

**Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
Wednesday, September 25, 2019
Glen Allen, Virginia**

MINUTES

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board convened at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at the Old Dominion Electric Cooperative in Glen Allen, Virginia.

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Chuck Arnason, Chair
Adam Wilson, Vice Chair
Gray Coyner
Janette Kennedy
Charles Newton
Cindy Smith
Clyde Cristman, DCR Director, Ex Officio
David Kriz for John A. Bricker, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ex Officio
Dan Goerlich, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Invitee

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Mario Albritton
Barry L. Marten

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Rochelle Altholtz, Deputy Director for Administration
Russell W. Baxter, Deputy Director of Soil and Water Conservation/Dam Safety and Floodplain Management
Isaac Sarver, Deputy Director for Boards and Constituent Services
Scott Ambler, Resource Management Protection Coordinator
David Bryan, Agricultural Incentives Program Manager
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Darryl M. Glover, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation
Blair Gordon, SWCD District Liaison
Wendy Howard Cooper, Director, Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management
Sharon Partee, Finance Manager
Christine Watlington, Policy and Regulatory Coordinator
Amy Walker, Conservation District Coordinator
Gray O'Dwyer, Office of the Attorney General

OTHERS PRESENT

Everett Chadborne, Timberlake Watershed Improvement District
George Shrader, Timberlake Watershed Improvement District
Barry L. Lobb, Robert E. Lee SWCD
Dee Dee Gillette, Timberlake Watershed Improvement District
Sammy Vest, Trout Unlimited

Doug Perrow, Robert E. Lee SWCD
Stephen Hill, Culpeper SWCD
Greg Wichelns, Culpeper SWCD
Sharon Conner, Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Dr. Kendall Tyree, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Giannina Franz, Tri-County/City SWCD
Marta Perry, Tri-County/City SWCD
Matt Kowalksi, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Darrell Marshall, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
James Nichols, Headwaters SWCD
Adrienne Kotula, Chesapeake Bay Commission
John Kaylor, Headwaters SWCD
Parker Agelasto, City of Richmond

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With six (6) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Arnason called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and asked for introductions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 22 2019

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Wilson moved that the minutes of the May 22, 2019 meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board be approved as submitted by staff. Mr. Newton seconded and the motion carried.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – *Clyde Cristman, Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation*

Director Cristman gave the Director's report and made the following announcements.

- After a nationwide search, Wendy Howard Cooper has been selected to be the Director of the Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management. Ms. Howard Cooper has been in the Acting Director position for some time.
- Welcome to Gray O'Dwyer from the Office of the Attorney General. Ms. O'Dwyer is the new OAG representative to the Board.
- After a 34-year career with Virginia State Parks, Craig Seaver is retiring from the agency, effective October 1. Western Regional Manager, Dave Collett, is serving as Acting Director.
- In addition, Director of Planning and Recreation Resources, Danette Poole is retiring after forty years of service. Director of Design and Construction, Kelly McClary, is serving as Acting Director.

Director Cristman called on Deputy Director Altholz to give an update regarding the 2020 Census.

Ms. Altholz noted that the census is done every 10 years. There is an effort to contact communities that are not easily reached. The Census will begin in April 2020 and can be completed online. The hope is that Soil and Water Conservation Districts will assist with the outreach particularly to the migrant farmer community.

Director Cristman referenced a memorandum from Mr. Glover to Soil and Water Conservation Districts regarding a programmatic review of the VACS Program.

This programmatic review conducted by the DCR Internal Auditor will not duplicate the independent financial audits. The programmatic reviews are designed to look at the largest risks for VACS Program and to determine if the Board policies and procedures currently in place are being implemented and are adequate to address the risks.

DCR Internal Auditor Eric Surratt will provide the results of this review at the December Board meeting.

Director Cristman also thanked Ms. Kennedy for attending the meeting even though her term had expired. He noted that Board appointments were anticipated in the near future.

ALLOCATION SUBCOMMITTEE – *Adam Wilson, Vice Chair*

Mr. Wilson reported that the Allocation Subcommittee held their first meeting in Charlottesville in August. There was considerable discussion regarding how to allocate a set, base level amount of technical assistance funding to Districts. Members were provided information and asked to review it and return with recommendations at the October meeting.

AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – *Adam Wilson, Vice Chair*

Mr. Wilson reported that the Audit Subcommittee met prior to the Board meeting and heard from two Districts regarding their corrective action plans. Mr. Wilson noted that all Audit Subcommittee materials were provided in member notebooks.

Five Districts that have grades of “C” in their assessments will be contacted and requested to report to the Audit Subcommittee at the December meeting regarding their plan of action.

AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP ACT REPORT – *Darrell Marshall, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*

Mr. Marshall gave an overview of the Agricultural Stewardship Act (ASA) Report. A copy of the report was provided in member notebooks.

Mr. Marshall noted the following:

- Each August, VDACS publishes a report regarding program activities.
- The ASA Program received numerous inquiries regarding possible agricultural pollution during the program year of April 1, 2018, through March 31, 2019. Sixty three of these cases became official complaints in the following categories:
 - Beef
 - Land conversion
 - Equine
 - Cropland
 - Dairy
 - Swine

- Poultry
 - Slaughter house
 - Beef, Equine
 - Beef, Equine, Goats, Poultry, Sheep, Swine, Slaughter house
 - Other
- During the program year, 19 (30 percent) of the 63 official complaints were determined to be founded and required agricultural stewardship plans to address water pollution problems. In each founded case, there was sufficient evidence to support the allegations that the agricultural activities were causing or would cause water pollution.
 - Nineteen (30 percent) of the complaints were determined to be unfounded.
 - Twenty-five (40 percent) of the complaints were dismissed.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Division Report – Russell Baxter, Deputy Director

Mr. Baxter presented the following written report.

DIVISION RECEIVES AWARD FROM ASSOCIATION OF STATE DAM SAFETY OFFICIALS (ASDSO)

DCR Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management received the 2019 Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) Southeast Regional Award of Merit. The association gives this award annually to individuals or organizations working in the dam safety field that have made outstanding contributions to dam safety on a regional level. Our team was honored for modernizing its management of regulatory documents from paper forms to an online system (Dam Safety Inventory System – DSIS), and for conducting targeted outreach efforts to educate the public about dam safety. The award was presented on Monday, September 9, as part of the ASDSO Dam Safety 2019 conference's Awards Luncheon. The conference was held in Orlando, Florida.

HURRICANE DORIAN

The Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management monitored Hurricane Dorian and coordinated with VDEM and the EOC for planning and preparation of potential impacts of the storm.

STRICKEN DEER RESERVE DAM – CARROLL COUNTY UPDATE

In January 2019, DCR determined that the unsafe conditions at the Stricken Deer Reserve Dam located in Carroll County presented an imminent danger to life and property. DCR notified the Governor and worked with the County to mitigate the imminent threat of the Dam's failure. The mitigation project cost DCR \$69,477.83, and DCR has referred the matter to the Attorney General requesting that he pursue all legal actions necessary to recover DCR's expenses.

CHERRYSTONE AND ROARING FORK LAKE DAMS

As directed by the General Assembly, the Division is continuing to work with the Town of Chatham, the County of Pittsylvania and the Pittsylvania Soil and Water Conservation Districts on upgrades to Cherrystone and Roaring Fork flood control dams. Each jurisdiction has agreed to work with NRCS in the design phase and will be seeking funding for any necessary construction in the coming years. Two meetings have been held since July 1 with DCR Dam Safety, local stakeholders and NRCS.

DAM SAFETY PERIODIC REGULATORY REVIEW

Public comment on the proposed regulatory review has been completed. Awaiting approval from the Governor’s office for release of the Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA).

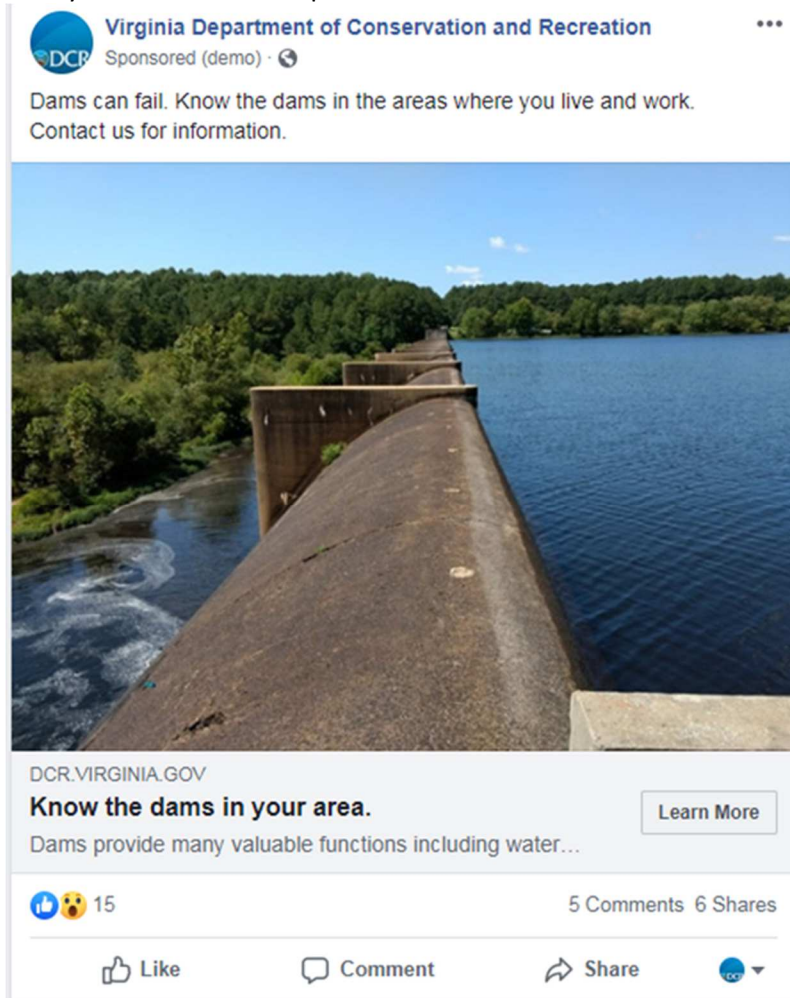
EXECUTIVE ORDER 24

Division staff are continuing work on Executive Order 24 “Increasing Virginia’s Resilience to Sea Level River and Natural Hazards” with the Secretary of Natural Resources office. The report called for in Part 2 of the order has been accepted by the Secretary.

PUBLIC AWARENESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

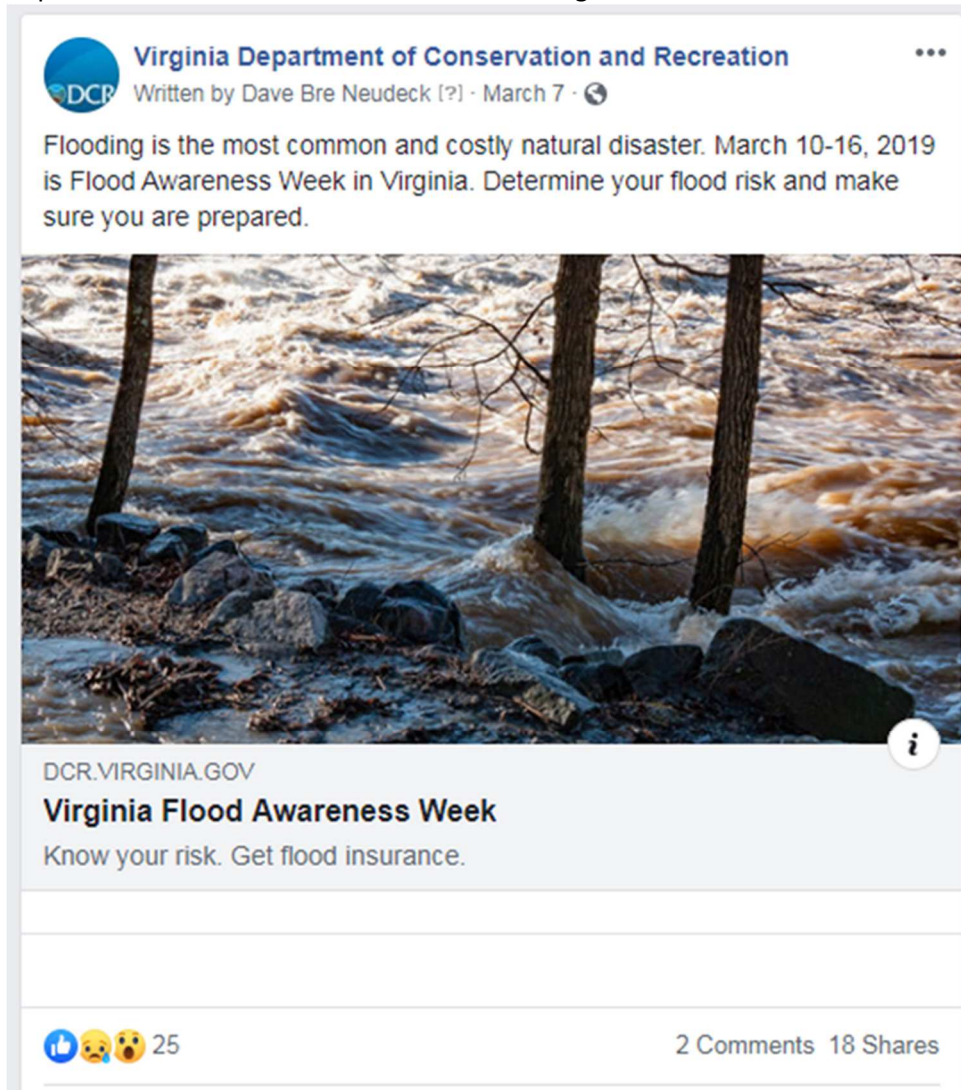
Dam Safety Paid Ads

Seven different ads began on Facebook and Instagram on Aug. 16 and are still running. The purpose is to reach users and build awareness around the issues of dam safety, recreation around dams and dam owner responsibility. Some ads target homeowners or people interested in recreation. As of Sept. 20, total spend was \$1,535. Ads have reached 577,000 Virginians over four weeks and generated 2,275 clicks to DCR Dam Safety web content. Cost per click is \$.67.



Flood Awareness Week Paid Ad

One paid ad ran on Facebook during the first Virginia Flood Awareness Week March 10 through March 16. The purpose was to drive people to the DCR Flood Awareness Week landing page (www.dcr.virginia.gov/floodawareness). The ad reached 30,550 users and 53 clicked through. The total spend was \$170.87. Flood Awareness Week also had extensive nonpaid social media activity with 57,000 impressions on DCR accounts alone. The hashtag #FloodAwareVA was created for Twitter.



The image is a screenshot of a Facebook advertisement. At the top, it shows the profile of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), with the name and a blue verified badge. Below the profile is the text: "Written by Dave Bre Neudeck (?) · March 7 · 🌐". The main text of the ad reads: "Flooding is the most common and costly natural disaster. March 10-16, 2019 is Flood Awareness Week in Virginia. Determine your flood risk and make sure you are prepared." Below the text is a photograph of a river with turbulent, brown water flowing through a wooded area with several trees. At the bottom of the ad, there is a link "DCR.VIRGINIA.GOV" and the text "Virginia Flood Awareness Week" followed by "Know your risk. Get flood insurance." Below the ad, there are reaction icons (thumbs up, sad face, surprised face) with the number "25" and engagement statistics: "2 Comments 18 Shares".

DAM SAFETY EDITORIAL: Richmond Times Dispatch

DCR's Deputy Director, Russ Baxter, ably assisted by David Wilmoth, was interviewed by Chris Gentilviso, Associate Opinions Editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch regarding dam safety issues in Virginia. The editorial appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch on Sunday, September 15, 2019 the web link and full text appear below.

https://www.richmond.com/opinion/our-opinion/editorial-don-t-be-afraid-but-be-aware/article_40bce52e-432d-5850-9532-dbaee8b30a1d.html

Editorial: Don't be afraid, but be aware

In August 2018, more than 100 homes in Lynchburg were evacuated after a public safety alert. The College Lake Dam — an aging 1930s structure owned by the city — was approaching “imminent failure.” If the dam breached, 17 feet of water could fill the city in seven minutes.

This was an extreme case and, while Lynchburg was spared the worst, the city and the University of Lynchburg decided to remove the dam to create wetlands. Repairing the dam was estimated at more than \$20 million — a local snapshot of a costly national infrastructure issue.

Dams need more attention and resources. Over the past two decades, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has compiled six editions of its “Infrastructure Report Card.” Each time, dams were given a “D” or “D+” grade.

Across Virginia, there are more than 2,900 regulated dams, with an average age of more than 50 years old. Owners and regulators face an uphill battle to keep the structures safe. We support state officials’ message to the public: Don’t be afraid, but be aware.

“We have an aging inventory of dams, which obviously leads to the necessity of continued maintenance and upgrades,” said Russ Baxter, deputy director of soil and water conservation and dam safety and floodplain management for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Dams serve critical purposes. They support recreation opportunities, from picnic areas to boating. They create reservoirs to store water and help control floods. They produce more than 100,000 megawatts of hydropower each year, a clean energy source.

But the process of keeping dams secure is complex. A majority in Virginia are not publicly owned like College Lake in Lynchburg or Williams Island in Richmond. They’re privately owned by individuals, homeownership associations or other entities.

If the dam is in disrepair, DCR alerts the owner and establishes requirements to bring the dam into compliance. Is its spillway adequate to pass heavy rainfall? Do the drains work? Is it free of trees? Then comes the hard part — who is responsible and is there money to make fixes?

“Many dam owners don’t have the resources needed to make their upgrades,” said Mark Ogden, project manager for the Association of State Dam Safety Officials. “That’s the biggest stumbling block to getting dams fixed.”

Age or condition aside, every dam in Virginia receives one of three hazard classifications from DCR. “High” means failure would cause probable loss of life or serious property damage. “Significant” means loss of life or appreciable property damage might occur. “Low” signals no expected loss of life or property damage, excluding the dam owner’s land.

Baxter and Ogden cautioned these measures are not reflective of the safety of a particular dam. They just assess what could be damaged if a failure occurred. Every six years, DCR and the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (VSWCB) issue certificates to dam owners — a check-in to assure the structure is in good regulatory standing.

But at the Dam Safety 2019 conference in Orlando, Fla., last week, Ogden was among hundreds of professionals discussing changing weather patterns and high-intensity storms. These systems challenge how dams are designed and regulated. As more development occurs, assessments also can fluctuate.

Think of a rural dam built in the 1960s. Fifty years later, a farmer sells the land and a subdivision is built downstream. More development could spell a change from a low- to high-hazard potential.

“A lot of dam repair issues are upgrades because of changes in classification or new standards,” Ogden said. New dams also can appear at any time. DCR has one regional engineer for each of the state’s five regions, which are vast. The Richmond area is part of Region 2, which stretches north to King George County, west to Goochland County and east to Hampton.

A 2018 executive order by Gov. Ralph Northam included a review of dam safety as part of overall environmental resiliency efforts. But there is more work to be done. Baxter estimated 60% of Virginia’s structures have “undetermined” hazard classifications. These dams have yet to be reached by DCR staff, or information from the owner is still being procured.

We urge the public to help be a change agent and communicate with state officials. Obey signs along dams that say to stay off the property. Report any issues, small or large, to dam@dcr.virginia.gov. Stay engaged on Virginia DCR’s Twitter and Facebook channels.

Wherever you live in the commonwealth, there are four questions to consider: Is there a dam in your area? Does it have an emergency action plan? What steps are in place if there were an incident? And if you need to evacuate, where would you go?

“We just want people to be aware if they live downstream,” Baxter said. “It doesn’t mean they need to panic. But they ought to be aware. Things happen. You never know when a hurricane or significant weather event will arrive.”

— Chris Gentilviso

FEMA COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM MEETING

Floodplain planner and NFIP coordinator Kristin Owen was one of eight NFIP Coordinators from around the country requested to participate in FEMA's CAP Coordinators' Meeting in Chicago on September 11 to discuss and provide feedback on proposed changes to FEMA's Community Assistance Program –State Support Services Element (CAP-SSSE) program, which funds part of DCR's Floodplain Management Program. At this meeting, Kristin provided feedback directly to FEMA Headquarters related to performance measures that will be used for all state NFIP programs.

GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Floodplain planner Angela Davis represented the Division at the Governor's Council on Environmental Justice meeting on September 18. Angela will continue to represent the Division as part of the "Climate Change and Resilience" and "4Ps (Policy, Planning, Programs, Permits)" subcommittees.

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT TRAINING

The Floodplain staff has continued to increase floodplain management training opportunities throughout the Commonwealth and bring new FEMA courses to the state. In May, division staff worked with FEMA to pilot the updated version of FEMA's L-273 Course: Management Floodplain Development through the NFIP. The feedback from this course was used to make changes that will be implemented on a national level. In

August, Virginia was selected as one of four states to host FEMA's 4-day Community Rating System course. In October, FEMA will be offering a new Coastal Construction course in Hampton Roads.

DAM SAFETY CERTIFICATES AND PERMITS ISSUED SINCE MAY

Permits	3	1	6	3	5
Regular Certificates	4	1	3	1	2
Conditional Certificates	4	3	9	6	14
Total	11	5	18	10	21

DAM SAFETY STATISTICS AS OF MAY 2019

1. Total number of Dams Potentially Regulated by DCR – 2861
 - a. Regulated – 2034
 - b. To be determined – 827
2. DCR Regulated Dams – 2034 Dams
 - a. 313 High Hazard (15%)
 - b. 166 Significant Hazard (8%)
 - c. 263 Low Hazard (13%)
 - d. 1292 Unknown Hazard (64%)
3. Breakdown of Ownership category by Regulated Dams (2034 Dams)
 - a. 1058 Private Dam Ownership (Individual / HOA) – 52%
 - b. 163 Local Government Dam Ownership – 8%
 - c. 104 Soil and Water Conservation District Dam Ownership – 5%
 - d. 82 State Government Dam Ownership – 4%
 - e. 61 Public Utility Dam Ownership – 3%
 - f. 570 Unknown Dam Ownership – 28%
4. Certificate or Permit Status
 - a. Regular Operation and Maintenance Certificate or General Permit Issued and Current
 - i. Full compliance with dam safety regulations – 310 dams or 15%
 1. High Hazard – 136
 2. Significant Hazard – 63
 3. Low Hazard – 111
 4. Unknown Hazard – 0
 - b. Conditional Operation and Maintenance Certificate Issued and Current
 - i. Dam has deficiencies and owners working with DCR to come into compliance – 287 dams or 14%
 1. High – 103
 2. Significant – 65
 3. Low – 47
 4. Unknown Hazard – 72
 - c. Expired or No Operation and Maintenance Certificate
 - i. Dams are out of compliance – 1437 dams or 71%
 - ii. High – 74
 - iii. Significant – 38
 - iv. Low – 105
 - v. Unknown Hazard – 1220
5. Dams without determination of Regulatory Status or Hazard Classification – 827

APPROVAL OF DAM SAFETY, FLOOD PREVENTION AND PROTECTION ASSISTANCE FUND GRANT MANUAL –

Wendy Howard Cooper, Director, Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management

Ms. Howard Cooper advised that the approval of the manual is usually brought before the Board in December. However, staff would like to announce the grant round in November. Training opportunities will be provided in November and December and the grant round will be open through February. Total funding available is \$1 million. The proposed revisions to the manual were available for public comment through September 4; no comments were received.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Coyner moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Board approve the 2020 Dam Safety, Flood Prevention, and Protection Assistance Fund Grant Manual as presented by the Department. Mr. Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION

Division Report – Darryl Glover, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation

Mr. Glover presented the following written report.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, please accept this Soil and Water Conservation Division Report.

Chesapeake Bay WIP III Update

Virginia's final WIP III document was released to the public on August 23. It is posted on the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality website and there is a link to it from the DCR website. A response to public comments about WIP III has also been released. On August 28, at a meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Committee, hosted by Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources, Matt Strickler, and Deputy Secretary Ann Jennings, Mr. Dana Aunkst, Director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Chesapeake Bay Program, explained EPA's review process and what to expect regarding feedback about Virginia's Final Phase III Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III). EPA will not formally approve or disapprove any jurisdiction's WIP III document, rather, they will score it as either "satisfactory" or not. This feedback can be anticipated sometime within the October – November period.

Deputy Secretary Ann Jennings has hosted two meetings of the Voluntary Best Management Practices Task Force. The goal of this committee is to "develop and refine approach (es) to document voluntary agriculture best management practices (BMPs) in collaboration with (several stakeholders including the VASWCD)..." DCR is about to issue a contract to GeoSolutions to conduct a demonstration project in Rockingham County, to identify livestock exclusion fencing near stream buffers. This project will utilize VGIN, DEQ, and DCR reference data sets to improve upon the accuracy achievable by the analysis of imagery datasets alone. Rockingham County was selected for this project because it has the second highest population of cattle (beef and dairy combined) of any county in Virginia. This project should be completed this winter. DCR has

also begun conceptual development of a survey for cover crop establishment in the Chesapeake Bay watershed of Virginia. This survey will have a target date of winter/spring 2021-22. Also, a new survey of conservation tillage, this time only in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay watershed, has a tentative target date of spring 2021.

The Department is currently working to incorporate the costs of WIP III implementation into the Agricultural Needs Assessment. This assessment is currently under executive review but will be included in the annual Water Cleanup Report by DEQ due for completion by early November.

VACS Programmatic Reviews

Due to the record amount of agricultural best management practice (BMP) cost share and technical assistance funding appropriated by the Virginia General Assembly in FY20 for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and in order to help implement the Phase 3 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III) by year 2025, the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program will need continued high levels of funding for several years, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will conduct a review to determine if existing VACS programmatic policies, procedures, and processes provide adequate guidance and oversight. This will be different than either our financial audits or annual assessments of SWCDs in that DCR is evaluating the VACS Program itself. This review will not result in any report card on any SWCD. 10 SWCDs have been selected for this review. This review will be conducted in September (at DCR) through October (at SWCDs). A report will be submitted to the Soil and Water Conservation Board at their meeting in December, with any recommendations for changes to VACS policies and procedures.

Base Technical Assistance for SWCDs

On August 27, 2019 the Soil and Water Conservation Board's Allocation Subcommittee had its first meeting at the Virginia Department of Forestry offices in Charlottesville. The subcommittee is comprised of seven voting members: three Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board) members, three representatives from the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and one DCR manager. It also has a nonvoting member from Virginia Farm Bureau. The subcommittee is charged with "reviewing the current methodology used for calculating the baseline technical assistance allocation to Districts and to provide recommendation(s) for alternative method(s) to determine the baseline". This Subcommittee will meet again in October, and if needed, in November, then provide its recommendations to the Board at the December 11, 2019 Board meeting. If adopted by the full Board, a new base technical assistance will replace what is currently used in the Board's Cost Share and Technical Assistance Policy as early as fiscal year 2021. The next meeting will be in October (tbd). These meetings are open to the public.

COIA Training Requirements

A new section (§2.2-3132 of the Code of Virginia) requires every local elected official to complete training on the Conflict of Interest Act within two months of assuming office and at least once every two years after the initial training is completed. Additionally, every local elected official in office as of July 1, 2019 must complete the training by December 31, 2019.

Pursuant to §2.2-3132, this training **must** be provided by the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council (Council); therefore, any training that has been provided by the Attorney General's Office does not meet this training requirement.

The Department has contacted the Council regarding this training. The Council will be providing an in-person training at the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in December. Additionally, the Attorney General's Office will continue to provide additional opportunities to answer any questions Directors may have, although these opportunities will not meet the requirement set out in §2.2-3132.

Poultry Litter Transport Expansion

As a result of significantly increased state funding, and continued partnership with the Virginia Poultry Federation, the DCR Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program is expanding in order to far exceed what has historically been between 5,000 – 6,000 tons of litter transported per year. Since July 1, 2019, in only the first two months of FY20, nearly 9,000 tons of poultry litter from both the Valley and Eastern Shore has already been requested by farmers in counties eligible to receive it. In the true spirit of partnership, and to help raise awareness about the availability of poultry litter within eligible areas, Virginia Farm Bureau has requested 2,000 of the new DCR Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program brochures for its local offices to make them available to farmers. DCR can also supply any Soil and Water Conservation District and/or U.S. Department of Agriculture office in litter eligible areas with these brochures if requested.

District Dam Rehabilitation

Twelve Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Districts) own, operate, and maintain, a total of 104 regulated flood control dams. In response to concerns about whether impounded water could be drained if ever necessary, DCR initiated a gate valve study. The Phase 1 gate valve evaluation project was finalized in May 2018. Phase 1 covered 20 Dams in Blue Ridge, Mountain Castles, and Robert E. Lee Districts. The Phase 2 gate valve evaluation funding that was previously approved was put on hold in 2018 to help pay for hurricane damage. Thus far, DCR and these Phase 1 Districts have learned that the concrete riser structures are in good shape, most of the metal that is underwater is in acceptable condition, with various levels of corrosion noted, and a large majority of these District dams have low level gates that are covered in sediment. The Phase 1 repair projects are still in need of engineering design. To address this need, Piedmont SWCD in cooperation with DCR has issued a Joint Term Contract for Engineering Services Request for Proposals (RFP). Blue Ridge, Hanover-Caroline, Lord Fairfax, Mountain Castles, Peter Francisco, Piedmont, Robert E. Lee, Shenandoah Valley, Southside, and Thomas Jefferson Districts are all participating in this Joint Procurement RFP. This will assist Districts in obtaining engineered designs for small dam repair projects. Also, the FY20 state budget was amended to provide \$400,000 for the purchase and installation of remote monitoring equipment for District-owned high and significant hazard dams. Sixty-Nine District dams are high hazard, and 27 are significant hazard classification. DCR plans to procure the remote monitoring equipment from a vendor by issuing a separate Request for Proposals (RFP) and install equipment at as many dams as possible.

Freese and Nicols, Inc., has been selected to design the rehabilitation of two high hazard District dams, South River #19 in Augusta County, and Leatherwood Creek #5 in Henry County. This company is headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, but this work will be run out of their office in Raleigh, North Carolina. Local subcontractors will also be involved in aspects of this work.

Ag BMP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Update

Over 50 stakeholders attended the August 14 meeting of the Ag BMP TAC. The TAC voted on several recommendations that were presented by its subcommittees, asked questions and provided input on other developing recommendations that will be brought back for a vote in later meetings. Among other items, key recommendations that were voted on for referral to the Soil and Water Conservation Board for their consideration next spring, were to allow up to 12 months poultry litter storage for layer/breeder operations, and to allow the rain gutter practice (WQ-12) to become eligible for carry forward into the following program (fiscal) year. The TAC voted to refer new suggestions for changes to the Ag BMP Manual that were received after the requested deadline, to the applicable subcommittees (Animal Waste, Cover Crop/Nutrient Management, and Stream Protection). The Animal Waste Subcommittee presented concepts and solicited input on creating a new animal waste best management practice, to be named "WP-4L," which could also be used for some equine operations. Next year, additional TAC subcommittees will be combined because fewer new suggestions are anticipated.

The Full TAC will hold its remaining meetings in 2019 on:

October 8 (Goochland), November 20 (Augusta), December 18 (Goochland)

- Programmatic Subcommittee – October 1 (Orange), October 24 (Henrico), November 14 (tentative date) (Goochland)
- Stream Protection Subcommittee – September 24 (Staunton)
- Cover Crop/Nutrient Management Subcommittee – October 3 (Farm Bureau)

Training

The Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees held their annual summer training at Graves Mountain Lodge in August. Several DCR staff attended and presented at three sessions that covered: an in-depth orientation and history of the agricultural cost share program; a required class for Conservation Planning Certification that included a review of the cost share manual; updates to the agricultural best management (BMP) tracking database; planning and design of agricultural BMPs; and, an overall district "engineering blitz" session that focused on common issues and questions from Districts on proper agricultural BMP engineering. RUSLE 2 training by USDA – NRCS was offered to SWCDs via several sessions that ended in June.

Additional in-person classes to qualify for DCR Conservation Planning Certification have either recently been conducted or are scheduled through next spring.

*Approval of Pilot Project Between Headwater Soil and Water Conservation District and Trout Unlimited –
Christine Watlington, Policy and Regulatory Coordinator*

Ms. Watlington noted that Headwaters SWCD and Trout Unlimited have been in discussions for quite some time. There is an area in August County that does not have a high participation level with the VACS Program. Trout Unlimited is interested in increasing the trout population.

The goal of the pilot project is to encourage producers who have not been involved in VACS to sign up, primarily for the livestock exclusion practices.

Headwaters will approve all practices in accordance with the VACS manual and their primary and secondary considerations. Trout Unlimited will provide the cost of materials and will provide labor to install many of these practices.

Ms. Watlington advised that for approval of the project, the Board needed to waive the bid process in the 2020 VACS manual and to allow the assignment of payment to Trout Unlimited for the components that Trout Unlimited installs.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Coyner moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the Pilot Project between Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District and Trout Unlimited as presented in the summary document. For this pilot project only, the Board:

1. Waives the bid requirements established for the components that Trout Unlimited is installing (2020 VACS BMP Manual, Section II, Page II, Paragraph 1); and
2. Allows the assignment of payment to Trout Unlimited for the components that Trout Unlimited installs.

Mr. Newton seconded and the motion carried.

TIMBERLAKE WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (WID) – *Christine Watlington*

Ms. Watlington advised that at the May meeting staff brought forward a motion regarding the approval of two trustees for the Timberlake Watershed Improvement District. The Board had several questions related to the WID and asked that representatives from the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District and the WID attend this meeting. A third individual has also been recommended for approval as a WID trustee.

Mr. Coyner asked if the Homeowners Association was aware of the action.

Ms. Gillette advised that the homeowners were very supportive of the process. She noted that there were two referendum on the November 5, 2019 ballot that related to the ability of the WID to tax and to incur indebtedness. The WID was anticipating moving a project forward for Board approval in December.

The WID was advised that, following the approval of the referendum on November 5, the certified results and any Robert E. Lee District Board minutes must be submitted to DCR prior to November 30 to be on the December agenda.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Coyner moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the appointments of the individuals being appointed by the Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District to serve as Trustees of the Timberlake Watershed Improvement District. Mr. Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

Approval of Revised Variance Procedures for Combined Animal Waste Control Facilities (WP-4) and Composters (WP-4C) – Christine Watlington

Ms. Watlington noted that this item was a technical correction from what was submitted from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for FY2020.

The recommended revisions were:

1. Amend the Variance process and procedures as set out in the FY2020 Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share BMP Manual (page II-28) to allow a combination WP-4 and WP-4C practice to be eligible to exceed the established participant cap with an approved variance.
 - a. A request for variance is eligible for a WP-4 practice, WP-4B practice, or a combination WP-4 and WP-4C project for which cost-share would exceed the current cap per applicant, per program year.
2. Amend the FY2020 Policy and Procedures on Soil and Water Conservation District Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Funding Allocations (page 21) to allow a combination WP-4 and WP-4C practice to be eligible to exceed the established participant cap with an approved variance.
 - a. A producer may be eligible to receive a variance from the cap for ~~either a WP-4 practice or a WP-4B practice,~~ or a combination WP-4 and WP-4C project. However if the producer is approved for such a variance, he is not eligible for any additional cost-share funds for any other cost-share practices.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Newton moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the revisions to the FY2020 Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share BMP Manual variance process and procedures and the FY2020 Policy and Procedures on Soil and Water Conservation District Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Funding Allocations as presented. These revisions will allow a combination WP-4 and WP-4C practice to be eligible to exceed the established participant cap with an approved variance. Mr. Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

Review of Results of Pilot Program Reviews of District Duties Related to Resource Management Plan Program – Scott Ambler, Resource Management Protection Coordinator

Mr. Ambler gave the following update.

Results of the Pilot Program Reviews related to the RMP Program

Review of duties performed by soil and water conservation districts (4VAC50-70-130)

- Department develops a program review schedule to review Districts
- Comprehensive review of the RMP duties performed by Districts
- Review occurs at least once every five years

Pilot Program Review Districts

- Pilot program review schedule approved at the September 2018 Board meeting

- Reviews approved for:
 - Culpeper
 - Headwaters
 - Three Rivers

Pilot Program Overview

- Participating Districts had RMPs in varying stages of process
- Conducted to ensure adequacy of the checklists; to see if scoring was reflective of District performance
- Reviewed to determine if revisions were needed to program administration requirements in regulations

Program Review Areas

General Program Administration

- 30 points available
- Review of Plans
- 100 points available
- Inspections
- 100 points available
- Verification
- Compliance (every 3 years after certificate)

Program Review Results - Headwaters

General Program Administration (30 of 30)

- The District has established a Technical Review Committee (TRC)
- All information is protected from FOIA as required
- Technical Review Committee and District board meetings were conducted in accordance with the Administrative Process Act and all guidance

Review of Plans (95 of 100)

- The TRC has reviewed all of the RMPs within the required time
- Clear comments were provided to the plan developer
- All of the required information and minimum standards were contained in the RMPs
- One minor deficiency: a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) expired between the time the RMP was initially submitted

Inspections (100 of 100)

- Verification
- The TRC conducted a compliance inspection when a request was submitted by the producer
- All of the required information was complete
- Current NMP was submitted and an NMP verification was provided by planner
- Inspection ensured all of the required minimum standards had been completed by producer
- Compliance Inspections

- No compliance inspections have been conducted

Program Review Results - Culpeper

General Program Administration (30 of 30)

- Review of Plans (100 of 100)
- Inspections (100 of 100)
- No compliance inspections have been conducted.

Program Review Results - Three Rivers

General Program Administration (30 of 30)

- Review of Plans (95 of 100)
- The TRC has not reviewed all of the RMPs within the required time (90 days)
- The TRC reviewed and recommended approval of the plan but the District Board canceled a regular board meeting, delaying plan approval.
- Inspections (100 of 100)
- No compliance inspections have been conducted.

Summary/Recommendations

- All three Districts have adequately acted as the RMP program authority.
- Excellent records and should be commended for their implementation and promotion of the program.
- There are no recommendations for the Districts at this time.

Program Review for FY20

- No longer a “pilot”
- Requesting approval to review the following Districts:
 - Hanover-Caroline
 - John Marshall
 - Northern Neck
 - Thomas Jefferson
- District Board Chair and Manager will be notified in writing of program review after schedule approval.
- Reviews will consist of:
 - Personal interview between Department and District staff;
 - Assessment of information included in RMP Module and in District files; and
 - Evaluation of select RMPs to determine that processes were conducted in accordance with established procedures
- Following Review, Department will provide results to Districts.
- District may provide comments to Department in response.
- Results of Program Reviews will be provided to Board annually.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Coyner moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board authorize staff to write to the three pilot Districts to commend them for outstanding work and that further staff be authorized to move forward with the 2020 program review as outlined. Ms. Smith seconded and the motion carried.

Update on Pilot Projects – Christine Watlington

Whole Farm Approach (Three Rivers)

Ms. Watlington noted that the Board approved the whole farm approach at their December meeting. This is a pilot which tries to increase the amount of data that can be received from producers by allowing the "stacking" of payment rates for BMPs. While the dollar figure for each BMP in the Whole Farm Approach may be less, producers receive additional funding for reporting each BMP that the producer implements.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Newton moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board authorize the Three Rivers Soil and Water Conservation District to utilize up to an additional \$300,000 of FY2020 VACS cost-share allocation to supplement the funding provided for the *Whole Farm Approach Pilot Project*, if needed. This will allow the District to utilize up to a total of \$1,000,000 of FY2020 VACS cost-share allocation for the *Whole Farm Approach Pilot Project*. Ms. Kennedy seconded and the motion carried.

RMP Pilot (Northern Neck)

Ms. Watlington gave an update regarding the Resource Management Plan BMP Pilot Project.

At the May 22, 2019 meeting, the Board approved the Resource Management Plan BMP Pilot Project in the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District. A total of \$400,000 was allocated to the District for the Pilot Project in the following manner:

- up to \$348,000 for payments to Project participants for the implementation of BMPs contained in the approved RMPs;
- up to \$32,000 for District technical assistance funding for the implementation and installation of BMPs; and
- an additional \$20,000 for District technical assistance funding for the administration and implementation of the Pilot Project.

All eligible producers (10) have signed up for the Pilot Project and will, in good faith, try to fully implement all of the BMPs in their RMPs and reach certification.

District Director Resignations and Appointments – Christine Watlington

Ms. Watlington presented the District Director appointment recommendations.

Piedmont

Resignation of Ms. Donna Kerr, of Amelia County, effective 5/31/2019, elected director position (term of office expires 12/31/2019).

Tazewell

Appointment of Ms. Donna Kirby, of Tazewell County, effective 9/25/2019, to fill the unexpired At-Large director term of Ms. Virginia Turley (term of office expires 12/31/2022).

Three Rivers

Resignation of Mr. Robert P. Longest, of King and Queen County, effective 3/13/19, elected director position (term of office expires 12/31/2019).

Appointment of Mr. Bruce Taylor, of King and Queen County, effective 9/25/2019, to fill the unexpired elected director term of Mr. Robert P. Longest (term of office expires 12/31/2019).

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Coyner moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the appointment of the individuals being recommended. Mr. Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

Conflict of Interest Act Training Requirements – Christine Watlington

Ms. Watlington advised that legislation from the 2019 General Assembly requires that all locally elected officials take the COIA training as provided by the Ethics Council. Any local official in office by July 1 must take the training by December 31. The training provided to the Board on an annual basis does not meet this requirement. The Ethics Council training is available online.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

2019 Budget Template Results – Christine Watlington

Ms. Watlington reviewed the 2019 Budget Template results.

PARTNER REPORTS

Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts – Kendall Tyree

Dr. Tyree gave an update regarding Association activities.

- Summer is a high education season for the Association with Youth Conservation Camps at Virginia Tech and the Envirothon.
- The Virginia Envirothon team placed first in the international competition overall in the forestry area.
- At the quarterly Board meeting earlier in September, the Board approved the list of legislative priorities, many of which mirror that of the Soil and Water Conservation Board.
- The Association will again be participating in the State Fair. This year the exhibit will highlight soil health and the VCAP program.
- The draft agenda for the annual meeting is being developed. Materials will be available on the Association website.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – David Kriz

Mr. Kriz presented the NRCS report. A copy is included as Attachment A.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Mr. Goerlich presented the following report:

Virginia Cooperative Extension support the participation of Extension agents on local Soil and Water Conservation District Boards. VCE recognizes that one at-large director position on every SWCD Board will be an Extension agent:

The following procedures will apply to Extension agent participation on local SWCD boards:

1. VCE encourages agents to actively participate in SWCD board meetings.
2. The appropriate VCE District Director and the VCE Associate Director for Economy, Community, and Food will approve agent appointments to the SWCD boards.
3. VCE Extension agents will serve a 4-year term according to Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board guidelines.
4. VCE Extension agents will serve as an educational resource to SWCD boards.
5. VCE Extension agents are voting members on SWCD boards.
6. VCE prohibits Extension agents from running for and/or holding the position of Treasurer on SWCD boards.
7. While the offices of Personnel Committee Chair, Finance Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Chair of the Board of Directors are not intended to be held by VCE staff, in exceptional circumstances an Extension agent may serve in one of these roles. This service will be limited to 12 months or less and requires VCE District Director approval. Otherwise, VCE Extension agents are eligible to serve on and/or lead committees associated with the SWCD boards.
8. VCE District Directors and the VCE Associate Director for Economy, Community, and Food will encourage a rotation among eligible VCE Extension agents in SWCDs covering multiple localities.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Kowalski from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation noted the concern regarding enough technical assistance for districts, and the fear that funds may not be spent in time. He advised that representatives from urban districts be better informed regarding the sharing of unused funds.

NEXT MEETINGS

- December 11, 2019, Sheraton Norfolk Waterside, Norfolk, Virginia
- March 26, 2020 – tentative
- April 22, 2020 – tentative
- May 20, 2020 – tentative

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 12:51 p.m.

Attachment A

NRCS REPORT
Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board Meeting
September 25, 2019 ♦ Glen Allen, VA

ASTC-Programs

EQIP, CSP, RCPP and Easement Programs

Field staff are currently managing 2,451 active conservation contracts with our participants. These contracts represent 122 Million in financial assistance to Virginia farmers on nearly 600,000 acres.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

We requested and received an additional 2.2 Million to bring our total FY19 allocation to \$26,146,252. We received 1,146 applications requesting \$44 million in Financial Assistance. Field staff have nearly finished (90%) contracting 607 funded applications.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)–Classic

Nearly 200 applications were received for the 2019-1 signup period which is up slightly from FY18. This program changed from an acre-based program under the 2014 Farm Bill to a monetized-program in the new 2018 Farm Bill. Application evaluation, screening and ranking is complete, and contracting is underway for 100 approved applications. This represents 5.3 Million in financial assistance to our farmers over the life of their 5-year contracts.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP-GCI) Grassland Conservation Initiative

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) authorizes NRCS to provide financial assistance to producers to protect grazing uses; conserve and improve soil, water, and wildlife resources; and achieve related conservation values at an annual rate of \$18 per acre on eligible base acres. Eligible producers will have a single opportunity to enroll in a five-year contract. By signing the contract, producers agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for one priority resource concern by the end of the five-year contract. All 130 applications received were approved and are in various stages of contracting nearly 450K by September 27th.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

On September 3rd, NRCS released the Announcement for Program Funding for the new and expanded stand-alone program. The application period is for 90 days through December 3rd, 2019 and 300 Million is available. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address. The priority for RCPP in Virginia is additional boots on the ground to support these proposals. Successful RCPP projects embody the following core principles: impact, partner contribution, innovation, Partnerships and Management

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

We received 6 ALE applications for easements on 1,335 acres for nearly \$3 million and 2 WRE applications for approximately 65 acres and ranking us underway. Our state allocation was enough to fund 2 of these applications. We requested and received additional ACEP funds for the backlog enabling us to fund a total of 5 ALE enrollments. These new ALE agreements are in the final stages of approval by Grants and Agreements and the national Internal Controls to obligate these funds by September 27th.

Engineering (SCE)

Dam Rehabilitation

- **Mountain Run 11 and Mountain Run 50** – Construction at both Mountain Run 11 and 50 projects is complete. A dedication ceremony for the projects was held August 8th, 2019 in Culpeper.

NRCS REPORT
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- **Upper North River 77** – Hearthstone Dam site in Augusta County is under construction. Installation of the toe drain is complete. Earthfill is being placed to reconstruct the front of the dam. Construction is anticipated to be complete by November. The Sponsors have requested a no cost time extension to April 2020 for completion. This will allow a close-down over the winter with minor repairs and planting to be completed in the spring.
- **Cherrystone Creek 1 and Cherrystone Creek 2** – The Final Plan-EAs for Cherrystone Creek 1 and Cherrystone Creek 2A (Pittsylvania County) are complete and the next step is for the Sponsor to sign the Plans. Administrative closeout activities for both of the project agreements are underway.
- **Johns Creek 1** – The Sponsors (Craig County and Mountain Castles SWCD) and the State Conservationist have signed the final Plan. The final Plan has been submitted for the Chief's authorization. Authorization of the Plan is expected by the end of September.

State Resource Conservationist (SRC)

Technical Tools (Field Office Technical Guide)

- Continuing to revise Cover Crop Planning Manual/Agronomy Tech Note 10 for use by both NRCS and partners as statewide cover crop reference and educational tool.
- Collaborated with the State Hydraulic Engineer to review the surface roughness storage input variables for pasture versus cropland and provide consultation for how it would affect lateral effect distances to drainage tile and wetland compliance across Virginia.
- Review assessment tools and recommended changes for the soil erosion resource concern on pasture and propose PCS indicators for the new assessment tool and quality criteria level.
- Completed revision of multiple technical documents pertaining to RUSLE2 and erosion prediction for posting to FOTG in conjunction with May and June RUSLE2 trainings for field staff and partners. After testing by NRCS field staff and partners, have now announced via official FOTG technical guide notice and planned webinars for September.
- Drafted comments to national headquarters on the new national assessment methods for new soil health resource concerns.
- Coordinated breakthrough with Greensboro NRCS on use of PCS as optional replacement for RUSLE2 in assessment of sheet & rill erosion on pastures.
- Transferred all 2018 imagery to f:drive geodata in service centers and sent note to employees in each office.
- Virginia is serving as an early adopter with a national contract to transition “old section IV” of the FOTG to the new section which will eliminate confusion of where our standards are housed in the FOTG.
- Initiated the review and revision of state standards for release in FY20.
- Developed 13 forage identification sheets as training and reference materials for new and experienced conservation planners per field office request for better technical identification materials.
- Organized and held a teleconference with Dr. Adam Chambers in the WNTSC to discuss COMET-Farm and COMET-Planner in predicting carbon sequestration in association with applied NRCS practices. State partners have asked NRCS to possibly run these models to show cumulative effects of CO2 sequestration.
- National leadership meeting in Oklahoma to discuss changes coming with Conservation Desktop and CART.
- Appalachian team meeting in Tennessee to discuss upcoming changes in policy and procedures with planning, tools, wetland compliance, environmental compliance, etc.

NRCS REPORT
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Training to Field Staff

- Partnering with NRCS staff and DCR partners to provide basic RUSLE2 training statewide through series of four day-long sessions around VA:
 - Conducted Basic RUSLE2 training in Fishersville May 15.
 - Conducted Basic RUSLE2 training in Richmond June 5.
 - Conducted Basic RUSLE2 training in Wytheville June 12.
 - Conducted Basic RUSLE2 training in Richmond June 26.
- Completed Conservation Desktop 2.1 rollout at August JEDs. Conservation Desktop 2.2 rollout for the November JEDs.
- Assisting DOF with their Prescribed Burn Class for individuals who want to be a “Certified Prescribed Burn Manager” for Virginia in September.

Customer Service and Outreach

- Provided a video interview highlighting NRCS involvement in the conservation aspects at Ronnie Nuckols, Overhome Farm and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association Environmental Stewardship Award that will be used at the national meeting in July.
- Continued working on Grazing Farmer Tour for the Valley on September 26th.
- Served on soil health panel for Shenandoah Valley Regional Ag. Networking Forum (Sponsored by NFWF).
- Assisted with pasture fencing meeting in Rockingham Co. put together by Va. Coop. Extension, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Gallagher Fence Co.
- Coordinated with local NRCS, SWCD and Extension field staff in Louisa to plan an evening pasture walk with VFGC to highlight the successful implementation of establishing novel endophyte fescue and native warm season forages in support of a balanced forage system.
- Served as panelist on Soil Health at NFWF Shenandoah Valley Regional Water Quality Forum.
- Represented NRCS on the Mountains to the Bay Grazing Alliance Steering Committee Quarterly meeting working to build and strengthen the structure and information sharing for improved rotational grazing and soil health throughout the Bay Watershed.
- Led the planning and partnership activities to establish a formal networking and mentoring framework for between VFGC experienced graziers and new farmers.
- Partnered with VFGC, Extension, Virginia Tech, SWCD, local NRCS staff, CBF, and M2B to conduct a Pasture Walk at Dragonfly Farms in Louisa where 79 people attended to learn more about using improved types of novel-endophyte fescue, or native warm season grasses to diversify the forages on the farm to reduce the risk of forage shortfalls and improve resiliency of the grazing system, combined with improved grazing management to build soil health and provide a continuous supply of forage to livestock throughout the growing season. Farm Bill programs and supporting technical assistance was emphasized as a way to help achieve individual farm goals. Certified conservationists were able to earn 2.5 CEU’s for nutrient management recertification and 2.0 Contact Hours for DCR certified conservation planners.
- Participated in VIMs Farmland Resiliency Education for At-Risk Coastal and Riparian Agricultural Lands and provided input on NRCS programs and practices that would assist in keeping farmland in production as long as feasible.
- Held a coordination meeting with Army Corps of Engineers in Norfolk to discuss common exemptions for Clean Water Act and Food Security Act to get a better understanding of each of these laws.
- Held a meeting with DEQ in Richmond to discuss permitting and state regulated wetlands (section 401) to get a better understanding of these laws.

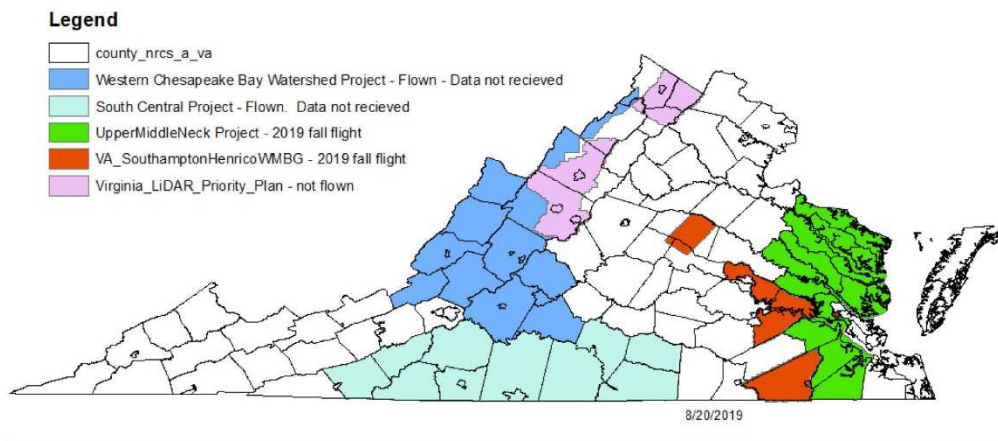
NRCS REPORT
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State Soil Scientist (SSS)

- Partner with the National Park Service. Actively working on the science team with a project to address highly acid streams in the Shenandoah due to acid rain. This project will help water quality.

LIDAR acquisition

- Virginia NRCS contributed \$300,000 for this year's LIDAR data acquisition.
- Partnered with USGS, Henrico, and the City of Williamsburg, to acquire additional areas.



Natural Resources Inventory

The 2015 NRI state wide data is currently publicly available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/nra/nri/>

- Virginia NRCS now has a new tool to query NRI data with a new tool called Land Use & Cover Inventory Database (LUCID). LUCID can query land use change, and land use for the state or county, and able to easily adjust the timeframe for the query.
- NRI grazing land field data collection is underway and will continue through September.

Public Affairs

Outreach/Public Affairs

Native American Outreach. NRCS, FSA and RD staff met with representatives from the Rappahannock and Pamunkey tribes on July 16 and 17 respectively to discuss next steps in initiating a new government-to-government relationship. State Conservationist Jack Bricker also joined local staff in an August 20 follow up meeting with Pamunkey Chief Gray to commence conservation planning activities to assist the tribe in meeting stewardship goals for their land.

Minority Farmer Recognition. Solicited statewide nominations for the Virginia NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee's 2019 Farmer of the Year to be recognized at the Virginia Small Farm Conference in Suffolk.

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Urban Ag. Assembling stats on urban agriculture projects supported statewide with the goal of better telling the stories of these partnership efforts to provide fresh food to citizens in need or help individuals and communities develop agriculture operations to serve those currently living in food deserts.

Small and Nontraditional Farmers. Collaborated with VSU Small Farm Outreach Program staff to provide updates on NRCS programs and services at USDA Information Sessions held in Saint Stephens Church (August 7) and Charlotte Court House (August 21). NRCS State Office and Area IV staff also participated in VSU's AgFest and networked with many of the approximately 400 attendees during the August 28 event at Randolph Farm.

Partner/Meeting Support. Coordinating USDA Collaboration Group exhibit for the inaugural National Conference on Outreach and Agriculture Development in Richmond, Va., on September 10-11. Representatives from NRCS, FSA, RD, FNS and Virginia Tech will showcase computer donations, summer feeding sites, urban farming and other joint projects to put funding and resources into the hands of those who need them most.

NRCS in the News. Two summer spotlights on Virginia farmers also showcased the great work of service center teams on a national stage. Accomack County was chosen as the fourth stop in the [#OurFarmers Roadtrip](#) series, a virtual grand tour of the country with stopovers in more than 20 states from Delaware to the Pacific Coast. The feature on local landowner Grayson Chesser not only shared the story of one of the country's most famous waterfowl decoy carvers but also highlighted his commitment to stewardship. View the longer ["Keeping the Farm" column](#) in *The Delmarva Farmer* newspaper.

A July 26 ["Fridays on the Farm" feature](#) on a Virginia Beach father-son agritourism operation centered on their strong ties to NRCS (father Louis Cullipher retired in 1990 as the DC in nearby Chesapeake). The Culliphers' strong relationship with current Chesapeake DC Jake Browder is clearly evident in the narrative as Louis and son Michael outlined the challenges of transitioning from a corn and soybean operation to cultivating the 12 varieties of fruits and vegetables in their "you-pick-it" menu.

On August 8, a large company of NRCS employees joined citizens and partners from the Town of Culpeper, Culpeper SWCD and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to mark a "watershed moment" for the agency and community. The dedication ceremony not only highlighted the completion of upgrades to the Lake Pelham and Mountain Run Lake dams but also showcased the team's contributions to public safety. Read the [Culpeper Star-Exponent](#) (August 9) and [Culpeper Times](#) (August 15) articles.

Summer Meetings. Networked and shared program information with more than 2,100 farmers and partners at four field days/events: 2019 Virginia Cattle Field Day and Dairy Expo (July 12), Virginia Ag Expo (Aug. 1) and VSU AgFest (August 28).

Earth Team Program

Reached out to NRCS and district staff to solicit nominations for 2019 state and national Earth Team awards. The Earth Team Advisory Committee will review submissions and select state winners at their next quarterly meeting on October 1. Also collaborating with Harrisonburg and Shenandoah SWCD staff to remotely supervise JMU grad student conducting Smith Creek outreach on a volunteer basis. Activities include partner list and website updates as well as an electronic newsletter.