

AGENDA

TAC Stream Protection & Forestry Subcommittee – 1st Meeting

September 28, 2026

Smith West Room, Augusta County Government Center

18 Government Center Lane, Verona, VA 24482 - (540)248-5600

9:30 a.m. – Welcome, introductions, declaration of a quorum, assign note taker, review agenda discuss the prioritization

1. Review of TAC Ground Rules and General Decorum

- ADVANCE – To officially adopt a recommendation to the TAC as it was submitted and send it to the SWCB.
- AMEND – To officially adopt language based upon, yet not identical to, a recommendation to the TAC, and send it to the SWCB.
- TABLE – To officially suspend consideration of a recommendation to the TAC. Note: Tabled items will not be brought back to the TAC for at least three years.
- DEFER – To officially postpone consideration of a recommendation to the TAC. Deferred items will be reconsidered in a future TAC year.

2. New Business:

- Review Matrix and prepare plan to address items.
- Discussion and possible action on the following specifications under review this cycle: TBD
- Discussion and possible action on Matrix Items 1S through 15S, as prioritization and time allow.

3. Public Comment (NOTE: Per TAC Ground Rules and Procedures, anyone attending the meeting who is NOT a member of the subcommittee or an invited guest is considered a member of the public and must reserve their comments until the public comment period)

4. Review the day's discussion/outcomes/actions. This will help with creating minutes.

- Final check of matrix items

5. Adjourn: No Later Than 3:30 p.m.

MATRIX OF ADVANCED STREAM PROTECTION FORESTRY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2026 (CY26) TAC					
Item #	Ag. BMP	Suggestion to the TAC	TAC Recommendations	DCR Supports	FY2028/2029
		Complete review of practices for use and effectiveness, per TAC rules (list of practices provided).			
1S		Update the SE-2 practice to be consistent with the eligibility of the WP-2A practice and allow shorelines bordering forestlands to be eligible. WP-2A: Streambanks bordering only agricultural and forestal lands. Other land, such as recreational, urban and built-up or residential lots are not eligible. SE2: For shorelines bordering only agricultural lands. Other lands such as recreational, urban and built-up or residential lots are not eligible.			
2S		Update the SE-2 practice, or clarify in the specification, that shorelines adjacent to a BMP (like a grass filter strip (WQ-1 or equivalent), riparian buffer (FR-3 or equivalent), etc), but not directly bordering an agricultural field, are still eligible. We should not penalize a producer or landowner who wants to stabilize their shoreline for also having a buffer on their agricultural fields.			
3S		Permanent Long-term shade practice (trees)- The majority of the shade on many farms is along the stream which is a major reason why farmers do not sign up for the program because their cattle lose access to shade. We propose a practice similar to the FR-1 specifically designed for cattle shade with a cost share rate of 75%. Time must be given for the trees to establish and fast growing trees native to Virginia should be prioritized. <i>Deferred in 2025 pending creation of a draft silvopasture practice specification</i>			
4S		Modify CCI-FRB-1 spec to a. extend land use change eligibility to 20 years from 15 years; and b. increase VACS payment rate to \$500/acre in order to provide an incentive for buffer maintenance that will protect the initial investment of the land conversion.			
5S		Convert WP-2C to Cost-Share: Transition the WP-2C (Stream Protection)* practice from a tax-credit-only model to a full cost-share practice. Direct financial assistance is far more effective than tax credits for many producers in implementing these critical protections. <i>*The name of the WP-2C practice is Stream Channel Stabilization</i>			
6S		Add Wells to SL-7: Explicitly include the installation of a new well as an eligible component under the SL-7 (Extension of Watering Systems) specification. Many grazing systems have reached the capacity of existing infrastructure, making new water sources a primary need for further expansion.			

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7S		Flash Grazing Flexibility: Allow for highly managed "flash grazing" within protected stream areas under strict conditions. This would allow producers to manage invasive species and fuel loads without compromising the environmental integrity of the exclusion zone.			
8S		Align Buffer Payments with Market Rates: Increase one-time buffer incentive payments to exceed the \$100.00 per acre land rental rate. To compete with the productivity of agricultural land, the program must offer a payment that reflects current economic realities.			
9S		Expand CCI to Include Buffers and Cross-Fencing: Include buffer maintenance and the repair of internal cross-fencing in the Continuous Conservation Initiative (CCI). Ensuring that existing infrastructure remains functional is just as important as installing new practices.			
10S		To better align our stream exclusion practices with Chesapeake Bay Program crediting, we suggest modifying the Stream Exclusion practice specifications to remove the limitation for live streams and live water. Currently the Bay Model is reporting the buffer, not the type of waterbody, and considers the buffer around any environmentally sensitive area the same as it would a live stream buffer. According to the Chesapeake Bay Program's Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verifications Visual Indicators Report- Page 15 (attached) indicates that the purpose of the watercourse access control practice is: "... to prevent, restrict, or control access of livestock into surface water or environmentally sensitive areas." In addition, on Page 15, the report states that the conditions where the practice applies includes: "...area adjacent to surface water or environmentally sensitive areas where the control of livestock is needed." Suggest the following edits to existing practice specifications: ▪ Livestock watering systems and fencing improve water quality, control erosion and eliminate direct access to or a direct runoff input to all live streams or live water, <u>surface water or environmentally sensitive areas</u>. ▪ Isolated seeps, springs, wetlands, and ponds without direct connection to a stream may be fenced as well, but shall not be used as the sole criteria for determining eligibility for the SL-6 practice, <u>if deemed environmentally sensitive by the local Soil & Water District Board</u>.			
11S		The language in the SL-7 specification limiting its eligibility to fields that also have stream exclusion should be removed.			

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		B. Policies and Specifications 1. All fields that receive cost share under this practice must have had all livestock previously excluded or concurrently being excluded from all live streams or live water. Any field that is part of a rotational grazing system is eligible. Rotational grazing systems without live water previously or concurrently excluded do not qualify for this practice. The benefits of rotational grazing for water quality exist whether the field being grazed is adjacent to a stream or not. Rotational grazing increases a field's vegetative cover, forage health, soil health and soil carbon. All of these improvements then help protect water quality in the local groundwater and streams. The VACS program is intended to improve water quality through agricultural BMPs, so it makes sense to expand, not restrict the application of the SL-7 to any farm or field that wants to use rotational grazing.			
12S		Take a look at the rates for the suite of CCI practices related to stream exclusion to see if an increase is needed. Inflation has been occurring for newly installed practices, and maintenance is likely going up as well.			
13S		Consider a way to include pasture improvement planting as an add on into our practices that implement rotational grazing. This could hopefully be done in a way to obtain bay model credit but could be an extra incentive to sign up to do one of these practices and require a nutrient management plan.			
14S		Shade practice as part of stream exclusion practices - with a wide buffer area of 50' this often decreases the amount of shade for livestock and is a turn off to some producers who are on the fence about a exclusion practice. I propose that there should be cost share or tax credit for portable shade structures to be included in rotational grazing where shade has now been excluded from the pasture. These structures could be moved around the paddock. This will allow for adequate distribution of manure, will decrease the likelihood of one heavy use area, such as a stand of trees.			
15S		<i>Two suggestions related to virtual fence:</i> - Geo fence for divisional fencing - NRCS is cost sharing on it. Least cost technically feasible as opposed to wood posts and wire. - SL-6F Stream Exclusion in Floodplains: Establish a pilot research and demonstration project(s) for invisible fencing for cattle in the floodplain. There should be a limited total number (1-5) of projects and must be in cooperation with VCE, manufacturers,			

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		local swcd, and/or other conservation partners. If invisible fencing does not perform as expected, the applicant would qualify for SL-6F funding for fencing. Invisible fencing for cattle – initial demonstration project for stream exclusion 1. Permanent marker/boundary posts – serve as reference points for field verification (currently required for SL-6F) 2. Must start with electric fence for training of livestock 3. Manufacturers software must show historical location of animals and is accessible by VCE and swcd 4. Training requirement of producers 5. Field verification by swcd staff – weekly 4x > monthly 6x > annually 6. Collars must be on farm, 7. Would not work during calving season 8. How old of animals does this work for, questioning calve control, manufactures have recommendations of not less than 400 lbs 9. VT Shenandoah is currently managing a project 10. It is likely this project would require 1 in year planning and may run 2-3 years to verify functionality and further develop practice requirements.			

MATRIX OF DEFERRED STREAM PROTECTION FORESTRY RECOMMENDATIONS			
Item #	Ag. BMP	Suggestion to the TAC	Reason for Deferring

MATRIX OF TABLED STREAM PROTECTION FORESTRY RECOMMENDATIONS			
Item #	Ag. BMP	Suggestion to the TAC	Reason for Tabling