



Newsletter

MAY 2025

www.swrdc.org

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<https://www.swrdc.org/>

SRDC at the 2025 NADO Washington Policy Conference (March 10–12)

SRDC's Executive Director and Board President joined regional peers in D.C. to discuss federal policy shifts, rural development strategies, and advocacy for programs vital to Southwest Minnesota.

TopTakeaways:

Policy Impacts: Panels urged close engagement on potential changes to municipal bond tax exemptions, SNAP funding, and other Executive Order effects.

Aging & Care: Leaders called for quick reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, emphasizing that social and medical care must work hand-in-hand.

Rural Investment: Bipartisan honors for EDA champions underscored the need for modernized federal support; Brookings and CDFI speakers showcased innovative rural initiatives.

Transportation Funding: Discussion centered on state gas taxes, EV fees, and advocacy for flexible MPO/RTPO funding.

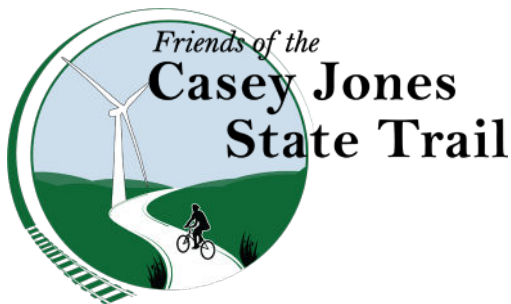
Hill Visits: Meetings with Senators Smith, Klobuchar, and Rep. Finstad thanked them for EDA reauthorization and raised regional funding and USDA program concerns.

Resilience & Recreation: FEMA insights stressed pre-contracting local disaster services, and a closing session highlighted the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy and its ties to trail development and housing.

Solid Waste Commission:

The Southwest Solid Waste Commission convened on Monday, March 24, 2025. During the meeting, Jay Trusty, the Executive Director of the Southwest Regional Development Commission, presented the 10-year Solid Waste Plan to the Commission. The draft plan has been submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for an initial review. The MPCA will provide feedback, and any necessary corrections will be made before the final report is submitted.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2025.



In a recent meeting, the Friends of the Casey Jones State Trail group has opted to reallocate some of their funds. Kent Skaar, DNR, stated : *The priority and scope will be revised for each of the two projects, with the Lake Wilson now being identified for Design and Construction and the Woodstock – East Segment shifting to Design only. Noting that we will likely limit further work at Woodstock for now to allow the Lake Wilson Project to proceed.*

The group recently had a booth at the Slayton Expo sharing information about the trail with those in attendance along with handing out brochures, talking about upcoming events and membership.

Upcoming events for 2025.

- September 13, Currie ride
- Horse trail ride, Sept. 20th or 21st



ORIENTATION

Orientation for new elected officials and new SRDC Commissioners was held on March 21st at the Murray County 4H Building in Slayton. We had a very good response from the region with 23 elected officials in attendance. Many Commissioners have told me that after serving in their first term as an SRDC Commissioner, attending the orientation a second time makes everything clearer than the first time they attended. Paul welcomed everyone to the Orientation and then we walked everyone through the orientation, with staff members handling the programs that they administer or work on.



City of Hardwick

The City of Hardwick applied for, and were awarded, a \$30,000 USDA SEARCH planning grant that will include planning efforts for water system improvements. The plan is for system updates to the water system that will allow for remote reading of residential water meters. The city requested assistance from SRDC regarding USDA ADA requirements. SRDC was involved with the ADA Checklist for existing buildings and provided technical assistance with the required Accessibility Transition plan.

The fall of 2024, SRDC staff worked with **Egans Market, Adrian, MN** on a successful Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing (MPEM) Grant application. Egans Market received an award in the amount of \$11,378.00. This award will cover 50% of their flooring project. The floors at Egans Market are approximately 45 years old and are worn and deteriorating. The USDA required the replacement. New flooring will help ease the burden on several fronts by enhancing sanitation efficiency, supporting contamination control protocols, and helping promote safe personnel conditions.

Highwater Creek Meat Market also received the MDA's Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing (MPEM) Grant award. In their application, they emphasized increasing safety for food products and employees. They will be purchasing new equipment such as: meat slicer, power bandsaw, splitting saw, patty machine, curing pump, and tenderizer. The current equipment is old and not as easily cleaned and maintained as new and updated equipment.

Staff collaborated with several small business owners in the region to apply for the Good Food Access Program Equipment and Physical Improvements Grant.

Bolts Grocery Store in Lake Benton

received \$70,120, and **Ivanhoe Supermarket in Ivanhoe, MN**, received \$70,000—both receiving 100% of their grant requests.

Bolt's Grocery Store is undertaking a project to remove and dispose of their outdated refrigerated meat and dairy cases, along with the associated condensing units. These old cases are too small and inefficient. By replacing them with newer, larger, and more energy-efficient models, the store will not only create additional space but also save money. This will allow them to expand their selection of fresh meat and dairy products, including options sourced from Minnesota-raised farms.

Ivanhoe Supermarket's project will focus on replacing the refrigeration displays used for produce and meat. Completing this project will ensure the maintenance of high-quality produce and meat products with consistent food storage for years to come.

Staff has also recently submitted a grant application for the **MPCA Next Generation Refrigeration Grant** on behalf of the Heron Lake Mini Mart. Heron Lake Mini Mart needs to replace its outdated and malfunctioning walk-in freezer and cooler, as well as the external compressor and condenser. By installing new equipment, normal operations will be restored, and inventory can be expanded to include meat, dairy, eggs, and ready-to-eat fresh salads and sandwiches. An energy audit conducted on October 28, 2024, shows that replacing the failing equipment will result in significant savings through improved insulation and enhanced cooling efficiency. This grant award will be announced by May 15, 2025.

Portable Counters Available: If you or someone in your area is planning to apply for MnDOT or other funding for a trial project, consider requesting a portable counter from the SRDC Office. These counters provide valuable information and data on current trail users that can be very beneficial for grant applications and other planning efforts. Contact Planner Webb for more information: chrisw@swrdc.org

RDO Transportation Planner's Group: Planner Webb has been selected to serve as Co-Chair of the RDO Transportation Planner's Group in Minnesota. This group works with MnDOT officials and all of the Regional Development Commissions to lead quarterly planning meetings and other efforts in relation to RDO's and their relationship with MnDOT.



Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference

— SRDC Economic Development Specialist Murphy attended the Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference on March 20-21, in Virginia, MN. The focus of the conference was how entrepreneurship connects to our regions to build a stronger economy and focused on four key components to a healthy and thriving region: Business Development, Community Development, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life.

Murray County Historical Society Strategic Plan 2025

— **2030:** On January 16 staff conducted a strategic planning session for MCHS. Participants reviewed progress on the past plan and then created goals and objectives for the new plan under four themes. The themes were: 1) Programming and Outreach, 2) Facilities, 3) Membership/Fundraising, and 4) Volunteers. Staff then updated the plan and send it to the Historical Society's approval in March 2025.

Childcare: Successful DEED Childcare Economic Development program applicants from this region include: Hendricks Community Hospital Foundation in the amount of \$159,000 and Nobles County Community Service Agency at \$480,000.



SRDC completed a three-year strategic plan for Wonder World between Aug 2024 and January 2025 and received \$5,000 compensation from SWIF for the work. Other assistance for Wonder World included submitting grant applications to the Lyon County Riverboat Foundation, DEED, and Boxcar wind; presenting to the Murray County EDA, developing a funding plan, and connecting them with other technical assistance providers.



Workforce Summit Highlights

Adaptability, Innovation, and the Role of AI

The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council partnered with several economic development and workforce partners in southwest MN to hold a Southwest MN Workforce Summit. It was held April 29 at the Heritage Event Center in Taunton and brought together employers, HR professionals, educators, community leaders, and economic developers to explore current workforce challenges and opportunities.

Nationally recognized workforce expert Gerry Hoeffner opened the day with a keynote focused on adapting to Minnesota's tightening labor market, where the unemployment rate remains low and demand for workers outpaces supply. Hoeffner emphasized the need for employers to rebrand themselves using real data and compelling digital storytelling, while also streamlining hiring practices and emphasizing cultural fit, mentorship, and purpose-driven work to attract today's job seekers—especially Gen Z.

Mike Kutzke of Professional Training Services delivered an engaging presentation on the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI). He stressed that AI is not a replacement for human intelligence but a tool that enhances productivity and creativity when used wisely. Kutzke broke down AI into four key categories: generative, predictive, agentic, and natural language models, demonstrating how these tools are already integrated into everyday platforms like Microsoft Teams and PowerPoint. His message was clear—AI is here to stay, and AI literacy is quickly becoming essential across all industries. From writing summaries to analyzing trends, AI offers support, but users must apply judgment, ethics, and validation to use it effectively.

The summit reinforced two key workforce priorities: anticipating job displacement and investing in upskilling and reskilling. Leaders were encouraged to build long-term talent pipelines, treat recruitment like marketing, and create inclusive, people-centered environments. As both Hoeffner and Kutzke emphasized, the future of workforce success depends on adaptability, communication, and a willingness to embrace new tools and ideas—always with the human element at the core. The event was made possible through a strong collaboration of regional partners, including SRDC, UMRDC, SWIF, LYFT Career Pathways, and chambers and EDAs across southwest Minnesota.

RLF Spotlights

Site Visits

Site visits are required every three years; however, they are done more often as the need arises. Annual business taxes continue to be gathered for files. Site visits are combined with communication audits and interviews for storytelling. Success stories can now be found at <http://www.swrdc.org/economic-development/revolving-loan-funds/rlf-business-spotlights/>.

RECENTLY FEATURED



Marshall, MN

Atlantic Place: Craft Food & Cocktails

*Crafted for Memo-
ries & Connectiosn,
Inspired by Flavor*

**Erin Schutte
Wadzinski:**
*Bringing
Immigration
Law Home*



Worthington, MN



Belview, MN

Jeff Manthei: From Hometown Roots to Thriving Business Owner

**Midway Farm
Equipment: A
Local Partnership
Growing Strong in
Mountain Lake**



Mt. Lake, MN

SRDC Staff

Jay Trusty
Executive Director

Robin Weis
Deputy Director

Melissa Nelson
Finance Director

Jason Walker
Community Development Director

Kim Murphy
Economic Development Specialist

Nadya Bucklin
Development Planner

Chris Webb
Transportation Planner

Kathy Schreiber
Administrative Specialist

Jodi Klein
Accounting Specialist

Sheila Crowley
Communications Specialist



EECBG (Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant)- Energy Planning for Small Com- munities-

EECBG is a funding source for planning efforts designed to as-
sist small communities (this in-
cludes cities or counties under

15,000 in population) in implementing strategies to reduce energy use, to reduce fossil fuel emissions, and to improve energy efficiency. There is no match require-
ment, and it is eligible to all cities in our region and the
counties of Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Murray, Pipe-
stone, and Rock. SRDC received \$99,959.78 of which 10%
is allocated for project administration. Grants to eligible
communities are maxed at \$20,000. Planning efforts
could include resiliency plans, energy audits, engineering
studies, etc.

SRDC recently shared our EECBG PowerPoint with other
MN RDCs. Staff are available to meet with eligible enti-
ties. One project was recently approved for \$20,000.

SRDC Commissioners

Cottonwood County

Jenny Quade, Municipalities
Ronald Kottke, Townships
Donna Gravelly, Commissioners

Jackson County

Mark Haberman, Municipalities
Craig Rubis, Townships
Kent Bargfrede, Commissioners

Lincoln County

Lyndon Johnson, Municipalities
Jeff Moen, Townships
Mic VanDeVere, Commissioners

Lyon County

Pam Cooreman, Municipalities
Lori Grant, Townships
Rick Anderson, Commissioners

Murray County

Miron Carney, Municipalities
Vacant, Townships
Dennis Welgraven, Commissioners

Nobles County

Steve Kellen, Municipalities
Paul Langseth, Townships
Bob Paplow, Commissioners

Pipestone County

Dan Delaney, Municipalities
Vacant, Townships
Chris Hollingsworth,
Commissioners

Redwood County

Leah Bittner, Municipalities
Tiffany Lesmeister-Knott,
Townships
Bob Van Hee, Commissioners

Rock County

Dennis Madison, Municipalities
JoEllen Benson, Townships
Sherri Thompson, Commissioners

Cities over 10,000

Rick VonHoldt,
City of Worthington
Bob Byrnes
City of Marshall

Officers

Paul Langseth, Chair
Dennis Welgraven, Vice Chair
Rick Anderson, Treasurer
Eric Hartman, Secretary

Southwest MN School Boards

Eric Hartman
Stephen Schnieder

Lower Sioux Community

Vacant

Public Interest Groups

Justine Wettschreck,
Economic Development
Carrie Bendix
SW MN Private Industry Council
David Sturrock
SW MN Higher Education
Carol Biren,
Health & Human Services
Kristie Blankenship,
SW MN Housing Partnership

Everyone Welcome

Save the Date

2025 BUS TOUR & ANNUAL MEETING

*July
10th*



*Bus leaves
at 1 p.m.*

Stops to include:

- Edgerton Bakery (RLF Client)
- Stop at Woodstock Casey Jones Trail
- RTR School (Safe Routes to School)
- Bolt's Grocery, Lake Benton
- (PACE Client)

**Bus will return to
Pipestone at 4 p.m.
with Annual Meeting
and meal to follow**

Annual Meeting

Hiawatha Lodge 201 4th St NW , Pipestone, MN