

Meeting Minutes

TAC Stream Protection & Forestry Subcommittee – 2nd Meeting September 23rd, 2024

Smith East Room, Augusta County Government Center
18 Government Center Lane, Verona, VA 24482 - (540)248-5600

Attendees:

TAC Member	Organization	Voting
Ben Chester	DCR	Yes
Anne Marie Roberts	James River Association	Yes
Bryan Hofmann	Friends of the Rappahannock	Yes
Hunter Wyatt	Holston River SWCD	Yes
Michael Tabor	Blue Ridge SWCD	Yes
Elizabeth Dellinger	Shenandoah Valley SWCD	Yes
Gary Boring	New River SWCD	Yes
Jack Carlton	Headwaters SWCD	Yes
Tricia Mays	Southside SWCD	Yes
Kevin Dunn	Piedmont SWCD	Yes
Madison Coffey	Lord Fairfax SWCD	Yes
Mark Campbell	Virginia Farm Bureau	Yes
Matt Kowalski	CBF	Yes
Robert Bradford	Culpeper SWCD	Yes
Tim Higgs	VDACS	Yes
Chanz Hopkins (proxy Chris Barbour)	Skyline SWCD	Yes
Sara Bottenfield	DCR	No
Jen Edwards	DCR	No
Chris Coggins	Shenandoah Valley SWCD	No
Amanda Pennington	DCR	No
James Moneymaker	DEQ	No

- Meeting Brought to Order - 9:30AM
- Review of ground rules and expectations of the group
- Review of matrix items remaining and agenda.
- 13 voting members present, subcommittee has quorum and 11 votes is 80%
- Review of work done at last meeting
- Today is to discuss 3S and 4S
- Robert Bradford came in after first voting member count, so now there are 14 voting members present
- Elizabeth has also joined, total voting members present is 15
- \$80/acre/year was originally set based on average rental prices

- Seems most pasture rental is well below the buffer payment at around \$30-50 an acre
- Trisha moved to table 3S, Matt seconded motion
 - Motion passes unanimously

Item 3S:

Increase SL-6W buffer payment rate to \$150/acre/year. USDA Land Values 2022 Summary Publication stated “The United States pasture value averaged \$1,650 per acre, an increase of \$170 per acre (11.5 percent) from 2021.

(https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/land0822.pdf). \$150 per acre per year is a better reflection of the costs associated with setting aside an acre of productive pastureland, as well as shade for the livestock, with consideration given to inflation, current livestock values, hay and pastureland values. This payment rate has not been updated since 2019. Current average cost of a weaned calf a year is \$1500 which translates roughly \$700/acre.

- Move on to discussion of 4S
 - Michael Tabor joined, now 16 voting members
 - The folks in support of this do not have numbers as to how many landowners this effects
 - Matt suggests asking folks to plant trees if they go over 15 acre buffer
 - Southern river districts exceed the buffer cap all the time and it is not stopping participation
 - Brian thinks increasing cap could help incentivize going from 35’ buffer to 50’
 - Even bay districts are saying they are not seeing folks not participate because of the cap, this discussion seems to be because of one lost project
 - It was discussed to calculate the buffer based on a 50’ max distance from the water and calculate/pay based on this number.
 - Ben noted that measuring the buffer this way would greatly decrease the average buffer payment and we looked at the math behind it.
 - Matt moved to table item 4S
 - Chanz seconded motion
 - Elizabeth abstained
 - Robert abstained
 - Motion passed

Item 4s:

i. Consider creating a variance process to exceed the 15 acre buffer payment cap associated with the SL-6W practice. We recognize the need for a buffer cap, but feel there should be a process by which the DCR Variance Review Committee can evaluate buffers exceeding 15 acres for eligibility of additional buffer payment. [Deferred in 2023]

ii. Remove SL-6W buffer caps. Removing the buffer caps would enable to enrollment of additional buffer acreages. At this time with full program funding we fail to see a reason to cap buffer acreage.

- Meeting adjourned 10:55 AM.