

**Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
Friday, July 24, 2026
Virginia Transportation Research Council – Research Council Auditorium
Charlottesville, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board took place at 12:01 p.m. on Friday, July 24, 2026, at the Virginia Transportation Research Council, Research Council Auditorium in Charlottesville, Virginia.

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Charles Newton, Chair
Jason De La Cruz
Kevin Dunn

John Schick, Vice Chair
Leigh Pemberton
Dr. Edwin Martinez

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Adam Wilson
Robert Mills
Stephanie Cornnell
Nick Thomas

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION STAFF PRESENT

Sarah Spota, DCR Deputy Director
Darryl Glover, Deputy Director, Soil and Water Conservation, Dam Safety, and Floodplain Management
James Martin, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation
Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager
Lisa McGee, Director of Policy, Planning, and Legislative Affairs
Breanne Lindsey, Board and Constituent Liaison
Blair Gordon, District Operations Coordinator
Nico Robichaud, Policy and Program Assistant
Marissa Roland, DCR

OTHERS PRESENT

Darrell Kuntz, Office of the Attorney General
Darrell Marshall, VDACS
Tim Higgs, VDACS
Kevin Schmidt, VDACS
Kendall Tyree, VASWCD
David Massie, Culpeper SWCD
Melissa Allen, John Marshall SWCD
Meredith Rose, Tidewater SWCD
Kelly Snoddy, Peter Francisco SWCD

Luke Longanecker, TJSWCD
Joe Thompson, TJSWCD
Aaron Mills, TJSWCD
Michelle Carter, Three Rivers SWCD
Jim Wallace, Colonial SWCD
Sharon Conner, HCSWCD
Shelby Foosness, Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Megan Trice, Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Megen Dalton, Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Buck Tharpe, SSWCD
Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau
Kevin Tate, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
Alston Horn, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With five (5) members of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board present a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Newton called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m. and asked for introductions.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 17, 2026

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Pemberton moved to approve the June 17, 2026, Board meeting minutes as amended. Mr. De La Cruz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: De La Cruz, Dunn, Newton, Pemberton, and Schick.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – *Darryl Glover, Deputy Director, Soil and Water Conservation, Dam Safety, and Floodplain Management*

Mr. Glover reported that the General Assembly adopted the revised FY2027–2028 budget at the end of June. The FY2027 budget includes funding for the Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost Share, Technical Assistance, District Operations, district-owned dam rehabilitation and maintenance, District Support, and the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP).

An update was provided on several initiatives related to the verification of cover crops. . DCR is incorporating training into the Conservation Planning Certification curriculum to more thoroughly teach how to verify that cover crops meet the required standards. The use of technology to assist with verification activities is being examined through a pilot study being conducted by Colonial SWCD and additional efforts by the Department to use a different set of satellite images to verify cover crop fields. The Department is also working to make an existing mobile field app more efficient and user-friendly. Additional information on these initiatives is expected to be presented at the annual Association meeting in December.

Mr. Glover also announced organizational changes. The Division Director of Soil and Water Conservation will report directly to the DCR Director and a new Deputy Agency Director is being recruited to oversee the Divisions of Dam Safety, Floodplain Management, and the Office of Resilience Planning. The Office of Environmental Education will be transferred to the Division of State Parks while maintaining its statutory focus on K–12 environmental education.

UPDATE ON FOIA MEETING RULES – *Lisa McGee, Director of Policy, Planning, and Legislative Affairs*

Ms. McGee informed the Board of changes resulting from Senate Bill 699, enacted during the 2026 Legislative Session. She explained that the legislation requires public bodies to post meeting agendas on their official government websites prior to each meeting. Once a meeting has begun, the Board generally may not take final action on items not included on the posted agenda, unless the matter is time-sensitive or properly considered in closed session as authorized by law.

Ms. McGee further explained that, for purposes of these requirements, "final action" refers to a vote or other formal decision that completes or finally resolves a matter. Routine procedural actions, such as referring an item to a committee, postponing consideration to a future meeting, directing staff to gather additional information, or issuing a commemorative proclamation, do not constitute final action and may still be taken.

APPROVAL OF BOARD POLICY ON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 – *Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager*

Ms. Watlington Jones presented the proposed Policy on Soil and Water Conservation District Administration and Operations Funding Allocations for Fiscal Year 2027. She explained that the policy establishes the distribution of state appropriations to Soil and Water Conservation Districts for administrative and operational support in accordance with the 2026 Appropriation Act and the Board's statutory authority.

Ms. Watlington Jones reviewed the FY 2027 funding allocations, including funding for district administrative and operational expenses, district-owned dam maintenance, small dam repair projects, and department support services provided to the districts.

The Board discussed the two proposed funding allocation methodologies: one based on prior-year allocations and the other based on budget templates submitted by the districts. Ms. Watlington Jones explained that staff are reviewing the budget template format to improve its clarity and assist districts in completing it more accurately in the future.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Pemberton made the following motion:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approves the Policy on Soil and Water Conservation District Administration and Operations Funding Allocations for Fiscal Year 2027 utilizing the scenario with allocations based on the districts' budget template submissions.

Mr. Schick seconded the motion, which was approved by: De La Cruz, Pemberton, and Schick.

Mr. Newton and Mr. Dunn opposed the motion.

APPROVAL OF ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS SUPPORT GRANT AGREEMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR

2027 – *Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager*

Ms. Watlington Jones presented the proposed Administration and Operations Support Grant Agreement for Fiscal Year 2027 and reviewed several updates. Attachment E was revised to separate the Transfer In and Transfer Out columns. The image of the Attachment D Budget Template was removed while staff work to simplify and revise the template, including updates to the personnel worksheet and instructions. The revised template has been provided to the Peer Review Committee for review and comment, and training on the new template is planned for the spring.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Pemberton made the following motion:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approves the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District Administration and Operational Support Grant Agreement (Fiscal Year 2027).

Mr. Schick seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: De La Cruz, Dunn, Newton, Pemberton, and Schick.

APPROVAL OF BOARD POLICY ON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COST-SHARE AND

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 – *Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager*

Ms. Watlington Jones provided an overview of the proposed Board Policy on Soil and Water Conservation District Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Funding Allocations for Fiscal Year 2027. She noted that the budget language was revised to reflect the adopted Appropriation Act, although a chapter number has not yet been assigned. The additional technical assistance amount was also corrected in several instances from 13% to 12% following the inclusion of \$1.3 million in recordation revenue as base technical assistance funding. No additional changes were made to the policy.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Pemberton made the following motion:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approves the Policy and Procedures on Soil and Water Conservation District Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Funding Allocations (Fiscal Year 2027).

Mr. Schick seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: De La Cruz, Dunn, Newton, Pemberton, and Schick.

APPROVAL OF COST-SHARE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT AGREEMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 –

Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager

Ms. Watlington Jones provided an overview of the Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Grant Agreement for Fiscal Year 2027. She noted that the additional technical assistance amount was revised in several instances to reflect the correct percentage of 12% rather than 13%. No additional changes were made to the grant agreement.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Pemberton made the following motion:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board) approves the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Grant Agreement (Fiscal Year 2027).

Mr. De La Cruz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: De La Cruz, Dunn, Newton, Pemberton, and Schick.

APPROVAL OF DISTRICT DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS - *Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager*

The Board reviewed the following Soil and Water Conservation District Director appointments:

Lord Fairfax

Appointment of Ms. Jenna Wiles, of Frederik County, effective 7/24/2026, to fill the vacant elected director position (term of office expires 12/31/2027).

Ms. Wiles currently works on the family farm, raising produce and assisting at the farm market. Woodbine Farms was the 2025 Shenandoah River Basin Grad Award winner. She previously worked for NRCS and holds a bachelor's degree in crop and soil science from Virginia Tech.

Tri-County/City

Appointment of Ms. Pamela Scruggs, of the City of Fredericksburg, effective 7/24/2026, to fill the vacant elected director position (term of office expires 12/31/2027).

Ms. Scruggs has been with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 2008, serving first as a Program Leader for their International Affairs division focusing on international policy, regulation and financial assistance. In this role she helped establish a unit for wildlife trafficking and built a coalition of foreign government representatives and NGO partners to increase protections for sharks. In 2022 she moved to the division for ePermits and lead the agencies permitting process into the digital age. Ms. Scruggs also previously served as a Director for TCCSWCD.

BOARD ACTION

After review, Mr. Pemberton made the following motion:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approves the appointments of the individuals being recommended.

Mr. Schick seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: De La Cruz, Dunn, Newton, Pemberton, and Schick.

DISCUSSION INVOLVING LETTERS RECEIVED REGARDING COVER CROP DECISIONS AT JUNE MEETING – SUBCOMMITTEE CHARGE – *Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager*

Ms. Watlington Jones provided an overview of the revisions to the cover crop specifications made by the Board at the June meeting. She noted that the adopted language was incorporated into all applicable cover crop specifications, including SL-8 (Protective Cover for Specialty Crops), SL-8B (Small Grain and Mixed Cover Crop for Nutrient Management and Residue Management), SL-8H (Harvestable Cover Crops), SL-8M (Small Grain and Mixed Cover Crop for Nutrient Management and Residue Management with Fall Manure Application), WFA-CC (Whole Farm Approach – Cover Crop Bundle), and WQ-4 (Legume Based Cover Crop).

Ms. Watlington Jones provided the language adopted at the June meeting:

“A good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover must be obtained by January 1 to protect the area from runoff in the fall and winter. All cover crop plantings must maintain a minimum of 60% cover crop plant material on the enrolled acres from January 1 through the lifespan of the practice. District staff will conduct field visits no later than January 31 to verify required cover has been established.”

The Board discussed the language and the letters received regarding the action taken to approve the language at the June meeting.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Dunn made the following motion:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board) approves the removal of the following language in the current WQ-4 specification (2027 program year):

#7. A good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover must be obtained by January 1 to protect the area from runoff in the fall and winter. All cover crop plantings must maintain a minimum of 60% cover crop plant material on the enrolled acres from January 1 through the lifespan of the practice. District staff will conduct field visits no later than January 31 to verify required cover has been established.

Mr. De La Cruz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: De La Cruz, Dunn, Newton, Pemberton, and Schick.

Ms. Watlington Jones reviewed the topics that will be the focus for the Subcommittee that was established at the June meeting. After discussion, the Board confirmed the following topics will be addressed by the Subcommittee:

- What specifications require the 60% cover verification?
- How to verify 60% cover (methodology)?
- How does the Board (Department) ensure that the verifications are done in accordance with Board directives?
- Ways to make sure cover crop “works with” the nutrient management plan
 - Soil loss versus nutrient reductions (different category of BMP)?
- Opportunities available from satellite imagery
- Is there a way for the verification date and date by which cover is established to be the same?
 - Variable verification date based on planting date (geographic area)
- Ensure input from Districts regarding, at a minimum, the workload impact is received. How to train staff?

Ms. Watlington Jones also informed the Board that the Subcommittee will attend the nutrient management and cover crop training being provided by the Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees at Graves Mountain on August 20, followed by a Subcommittee meeting.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Pemberton moved to approve the topics that will be the focus of the Subcommittee. Mr. Dunn seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: De La Cruz, Dunn, Newton, Pemberton, and Schick.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business for the Board to consider.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business for the Board to consider.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau, provided public comment about the TAC process.

Buck Tharpe, SSWCD, provided public comment about cover crops.

PARTNER REPORTS

Natural Resources Conservation Service – John Womack

Dr. Martinez gave the report for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts – Dr. Kendall Tryree, VASWCD Executive Director

Dr. Tyree gave the report for the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

NEXT MEETINGS

The Board was reminded of the dates for the next two meetings:

- September 14-15, 2026; location to be determined
- December 10, 2026; Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, VA

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.