

Land & Water Conservation Committee Minutes

July 16, 2025

1. Call to Order:

The monthly meeting was called to order by Meg Turville-Heitz at 8:30am. Committee Members Meg Turville-Heitz (Chair), Matt Foelker (UW) (Vice-Chair), Margaret Burlingham (PACE), Walt Christensen, and Scott Schultz (Ag), were present. Also in attendance were Patricia Cicero, Director, Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD); Kim Liakopoulos, LWCD; Dave Hoffman, LWCD; Joe Strupp, LWCD; Michael Luckey, County Administrator (via Teams); Danielle Thompson, County Corporation Counsel; Zach Thayer, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); and Savannah Warwick, NRCS. Cassie Richardson was excused. Elizabeth Hafften (UW) was absent.

- Others in Attendance: Matt Zangl, Director, Planning and Development; Deb Hall-Kind; Anita Martin; Sue Marx.

2. Roll Call (Establish a Quorum):

A quorum was established.

3. Certification of Compliance with the Open Meetings Law:

It was determined that the committee was in compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

4. Review of the Agenda:

The agenda was reviewed by the committee members. No changes were proposed.

5. Approval of the June 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes:

Foelker made a motion to approve the June 18, 2025 meeting minutes as written, Schultz seconded. Motion passed 5/0.

6. Public Comment:

Sue Marx gave public comment on agenda item #13 and item #17.

Deb Hall-Kind gave public comment on agenda item #15.

7. Communications:

- Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) Report.

8. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report:

Zach Thayer and Savannah Warwick discussed current NRCS program applications. Warwick discussed internal staffing adjustments and possible staffing reductions due to the current administration.

9. Discussion on Departmental Updates:

Cicero attended a Rock River flooding work group meeting. Cicero and Hoffman had a discussion with the Financial Empowerment Center regarding the Purchase of Conservation Easement (PACE) program and other LWCD programs. Cicero and Colton Hutchinson provided nitrate screening at the Jefferson County Fair. Hutchinson assisted the Parks Department with river cleanup. Hutchinson is conducting field work - lake water quality, stream flow, plant surveys, shoreland site visits with landowners, volunteer stream monitoring training, and assisting the Lake Ripley Management District with field work for a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant. Strupp and Sam Peterson finished Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) spot checks of the northeast quadrant of the county. Strupp and Peterson were trained on new US Department of Agriculture software. Hoffman has completed PACE annual inspections and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) monitoring. Liakopoulos is conducting an audit of inactive FPP files.

- 10. Discussion on County Owned Farmland: Compaction, Drainage, Future Farming and Vegetation, and Potter's Field Access:** LWCD staff is working with the City of Jefferson and their consultant regarding a few issues on the farm resulting from construction. LWCD staff is working on a plan to address compaction, drainage, and new access to Potter's field.
- 11. Discussion on Manure Complaint Report:**
Cicero and Strupp discussed the manure complaint report and answered committee questions.
- 12. Discussion on Southern Area Association Tour:**
The tour is September 4th. Cicero is finalizing a few details.
- 13. Discussion and Possible Action on Joint Development Agreement for Whitewater Solar Project:**
The committee discussed the agreement. Thompson and Zangl answered committee questions. The agreement is being reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Committee and the Executive Committee before being submitted to the County Board for consideration in September.
- 14. Discussion on Producer-Led Groups: Jefferson County Soil Builders (JCSB) & Rock River Regenerative Graziers (R3G):** JCSB will have a drone demonstration at the Hundt farm in August. R3G is having a beef grazing demonstration hosted by Link Family Farms on July 31st. R3G received a grant from the Sand County Foundation for \$50,000.
- 15. Discussion and Possible Action on Notices of Noncompliance - Farmland Preservation Program (FPP):**
Aztalan Ancient Grains LLC, Deb Hall-Kind, Curtis & Mary Ann Pernat
Foelker made a motion to accept the notices, Burlingham seconded. Motion passed 5/0.
- 16. Discussion and Possible Action on Cancellation of Notices of Noncompliance - FPP:**
Daniel Lemke Jr.
Christensen made a motion to accept the notice, Foelker seconded. Motion passed 5/0.
- 17. Discussion and Possible Action on Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easement (PACE) Applications & Baseline Documentation:** No new updates.
- 18. Discussion on Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Overview, Ranking and Fees:**
Hoffman gave an overview of the PACE program and answered committee questions.
- 19. Discussion and Possible Action on 2026 Departmental Fees:**
Cicero outlined departmental fees and discussed changes. A new fee structure was discussed for the PACE program. Christensen made a motion to change the PACE application fees: 1. application acceptance fee = \$400.00, 2. ranking initiation process fee = \$400.00, 3. title search/appraisal fee = \$1,400.00, Foelker seconded. Motion passed 5/0. Schultz made a motion to increase the fee for a full nutrient management class to \$100.00, increase the fee for the nutrient management update class to \$30.00, and establish a delivery fee for the tree planter or sprayer to \$150.00 per trip, Christensen seconded. Motion passed 5/0.
- 20. Discussion on 2026 Department Budget:**
Cicero informed the committee about an increase to the DATCP staffing grant this year and discussed the 2026 budget process.
- 21. Review of the Monthly Financial Report:**
The most recent statement of revenues and expenditures was distributed.
- 22. Discussion on Items for the Next Agenda:**
Possible agenda items include: CREP Conservation Plan Update
• **Next Scheduled Meeting:** August 20, 2025 at 8:30am in Room C2063
- 23. Adjournment:**
Foelker made a motion to adjourn at 10:30am, Christensen seconded. Motion passed 5/0.