

Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Inc.
Annual Business Meeting
Friday, December 19, 2025

MINUTES

Meeting Called to Order at 12:06 pm

1. Welcome and Introductions Marc Roberts

President Marc Roberts called the 82nd meeting of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Inc., (IASWCD) to order at 12:06 pm. He welcomed and introduced the executive officers: Marc Roberts, President; Sarah Delbecq, Vice-President; Mark Kingma, Secretary; Ethan Truax, Treasurer. He also introduced Ed Frazier, Parliamentarian.

2. Seating of Delegates / Roll Call Mark Kingma

Marc reported that there are 49 delegates present and ready to vote, providing a quorum.

Marc referred to the proposed meeting rules in the front of the 2025 Delegate Notebook. A vote in favor of adopting the Procedures and Rules was taken. More than two thirds were in favor. No one opposed.

3. Minutes of 2025 Annual Business Meeting Marc Roberts

Marc stated that the 2025 minutes were approved during the February 9, 2025 IASWCD Board Meeting in accordance to a bylaw amendment made in 2019.

4. Treasurer's Report Ethan Truax

Ethan gave the treasurer's report of assets and liabilities.

Lana Zimmer, Jasper County inquired about how the annual conference affected the budget this year. Liz Rice, IASWCD Executive Director, clarified that the 2025 annual meeting was rather expensive because it was a full conference but also brought in some revenue. This conference will not take place in the 2026 fiscal year so the association will have neither the associated income nor expenses.

President Marc stated that the **Treasurer's report would be filed.**

5. Audit Committee Report

Ethan Truax

Since 2018, the IASWCD has been engaged in third party audits, as is required by the federal government Uniform Guidance audit, formerly known as Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133. These audits are required for entities that exceed the threshold of \$750,000 in federal dollars expended in a single fiscal year. A Uniform Guidance Audit will be completed this month and the findings will be reported to the Board of Directors once complete.

As a reminder, due to the timing overlap with the normal IASWCD audit committee review in December, the board has decided that the federally required third party audits will be substituted for the traditional internal IASWCD audit committee review. The federally required audits must be completed in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and thus are much more rigorous than our internal audits. The audit findings report will be available upon request from the IASWCD Executive Director.

Acceptance of the Audit Committee Report was presented by Marc Roberts. The vote was unanimous in favor of accepting the Audit Committee Report. No one opposed.

6. Resolutions

Marc Roberts

Marc reminded everyone that each person may speak twice to each motion for no more than three minutes each time and may not speak the second time until everyone has had a chance to speak the first time.

Marc reminded everyone that the resolutions were submitted by SWCDs and that the association held virtual sessions to review them ahead of time. Two resolutions have been withdrawn prior to the meeting.

- 1) The first resolution is from the Knox County SWCD entitled "*District Consolidation Study Committee.*"

Be it resolved that the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Inc. establish a District Consolidation Study Committee made up of the above mentioned entities to determine the feasibility of SWCD consolidation.

Discussion was held as follows:

Ray Chattin, Knox County - During the initial years of districts, it was pretty straightforward - NRCS supported and we were on a level playing field. Flash forward to 2026 and the rise of AI, there isn't a level playing field anymore. The law of the jungle is if you can't adapt, your chances of survival diminish. I think we are stronger together than apart. There are a whole host of efficiencies to be realized through this. It's not a silver bullet but is a step in the right direction to make districts stronger and help underserved districts provide support for natural resources. I encourage support for this resolution. I yield my remaining time.

John Newby, Delaware County posed a question - the resolution says it establishes a committee and also a template. Will we have to meet to approve that template as well?

Liz Rice answered that, in statute, districts may combine or dissolve already.

Ray said this is part of the process to study statute, figure it out, and come forth with a template.

Liz Rice commented that she figures it would have to come before the body again.

Lana Zimmer, Jasper County- Is the idea , then, that this committee would meet prior to the next conference and that would be the moment that we vote?

Ray answered "However long it takes"

Brian Martin, Kosciusko- If it's in the statute already that districts can dissolve or consolidate at will - why do we need a study committee? If you want to do it, just do it - we can already colocate when districts are doing similar work. This seems too much - we're trying to reinvent the wheel when it has already been invented.

Vote held. The majority is in the negative. **18 approved**

2) The second resolution is from the Dearborn County SWCD entitled "*Snowball's Chance.*"

Be it resolved that the IASWCD request the wording of Indiana Code IC 14-32-4-1 (2) be changed to: "must maintain the individual's permanent

residence within a contiguous county of the district; and own property in the county of the SWCD on which they wish to serve on the board."

Discussion was held as follows:

Ken Gunkel, Dearborn County- Where this came up is that we had an associate supervisor who owned a 100-acre farm in Dearborn County but their residence was in a county adjacent to Dearborn County. We didn't have a problem having them as an associate supervisor but when we had a vacancy open up on our board, they asked about joining. I checked and saw that they were not eligible because of the Indiana code. In discussion at other conferences and meetings, other counties had similar problems. The solution is so if they live in a joining or contiguous county, they could join. This resolution is to see if we can get a code changed, knowing that getting the Indiana code changed will be a snowball's chance. This would direct the legislative committee to change the code.

Stanley Diamond, Morgan County- Morgan county just had a situation similar to this come up. We would support the change if it allows people who own property and farm within our districts even if they don't live in the district, but right outside

Matthew Payne, Floyd County-Same in Floyd County - we fight urban sprawl on a daily basis. It's hard to find these individuals who are ag-friendly, conservation-friendly - just because they don't know any better. We have folks who farm and live right over the county line and could be a voice for conservation and soil quality and health. Although we'd support it, the current statute doesn't permit it.

Jeremiah Reichmann, Brown County- Clarification, Brown County is heavy with tourist homes. I'm sure other counties also have people with tourist homes. Will this allow someone who owns a tourist home to sit on the board? Would they be able to sit on multiple boards if they own multiple tourist homes in other counties?

Ethan Truax, it's an elected position so it's privileged. It's lucrative so they cannot hold multiple lucrative positions.

Jeremiah Reichmann- Not all supervisors are lucrative - I just went through this to get appointed here - if your county is not paying your board, then it is not a lucrative position.

Jeff Baker- In the past year that has been refined, you may want to check that.

Lana Zimmer, Jasper County- I am not sure how this is very different from Knox county's resolution to consolidate districts. Why wouldn't this individual serve on their own county's board?

Ken Gunkel, Dearborn County- We had that conversation over lunch, actually - in the case we had, the associate supervisor had 100 acres in our county and was very active with OUR SWCD with their farm. But they live on a small parcel in a joining county, they weren't interested in being on that board because they weren't very engaged in that community.

Ryan Martin, Kosciusko County- Opposed - The key here is "elected" - we are mostly elected, with two appointed positions extra. I commend this - the ideas behind it are not wrong - but the process is problematic. I live in Wayne Township, I farm in Clay Township - I cannot run for anything in Clay Township because it's where I'm not. This is just like gerrymandering. Getting people into these positions to represent areas that they don't necessarily represent. The idea is outside of the box but it's opening Indiana code to allow people to represent in elections where they don't live. I'm not just opposed, I am adamantly opposed on the merits of how elections are supposed to happen. We've gotta solve the problem, this is not the way to solve the problem.

Roger Wenning, Decatur County- In favor - if you own land in that district but you're not allowed to run for the board? You're getting ruled without representation. This way, you at least have the chance to speak up and be part of where your property is.

A vote on the resolution was held. The majority is in the negative and the resolution is not adopted. 18 approved

3) The third resolution is from the Kosciusko County SWCD entitled "*Resolution Supporting Refund of Indiana Bottle Deposit Revenues to the State of Indiana.*"

Be it resolved that the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Inc propose the establishment of a dedicated conservation fund at the state level, seeded by bottle deposit revenues or matched with state general funds.

Discussion took place as follows:

Paul Lake, Pike County- All I'll say is "don't shoot the messenger" - I don't think many of us question the environment. I don't think and of us question that we need a stable funding mechanism to support Clean Water Indiana and Indiana conservation. At the very Mostly, this should have been proposed as a study committee to assess the potential revenue streams and logistics - to prevent further movement from the association. I will shut up now because my wife told me to play well with the other kids.

Brad Ponsler, Jennings County Would you be amenable to changing the resolution to be about a study committee?

Brad motions to amend the resolution.

Next up will be a resolution from the floor.

A vote was held on the resolution, as amended. The majority is in the Negative and the resolution Fails. 17 approved

4) The fourth resolution is from the floor - Brad Ponsler, proposes to amend the "*Resolution Supporting Refund of Indiana Bottle Deposit Revenues to the State of Indiana*" to refer it to a study committee. Floyd County seconds.

Discussion took place as follows:

Kosciusko, Question - who is the study committee?

Marc - I assume the association would form the study committee

Of who?

Volunteers. We would open it up to appointments by the president

Stanley Diamonds, Morgan County- We don't have a consistent bottle deposit across the state of iIndiana. I don't know if we'd be able to get the state to establish one. You can clarify if we already have one but if we were to get one going - it would be complicated, another form of tax... although we need more revenue flowing into the association, this is not the mechanism to use

Jeremiah Reichmann Brown County- We need more clarification of what the details of this new resolution is. I know we want a study committee but who is it, how many people, what is the purpose, what are they specifically looking at,

what data do we have to drive off of. I think it's smart to move in this direction but send it back up the pipe to whoever submitted it and let them do that heavy lifting to get that together and a full vote.

A vote was held. The majority is in the negative and the resolution is not adopted.

14 approved.

Marc Roberts asked if there were any more resolutions from the floor. There were none.

7. Nominating Committee Report

Marc Roberts

Marc Roberts reiterated the nominees for each office and asked if there were additional nominations from the floor. No additional nominations were presented and nominations were closed.

Slate of Officers is as follows:

- **For President: Marc Roberts, Montgomery County**
- **For Vice President: Mark Kingma, Jasper County**
- **For Secretary: Ethan Truax, Hendricks County**
- **For Treasurer: Troy Hattery, Miami County**

Marc Roberts moved to accept the slate of officers. Ethan Truax seconded. A vote was held with the majority being in the affirmative. Delegates then marked their paper ballots.

8. Executive Director Update

Liz Rice

Liz Rice provided a video update. She shared that this year began with a key effort -the development of our strategic plan. I am pleased to share that this work has already strengthened our structure, communication, and ability to serve you. For example, our finance, governance, and legislative committee were formed and met regularly so we can support districts. We have expanded our RITA program by hiring multiple new technicians to cover more of the state. For Urban Soil Health, we are guiding the program through a thoughtful rebrand so they can continue to deliver their services. We sent 3 representatives to the DC fly-in and have delivered updates to districts so they can stay in tune with federal efforts. In Indiana, we fought diligently to keep the funding for Clean Water Indiana level - and we succeeded. We also faced challenges this year with federal funding abuses, and even having to pause programs. This year we partnered with the DNR division of water on lunch and learn programs as well

as CCSI on their ride-long programs to encourage districts to adopt similar initiatives. Pathway to Water Quality walkthrough water quality exhibit at the Indiana state fair. Welcomed over 200 attendees to the August ceremony for our river friendly farmer awards to highlight those who live by example. Empower districts to plan their own meetings with support from ISDA and IASWCD for the regional summits. This encouraged a local approach so conversations were truly tailored to local unique needs. We bounded back to our pre-covid model for the state conference this past January and have changed our model to have an in person conference every other year. We also held the first conservation farm tour at Hackman Family Farms. We strive to keep districts informed through our biweekly newsletter so we can share up to date conservation news, opportunities, and resources. I look forward to what we will accomplish together in 2026. Your state association remains committed to every district and strengthening conservation throughout Indiana. Thank you for your perseverance and work. Please reach out and schedule meetings with your association the more we know about your challenges, ideas, and questions, the better we can support you. Thank you so much, here's to 2026.

Liz followed up with some announcements

- The January 27th, 2026 advocacy day at the statehouse. We intend to share the value of CWI to conservation efforts in your districts -what's special about your county. Conservation successes and challenges in your district. And invitations to join you for a field day or meeting. This is a similar model to the DC fly-in - we will encourage districts to schedule appointments with their reps. We will meet here at IFB and then bus over to the statehouse to visit with legislators and then return here.
- In just about a year from now, we'll be back at the Westin for the 2027 meeting
- We are not yet sure where we'll be for the 2028 conservation farm tour
- Award nominations are open for 2025 and 2026 - we will accept nominations through March 31. Conservation farmer of the year, district showcase, friend of conservation, and supervisor of the year
- I want to visit with you! Ensure you're heard and that the association has your back - I am always happy to meet virtually or in person if we can arrange it.

9. New Business Election Report

Marc Roberts

Marc Roberts announced the 2025 officers following the vote.

- **For President: Marc Roberts, Montgomery County**
- **For Vice President: Mark Kingma, Jasper County**

- **For Secretary: Ethan Truax, Hendricks County**
- **For Treasurer: Troy Hattery, Miami County**

Troy Hattery shared remarks: I felt like this was a good fit

Ethan Truax - it's been an honor to serve on the executive board for the last year and I look forward to continuing to learn and listen to you all as I go forward

Mark Kingma - I got bummed to see Sarah step down but I'm getting bumped up to vice president. Looking forward to what we accomplish in the future

Marc Roberts- This year, all in all, went pretty well. It got off to a bumpy start with furloughing some staff and working through the challenges of that. But hearing the financial report, the amount of funds the IASWCD will refill the rainy day fund -Whitney, Liz, and Amy deserve a lot of appreciation. We've done a lot of work this year and we're in much better shape than we have been in recent history. Reach out to us! It's not hard to get our phone numbers if you don't already have them. We're here and easy to talk to. I know Ethan and Ken will represent us on the NACD board this year. If you have something you want to run up the flagpole, reach out. Keep in contact! If you've got something, let us know. I'm harping on this - if you don't have a succession plan on your farm, get one!! Mental health is a real thing and it's going to happen either way. It's better to have a plan and handle it that way.

Jeff Baker swears in Marc Roberts, Ethan Truax, Mark Kingma and Troy Hattery.

10. Other business

Marc Roberts

Awards

- Marc presented an award to Cress Hizer- Because of his leadership, districts were better prepared to engage legislators, water quality, and stewardship. His guidance played a key role in supporting the Clean Water Indiana program, which recently was increased in the Indiana state budget. Cress brings to this work a lifetime of service - leading the agribusiness council of Indiana. He has been awarded the highest honor by two governors. Thank you for your wisdom, advocacy, and belief in Indiana SWCDs. We are deeply grateful for your service and wish you the best in your retirement. Please join me in thanking Cress.
- Marc presented the IASWCD president's award to Kenny Cain. His passion runs deep - he and his family have been dedicated to conservation practices, no-till, cover crop, filter strips, and more. It's not just what he's done on his land but

how generously he shared his time and commitment to conservation with others. When I joined the board in 2012, he took me under his wing to get me up to speed and supported me into leadership. Kenny and his family have hosted 1000s of children to his farm. Kenny has given countless hours in service, including to the Montgomery County SWCD and many other boards. In 2013, Cain's homelike farms was honored for their conservation efforts but this award recognizes their dedication and servant leadership. Kenny reminds us that real conservation happens over decades and that your real legacy is who you inspire along the way.

11. Oath of Office

Jeff Baker

Jeff Baker, past President of IASWCD, performed the oath of office with all of the newly elected officers.

Candidates were asked if they agreed to fulfill the duties of their respective offices as stated in the IASWCD bylaws to the best of their ability. They agreed. Jeff declared them duly installed as the 2026 Executive Officers of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

12. Adjournment

Marc Roberts

Marc asked for any further business that needed to come before the assembly. There was none.

The meeting adjourned at 1:04 pm.