

SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION
Wisconsin Land + Water Conservation Association

Southern Area Counties:

Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock & Sauk

President: Luke McGuire, Lafayette County
Vice President: Kurt Calkins, Columbia County
Secretary/Treasurer: Tess Wallner, Green County
Area Coordinator: Todd Jenson, Green County

August SAA Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 17, 2023
Iowa County LCD
303 W. Chapel St
Dodgeville, WI 53533

1. Meeting called to order by Kurt Calkins at 1:32pm
2. Roll Call of Counties: Columbia- 1 staff; Dane- 1 staff; Dodge- 1 staff; Grant- 2 staff; Green- 2 staff 1 LCC; Iowa- 1 staff; Jefferson- 1 staff; Lafayette- 1 staff; Richland- 0; Rock- 1 staff; Sauk- 1 staff; NRCS- 1 staff; WI Geological and Natural History Survey- 1 staff.
3. Approval of Agenda: motion by Grant/ 2nd by Green to approve the agenda. Motion carried.
4. Review and Approval of May Minutes: motion by Lafayette/ 2nd by Iowa to approve the minutes. Motion carried.
5. Treasurers Report: motion by Dodge/ 2nd by Grant to approve the treasurers report. Motion carried.
6. Discussion on Dues: dues were recently increased a few years ago and there is a good amount of money saved in our accounts. Things that are typically funded are the SAA summer tour bus, Envirothon, Land + Water speaking and poster contest winners, and funding board representatives travel to the annual conference but that is not usually used. Cost of dues will not change, Dodge County will send a copy of a previously written budget.
7. Financial Reporting for the Association: September 14th will be a training through WI Land + Water for IRS reporting of area associations. Attending the training will be Green (current) and Iowa (upcoming). SAA cannot fall under WI Land + Water reporting. Discussion if we should become a 501c3 and what that process entails. Also what we need to do to get Amy Piaget's SS no longer linked with our financial accounts. Tabled until after the 9/14 training.
8. State Budget Outcome: Dodge County saw a significant cut of around \$25,000. Grant County saw a \$12,000 cut. Are there other strategies we can attempt when trying to get budget approved? Water quality had strong messaging previously. Also good news to see statute regarding FSA farmer representative on committees.
9. SAA Banking and Possibly Becoming a 501c3: discussed with agenda item #7

10. Training Opportunities Hosted by SAA: Looking at having a speaker or training for farmers, ourselves, or both. Talked about the effectiveness of having an area-wide theme to market, doing something involving the new learning center starting at Sinsinawa Mounds, community based social marketing training, or conflict management especially for new employees. Will wait to see what PIC & TEC committee decide to offer at the annual conference.

11. Agency Updates:

- NRCS: Joe Schmelz was present. Fiscal year is wrapping up at the end of September. CSP, EQIP 1 and EQIP 2, and RCPP are about 75% through with obligations. CRP is allowing emergency practices due to drought. New state conservationist- Tyrone Larson. Staffing is up to about 300 FTE with IRA funds. Putting together a training calendar.
- WI Geological and Natural History Survey: Amy Wiersma is a new hydrogeologist with WGNHS and was there to introduce herself. Her position was created with the 2021 Nitrate Bill. She is the contact for county work. She recommends starting taking well geolocation data if not already doing it and they can help with information from your data.

12. County Roundtable

- Columbia: in beginning stages of a wetland mitigation evaluation banking program with the highway department, conducting interviews for a conservation planner
- Dane: demonstration farm network position has been filled, 3 farms have been selected as demo farms to be working with Francisco Arriaga on field scale research, having official kick off to program in September.
- Dodge: large scale TRM grant approved but with low response, farmer led group will be offering \$500 incentive to have NR151 compliance checks and additional \$500 if in compliance
- Grant: zoning-sanitation position is open, revamping FPP for all 419 participants by June 1, 2024, to get up to date with changes from 2015, partnering with SW Tech for farmer written NMP classes
- Green: staff is working on grant proposals for DATCP producer led watershed groups, doing CRP status reviews with summer intern, recently had public meeting on results from ongoing groundwater nitrate study, in year 4 of 5 and committee approved extending it another 2 years, first solar farm is going in and haven't heard any complaints
- Iowa: wind farm coming in, technician is leaving, \$100k from ATC lines intended for groundwater improvement is about halfway spent and majority is cost sharing septic systems
- Jefferson: groundwater study with UWSP had a goal of recruiting 800 wells and got just under 900, public session with results will be held in November, partnering with city of Watertown for first program in phosphorus trading for stormwater credits, having a farmer session in September about P trading and will include harvestable buffers as an eligible practice, mentioned increase in science denial and distrust in public meetings
- Lafayette: 2 new ordinances regarding solar and parks, updating ordinances for sanitary and zoning, merging zoning and land conservation committees, updating

the outdoor recreation plan, working on LWRM plan, FP expires in 2026, just starting budget

- Rock: updating LWRM plan, lots of vacancies in office, new NRCS DC Merica Xiong, already thinking about 2024 SAA summer tour and visiting CHS soybean oilseed facility in Evansville, groundwater nitrate study is installing field edge lysimeters on discovery farms
- Sauk: director is leaving September 7, Farm Tech Days was held in July and since it wasn't held on a farm they organized off site tours, cooperative agreements with NRCS for hiring a 4 year position, finalizing design with engineers for education hub

13. Next meeting date: October 26th, sometime in AM, at Dane or Iowa (date and time TBD), hybrid meeting

14. Motion by Grant/ 2nd by Lafayette to adjourn at 3:02pm. Motion carried.