

**Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
Briar View Farms, 1101 Wynell Dr, Callands, VA 24530
September 14, 2026; 4:00 p.m.**

AGENDA

- A. Call to Order and Introductions
- B. Tour of Briar View Farms
- C. Discussion of traditional cover crop verification procedures
 - I. Procedures document discussed at Cover Crop Subcommittee meeting
 - II. Comments received from Districts
- D. Discussion of results of survey provided to Districts regarding cover crop practices
- E. Public Comment
- F. Next Meetings
 - September 15, 2026; Hunt and Company Restaurant and Catering, Chatham
 - December 10, 2026; Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke
 - Thursday, March 25, 2027
 - Tuesday, April 20, 2027
 - Thursday, May 27, 2027

For copies of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board meeting materials contact Breanne Lindsey, Board and Constituent Liaison at 804.786.8445 or by email at breanne.lindsey@dcr.virginia.gov.

Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board

John Schick, Vice-Chair	Jason R. De La Cruz
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Dr. Edwin M. Martinez, NRCS, Ex Officio	

Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board

AGENDA

Verifying Cover Crop Percent Cover

Purpose and Standard

These procedures use established vegetation assessment techniques for research and field work and United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service crop residue assessment methods to verify the percentage of cover maintained on cover crop practices. These verification procedures meet the expectations established for the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program requirements.

VACS Program Standard:

- Cover crop practices are required to maintain a minimum of 60% cover of the cover crop species specifically, not weeds.
- The percent of vegetative cover that is present on the field by the date cover is required to be maintained is the only metric used for verification. Plant concentration, tiller count, and projected future cover are not considered.

Assessing Cover Crop Percent Cover

Meter Square Method

1. Place a one-meter-square frame (e.g., a PVC quadrat) in the field.
 - Select areas that are representative of the field as a whole. Avoid areas not representative of the field, e.g. end rows, edges, field borders, etc.
2. Looking straight down into the square, visually estimate the percentage of the area inside the frame that is covered by the cover crop species.
 - Only count cover crop plant material. Do not count weeds, residue of previous crops, or bare soil.
 - Compare the square to reference photographs or cutouts of known cover percentages if needed to calibrate the estimate.
3. Record the estimate percentage for that placement.
4. Repeat the procedure several times in different areas of the field and average the findings.

Point-Intercept Method (Line Transect)

1. Stretch and place a 50- or 100-foot tape measure on the ground. If the cover crop species was drilled place the tape diagonally, or at 45 degrees, to the rows.
 - Select an area that is representative of the field as a whole. Avoid areas not representative of the field e.g. end rows, edges, field borders, etc.
2. Walk along the line and count the number of times where tape markings intersect with cover crop vegetation.
 - If using a 100-foot tape measure, evaluate at 12-inch intervals. If using a 50-foot tape measure, evaluate at 6-inch intervals.
 - Remember to look straight down.
 - Be consistent. Use only the left or only the right side of the tape.
3. Use the total number of intersections to calculate crop residue percentage. Out of 100 tape markings evaluated, 60 points where cover crop vegetation intersected a mark equals 60% cover
4. Repeat procedure several times in different areas of the field and average findings.

Tip: As a supporting technique, use a photo comparison of field conditions to reference photographs showing known percentages of cover, viewed from directly overhead.

Common Errors to Avoid

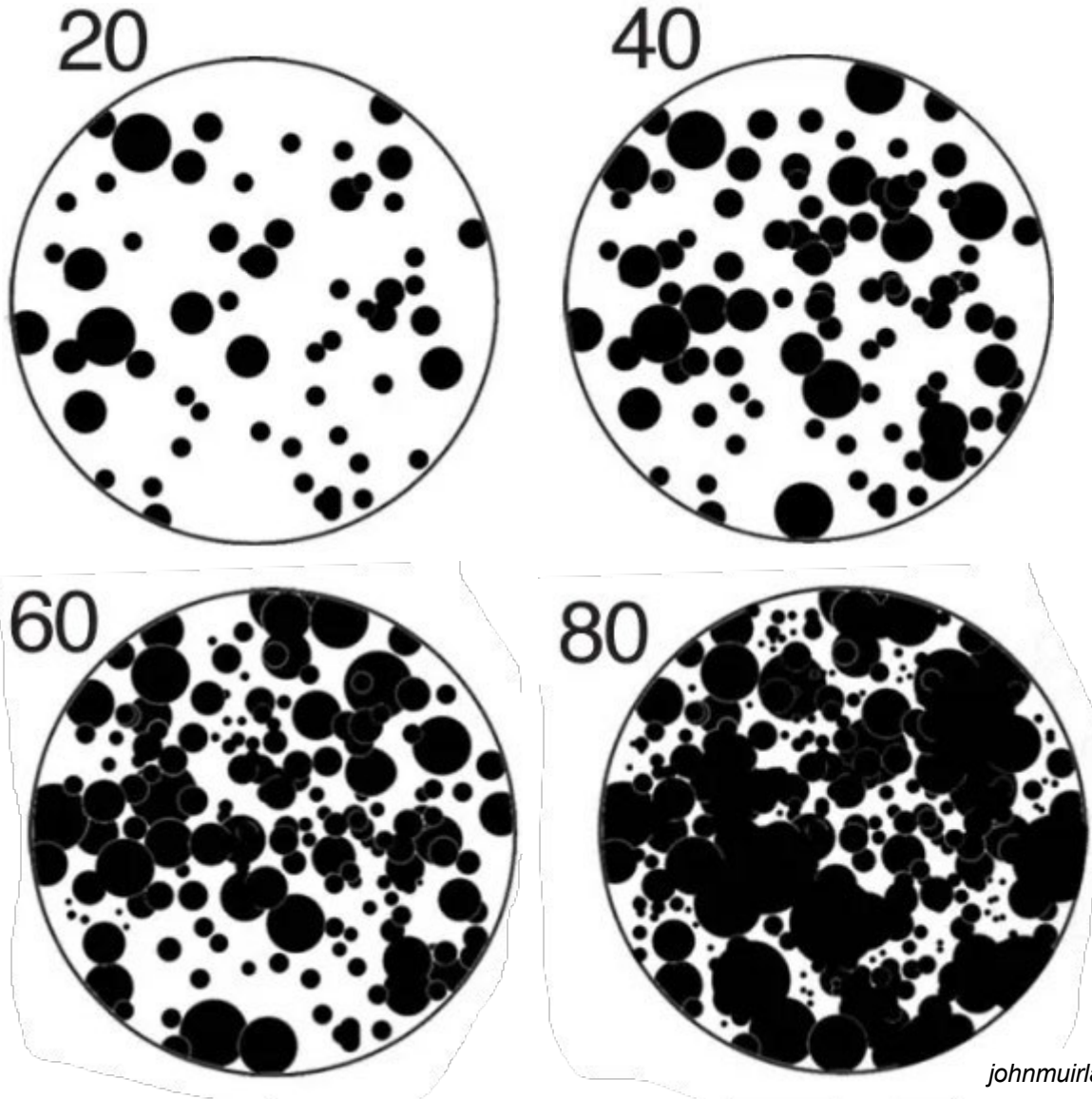
- Looking across the field instead of straight down.
- Counting weed cover or crop residue as cover crop cover.
- Switching sides of the tape between readings instead of reading consistently from the same side of the tape.
- Measuring only one spot instead of repeating in several representative areas and averaging.
- Measuring end rows, field edges, or other unrepresentative areas.
- Over or under estimating cover within the quadrat.

Training Resources

- Meter square demonstration video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cS4qwSK-Mqw>
- Point-intercept method demonstration (first ~4 minutes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGOXro1YVCs>

Percent Cover Visual References

Various formats can be found online.



Cover Crop Information Requested from Districts

This survey is intended to help the Board and the Department understand current District processes for cover crop implementation and verification, and the staff time involved in conducting verifications correctly.

General Information

- 1. What questions does your District typically ask producers at sign-up regarding cover crop practices, and what information do you gather from those conversations?**

For example, does your District typically ask whether nutrients or manure have been or will be applied to fields, or whether the property has a current nutrient management plan?

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 2. In CAS, each instance is represented by a single location point. Does your District also digitize the field boundaries that make up the instance?**

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Conducting Verifications

- 1. What method(s) does your District use to conduct cover verifications?**

Choose an item.

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 2. Are you aware of other scientifically valid methods beyond the meter square or point intercept methods?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 3. How many staff conduct verifications?**

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- 4. How does staff determine the route for conducting verifications?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

5. On average, how long does it take staff to complete verification of one instance in the field?

Choose an item.

Click or tap here to enter text.

6. How are verification results documented? Are photos taken of the fields? Please describe your documentation process.

Click or tap here to enter text.

7. How long would it take your District to complete all verifications using either the meter square or point intercept methods, and how many staff would that require?

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. How long would it take your District to complete all verifications with a photo taken of each field, and how many staff would that require?

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. Does your District combine cover crop verifications with other inspections or field visits?

Choose an item.

Click or tap here to enter text.

10. Does your District verify that all cover crop fields are included in the current Nutrient Management Plan? If yes, please describe the process and staff time it requires.

Choose an item.

Click or tap here to enter text.

11. Does your District verify that the specific cover crop practice implemented on each field matches the cover crop practice information from the Nutrient Management Plan? If yes, please describe the process and staff time it requires.

Choose an item.

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 12. Does your District follow up with producers in the spring regarding cover crop termination and/or harvest? If so, what does that follow-up process involve, and how much staff time does it typically require?**

Choose an item.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Use of Technology

- 1. Does your District utilize an app for verifications? If so, which one?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 2. Does staff conducting verifications have a District-issued smartphone or tablet?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 3. What percentage of your cover crop acreage has cell service/wi-fi access?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

Training

- 1. How would you like training on verification methods to be handled?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 2. Are there other topics that should be included in verification training (such as what 60 percent cover looks like for mixed-species cover crops)?**

Click or tap here to enter text.

Other Information

- 1. Is there any other information you would like to provide?**

Click or tap here to enter text.