

**Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
Audit Subcommittee
Tuesday, September 15, 2026
Hunt and Company Restaurant and Catering
Chatham, VA**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Audit Subcommittee of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board took place at 9:31 a.m. on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at Hunt and Company Restaurant and Catering in Chatham, Virginia.

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

John Schick, Chair
Nick Thomas

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION STAFF PRESENT

Nikki Rovner, DCR Director
Sarah Spota, DCR Deputy Director
James Martin, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation
Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager
Breanne Lindsey, Board and Constituent Liaison
Blair Gordon, District Operations Coordinator
Andrea Henry, Chief Engineer
Nico Robichaud, Policy and Program Assistant
Carl Thiel-Goin, DCR
Becky Hubble, DCR
Angela Ball, DCR
Seth Mullins, DCR
Denney Collins, DCR
Sara Bottenfield, DCR

OTHERS PRESENT

Robert Mills, Board Member
Kevin Tate, Board Member
Stephanie Cornnell, Board Member
Kevin Dunn, Board Member
Leigh Pemberton, Board Member
Dr. Dan Goerlich, VCE
Kendall Tyree, VASWCD
Gary Cross, Chowan Basin SWCD
J. Wyatt Cox, Chowan Basin SWCD
Jennifer Coker, Chowan Basin SWCD
Granville Maitland, Appomattox River SWCD

Buck Tharpe, SSWCD
Charles Newton, Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Austin Magruder, Peanut SWCD
Courtney Coleman, Peanut SWCD
Robert Waring, Colonial SWCD
Luke Longanecker, TJSWCD
David Massie, Culpeper SWCD
Jessy Lacks, Pittsylvania SWCD
Amber Eanes, Pittsylvania SWCD
Stephen Bartz, VCE
John Womack, NRCS

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Schick called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and asked for introductions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MARCH 20, 2026

ACTION

Mr. Thomas moved that the minutes from the March 20, 2026, meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board Audit Subcommittee be approved as submitted. Mr. Schick seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

REVIEW OF 2026 ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR GRANT AGREEMENT DELIVERABLES

Ms. Watlington Jones provided an overview of the grant agreement deliverables for 2026. She noted that the primary challenge for Districts has been ensuring accurate data entry into CAS. She also acknowledged and commended the Districts for their continued efforts to meet grant deliverables, particularly in the area of conservation planning.

Recommendations regarding two Soil and Water Conservation Districts:

Natural Bridge – Ms. Watlington Jones provided an update on the challenges currently facing the Natural Bridge District, including difficulties with EJAA and accurate data entry in CAS. She noted that while the District's CDC has offered assistance, the District has not yet acted on that support. Following recent discussions, the District appears motivated to address and resolve these issues.

ACTION

After discussion, Mr. Thomas made the following motion:

The Audit Subcommittee of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board directs the Department to send a Letter of Notice (LON) to the Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District for receiving one "C" score on the *FY2026 Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Support Grant Agreement*.

Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District (District) will receive a LON for not fulfilling the following Deliverable:

Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Grant Deliverable

Deliverable 2 *(Did the District implement VACS in accordance with the Program Year 2026 Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) BMP Manual, including but not limited to the provisions on approval and payment of cost-share, working within District boundaries, bid process, applying average cost list to contract estimates properly, ranking cost share applications consistently with priority and secondary considerations, taking appropriate action to address verification issues, following the appropriate procedures for any mid-year update to the Average Cost List, and other administrative guidelines established in the Manual.)*

The Audit Subcommittee directs the following actions to be taken:

1. The District is prohibited from (i) approving any applications or contracts or (ii) issuing payments for any practices without the Department of Conservation and Recreation's written approval for the next 60 days. The District's Conservation District Coordinator will coordinate with the Department's Agricultural BMP Engineering Services Program and the Agricultural Incentives Program Manager to provide notice of practices that are eligible for payment by the District Board on a monthly basis.
2. All District Directors and all District staff must attend a targeted training provided by the Department for the District within the next 60 days.
3. At the December 9, 2026 Board meeting, the Department will provide an update on the status of VACS Program administration at the District as well as any additional actions that may be warranted.

Mr. Schick seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Southside – Ms. Watlington Jones provided an overview of the requirements necessary for Southside to meet.

ACTION

After discussion, Mr. Thomas made the following motion:

The Audit Subcommittee of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board directs the Department to send a Letter of Notice (LON) to the Southside Soil and Water Conservation District for receiving one "C" score on the FY2026 Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Support Grant Agreement.

Southside Soil and Water Conservation District (District) will receive a LON for not fulfilling the following Deliverable:

Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Grant Deliverable

Deliverable 3 *(Did District staff implementing the VACS Program obtain the DCR Conservation Planner Certification within 24 months of hire (dependent upon availability of all required courses? If the 24 month timeline is exceeded, did staff adequately demonstrate progress towards achieving certification? Did staff maintain conservation planning certification after achieving the initial certification?)*

The Audit Subcommittee directs District staff implementing the VACS Program to obtain the DCR Conservation Planner Certification in the timeframe established in the FY2027 Cost-Share and Technical

Assistance Grant Agreement. Failure to meet this Deliverable in future assessments may lead to additional actions, including financial penalties, being taken by the Audit Subcommittee or the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board.

Mr. Schick seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

RECOMMENDED ACTION REGARDING REPAYMENT FOR PRACTICES BY HOLSTON RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Ms. Watlington Jones informed the Subcommittee that the Holston River SWCD received C and D ratings on their grant agreement deliverables. She noted that the District has experienced significant staff turnover, and that the new team is working diligently to meet the standards established by the VACS program.

ACTION

Mr. Thomas made the following motion:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board) directs the Holston River Soil and Water Conservation District (District) to reimburse the Department for the payments made for Contract 23-26-0011 as these practices were ineligible to receive cost-share funding in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Program Year 2026 Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) BMP Manual. The required reimbursement amount is \$94,160 (\$83,327 for the practice implementation costs and \$10,833 in related technical assistance funding). The District is not authorized to utilize existing VACS Program costshare or FY2027 technical assistance funds to provide reimbursement for this Contract.

Mr. Schick seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for December 9, 2026 at Hotel Roanoke.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 a.m.