

BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS, WETLAND PROFESSIONALS
and GEOLOGISTS MEETING MINUTES

The Board for Professional Soil Scientists, Wetland Professionals and Geologists met on June 3, 2026, at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR), 9960 Mayland Drive, Richmond, Virginia.

Members present for all or part of the meeting:

Wetland Delineators

Justin Brown
Emily Drahos
Emily Salkind

Geologists

Ernest Beasley
Matt Heller
Shannon Lukens
John Pollard

Citizens

Steven Yob

Soil Scientists

Alexis Jones
Richard Michniak

Members absent from the meeting with regrets:

Citizens

Cayman Lowe

Soil Scientists

Jay Conta

Staff present for all or part of the meeting were:

Laura McClintock, Director
Steve Kirschner, LRPD Director
Kate Nosbisch, Executive Director
Davon Jones, Administrative Coordinator
Joe Haughwout, Regulatory Affairs Manager
Connor Davis, Budget Officer

Josh Laws, Assistant Attorney General, was present from the office of the Attorney General.

Jackson Dyer, BPOR Liaison, was present from the Board of Professional and Occupational Regulation.

Greg Emerson, Director of Examinations, was not present at the meeting with regrets.

Members of the audience:

Thaddeus Kraska, *Virginia Association of Wetland Professionals*
Elijah Wright, *Virginia Association of Wetland Professionals*
Sabrina Heltzel, *Virginia Association of Professional Soil Science*
Tom Ashton, *Virginia Association of Professional Soil Science*
Greg Hammer, *Hammer Environmental*

Mr. Brown, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Call to Order

Mr. Brown and Ms. Nosbisch advised the Board of the emergency evacuation procedures.

Emergency Evacuation

Mr. Yob moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Jones seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members: Beasley, Brown, Drahos, Heller, Jones, Lukens, Michniak, Pollard, Salkind and Yob.

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Lukens moved to approve the PSSWPG Board Meeting, March 9, 2026. Ms. Jones seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members: Beasley, Brown, Drahos, Heller, Jones, Lukens, Michniak, Pollard, Salkind and Yob.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Heltzel addressed the Board regarding her experience pursuing Soil Scientist licensure in Virginia. Although she passed the Fundamentals Examination, she expressed concerns that the Professional Practice Examination contains highly specialized, scenario-based questions that may create barriers for otherwise qualified candidates. She encouraged the Board to consider reforms that support workforce growth while maintaining public protection.

Public Comment Period

Mr. Hammer addressed the Board regarding his concerns that the current Soil Scientist licensing examination may exceed the statutory standard of minimum competency.

Mr. Bedenbaugh addressed the Board regarding the Wetland Professional Universal License Recognition (ULR) process and requested a dedicated work session to evaluate equivalency determinations for out-of-state credentials. He emphasized the need to maintain rigorous standards while ensuring a fair and transparent pathway to licensure and consideration of Virginia-specific wetland conditions.

Mr. Wright addressed the Board regarding a dedicated work session on Wetland Professional licensure and ULR matters..

Ms. Nosbisch provided an update for informational purposes.

Examinations Update

Ms. Nosbisch stated the Executive Director Report was provided for informational purposes.

Executive Director Report

HB 1254 Amendment

Mr. Haughwout addressed the Board to consider regulatory changes to the soil scientists regulations required to comport with recent legislation, changing continuing education requirements for Soil Scientists. The legislation stipulates that requirements for continuing education not to exceed eight hours per renewal cycle, instead of the current provision stipulating that requirements for continuing education not exceed eight hours per year. The proposed amendment aligns the regulations with the updated statute.

Ms. Jones moved to approve the amendment as presented and authorized staff to file the exempt regulatory action and make any necessary technical or stylistic corrections. Mr. Michniak seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members: Beasley, Brown, Drahos, Heller, Jones, Lukens, Michniak, Pollard, Salkind and Yob.

HB 1289 Amendments (NOIRA)

Mr. Haughwout provided an overview of legislation that requires the Board to develop continuing education regulations for Professional Geologists. Mr. Haughwout requested the Board initiate a Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) to begin the formal regulatory process.

Mr. Pollard moved to authorize Board Staff to file a NOIRA. Ms. Lukens seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members: Beasley, Brown, Drahos, Heller, Jones, Lukens, Michniak, Pollard, Salkind and Yob.

HB 1835 Amendment (Proposed)

Mr. Haughwout addressed the Board regarding the proposed permanent regulations associated with the transition from geology certification to licensure to replace the current emergency regulations. The proposed permanent regulation will (i) replace references to certification in the regulation with references to licensure; and (ii) remove references to “ethical character” to comport with a recent legislative change that prohibits regulatory board from using “vague and arbitrary” terms to refuse a license.

Mr. Pollard moved to adopt the proposed regulation as presented, and authorizing staff to file the proposed regulation and make any necessary technical or stylistic corrections. Ms. Lukens seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members: Beasley, Brown, Drahos, Heller, Jones, Lukens, Michniak, Pollard, Salkind and Yob.

Mr. Davis presented a financial overview to the Board, including revenue, expenditures, cash balances, and cost allocation adjustments. Discussion focused on the Board's cyclical revenue structure, projected operating deficits, and future fee considerations. Director McClintock provided context regarding statewide financial management improvements, cost allocation corrections, and new authority allowing more timely fee adjustments when necessary.

Financial Monthly Statement

A letter from Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientist President, Sabrina Heltzel was provided to the Board for review. Ms. Jones presented concerns regarding the current Soil Scientist licensure framework. The discussion focused on examination requirements, workforce challenges, declining numbers of licensed professionals, and recommendations to evaluate whether the current licensure model adequately supports the profession while maintaining public protection. The Board discussed the next potential steps, including the formation of a work group to further evaluate the issue.

Communication from VAPSS

The Board discussed challenges facing the Soil Scientist profession, including declining licensure numbers, examination pass rates, workforce development concerns, and potential regulatory solutions. The Board agreed that further evaluation is needed and discussed forming a dedicated work group to examine options and develop recommendations for future consideration.

Soil Scientists Update

Mr. Heller moved to create a work group with all Soil Scientist Board Members and one representative from each group. Ms. Salkind seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members: Beasley, Brown, Drahos, Heller, Jones, Lukens, Michniak, Pollard, Salkind and Yob.

Work Group Members: Jones, Michniak, Conta, Beasley, Salkind

Ms. Drahos discussed Universal License Recognition (ULR) matters and the potential need for a dedicated work session to review certification equivalency standards and interstate licensure issues. The Board agreed to holding a special session to further evaluate these matters and ensure consistency in application review processes.

Wetland Professionals Update

Salkind moved to create a work group with all Wetland Delineator Board Members and one representative from each group. Ms. Drahos seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by members: Beasley, Brown, Drahos, Heller, Jones, Lukens, Michniak, Pollard, Salkind and Yob.

Work Group Members: Brown, Drahos, Salkind, Jones, Pollard

Mr. Pollard provided a report on the recent Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG) Spring Meeting. The report highlighted examination development processes, psychometric review practices, exam validation efforts, and collaboration among state geology boards to ensure examinations continue to assess minimum competency and protect the public.

Geologists Update

Mr. Brown informed the Board of the licensee counts as of May 1, 2026:
Soil Scientists – 72; Wetland Delineators – 157; Geologists – 924.

**License and
Certified
Population**

Conflict of Interest forms and travel vouchers were completed by all Board members present.

**Conflict of Interest
Forms/Travel
Vouchers**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:36 p.m.

Adjourn

Justin T. Brown, Chair

Laura V. McClintock, Secretary