

Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board (Board)

Subcommittee on the Future of Districts

Va United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone, VA
Thursday, June 26, 2003 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Subcommittee members present: Granville Maitland (chair), Charles Horn, Jim Byrne, Don Wells, Daphne Jamison, Bob Tudor, Pete Holden, Keith Burgess, Bill Browning, Mark Meador

Subcommittee members absent: Linda Campbell (vice chair), Hudson Reese

Other attendees: Stephanie Martin, Mike Altizer, Herb Dunford, Jim Boland, Dan Pace, Jean Packard, Greg Evans, Margaret Ullrich, Ricky Rash, Wilkie Chaffin

Outcomes from the June 26th meeting:

Chairperson Granville Maitland convened the subcommittee at approximately 7:20 p.m. Maitland summarized questions he hopes will be entertained and addressed during subcommittee discussions. Following the chair's opening remarks, Maitland facilitated an open discussion with participation by members of the committee and others. The discussion lasted approximately 2 hours with individuals offering perspectives and recommendations. An audio tape of the discussion will be retained on file by Mike Fletcher, DCR Community Development Specialist. At approximately 9:30 p.m. Maitland referred to the meeting agenda and summarized outcomes as follows:

- **Subcommittee discussion:**

1. Perspectives from committee members

Outcome summary: Audio tape of discussion on file at DCR

2. Consideration and closure on any additional agency/organization representation on the committee

Outcome summary: Three agencies [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; USDA Farm Service Agency; Virginia Cooperative Extension] will be invited to select a representative to serve as committee members. Letters to each agency head will be issued within the coming week.

3. Consideration of the following:

A. Pursuit of including all Virginia counties/cities in a conservation district

Outcome summary: There was discussion about areas in Virginia that are not presently within an SWCD. These areas include Arlington County and an unspecified number of cities. It was noted that the large metropolitan area in the southeast which includes Norfolk, Newport News, Pocquoson, Hampton, and Portsmouth, collectively represent a powerful urban community that are currently excluded from SWCD coverage. No one present expressed opposition to seeking inclusion of all cities and Arlington County in the system of SWCDs as a longer term goal.

Additional statutory empowerments/authorities for SWCDs

Outcome summary: {See Phase Two under item 4 that follows}

B. The role of districts in implementing state and federal programs

Outcome summary: No action was taken on this item, however there was discussion acknowledging the increasing reliance of state and federal agencies on Virginia's 47 SWCDs with delivery of certain programs and services.

C. Other matters for consideration and discussion? (specify)

Outcome summary: None specified.

4. Development of a process approach and timeline for completion of the committee assignment

Outcome summary: There was agreement that a two phased approach will be taken by the subcommittee.

Phase One is development of a position or policy for consideration by the Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board (Board). The subcommittee recommends the Board require financial commitments from localities prior to creation of any new SWCD and/or realignment of an existing SWCD. The financial commitment would be no less than the "essential" funding provided by the Commonwealth to every district (presently \$78,000) and that this funding be borne by the county/city annually until the statewide level of SWCD funding from the Commonwealth is increased by at least this amount. Bill Browning and Mark Meador were asked to assist with development of a draft document for review by subcommittee members prior to the group's next meeting.

Phase Two is the longer term review of the roles and functions of SWCDs and consideration of changes in the structure and organization of districts.

Outcomes from future discussions by the subcommittee could lead to recommendations that pertain to changes in state law as well as policies that impact SWCDs. Phase Two will follow after Phase One closure and will continue for an unspecified number of months.

- **Summarize:**

- ✓ Conclusions

Outcome summary: (see above)

- ✓ Next step(s); to include closure on any information and/or assistance needed

Outcome summary: (see above)

- ✓ Date, location, time of next committee meeting

Outcome summary: Monday, July 14th, 2003, at the Virginia Department of Forestry State Office (Charlottesville) in the Board Room from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

The subcommittee adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.