



IASWCD Board Meeting MINUTES

February 13, 2026

Indiana Farm Bureau, Indianapolis, IN

Attendance

In person: Liz Rice, Ethan Truax, Meg Leader, John Kruse, Troy Hattery, Kim Peterson, Steve Crowe, Mark Kingma, Mark Roberts, Barbara Scott, Ray Chattin, Sam Miller, Amy Work, Whitney McGrew, Barb Scott

Virtual: Walt Sell, Roger Wenning, Chris Mitchem, Brandi Frazier, Trevor Vance, Jennifer Thum

Meeting called to order at 10:06 am

- Approval of Consent Agenda – Motion by John Kruse; second by Mark Kingma. Approved unanimously.
- Approval of December 19, 2025 Annual Business Meeting Minutes – Motion by Mark Kingma; second by Steve Crowe. Approved unanimously.
- Approval of December 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes – Motion by Ray Chattin; second by Ethan Truax. Approved unanimously.

Partner and Staff Updates

Walt Sell, Purdue

- Dealing with funding issues and therefore restructuring - will take about a year to accomplish
- More focused on outreach and specialized areas; better address needs of clientele
- Angie Abott - now named director of Extension and is an associate dean
- March 3-5 Pork Conference in Hendricks Co
- Feb 17 event in Vincennes; Technology Assistance for Farmers with restrictions

Jennifer Thum, ISDA

- SWCD Needs Assessment Survey Working Group met this past week (IASWCD: Mark Kingma, Liz Rice; IDEA, Brandi Frazier; W4theLand: Heather Bacher, others)
- SSCB met on Tuesday - focus on professional development; reminder about Conservation Link and Board Leadership Program available for training
- SB230 is on Governor's desk; if signed, ISDA will develop a FAQ for partners
- Tillage Transect coming up soon
- CWI guidance available at the May meeting; Brad Dawson is the CWI representative on the SSCB Grants Committee
- For the full SSCB strategic planning session they will be reaching out to partners

Brandi Frazier, IDEA

- Rolled out 2026 membership form
- Two 2026 career development classes completed
- Fall conference will be at Pokagon



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Damary Mortenson, NRCS

- Pilot program - rollout yesterday; training meetings
- Farm plan assessment
- Meeting with national program - moving to more model advices and tools to use in the field
- Chief is updating conservation standards - big endeavor with many meetings across the nation
- MOU - working with districts on the many questions they have; paused at the moment as they have to be assigned numbers and an expiration date
- Report was sent highlighting last year's projects
- Good news about staffing - but can't share details yet

Chris Mitchem, VanceMitchem

- Hearing good feedback from legislators and the Soil & Water Advocacy Day
- Session is wrapping up at end of month; earliest he has ever experienced
- A crazy amount of bills put forward
- SB230 - dept of ag bill; probably be signed into law in the next few weeks
- HB1003 - 400 page bill; boards and commissions; not scheduled yet;
- Information regarding bill monitoring can be found in their weekly updates for IASWCD
- HB1333 - Kendall Culp; all but dead; will keep monitoring

Meg Leader, RITA

- Last tech started in January - now fully staffed
- Martin Franke and Camille Sczerbowicz shared how they work together at the last SSCB meeting
- Quarterly reviews by SWCDs are rating techs well
- Techs helping NRCS; 1/3 of their time supporting NRCS workload
- Took 9 techs to national no-till; Casey took the prize for talking to the most people at National No-Till Conference
- Collecting metrics and these are on the back page of the RITA techs report
- Liz and Meg are doing some strategic planning for RITA; goals for moving forward
- March 19 - meeting with funders, ISDA and NRCS
- SWCS, Hoosier Chapter - Meg is now President; Liz is on the board
- Hanna Garriott - going to NACD conference next week; Montgomery Co and another county is supporting this trip
- Marc Roberts - requested Meg to ask Districts what they have done with their \$10K; want to highlight stories;
- **ACTION ITEM (receipt): JenniferThum (ISDA) stated that she will send capacity report information for stories regarding the \$10K CWI funds available to districts each year.**



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Liz Rice for CCSI

- Lisa at the Louisville Farm Show
- Report provided

- Working on fiscal relationship between IASWCD and CCSI
- Mark asked about the Farm Advisory program
 - List of mentees and mentors is growing;
 - working on becoming a 501c3;
 - Ethan attended a meeting a few months ago, probably 40 farmers there.

Liz Rice for Indiana Small Farms

- Elli in Ft. Wayne
- Program is transitioning
- Report provided

Board Business

Whitney McGrew

- Membership dues invoices will be going out soon
- Profit and Loss statement provided
- Continuing with the audit; smoother experience this year
- **ACTION ITEM: Liz stated current budget expenses v. actual will be presented at the next board meeting**

Marc Roberts

- Mentioned IASWCD bylaws reserve policy
- Reminded new board members about the bylaws that were previously sent to them

Liz Rice

- New region assistant to Steve Crowe is Clint ???
- SSE: PJ and Ron are still the representative, but they are not very involved in board activity

Recap of Annual Business Meeting (Liz)

- Held December 19 at IFB building, downtown Indianapolis
- Moved this meeting date and location due to not having conference in Jan 2026
- May need to look at a larger venue in the future as space is limited
- Legislative panel went very well
- No resolutions passed this year (4)
- Region meetings during the business meeting were very well attended;
- Some discussion about having separate business meeting from conference in future years might be beneficial
- John Kruse - appreciated the panel



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- Marc Roberts - appreciated the panel and meeting before Soil & Water Advocacy Day (SWAD)
- Troy Hattery commented that he thought the meeting went well

Soil & Water Advocacy Day (SWAD) at the Statehouse

- Marc Roberts - had good conversations; was invited into office of Greg Goode
- Troy - activity was slow and so legislators had time to meet that day
- Liz - that week was good as bills were moving out of one chamber to the next
- Ray - took a new supervisor there to experience the statehouse
- Barb - met with 2 representatives and an intern; focused on thanking them, CWI and invited them to events in the county and they are coming
- Ken Gunkel met with Lt. Governor
- Julie Good, Allen Co, went with Farm Bureau and met with all 10 of their representatives
- Marc - for next year - is there a group like that we can partner with to do this again?

Conference Planning Committee & Update

- March 12 meeting
- Looking for volunteers for this committee
- Kris Vance is doing the moderating
- **ACTION ITEM: Add Ethan Truax to Conference Planning Committee**
- Presentation submission open now through Feb 27

Program & Awards Update (Amy)

- Statewide Conservation Award nominations due online March 31
- Amy discussed summer intern hiring to help with developing materials and awards program

Committee updates (Legislative, Finance, Governance)

Legislative (Marc Roberts)

- Working on the next request for the budget session
- Looking at \$50K for districts in place of the current \$10K and now \$20K;
- Mark K - like the idea of the \$50K and having a match for it

Finance (Troy Hattery)

- In good shape; reserve funds available
- Marc asked: if we had a shutdown, how long could IASWCD stay open?
- Whitney answered: 30 days at full operation; most of our grant budgets come from federal

Governance (Mark Kingma)

- Have not had a recent meeting
- Working on how to get others to step up for IASWCD board and SWCD supervisors



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CCSI Oversight Committee Representation (Stan Moore, John Kruse)

- Stan is up for renewal on the CCSI oversight committee and is willing to stay
- John is staying on as an IASWCD representative
- Marc Roberts explained the programs (CCSI, RITA and IN Small Farms) that are housed within IASWCD
- Kim motioned for Stan to stay on committee; Ethan seconded.
- All approved.

IN Small Farms Program: question and clarification

- Kim asked about the change of name with USH to IN Small Farms
- Liz reminded everyone that NRCS funding for USH would be going away, so a change was needed for the program
- Aug/Sept - NRCS had \$500K for USH, but “urban” verbiage had to be removed; IASWCD accepted the \$500K and had to decrease staffing numbers by two
- IN Small Farms had three staff, each covering about 30 counties
- These changes were previously announced at the Sept board meeting
- NRCS is hoping to have more funding available
- New focus is direct technical assistance as opposed to outreach and education

From 1:09 pm to 1:37 pm - the board pivoted to the weekly online IASWCD **Legislative Update Zoom meeting** with districts.

After the Legislative Zoom meeting:

New Grant Opportunity (Liz)

- Rural Climate Partnership
 - Created fact sheets regarding renewable energy
 - Solar information for SWCDs; act as a hub of information
 - \$50-\$75K grant available, no matching requirements
 - Discussion was held regarding this opportunity and the association’s involvement
 - Jeff Baker - thinks there is a need for this information for SWCDs
 - Barb asked: Can you talk to Rural Climate Partners re: being neutral?
 - Liz answered: the purpose and intent is education
 - John made a motion and rescinded it so that more discussion can be held at the March meeting.
 - **ACTION ITEM: Liz will invite Scott/RCP and Matt/Wisconsin to the March 13 meeting**



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NACD

- NACD Updates (Ethan Truax, Ken Gunkel)
 - Winter regional meeting, Carmel, IN: January 13-14, 2026
 - Ethan shared highlights from the January meeting
 - Next meeting in Missouri
 - Annual meeting, San Antonio, TX: February 15-19, 2026 (Marc Roberts, Ken Gunkel, Liz Rice)
 - Hanna Garriott and Ray Chattin are attending
 - NACD Fly-in, Washington D.C.: March 24-26, 2026 - attending: Marc Roberts, Ken Gunkel, Eric Shideler, Sam Miller, Liz Rice
 - NACD Summer Meeting, Grand Rapids, MI: July 17-22, 2026
 - Need to start thinking about reps for this - most likely Ken and Ethan

OTHER

Board Retreat

- In June. More details to come.
- Location ideas: Fair Oaks, Kankakee, Limerlost, Kankakee Sands, Connor Prairie
- Meeting will include strategic plan updates and a tour
- In-person only; no Zoom option will be available

Next board meeting **Mar 13, 2026**

Meeting adjourned 2:11 pm