategic plan is tentatively scheduled for June 2026.

Drone Training and Licensing-Director Martz moved to approve $150 for Grace to complete a drone training and licensing course. Director Bend seconded the motion, motion carried.

Soil Health Leadership Training-Grace was selected for one of the few coveted spots in the Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership’s Soil Health Leadership program. Director Bend moved to approve Grace’s participation, the time out of the office and funding for her travel by DeKalb County SWCD. Director Martz seconded the motion, motion carried.

Simonson Scholarship-Applications have been received and will be reviewed by DeKalb County SWCD staff. There were no additional volunteers for the selection committee. The DeKalb County Community Foundation reported there is $1,080 in the fund available for distribution this year. Director Martz made a motion to award $1,080 to the winning recipient. Director Bend seconded the motion, motion carried.

Donation for 4-H Show and Fair award- Director Martz moved to approve a $25 donation for a plaque for the Best Environmental Sciences Project at this year's 4-H Show and Fair. Director Bend seconded the motion, motion carried.

Local Work Group Summation - The Directors reflected on the discussions at the local work group meeting. Several noted that recent rain events demonstrated the need for improved waterways is significant, as a substantial topsoil has been lost this month. Conversation continued about opportunities for alternative sources of funding either through private grants or reviewing SWCD budgets, to expand financing of waterway projects in DeKalb County.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Announcements

The next meeting of the DeKalb County SWCD will be on May 13, 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**