

**Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
Wednesday, April 20, 2016 – 10:00 a.m.
Lexington, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board took place on April 20, 2016 at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Daphne W. Jamison, Chair
Richard A. Street, Vice Chair
Gary Hornbaker
Jerry L. Ingle
Stephen Lohr
Janette Kennedy
Barry L. Marten
Raymond L. Simms
Clyde E. Cristman, DCR Director, Ex Officio
David Kriz for Jack A. Bricker, NRCS Ex Officio
Dr. Bobby Grisso, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Invitee

MEMBERS ABSENT

C. Frank Brickhouse, Jr.

DCR STAFF

Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration
David C. Dowling, Deputy Director of Dam Safety and Soil and Water Conservation
Michael R. Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Darryl Glover, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation
Stephanie Martin, SWCD Liaison
Gary Moore, Agricultural Incentives Program Manager
Amy Walker, Conservation District Coordinator
Matthew Gooch, Office of the Attorney General

OTHERS

Suzanne Brown, Loudoun SWCD
Terri Bollinger, Peaks of Otter SWCD
Richard Chaffin, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Katie Hellebush, Virginia Grain Producers Association
Matt Kowalski, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Dr. Bridgett McIntosh, Extension Equine Specialist
Alyson Sappington, Thomas Jefferson SWCD
Dr. Kendall Tyree, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

E.B. Watson, Peaks of Otter SWCD
Greg Wichelns, Culpeper SWCD

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With eight (8) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Jamison called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and called for introductions of members, staff, and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MARCH 17, 2016

An amended version of the DRAFT minutes was provided in member packets. An additional correction was requested changing an Area IV reference to Area III on page 13 of the amended minutes.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Lohr moved the approval of the minutes of March 17, 2016 meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, as amended, and was seconded by Mr. Street. The minutes were approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Cristman advised the Board that the reconvened session of the General Assembly was happening in Richmond but that DCR had no pressing business before the legislature and provided the following:

- The approved budget provides \$61.7 million from the Water Quality Improvement Fund and authority for \$10 million from the recordation fee for Districts. These items were before the Board for discussion at this meeting.
- DCR has significantly restructured the Finance Division and the Department's financial and administrative procedures and policies. An entry interview with the Auditor of Public Accounts had been held and DCR is confident that audit items have been addressed.
- A review of water quality unobligated account balances extending back to 2008 has noted the availability of \$7.1 million for redistribution to Districts for Agricultural Cost-Share funding. DCR discussed this with the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) and staff would be bringing forward a recommendation for expenditure of these funds later this meeting. The funds will be distributed along the traditional 60/40 Bay/Non-Bay split.

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD 2017 VACS PROGRAM AND POLICY DISCUSSION

Mr. Dowling led the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share program and policy discussion.

FY16 Supplemental SL-6 Funding

Mr. Dowling requested that, as noted in the Director's report, the Board approve adding this discussion item to the agenda.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Street moved and Mr. Lohr seconded that the Board add the discussion of FY16 Supplemental SL-6 Funding to the agenda ahead of other business. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Dowling reviewed the available funding.

- \$7,322,849 is available from unobligated Virginia Natural Resource Commitment Fund monies and FY15 Department carry-forward funds.
- At the March 17, 2016 meeting, the Board recommended applying a 12% Technical Assistance (TA) to this amount (or a portion of this amount); included an RMP-1 and RMP-2 set-aside; splitting the remainder between basic cost-share and SL-6; split basic cost-share 60% CB/40% OCB and SL-6 50% CB/50% OCB.
- The initial intent was to include these funds in the FY17 allocations.
- Subsequent discussions with DPB indicated the need to utilize the Water Quality Improvement Act distribution formulas which direct 8% for TA and a cost-share split of 60% CB/40% OCB. It was also suggested to move these funds to FY16. Accordingly, DCR is recommending distributing this funding as Supplemental FY16 SL-6 cost-share to continue to address the FY15 SL-6 backlog.

Funds would be managed as follows:

1) Unobligated 0936 Funds (Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Funds)

Total Available	\$7,109,602
Hold-back for cash flow*	-\$500,000
Subtotal (Cost-Share and TA)	\$6,609,602
8% TA	-\$528,768
Subtotal (Cost-Share)	\$6,080,834
RMP-1/RMP-2	-\$150,000
Subtotal (SL-6)	\$5,930,834
CB SL-6 Allocation	\$3,545,607
OCB SL-6 Allocation	\$2,385,227

* This is to allow for cash flow management associated with monthly recordation revenue.

2) FY2015 General Fund Carry-forward

Department Carry-forward – Directed for use for SL-6 Allocation (No TA is associated with this)	\$202,247
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Mr. Dowling noted that the funding was distributed based on what was dictated in the *Code of Virginia*. A copy of the grant agreement was circulated for member review that was similar to other grant agreements before the Board. Districts will have until June 30, 2018 to apply the funds. Director Cristman will send a letter to Districts upon Board approval.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Ingle moved and Mr. Street seconded that the Board approve the grant agreement and allocations for FY16 Supplemental SL-6 Funding as proposed by staff. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Board's Program year 2017 Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) BMP Manual

Mr. Dowling reviewed the March 17, 2016 discussion of the Agricultural Cost-Share Manual and noted that after several hours of discussion at that meeting, the Board made the following recommended changes (Items 1-20) and provided additional direction to staff.

- 1-10 Agricultural practice updates (Board further refined WQ-12 Roof Runoff Management specification)
- 11 Various Administrative Updates.
- 12 Several language updates that applied to multiple practices.
- 13 COIA language updates to reflect legislation.
- 14 CREP Program updates.
- 15 Inclusion of a new section on voluntary practices.
- 16 Procedural updates on District jurisdictional boundaries.
- 17 Suspension of the 3rd quarter reallocations. Keep funds working in the Districts and target SL-6 backlog.
- 18 Addition of a section on DCR Agricultural Engineering Program.
- 19 Update to definitions.
- 20 BMP Incentive Programs Contract Updates.
- 21 Inclusion of Conservation Planning Guidelines.

Mr. Dowling also noted the following:

- The manual also contains a list of BMPs that are eligible for state tax credits by individuals and corporations. The *Code of Virginia* (§§ 58.1-339.3 and 439.5) calls for this to be incorporated into the cost-share manual.
- A draft Program Year 2017 Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) BMP Manual was sent to members reflecting the Board supported changes.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Street moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the proposed changes to the Program Year 2017 Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share BMP Manual (including the tax eligibility list) as proposed by staff and that the Board further authorize the Department to make additional editorial refinements as the document is made printer ready. Mr. Lohr seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Review of Draft Policy on Soil and Water Conservation District Administration and Operations Funding Allocations for Fiscal Year 2017.

Mr. Dowling noted that the available Administration and Operations Funding Allocations for FY2017 were the same as FY2016 with the exception of additional funding being available for small dam repairs which will be handled through a separate process. He advised that staff worked to tighten up the

deliverables and had shared those concepts with the Board at the last meeting. The Board will be asked to make a final determination on the Policy and Grant Agreement at the May 24, 2016 meeting.

- **Administration and Operation Budget Language (As passed by General Assembly on March 11, 2016)**

Item 364 A.1. Out of the amounts appropriated for Financial Assistance to Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts, ~~\$6,841,091~~ **\$7,191,091** the first year and ~~\$6,841,091~~ **\$7,191,091** the second year from the general fund shall be provided to soil and water conservation districts for administrative and operational support. These funds shall be distributed upon approval by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board to the districts in accordance with the Board's established financial allocation policy. These amounts shall be in addition to any other funding provided to the districts for technical assistance pursuant to subsections B. and D. of this item. Of this amount, **\$6,209.091** the first year and **\$6,209,091** the second year from the general fund shall be distributed to the districts for core administrative and operational expenses (personnel, training, travel, rent, utilities, office support, and equipment) based on identified budget projections and in accordance with the Board's financial allocation policy; \$312,000 the first year and \$312,000 the second year from the general fund shall be distributed at a rate of \$3,000 per dam for maintenance; ~~\$150,000~~ **\$500,000** the first year and ~~\$150,000~~ **\$500,000** the second year from the general fund for small dam repairs of known or suspected deficiencies; and \$170,000 the first year and \$170,000 the second year to the department to provide district support in accordance with Board policy, including, but not limited to, services related to auditing, bonding, contracts, and training. The amount appropriated for small dam repairs of known or suspected deficiencies is authorized for transfer to the Soil and Water Conservation District Dam Maintenance, Repair, and Rehabilitation Fund.

- Based on this, allocations to Districts were kept the same as last year (change in small dam repair funds).
- Uses of DCR Managed funds were refined. Included updates related to training including District access to the Knowledge Center.
- Incorporation of Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) process for deliverable reviews resulting in a "C" score.
- Updates to deliverables including those related to quarterly reporting, addressing audit findings, attending financial management and reporting training, attending new director orientations, attending key District meetings, and conducting business in accordance with FOIA.
- The budget template form in the Policy will require further updates.

Mr. Hornbaker observed that the funding for Districts seems to have stagnated and that there did not seem to be a remedy or solution. He asked if there were discussions in Richmond with regard to addressing funding issues.

Director Cristman replied that DCR included a rebenchmarking of district funding in budget recommendations but that the suggestion had not moved forward. The Association also proposed changes. He noted that the budget templates will help to continue to drive this discussion.

Mr. Dowling further noted that the budget template results were utilized successfully this past year to increase district technical assistance from 8% to 12%.

Concern was expressed over funding for district director travel and the correlation to deliverables. It was noted that not all district directors' travel and that the requirement to attend meetings or training only applies to one, not all district directors. Districts are also able to fund director travel out of other funds.

Ms. Jamison asked who would interpret whether Districts are appropriately responding to FOIA requests.

Director Cristman advised that FOIA requirements are clearly spelled out in the *Code of Virginia*. Training is available for Districts and is included in new director training with the Association.

Mr. Gooch will present FOIA/COIA training at the next Board meeting.

PRESENTATION: DR. BRIDGETT MCINTOSH, VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Dr. Bridgett McIntosh, Extension Equine Specialist, gave a presentation entitled "Equine Horse and Forage Management and the Potential Impact on Water Quality."

Review of Draft Policy and Procedures on Soil and Water Conservation District Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Funding Allocations (Fiscal Year 2017)

Mr. Dowling continued with the program and policy discussions. He reviewed the draft Policy and Procedures on Soil and Water Conservation District Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Funding Allocations. He provided spreadsheets outlining funding and noted that these changes had been made to district funding allocations since the Policy was printed for today's meeting. Mr. Dowling reviewed the following:

Recommended 2017 Budget Allocations for Cost-Share and Technical Assistance

Use	FY 2017 Allocations	FY 2016 Allocations
WQIF Reserve and Special Fund Deposits	\$0	\$18,881,888
WQIF Surplus Deposit	\$61,708,000	\$0
CREP	-\$800,000	-\$700,000
Financial Tracking Module	-\$500,000	-\$0
DOF Silviculture BMPs	-\$250,000	-\$0
NMP Golf Courses	-\$100,000	-\$100,000
WGIF Reserve Set-Aside	-\$8,244,210	-\$0
Subtotal for Transfer to VNRCF (C-S and TA)	\$51,814,590 [\$45,596,839 C-S]	\$18,081,888 [\$16,499,366 C-S]
General Cost-Share CB	-\$15,594,119	-\$9,688,014.84
General Cost-Share OCB	-\$10,396,079	-\$3,737,576.70
SL-6 Cost-Share CB	-\$9,803,321	-\$211,588.16
SL-6 Cost-Share OCB	-\$9,803,320	-\$2,862,157.30
Remaining Portion for Technical Assistance	\$6,217,751 (12%)	\$1,582,551 (8.75% to hold stable)
Balance	\$0	\$0

Estimated Recording Fee Deposit (C-S and TA)	\$8,200,000 [\$7,000,000 C-S]	\$7,500,000 [\$5,300,000 C-S]
Revenue Reduction for Budget Savings	-\$0	-\$1,000,000
Technical Assistance	-\$1,200,000	-\$1,200,000
Cost-Share (SL-6) CB	-\$4,184,783	-\$3,168,478.26
Cost-Share (SL-6 OCB)	-\$2,815,217	-\$2,131,521.74
Balance	\$0	\$0

- TA has increased \$2.7 M to \$7.4 M; 274% increase.
- C-S has also increased \$21.8 to \$52.6 M (\$25,990,198 basic C-S; \$26,606,641 SL-6) 241% increase.
- At the March meeting the following elements (Items) were discussed:
 - 22 Board reaffirmed support for modifications to Conservation Efficiency Factor.
 - 23 Board reaffirmed modifications to the Hydrologic Unit ratings computational strategies that would give more weights to agricultural acres within a HU.
 - 24 Set Recordation estimate at \$8.2 M which shall be allocated to SL-6; Discussed unobligated funds; Waived 4th quarter reallocation strategy; recommended TA be proportional to cost-share (eliminated use of FY13 base).
 - 29 Incorporation of Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) process for deliverable reviews resulting in a “C” score.
- However, in the Policy provided to the Board, for TA calculations, after reviewing the numbers, staff maintained use of the FY13 base (hold all Districts harmless on the TA).

The Policy and Grant Agreement will be out for consideration for another month before the Board will be asked to take action at the May meeting. Staff will send out a revised draft for review.

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS’ BOARD APPOINTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD FOR CONSIDERATION

Director Cristman reviewed the recommendations provided by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts for appointments to the Soil and Water Conservation Board. These appointments were forwarded by Dr. Tyree on behalf of the Association. Mr. Cristman noted that, due to Board composition requirements one of the appointments must be a farmer.

The recommended appointments were:

Area II Representative

Irvin White, Associate Director and Farmer
 Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District

Arthur Gray Coyner, Director

John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District

Area III Representative

Cindy Smith, Director and Farmer
Hanover-Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District

Herb Dunford, Director
Henricopolis Soil and Water Conservation District

Director Cristman stated that the Board has the ability to approve or reject the nominations. He also noted that the Governor may choose to appoint or reject the nominations and ask for additional names for consideration.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Ingle moved that the Board endorse the appointment recommendations from the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and direct DCR to forward the recommendations to the Governor for appointment consideration. Mr. Hornbaker seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

Division Director's Report, Mr. Darryl Glover

District Engineering Services - Engineering Job Approval Authority

The SL-6 livestock stream exclusion initiative resulted in \$121 million of cost share signup. Although to date, roughly \$60 million has already been devoted to this demand, as you know there currently remains a backlog of over \$61 million of pending applications. Given the workload that this signup, and subsequent survey, design, and close out are placing on affected Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Districts), the Department is working on several approaches, with input from the District Engineering Workgroup, to identify viable options for applicants and Districts to obtain engineering assistance as they work to design and install SL-6 and other structural agricultural BMPs.

Two major tasks would be essential for establishing and sustaining Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA) for Districts; training District Technical staff on a regular basis; and, conducting an annual review and affirmation of the engineering competency for each and every individual. As a result, for the Department to attempt to fully establish EJAA, for 47 Districts, with only two DCR Agricultural Engineering staff, is not feasible without assistance from others. Given that, there are a few options, which taken together, would provide some engineering assistance until funding for additional DCR engineering staff can be obtained.

One long-standing option for cost share participants is to hire their own engineer and add on the cost of engineering to their SL-6 cost share estimates. The FY2017 Agricultural BMP Cost Share Manual has new clarifying language to call attention to this option.

Another option, Districts with a lot of SL-6 applications that they can fund, but no one on staff who previously had EJAA under the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), would be, if they choose, to use some of their FY2017 Technical Assistance funding to contract with a Professional Engineer familiar with agricultural BMPs.

A third option would be for the more experienced District technical staff to help train staff from other Districts. This "Super Tech" concept originated within the District Engineering Workgroup. They are still working through the details as to how this could be done, while being mindful of their obligations within their own Districts. A written proposal is anticipated soon, and can hopefully be presented at the June 2016 meeting of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Finally, the Department is exploring whether some other staff could be trained to provide small percentages of their time to assist with SL-6 work on a temporary basis until the current backlog is substantially reduced.

Although DCR EJAA cannot be fully established until additional staff can be obtained, we shall begin conducting reviews of District staff that had EJAA issued by NRCS. These reviews will start with those Districts that have the heaviest SL-6 workload (e.g. Culpeper, Headwaters, Peaks of Otter, Shenandoah Valley, and Thomas Jefferson) and should be conducted by the end of May. This will reaffirm that engineering related work is being performed correctly by District staff.

District Engineering Services - Training

On Tuesday, March 29, 2016, a stream crossing training was held in Rustburg. This training was a part of the area Joint Employee Development (JED) and was held in partnership with NRCS. This training was highly complemented by those who attended.

Advanced culvert design training is scheduled for July 12, 2016 in Culpeper. Three additional trainings are being planned for the following locations:

Wytheville-Pressure Watering System
Charlottesville-Stream Crossing
Prince George-Pressure Watering System

Conservation Plan Training and Certification

The Department has requested authorization to recruit our first Conservation Planning and Certification Trainer. As previously reported, this position will be full-time, under the supervision of Barbara McGarry, from our Resource Management Plan Program. Barbara is USDA-NRCS conservation planning certified. She will be ably assisted in establishing the program by David Kindig, our Nutrient Management Plan Certification and Training Manager. To the degree possible, the DCR Conservation Planning and Certification Program will be similar to NRCS training, although more assessable for Districts. We hope to have this new program operational in early (calendar) year 2017.

Additional Training Scheduled for SWCDs

As previously reported, the Department will conduct book keeping/basic accounting training for District staffs later this spring. Both beginner and advanced training will be offered in several locations around the state. As we have every year, the Department will also conduct several training sessions for Districts on the FY2017 Agricultural BMP Manual that is before you today.

Accounting/Bookkeeping:

- May 17 (Beginners) Wytheville Community College
- May 27 (Beginners) Prince George County Library
- June 7 (Advanced) Wytheville Community College
- June 20 (Advanced) Prince George County Library
- June 23 (Advanced) DOF in Charlottesville

FY2017 Cost Share:

- June 14 Farmville USDA Service Center
- June 22 DOF in Charlottesville
- June 23 Wytheville Community College
- June 27 Prince George County Library

BMP Verification Plan

Virginia's BMP Verification Plan received "conditional" approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This required responses to EPA's comments and questions about the plan by April 4, 2016. In response to comments about agricultural BMPs, the Department proposed the following changes to the agricultural spot check framework in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and submitted them to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on April 1:

Agricultural BMPs have now been subdivided into verification groups based primarily on the risk of failure as demonstrated by the spot check histories for each type of BMP, as well as program type, credit duration, and applicability to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan.

The proposed categories are: cover crop, CREP, land management (e.g. woodland buffers), nutrient management, structural BMPs (including SL-6), (conservation) tillage, voluntary exclusion not built to specifications, other BMPs to be verified (e.g. shoreline stabilization), and other BMPs not to be verified by DCR or SWCDs (e.g. septic tank repair). Each BMP category would have different verification frequencies and/or methods.

The revised verification scheme, if accepted by EPA, must be fully implemented in the Chesapeake Bay watershed by FY2018. Further analysis will be made to compare the workload that would result from this new framework, to that from the existing 5% random spot checks, before committing to it outside of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Area Visits

A visit with District Directors in Area I was held on April 13. VSWCB member Stephen R. Lohr attended this meeting. Similar visits to Areas II and IV are being scheduled. Other Areas can schedule a meeting at their convenience.

District Director Resignations and Appointments

There were no District Director resignations and appointments for consideration.

Lake Barcroft WID Budget

Ms. Martin presented the Lake Barcroft WID Budget. The proposed budget had been mailed to members for consideration.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Lohr moved that the Board approve the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District FY 2017 budget as submitted by the Northern Virginia SWCD and presented by DCR staff. Mr. Hornbaker seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

Mr. Dowling reported for the Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management. There was no detailed report for this meeting. At the May meeting, staff will provide more information regarding enforcement, the enforcement manual, and potentially other guidance.

Director Cristman advised that staff reached out to Stafford County with regard to the Lake Arrowhead dams. The dams are now classified as orphan dams and Stafford County is moving forward with the creation of a tax service area that would levy an additional tax to support rehabilitation of the dams.

PARTNER REPORTS

Natural Resources Conservation Service, David Kriz

David Kriz presented the report for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. That report is included as Attachment A.

Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Dr. Tyree

- Area meetings and new director trainings are concluding and the Association now turns to education.
- The Envirothon will be held May 15 and 16, 2016 at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg. Youth Conservation Camp is scheduled for July.
- The Association is working with Districts with regard to legislator outreach in an effort to ensure that legislators recognize the work of Districts and the need for operational support.
- Kevin McLean has been hired as VCAP (Virginia Conservation Assistance Program) Coordinator.
- The Summer Board meeting and Director Training will be held June 21 and 22, 2016 in Richmond.

- An Annual Meeting planning session will be held on May 5, 2016. The submission of ideas for the program is encouraged.

Virginia Cooperative Extension, Dr. Grisso

- County agent terms end in the fall. VCE is beginning the replacement process.
- NRCS and VCE are working together on a soil health curriculum including a video library and print materials.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Dowling noted that the Board had previously inquired regarding funding DCR sends to the Department of Forestry. A copy of the annual report can be provided to members. In general the funding is for two programs:

- \$150,000 for the Logger BMP Cost-Share Program.
- \$100,000 for new riparian forest buffer development in targeted (non CREP) TMDL lands.

Ms. Martin noted that District budget templates are due to DCR by June 15.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Hellebush invited members and staff to attend the Small Grains Field Day in Warsaw, Virginia on May 19, 2016.

Mr. Ingle referenced a letter from the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy regarding the work the Daniel Boone Soil and Water Conservation District has been doing on the acid mine drainage issue. He noted that that NRCS has been a great partner and to date, one of the streams has been de-listed.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 24, 2016 at the Old Dominion Electric Cooperative in Glen Allen.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daphne W. Jamison

Clyde E. Cristman

Chair

DCR Director

Attachment A

NRCS REPORT
Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Board Meeting
April 20, 2016 ♦ Lexington, VA

EQIP, CSP, RCPP and Easement Programs

FY16 Program Activities:

- FY16 Program policy, ranking tools, handbooks and training materials were developed and presented to NRCS and district staff at the November, February and March JED meetings.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):

- 2,065 applications received for nearly 40 million in requests for financial assistance. The ranking deadline was 4/1/16.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):

- Renewed 88 FY11 CSP contracts and received 81 new applications. Virginia was allocated 19,000 acres for FY16.
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The FY16 allocations are:

§	EQIP:	\$16,096.907
§	ACEP-ALE:	\$1,767,455
§	ACEP-WRE:	\$404,452
§	RCPP-DOF:	\$470,000
§	RCPP-DCR:	\$725,000
§	RCPP-NFWF:	\$578,000

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):

- 86 out of 279 applications were preapproved for RCPP-DOF, RCPP-NFWF, and RCPP-DCR.
- Two FY16 proposals in RCPP were funded
 - TNC – Upper Clinch-Powell
 - Blue Ridge Prism – Invasive control in Albemarle, Augusta, Clarke, Greene, Madison, Nelson, Page, Rappahannock, Rockingham and Warren
- FY17 announcement of program funding just released. Preproposals due 5/10/2016.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP):

- **Virginia's Land Preservation Tax Credit is now recognized as a state-level contribution.** Projects could be eligible for a "Cash Contribution Waiver" that may result in a reduction of the cash match required for Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) funds from 50 to 5 percent.
- ALE – 5 applications for 1,143 acres received
- WRE – 7 applications for 750 acres received

Dam Rehabilitation

- The construction of the Upper North River 10, Todd Lake dam rehab project, is substantially complete. This should be complete at the end of April.

- NRCS has received the Chief's authorization for the Upper North River 77 Plan-EA (Plan-Environmental Assessment) in Augusta County. The final design is ongoing. The design is scheduled to be completed in FY16 and construction is scheduled for FY16/17.
- The dam rehab planning process for Mountain Run 11, Mountain Run Lake, and Mountain Run 50, Lake Pelham, is underway. The MR11 Plan-Environmental Evaluation has passed the National Water Management Center and is at NHQ for the next review. The structures are owned by the Town of Culpeper. NRCS is providing the watershed planning assistance. The

Town has obtained the services of Schnabel Engineering for the engineering design and construction phases. The planning process is scheduled to be completed in FY16 and the design and construction phases are scheduled for completion by 2018.

- The dam rehab planning process for Cherrystone Creek 1 and Cherrystone Creek 2A is underway. The structures are owned by the Town of Chatham. NRCS is providing the watershed planning and engineering assistance for the projects. The planning process is scheduled to be completed in FY17.
- NRCS has initiated planning for the Johns Creek Dam (1) in Craig County, Virginia.

LiDAR Acquisition

Virginia NRCS is working with State and Federal agencies to acquire additional LiDAR through a partnership with the USGS. The area of interest is focused currently in the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Watershed.

Soil Mapping

A project has begun to map the independent cities of Waynesboro, Staunton, and Winchester. Though mostly urban, many soil interpretations can be used for planning purposes. Storm water management is one that many of the cities have requested soils information. Waynesboro is currently in progress, and the remaining cities should be completed in 2016. The data should be available on Web Soil Survey next October.

Training

Joint CREP training with FSA/DOF/NRCS and the Districts was held in three sites across the state. Trainings were held at VSU, Staunton, and Wytheville. Prescribed Burn Awareness Training will be offered in April. Cultural Resource Training will be offered in May. Staff will offer the next Virginia Conservation Planner "Boot Camp," a week-long course designed to help boost the number of Virginia Certified Planners, in the spring of 2017. To date, 81 CEU credits in trainings have been offered this year.

Relief

Due to the tornado damage caused earlier in the year, Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) funds will be made available in a few Virginia Counties. The programs will be made available in Appomattox, Campbell, Essex, King and Queen, Middlesex, Patrick and Sussex counties. Applications need to be filed with the USDA-FSA offices.

Outreach

Debuted a new, deep-rooted cover crop display at the Virginia Farm Show in Fishersville on January 13-15. This innovative soil health exhibit helped start numerous conservation conversations at the Virginia Association for Biological Farming Conference at Smith Mountain Lake on January 29-30 and Virginia No-Till Alliance Winter Conference in Harrisonburg on February 17.

Also expanded soil health outreach through the Virginia YouTube channel. The new **Common Ground** video series featuring Ellen Polishuk of Potomac Vegetable Farms, which debuted at the Virginia Farm to Table Conference in December, now has more than 1,000 views (main profile) through NRCS/VCE/VABF cross-promotion on agency websites and through social media.

Agronomist J.B. Daniel received the American Forage and Grassland Council's (AFGC) **Pastureland Conservativonist of the Year** for his exceptional education and outreach to promote sustainable grazing practices statewide. This annual award recognizes a NRCS employee who has exemplified outstanding service to the agency, our clients, and the science of grazing land management.

Earth Team Program

Successful collaborations with district partners have garnered two regional and national Earth Team awards for Virginia. The New River Hill Farm Group received the Group Volunteer Award for their project to create a sustainable farming outdoor classroom for soil science, natural resource protection, and agricultural education in Southwest Virginia. Harrisonburg District Conservationist Cory Guilliams won the Employee Award for his outstanding use of volunteers to get more conservation on the ground in the state's top agriculture county. The New River SWCD received the group award at the Area IV Spring Meeting and the employee award will be presented at the Area I meeting on April 21.

VA NRCS Personnel Changes

New Hires/Transfers/Promotions

Jenna Swanson (Soil Conservationist, Lawrenceville) effective 10/4/2015
Lucia (Lucee) Kossler (District Conservationist, Fredericksburg) effective 10/18/2015
Wesley Hedrick (Soil Conservationist, Verona) effective 10/18/2015
Tyler Witkowski (Soil Scientist, Christiansburg Area Office) effective 10/18/2015
Mary Louise Jacques (Resource Soil Scientist, Rustburg Service Center) effective 11/1/2015
David Smith (Soil Conservationist, Amelia Service Center) effective 11/1/2015
Telecia Berry (Soil Conservationist, Hanover Service Center) effective 11/1/2015
Robert Norris (Soil Conservationist, Smithfield) effective 11/1/2015
Mark Jessee (District Conservationist, Gate City) effective 1/10/2016
Becky Faught (Management and Program Analyst, to AZ) effective 2/6/2016
Damien Loeper (Soil Conservationist, Bedford, to PA) effective 4/2/2016

Retirements/Resignations

Ron Wisneski (District Conservationist, Fredericksburg) effective 10/2/2015
Paul (Buddy) Gilmer (District Conservationist, Gate City) effective 12/31/2016
Barry Mason (Civil Engineering Technician, Farmville) effective 2/29/2016
Thomas Finsterle (Soil Conservation Technician, Harrisonburg) effective 4/2/2016
Alvin Phelps (Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations, Christiansburg) effective 4/30/2016