

Meeting Minutes
Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society
Board Meeting February 17, 2026
via Zoom

Mission: Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society promotes sustainable food systems through education, advocacy, and research.

Board Attendees: Martin Goter (MG), Mike Jorgenson (MJ), Larry Sax (LS), Nichole Hensen (NH), BJ McNeil (BJM), Carolyn Lane (CL), Steve Zwinger (SZ), Jesse Duncan (JD), Brandon Gutzmann (BG)

Absent: Rich Horsley (RH), Randy Nelson (RN), Executive Director: Krysti Mikkonen (KM).

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by MG at 8:02 am. Quorum was established. It was verified that MJ and SZ are still voting members of the Board, with their terms ending after this meeting.
Action Items: none

- 2. Agenda & Prior Meeting Minutes Review & Approval:**
MG added the OFARM TOPP proposal to the agenda.
Minutes of the December 13, 2025, meeting were reviewed.
Action: Motion made by BJ and seconded by SZ to accept the minutes from the December 18, 2025, meeting. Motion carried unanimously.
Action Items: none

- 3. New Board Members:**
Introduction of new board member, Jesse Duncan, elected at the annual member meeting.
Introduction of Brandon Gutzmann. There is one open position on the board.
Action: CL moved to appoint Brandon Gutzmann to fill this position. Second by MJ. Motion carried unanimously.
Action Items: (suggested by Larry)
 - 1. Write and introduction for each new Board member and publish in the next germinator.**
 - 2. Update website to reflect Board of director changes by Late March**

4. Financial Report: LS

Today's report reflected activity through January 31, 2026. It was provided for informational purposes only. LS will present a full financial report at the March Board meeting in accordance with quarterly financial reporting requirements. March's financial presentation will cover the first six months of our fiscal year. Overall things are looking good.

Action Items: Larry & Kristi will distribute February-ending financial reports one week ahead of the Board meeting.

5. Executive Director and Program Committee Report: (Reviewed by MG in KM's absence. Full report included in meeting documents.) The Events Committee meeting is still scheduled for this Thursday., 2/19

- We are considering two potential venues for 2027 conference: Dakota Events Center in Aberdeen and the Watertown Events Center in Watertown, SD. We need to finalize the venue and conference dates by our March Board meeting. It was suggested that we send thank you cards to each 2026 speaker prior to the next Board meeting. We should also begin seeking speakers for 2027. LS and KM have been in communication with the Watertown Event Center, they will hold January 20-23rd, 2027 through the end of March. LS offered to take the lead to work with KM to meet a March 15 deadline to finalize dates and venue (hopefully for next 2 years). Watertown or Aberdeen Events Centers. A contract needs to be available for review by the next board meeting.
- BG commented that there's a concentration of organic farmers in SW MN who would probably attend if held in Watertown, also NW Iowa and eastern NE. Our 2026 conference conflicted with the OGRAIN conference, which is gathering momentum.

SZ asked about payment for the conference auctioneer. Has he been paid yet and how much? Ben Stiegelmeier would like to be asked about future auctions. He did a great job auctioneering previously and may connect better with our members.

BG shared an idea to have the auction at lunch for better attendance. Many people don't stick around for the evening auction. How can we get better participation?

SZ passed on a comment from Charlie Johson - NPSAS should honor Fred Kirschenman in the next Germinator. All agreed. MG will pass it on to KM and make sure there's a writeup.

13th Hat Report review: Waiting for full conference review until KM is present.

- Summer field days Field days – according to TOPP grant, we have 2 collaboration field days plus 6 NPSAS dates (3 in ND, 3 in SD). We need to make sure we have these set by end of March. Planning and advertising must be done much earlier. We must increase participation at these events.
- Election of Officers: per bylaws election of officers occurs at the meeting immediately after conference. MG preferred to table it to the upcoming strategic planning meeting.

Action: MJ moved to table the election of on officers to strategic planning meeting. Second by BJ. Motion carried. MJ is not running again so we'll need a new VP.

LS commented that it's essential for the board to establish a better schedule of when we're expecting things to get done with clear deadlines. We also need to announce conference, field day dates, etc. to the membership earlier.

MJ suggested that his wife would be a good resource for the events committee.

Other discussion: For good speakers, we must book very early, and this should become part of our conference planning structure in the future. All speakers should be booked by the end of August at the latest. Panelists should also be confirmed well in advance. All these goals, dates, etc. must be recorded so there is accountability. We should seek to partner with other organizations that will list our conference on their events calendar.

Goal for field day planning: By end of March, we need the hosts, locations and dates finalized for ALL field days. NPSAS is committed to a total of 8 events through the Plains TOPP grant.

We need a list of those who KM has already spoken to and current status update by March 15 so we'll have it for our next board meeting. Potentially 3 confirmed in SD, 2 in ND and a collaborative one with in Vermillion for June.

SZ will ask Rick Mittleider. NH will speak again with John Dufner; also Don Dufner?

Collaborative events/meetings - we need more quality and depth. NPSAS must be truly involved in planning/conducting the events.

SZ and LS commented that Carrington is always a positive place to collaborate with, but we must be more active in this collaboration. We would also like them to continue supporting Farm Breeder Network. Carrington is doing research on BioFlora products, so LS also has a relationship with them.

Action Items:

- 1. Provide an answer for SZ question about auctioneer payment.**
- 2. Consider moving auction to immediately after a noon meal next year.**
- 3. Review 13th Hat evaluation at the next Board Meeting.**
- 4. Summer Field days: provide list of currently confirmed hosts, dates, locations, and speakers to the board by March 1. Have all field days confirmed by April 1 to be published on Website and Germinator.**
- 5. Officer election to be part of the agenda at the strategic planning meeting.**
- 6. Have basic information for Winter Annual Conference completed prior to April 1, 2026. Final conference schedule, speakers, hotel info, etc to be distributed to all members and on website no later than August 30, 2026**
- 7. 2028 Winter Annual Conference and 2028 field day planning should begin no later than October 1, 2026, so we can announce the dates, locations and possible speakers at the 2027 Winter Annual Conference.**
- 8. Develop and present a list of potential advertising collaborators for events by the end of March 2026**
- 9. LS to communicate with Carrington Research Station regarding how NPSAS may be able to collaborate with them more.**

6. OFARM TOPP Grant Proposal (reviewed by MG)

An agreement was proposed to NPSAS to be part of a grant proposal approved by TOPP Midwest with NPSAS's collaboration as a key component. At the Winter annual Conference, it was decided to make changes to the agreement and bring it forward for full board review.

Deliverables: 3 field days (June, July, Aug. preferred) and participation in a mentor/mentee program

Discussion took place with main concerns being timeliness of the agreement being brought to the board and the work/staff required for additional field days. It was decided that NPSAS should ensure that the previous TOPP commitment of ND and SD field days were confirmed with verification by the farm host and tentative dates before moving forward with adding more field days.

Action: MJ moved that NPSAS will not pursue the agreement with OFARM. Second by SZ. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Action Items: none

1. Communicate to OFarm that as of now the Board has not approved the agreement.
2. No further work be done on OFarm field days. Our Winter Conference and Field Days must be planned and confirmed before we pursue planning other Field Days.

7. Board Strategic Meeting

LS is talking to Watertown to see if we can do the Strategic Planning meeting for the week of March 9-13 at their facility (CL can't make it the 10th). It was also discussed having it in Fargo again, MG will talk with RH, RN and KM. It was discussed to ask Matt Stone to facilitate again, meeting time should be focused on Officer election, Field Days, and the Annual Conference...his facilitation may not be needed.

MJ and SZ are welcome to join our strategic meeting.

Action Items:

- 1. LS will contact Watertown Event Center.**
- 2. MG will call individuals as noted in minutes.**
- 3. MG, LS, and Kristi will develop an agenda for the meeting and distribute it by the end of February. (Location may not be finalized by that time.)**

SZ commented on membership and financials. Part of the reason we don't have members is that there's no set reminder to pay. We need to send out reminder notifications.

BG: Need to have better notification of membership and reminders to pay it. Needs to be easily accessible to pay on the website.

NH: Paper and email invoices. It's a lot easier to remember to pay if there's a paper invoice and receipt, rather than just an email.

CL: Can we have a multi-purpose mailing including several items such as field day dates, conference date, pay your dues, etc.?

Action Items:

1. Discuss at Strategic planning meeting.

BJ noted that 13th Hat pointed out that our website desperately needs updating and modernization. Very confusing to sign up on it.

MG agreed the website needs some work and we should be utilizing the functions of our member portal to a better degree. We need to post the videos from the conference and past conferences ASAP.

BJ: Might be worth having someone come in and advise on how to modernize it.

Action Items:

- 1. MG will work with KM to get videos posted to the website**
- 2. Who handles website?**
- 3. Discuss web site improvement at Strategic planning meeting.**

BG: I get usually 3 emails/month about the Acres conference, etc. Makes it easy to remember to register.

MG: E-Sprout gets pretty good open rates. We could make some improvements to our online presence.

SZ moved to adjourn. Second by BJ. Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 10:08.