

**Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
Monday, September 26, 2022
Virginia Department of Forestry
Charlottesville, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board took place on Monday, September 26, 2022 at the Virginia Department of Forestry in Charlottesville, Virginia.

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Charles A. Arnason, Chair	Dr. Stephen R. Hill
Adam D. Wilson, Vice-Chair	Anna Killius
Jay C. Ford	Charles Newton
Matthew S. Wells, DCR Director, <i>ex officio</i>	
Dr. Edwin M. Martinez, NRCS, <i>ex officio</i>	

VIRGINIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Kat Maybury	Dr. Dahlia O'Brien
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DCR STAFF PRESENT

Andrew Smith, Deputy Director
Darryl Glover, Deputy Director, Soil and Water Conservation, Dam Safety and Floodplain Management
James Martin, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation
Wendy Howard Cooper, Director, Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management
Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager
Derrick Bolen, Special Assistant for Policy
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Blair Gordon, SWCD Liaison
Amy Walker, Eastern Area Manager
Hunter Landis, Nutrient Management Program Manager

OTHERS PRESENT

Monica Smith Callahan, Henricopolis SWCD
Sharon Connor, Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Dan Goerlich, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Matt Kowalski, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Kathy Shamblin, Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Dr. Kendall Tyree, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Greg Wichelns, Culpeper SWCD
Darrell Marshall, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With seven (7) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Arnason called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and called for introductions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FORM JUNE 24, 2022

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Mason moved that the minutes of the June 24, 2022 meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board be approved as submitted. Mr. Wilson seconded and the minutes were approved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair Arnason turned the gavel over to Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson called for nominations for Chair. Board election.

Mr. Ford nominated Mr. Arnason to serve another term as Chair. There were no further nominations and Mr. Arnason was re-elected unanimously.

Mr. Wilson turned the gavel over to Chair Arnason.

Dr. Hill nominated Mr. Wilson to serve another term as Vice Chair. There were no further nominations and Mr. Wilson was re-elected unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Wells gave the DCR Director's report.

Regarding the Agricultural Stakeholder Group, the Department held a meeting on August 16th. Stakeholders included the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, Virginia Poultry Federation, Chesapeake Bay Commission, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, James River Association, and NRCS.

The group talked through the needs assessment for next year and for years 2025-2030. There were five scenarios with varying timelines for practice implementation.

The previous administration extended the timeline for certain structural practices until 2030. The Stakeholder Group may prefer a more aggressive timeline in order to offset underfunding in the past. That preference will be balanced with funding and the ability to get practices on the ground.

With regard to funding for dam safety initiatives, Director Wells noted the following:

Districts received an additional \$156,000 per year for routine dam maintenance, increasing support from \$3,000 per dam to \$4,500 per dam for a total of \$468,000 up from \$312,000 per year. While \$400,000 for remote monitoring was removed in the second year of the budget, funding already received for remote monitoring can now be used for all district-owned dams, not just significant and high hazard dams.

DCR received a \$10M deposit into the Dam Safety, Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund, established pursuant § 10.1-603.17, Code of Virginia.

DCR received \$45M for the major modification, upgrade, or rehabilitation of dams owned or maintained by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts to bring impounding structures into compliance with the Dam Safety Act requirements promulgated by the Board.

DCR also received \$1,925,000 to repair Lake Edmunds Dam at Staunton River State Park.

DCR received \$10M for improvements to identified high hazard water impounding structures consistent with the provisions of the Dam Safety, Flood Prevention, and Protection Assistance Fund established pursuant to § 10.1-603.17, Code of Virginia.

The agency is charged with developing and implementing the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan by December 2026, phase 2 of the Coastal Resilience Master Plan by December 2024, and the Community Outreach and Engagement Plan by December 2022 to help inform both master planning efforts. These requirements were laid out in HB516 (Bulova) / SB551 (Marsden).

The Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee held their first meeting on September 16, 2022.

REPORT FROM THE AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE – *Adam D. Wilson, Chair, Audit Subcommittee*

Mr. Wilson gave the report from the Audit Subcommittee. He noted that the Subcommittee met prior to the Board meeting. There were issues with two districts, Evergreen and Headwaters .

Headwaters SWCD

Mr. Wilson advised that an action came before the Subcommittee related to Headwaters due to the lack of having grazing plans on numerous SL-7s (extension of watering systems).

Ms. Watlington Jones noted that there were six SL-7s with no grazing plans. The plans are a requirement for those practices. She noted that the motion required repayment of funds if

certain actions were not taken. The motion required for grazing plans to be completed for the six known practices by November 28, 2022.

Dr. Hill noted that at the previous meeting the Board discussed the requirement to get signatures from producers prior to plans being implemented.

Ms. Watlington Jones noted that there were no plans to be signed.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Wilson moved the following:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board), at the recommendation of the Audit Subcommittee of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, directs the Department to send a Letter of Notice (LON) to the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District for receiving a "C" score for not fulfilling certain grant deliverables in accordance with the *FY2022 Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Support Grant Agreement*.

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

Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Grant Deliverables

Deliverable 2 (Did the District implement VACS in accordance with the PY2022 VACS BMP Manual, including but not limited to the provisions on EJAA, cost-share file administrative reviews, bid process, conservation planning, and other administrative guidelines established in the *Manual*).

Therefore, the Board directs the District to undertake the following actions:

1. No later than Monday, November 28, 2022, the District must take the following actions:
 - a. For the six known completed SL-7 instances where grazing plans were not developed and contained within the cost-share file, grazing plans must be developed, reviewed with the producer, and included in the cost-share file; and
 - b. A thorough review of all cost-share files for SL-7 practices completed since FY2020 shall be undertaken to ensure grazing plans have been developed and are included as part of the cost-share file.
2. The District Board must submit a letter to the Department, approved by formal motion of the District Board, certifying that these actions have been taken no later than Monday, November 28, 2022.

Additionally, if, during the review of the completed SL-7 cost-share files, the District finds that grazing plans were not developed and included in the cost-share files, the District shall develop grazing plans for each SL-7 instance, review such plan with the producer, and include the plan

with the cost-share file. The District shall complete these actions no later than Tuesday, February 28, 2023.

Further, the Department shall undertake a review of all the SL-7 practices completed since 2020 to ensure the District has complied with this Board action. If, for any reason, these actions are not taken in the timeframe established by the Board, the District must repay the Department all VACS monies used to provide cost-share to the producer for these practices, as well as the associated technical assistance funding.

Finally, beginning in FY2023, if any SL-7 practices marked complete are found to be lacking grazing plans or any other component of the cost-share file, the District will be responsible for repayment to the Department of any VACS monies provided to a producer, as well as the associated technical assistance funds.

Dr. Hill seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Evergreen SWCD

Mr. Wilson noted that the matter with Evergreen SWCD was coming before the full Board. The Audit Subcommittee recommended that the District be given until February 2023 to provide their Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to the agency for review at the March Subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Watlington Jones advised that the District recently terminated their District Manager. In addition, the Conservation Tech is out until October, possibly November. She noted that there is currently no one with the District to prepare the PIP.

The Department had concerns with the District Board approving any applications as there is a variety of missing information on twelve current applications. The recommendation is that the District not be able to approve applications until all of the necessary information is obtained and the information is verified as being part of the cost-share file.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Wilson moved the following:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board), at the recommendation of the Audit Subcommittee, directs the Department to send a Letter of Notice (LON) to the Evergreen Soil and Water Conservation District for receiving two "C" scores for not fulfilling certain grant deliverables in accordance with the *FY2022 Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Support Grant Agreement*.

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

Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Grant Deliverables

Deliverable 2 (Did the District implement VACS in accordance with the PY2022 VACS BMP Manual, including but not limited to the provisions on EJAA, cost-share file administrative reviews, bid process, conservation planning, and other administrative guidelines established in the *Manual*).

Deliverable 6 (Was data entered in the AgBMP Tracking Module accurately to the satisfaction of the Department, including the entry of a practice location point, path to stream (where required), digitized practice components to facilitate resource reviews, and accurate practice measurements including soil loss rate value based upon site specific soil type(s)).

Therefore, the Board directs the District to develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and submit the PIP to the Department no later than February 28, 2023.

The PIP must include the following elements:

1. Trainings District staff will attend as part of a continuing education initiative to ensure staff is knowledgeable about:
 - a. The Cost-Share and Technical Assistance grant deliverables;
 - b. The Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share (VACS) Program including trainings the VACS Program (such as the annual training on updates to the Program and VACS 101) and the maintenance of VACS Program files, ; and
 - c. The AgBMP Tracking Module including how to accurately and correctly enter the required BMP data.
2. To ensure data is correctly entered into the AgBMP Tracking Module, the District will:
 - a. Review the existing process regarding the entering of data into the AgBMP Tracking Module;
 - b. Examine the existing process to determine where improvements should be made to correct this deficiency;
 - c. Develop standardized template worksheets for creating cost-estimates and calculating payments and a template checklist for the cost-share files; and
 - d. Adopt a formal process, based on the review of the current process, to ensure all data is entered correctly into the AgBMP Tracking Module. The process adopted must:
 - i. ensure all appropriate District staff is adequately trained on the use of the standardized template worksheets developed; and
 - ii. require that every VACS application and contract contain these standardized template worksheets, accurately completed, for presentation to the District Board prior to application approval and prior to the processing of payments.

The District must provide the District Board-approved PIP to the Department no later than Tuesday, February 28, 2023 in preparation for the March 2023 Audit Subcommittee meeting. A complete and accurate list of all trainings District staff has attended must be submitted to the Department with the PIP. In accordance with the *FY2022 Cost-Share and Technical Assistance Grant Agreement*, the PIP must be presented by the District Board Chairman or designated Director to the Board's Audit Subcommittee at their March 2023 meeting.

Additionally, the District may not approve any applications until the Department verifies all necessary documentation is contained in the cost-share file and the AgBMP Tracking Module and the application is complete. The applications must all be ranked utilizing CEF prior to any Board approval. Upon approval of the PIP submitted by the District to the Audit Subcommittee, the review by the Department will no longer be necessary.

The Department will provide an update to the Board at the December meeting.

Mr. Newton seconded and the motion carried.

The next meeting of the Audit Subcommittee will be in March 2023.

REVIEW OF BOARD BYLAWS

Chairman Arnason noted that, as a follow up from the June meeting, the Board had been presented with recommended revisions to the Board bylaws. He advised that the Board would take action regarding these changes at the December meeting.

No action was taken.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Division Report – Wendy Howard Cooper, Director, Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management

Ms. Howard Cooper gave the report for the Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management. A copy is included as Attachment #1.

Approval of 2023 Grant Manual for the Dam Safety, Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund – Christine Watlington Jones, Policy and District Services Manager

Ms. Watlington Jones advised that the draft grant manual was published in the Virginia Register of Regulations on August 15, 2022; the public comment period ended on September 14, 2022. No comments were received. She noted that one change has been made since publication to reflect staff changes at the Virginia Resources Authority; that change has been highlighted for member review.

Ms. Watlington Jones noted that there have been relatively few changes to the 2023 grant manual; the key components of the grant have remained consistent with the 2022 grant manual.

- Ms. Watlington Jones reviewed the following changes:
 - Limitations on funding was added to clarify why only certain types of funding are available for 2023 (page 4).
 - A definition of maintenance was added for clarification (page 5)
 - The timeframe has been extended for the project period from 12 months to 24 months (page 7). This change will allow newly engaged dam owners and owners undertaking construction projects additional time to complete the required work.
 - The project descriptions and eligible activities have been realigned to meet the funding limitations for the 2023 grant (pages 12-14).
 - In order to ensure the application documents the amount of funds the owner has available for the project and in order to emphasize the match requirement, language has been clarified in the “Dam Safety Budget and Budget Narrative” (page 16).
 - Questions were clarified to enable the applicants to provide more accurate answers (pages 21-24).

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Mason moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the 2023 Dam Safety, Flood Prevention, and Protection Assistance Fund Grant Manual as presented by the Department.

Mr. Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION

Division Report – James Martin, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation

Mr. Martin gave the report for the Division of Soil and Water Conservation. A copy is included as Attachment #2.

Updates on the Resource Management Plans Program – Christine Watlington Jones

Annual report (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)

Ms. Watlington Jones gave the update regarding the Resource Management Plans Program. She advised that the annual report is being edited. The report will be sent to Board members when published.

Ms. Watlington Jones noted that the RMP is a comprehensive farming plan that uses proven agricultural best management practices to ensure a farm is meeting a high conservation standard. Updates in the report include:

- Program results
 - 509 plans with Chesapeake Bay drainage
 - 63 plans with drainage outside the Bay
 - 22 plans with drainage in both
- Facts
 - 594 plans now cover more than 134,745 acres
 - 14 plans, covering more than 3,966 acres, have been certified over the last year
 - Average plan covers 226 acres
- Acreage distribution
 - 115,547 cropland acres
 - 10,800 pasture acres
 - 8,398 hayland acres
- Status of RMPs
 - 48 plans being finalized for review
 - 359 plans approved by not yet certified
 - 188 plans fully certified
- Districts have started conducting continued implementation inspections
 - These inspections occur every 3 years
 - Culpeper, Lord Fairfax; Three Rivers

Overview of results of 2022 program review of district duties

Ms. Watlington advised that the program review is required by the RMP Program Regulations (4VAC50-70-130). She noted the following regarding the review:

- Reviews occur every 5 years
- Reviewed for general program administration. Plan review, verification inspections, and compliance inspections
- Districts that were reviewed this year:
 - Appomattox River
 - Received all possible points
 - Colonial
 - Exceeded the 90 day time requirement on three of the RMPs selected.

- James River
 - Received all possible points
- Lord Fairfax
 - Received all possible points
- Piedmont
 - Exceeded the 90 day time requirement on three of the RMPs selected due to pandemic related office closure.

Approval of districts to be reviewed in 2023

Ms. Watlington Jones reviewed the districts to be reviewed in 2023.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Wilson moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the following Districts for program reviews as required pursuant to 4VAC50-70-130:

- Chowan Basin;
- Lake Country;
- Natural Bridge;
- Peanut;
- Robert E. Lee; and
- Southside.

All program reviews will follow the process presented to the Board by the Department and will utilize the program review forms previously approved by the Board at the September 27, 2018 meeting.

Dr. Hill seconded and the motion carried.

Approval of District Director Appointments and Resignations – Christine Watlington Jones

District Director Appointments and resignations

Ms. Watlington Jones presented the list of District Director Appointments and Resignations.

Evergreen

Appointment of Ms. Sarah Gillespie, of Smyth County, effective 9/26/2022, to fill the unexpired elected director position of Ms. Dianne Beck (term of office expires 12/31/2023).

Natural Bridge

Resignation of Ms. Sandra Stuart, of Lexington, effective 4/28/2022, at-large appointed director (term of office expires 12/31/2022).

Appointment of Ms. Rebecka Szarzynski, of Rockbridge County, effective 9/26/2022, to fill the un-expired at-large appointed director position of Ms. Sandra Stuart (term of office expires 12/31/2022).

Skyline

Resignation of Mr. Thomas Adams, of Montgomery County, effective 7/20/2022, elected director (term of office expires 12/31/2023).

Appointment of Mr. Richard Wall, of Montgomery County, effective 9/26/2022, to fill the un-expired elected director position of Mr. Thomas Adams (term of office expires 12/31/2023).

Three Rivers

Resignation of Mr. Robert Bland, of King and Queen County, effective 9/26/2022, elected director (term of office expires 12/31/2023).

Resignation of Mr. Lloyd Mundie, of Essex County, effective 6/30/2022, at-large appointed director (term of office expires 12/31/2022).

Resignation of Mr. Troy Johnson, of King William County, effective 7/20/2022, elected director (term of office expires 12/31/2022).

Appointment of Mr. Robert Bland, of King and Queen County, effective 9/26/2022, to fill the un-expired at-large appointed director position of Mr. Lloyd Mundie (term of office expires 12/31/2022).

Appointment of Mr. Thomas Fox, of King William County, effective 9/26/2022, to fill the un-expired elected director position of Mr. Troy Johnson (term of office expires 12/31/2023).

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Wilson moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the appointments of the individuals being recommended.

Mr. Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

District Director at-large appointments

Ms. Watlington Jones presented the recommended list of District Director at-large appointments.

Soil and Water Conservation District At-Large Director Appointments
(Terms expire December 31, 2026)

SWCD	Current Incumbent Director	County/City	Requested Appointment	County/City
APPOMATTOX RIVER	Franklin Zitta	Dinwiddie	Franklin Zitta	Dinwiddie
*BIG SANDY	Bobby E. O'Quinn	Buchanan	Ruth Horn	Buchanan
BIG WALKER	Matthew K. Heldreth	Wythe	Matthew K. Heldreth	Wythe
BLUE RIDGE	Byron Brooks	Franklin	Byron Brooks	Franklin
CHOWAN BASIN	Walter W. Robinson, JR.	Greensville	Walter W. Robinson, Jr.	Greensville
CLINCH VALLEY	Jason Bush	Russell	Jason Bush	Russell
COLONIAL	Robert Jeremiah	New Kent	VACANT	
CULPEPER	Steven D. Morris	Greene	Steven D. Morris	Greene
DANIEL BOONE	Robert V. Burchett	Lee	Robert V. Burchette	Lee
EASTERN SHORE	Nicholas Thomas	Accomack	Nicholas Thomas	Accomack
EVERGREEN	Seth Harden	Smyth	Seth Harden	Smyth
HALIFAX	Dr. Bobby Hall	Halifax	Dr. Bobby Hall	Halifax
HANOVER-CAROLINE	Leigh Pemberton	Hanover	Leigh Pemberton	Hanover
*HEADWATERS	Richard M. Shiflet	Augusta	Walter Heeb, III	Augusta
*HENRICO	James Beckley	Henrico	Herbert L. Dunford, Jr.	Henrico
HOLSTON RIVER	Michael Countiss	Washington	Michael Countiss	Washington
JAMES RIVER	Stuart Jones	Chesterfield	VACANT	
JOHN MARSHALL	Edmond DeBerry	Fauquier	Edmond DeBerry	Fauquier
LAKE COUNTRY	William Austin Puryear	Mecklenburg	William Austin Puryear	Mecklenburg
LONESOME PINE	Glenn Graham	Dickenson	Glenn Graham	Dickenson
LORD FAIRFAX	James W. Fagan	Shenandoah	James W. Fagan	Shenandoah
LOUDOUN	James B. Christian	Loudoun	James B. Christian	Loudoun
*MONACAN	Richard Ayers	Powhatan	Sabastian Volker	Goochland
MOUNTAIN	Ellen Ford	Bath	Ellen Ford	Bath
NATURAL BRIDGE	Rebecca Szarzynski	Rockbridge	Rebecca Szarzynski	Rockbridge
NEW RIVER	Gary Boring	Carroll	Gary Boring	Carroll
NORTHERN NECK	Louis Gregory Basye	Northumberland	Louis Gregory Basye	Northumberland
*NORTHERN VIRGINIA	John W. Peterson	Fairfax	Scott J. Cameron	Fairfax
PATRICK	George Stovall	Patrick	George Stovall	Patrick
PEAKS OF OTTER	Keith Tuck	Bedford	VACANT	
PEANUT	Carey M. Copeland	City of Suffolk	Carey M. Copeland	City of Suffolk
PETER FRANCISCO	Barbara Teeple	Buckingham	Barbara Teeple	Buckingham
PIEDMONT	Juan W. Whittington	Amelia	Juan W. Whittington	Amelia
PITTSYLVANIA	Thomas Keatts	Pittsylvania	Thomas Keatts	Pittsylvania
PRINCE WILLIAM	James Gehlsen	Prince William	VACANT	
*ROBERT E. LEE	Joetricia Humbles	Campbell	Jennifer Elliot	Campbell
*SCOTT COUNTY	Delta Purkey	Scott	William L. Johnson, III	Scott
SHENANDOAH VALLEY	Keith Sheets	Rockingham	Keith Sheets	Rockingham
SKYLINE	Charles P. Shorter	Montgomery	Charles P. Shorter	Montgomery
SOUTHSIDE	Cornell "Brick" Goldman	Charlotte	Cornell "Brick" Goldman	Charlotte
TAZEWELL	Donna Kirby	Tazewell	Donna Kirby	Tazewell

SWCD	Current Incumbent Director	County/City	Requested Appointment	County/City
THOMAS JEFFERSON	John E. Easter, II	Fluvanna	John E. Easter, II	Fluvanna
THREE RIVERS	Robert Bland	King & Queen	Robert Bland	King & Queen
TIDEWATER	William Richardson, Jr.	Middlesex	William Richardson, Jr.	Middlesex
TRI-COUNTY/CITY	Ray Simms	Fredericksburg	Ray Simms	Fredericksburg
VIRGINIA DARE	Francis J. Drumm, Jr.	Virginia Beach	Francis J. Drumm, Jr.	Virginia Beach

BOARD ACTION

Dr. Hill moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the appointments of the individuals being recommended.

Mr. Newton seconded and the motion carried.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKGROUP TO DISCUSS IMPLEMENTATION OF VACS AND THE IMPACTS OF IMPLEMENTATION ON THE ABILITY TO MEET VIRGINIA’S WATER QUALITY GOALS

– *Christine Watlington Jones*

Ms. Watlington Jones advised that Mr. Ford had proposed that the Board establish a workgroup to review the implementation of the VACS Program and the ability to meet Virginia’s water quality goals. She noted that there have been revisions since the initial charter was provided. She also noted that removal of certain language may lead to more open and productive conversations.

Ms. Watlington Jones noted that the Department will work with other organizations to determine the appropriate individual(s) to serve on the workgroup.

Mr. Ford commented that the intent was to look at the practices that were implemented and see how the Board could do better at encouraging participation and increasing implementation.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Ford moved the following:

The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board) directs the Department of Conservation and Recreation (Department) to convene a Workgroup to discuss implementation of the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share (VACS) Program and the impacts of implementation on Virginia’s ability to meet its water quality goals, including the goals established in Virginia’s Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

Additional topics of discussion should include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Are there ways to increase participation in the VACS Program (and partner programs) to achieve the necessary nutrient and sediment reductions?
 - a. In FY2022, there were approximately 2,100 participants in VACS. This is a small percentage of producers throughout the state participating and needs to increase in order to achieve the necessary reductions.

2. Are the practices that are currently being encouraged by the Board the practices that reflect the best return on investment for Virginia?
 - a. How does the Board prioritize practices with the highest pollution reduction efficiencies?

3. Are there barriers to participation in VACS that could be diminished?
 - a. Are there steps that could be taken to increase participation of small producers?
 - i. Are there practices that could be developed for small producers that are not currently used in the VACS Program?

The Workgroup will be comprised of, at a minimum, representatives from this Board as well as representatives from the following organizations:

- Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts;
- Virginia Farm Bureau Federation;
- Virginia Agribusiness Council;
- Chesapeake Bay Commission;
- Natural Resources Conservation Service;
- Virginia Cooperative Extension (if available); and
- At least one nonprofit organization that partners with agricultural producers to implement and install practices.

The Workgroup will be chaired by a Board member who shall be appointed by the Board Chair. The Workgroup will meet at least once prior to the December 7, 2022 Board meeting. The Department will provide an update to the Board about the discussions of the Workgroup throughout the upcoming year (or for as long as the Workgroup continues to meet) and will share items that the Workgroup recommends the Board take action on for FY2024's VACS Program.

Discussion

Chair Arnason advised that at maximum of four Board members could participate.

Mr. Wilson requested that at least one member be from outside the Bay area.

Ms. Mason, Ms. Killius, Mr. Ford, Mr. Newton, and Mr. Wilson expressed interest in participating.

Chair Arnason appointed Mr. Ford to chair the working group. He advised that he would consider additional appointments after the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Increase in Bid Process Component Cost Threshold – Christine Watlington Jones

Ms. Watlington Jones advised that the Department was recommending an increase in the bid process component cost threshold. The threshold is currently at \$30,000. Several districts have recently requested increases due to inflation.

Ms. Watlington Jones noted that the Department was recommending that the threshold be increased to \$50,000. This recognizes the increased cost of implementing practices. It is early enough in the program year to have limited impact on participants.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Ford moved that the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approve the increase in the component cost threshold for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program bid process established in the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Manual (pages 36-38). The component cost threshold is increased \$30,000 to \$50,000.

Mr. Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

PARTNER REPORTS

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Dr. Martinez gave the report for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A copy of the written report is included as Attachment #3.

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Darrell Marshall

Mr. Marshall gave an update regarding the Ag Stewardship Program. A copy of the report was sent to the Board prior to the meeting. The report includes a summary of water quality complaints from April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022.

Mr. Marshall noted that VDACS has seen a reduction in complaints.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Mr. Goerlich gave the report for Virginia Cooperative Extension. A copy of the report is included as Attachment #4

Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Dr. Tyree gave the report for the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. She thanked those members who participated in the Association Quarterly Meeting.

She noted that members were currently working with the Virginia State Fair. She also reported that the Association is developing a new personnel management manual.

The Association strategic plan will be voted on at the Annual Meeting in December. She encouraged members to register soon and to secure hotel accommodations.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Mr. Kowalski commented that he looked forward to getting the funding on the ground. CBF is working on the blueprint report on the progress made by the three Bay states are with meeting their Chesapeake Bay WIPs.

Virginia Agribusiness Council

Not represented.

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation was not represented. Director Wells gave greetings from Martha Moore who was occupied at the State Fair.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no further public comment.

NEXT MEETING


The next meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board will be at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at the Hotel Roanoke in conjunction of the Annual Meeting of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

ADJOURN

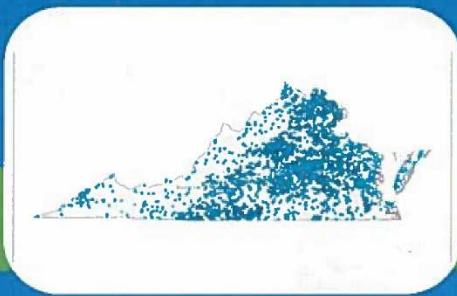
There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Attachment #1

Virginia



D A M S A F E T Y
P E R F O R M A N C E
R E P O R T - 2 0 2 2



High-Hazard Potential = Typically defined as a dam whose failure or mis-operation will cause loss of human life and significant property destruction.

Significant-Hazard Potential = Typically defined as a dam whose failure or mis-operation will cause significant property destruction.

Low-Hazard Potential = Typically defined as a dam whose failure or mis-operation will cause minimal property destruction.

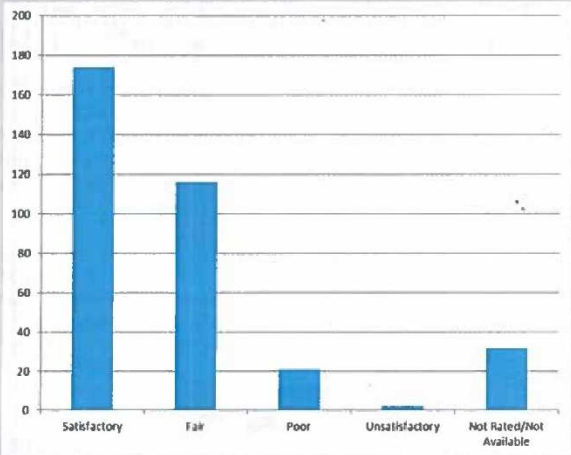
Dams are a critical part of the U.S. infrastructure, and all Americans enjoy the valuable benefits they provide, including flood protection, water supply, hydropower, irrigation and recreation. Our dams are aging and deteriorating, while downstream populations are increasing. Thousands of U.S. dams have the potential to fail with tragic consequences, therefore Americans must understand the risks associated with potential incidents and failures. This demands greater attention to and investment in measures that reduce risks to public safety and economic assets.

State dam safety programs regulate 70% of the 92,000 plus dams listed in the National Inventory of Dams (NID). State dam safety programs inspect existing dams, oversee remediation of deficient dams, and work with local officials and dam owners on emergency preparedness. State dam safety officials are experts dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of our nation's dams. However, many state programs lack adequate budgets, staff and authority to ensure public safety.

VA Dams in the NID

Total NID Dams	2,758
NID High-Hazard Potential Dams	389
Total State Regulated Dams	2,542
State Regulated High-Hazard Potential Dams	351

VA Condition Ratings-State Regulated High-Hazard Dams



Condition Rating	Count
Satisfactory	175
Fair	115
Poor	20
Unsatisfactory	5
Not Rated/Not Available	35

What Are Condition Ratings?

The NID collects condition data on state-regulated high-hazard potential dams. For the 2022 NID update, 90% of state-regulated high-hazard potential dams were rated across the U.S. This system is voluntary but the majority of state programs participate and the number of 'not rated' dams continues to decrease. State agencies determine the ratings.

Ratings Defined:

Satisfactory - No existing or potential dam safety deficiencies are recognized.

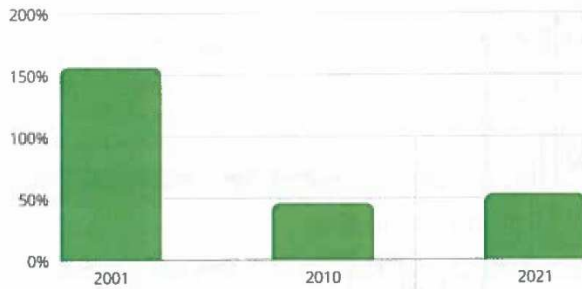
Fair - No existing dam safety deficiencies are recognized for normal loading conditions. Rare or extreme hydrologic and/or seismic events may result in a dam safety deficiency.

Poor - A dam safety deficiency is recognized for loading conditions which may realistically occur. Remedial action is necessary. Poor may also be used when uncertainties exist as to critical analysis parameters which identify a potential dam safety deficiency. Further investigations and studies are necessary.

Unsatisfactory - A dam safety deficiency is recognized that requires immediate or emergency remedial action for problem resolution.

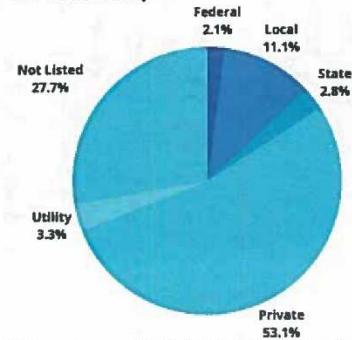
Not rated - The dam has not been inspected or has been inspected but, for unknown reasons, has not been rated.

Percentage of State Regulated High-Hazard Potential Dam Inspections Completed: State-Specific Data



* Inspection percentages may vary above and below 100% for any given year based on a state's inspection frequency and scheduling.

VA Ownership



Unlike most components of U.S. infrastructure, the majority of dams listed in the National Inventory of Dams are privately owned. (Dam Ownership percentages are based on the most recent NID dataset for the state for total NID-sized dams.)

VIRGINIA HIGH HAZARD POTENTIAL DAMS REMEDIATED – IN CALENDAR YEAR 2021, NO STATE-REGULATED HIGH HAZARD POTENTIAL DAMS WERE REMEDIATED (THAT IS CONSTRUCTION WAS COMPLETED) IN THE CALENDAR YEAR BECAUSE OF HYDRAULIC/STRUCTURAL DEFICIENCIES.

Are States Comparing Well to National Benchmarks?

The National Dam Safety Program, in cooperation with ASDSO, developed a benchmark called the Model State Dam Safety Program to assist state officials in initiating or improving their state programs. The model outlines the key components of an effective dam safety program and provides guidance on the development of more effective and sustainable state programs to reduce the risks created by unsafe dams. Topics include Legislative Authorities, Permitting, Inspection, Enforcement, Emergency Action Planning and Response, Education and Training, and Public Communications.

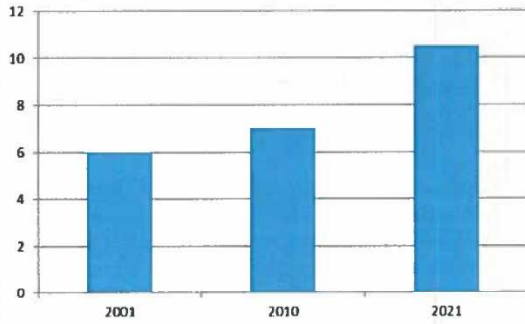
The tables here present the state's response to a series of yes/no questions on the authorities for each chapter and an overall weighted percentage for the program. The tables also show how the state's weighted averages compare to the national averages over time. Higher percentages indicate greater alignment of the state program with the model and lower percentages can be indicative of needed improvement in authority. The areas are weighted by importance for the overall percentage.

VA Weighted Percentage Detail	
LEGISLATION	94%
INSPECTION	97%
ENFORCEMENT	100%
EAP & RESPONSE	100%
PERMITTING	94%
EDUCATION/ TRAINING	89%
PUBLIC RELATIONS	92%
WEIGHTED %	96%

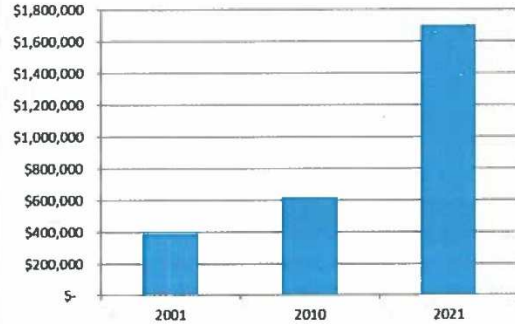
Overall Weighted Percentage				
	1999	1998	2010	2021
National Average	58%	66%	77%	80%
Virginia	75%	74%	96%	96%

Virginia Dam Safety Program Metrics

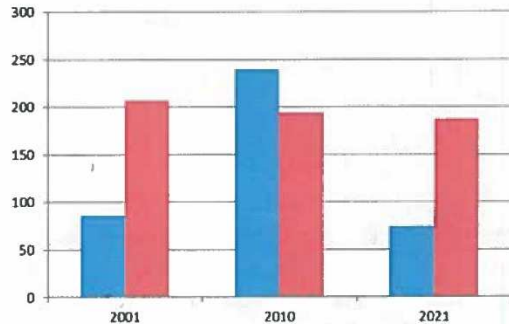
State Staffing for Dam Safety: Total Staff FTEs



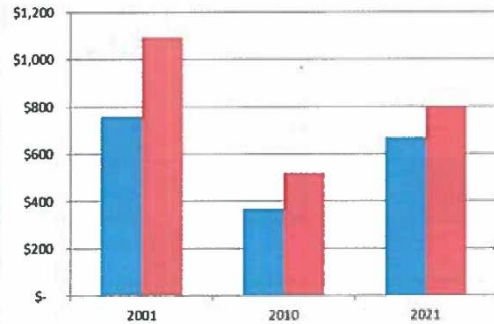
State Budgeting for Dam Safety: Overall State Budget



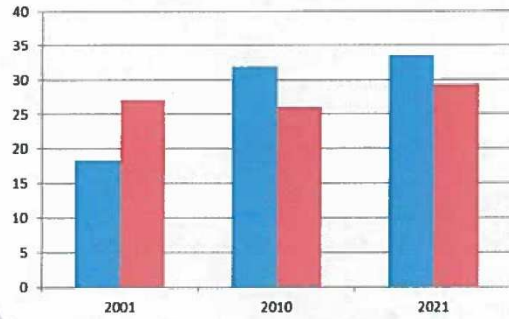
State Staffing for Dam Safety: State Regulated Dams per FTE (blue) and National Average (red)



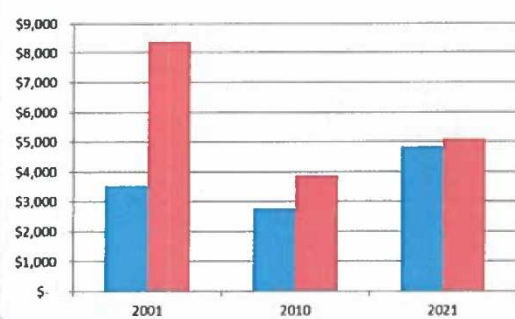
State Budgeting for Dam Safety: State Budget per Regulated Dam (blue) and National Average (red)



State Staffing for Dam Safety: State Regulated High-Hazard Potential Dams per FTE (blue) and National Average (red)



State Budgeting for Dam Safety: State Budget per High-Hazard Potential Dam (blue) and National Average (red)

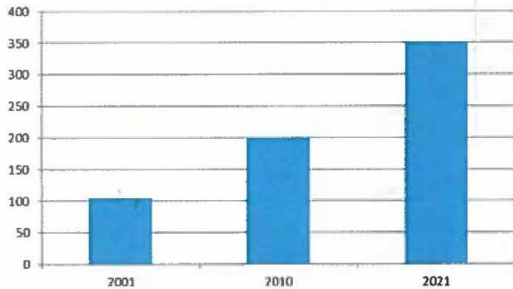


Adequate staffing is important to program performance. State numbers significantly above the Regulated Dams per FTE and Regulated High-Hazard Potential Dams per FTE national averages can be indicators of the need for additional staff resources.

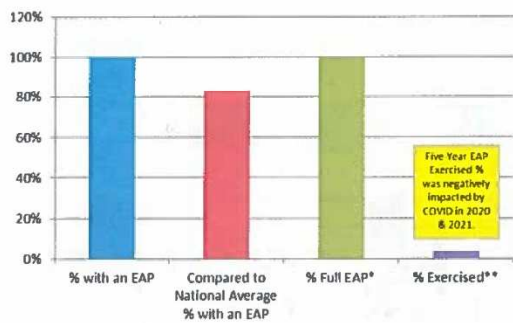
Emergency Action Planning

An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) identifies potential emergency conditions at a dam and specifies preplanned actions to be followed to help prevent loss of life and minimize property damage. Dam owners work with state and local officials to prepare and update EAPs to help mitigate losses resulting from dam failures. The EAP specifies actions the dam owner should take to moderate or alleviate the problems at the dam. It contains procedures and information such as failure inundation maps to assist emergency management officials with early-warning notification and evacuation plans.

Number of State Regulated High-Hazard Potential Dams with an EAP



2021 Emergency Action Plan Data for State Regulated High-Hazard Potential Dams



* The % Full EAP bar represents the percentage of high hazard potential dams with an EAP that contain all the elements from FEMA-64, Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety: Emergency Action Planning. The elements include a notification flowchart, inundation maps, and sections on emergency detection, responsibilities and preparedness.

** The % Exercised bar indicates the percentage of high hazard potential dams with EAPs that were exercised in the past five years. After an EAP has been developed, it must be exercised so it does not become outdated and ineffective.

Outreach to Dam Owners, Local Officials and the Public

Increasing the awareness of the risks related to dams, and effective methods for living safely with dams is an important goal of state dam safety programs, ASDSO and the National Dam Safety Program. Dam owners and operators need to be aware of their state's dam safety laws and regulations, the associated responsibilities and liabilities, and the proper operation, maintenance and inspection of their dams. In addition, local emergency management officials, first responders, and people who live and work in areas downstream of dams need to understand the risk and plans for response in an emergency situation. State programs respond to these needs through direct meetings and workshops with dam owners, workshops with local officials, and publications and outreach to the public.

Note: Exemptions

Virginia law exempts dams operated primarily for agricultural purposes which are less than 25 feet in height or which create a maximum impoundment capacity smaller than 100 acre-feet.



Association of State Dam Safety Officials
 239 S. Limestone St., Lexington, KY 40508
 859-550-2788
 info@damssafety.org
 DamSafety.Org

Attachment #2

Division of Soil and Water Conservation
Division Director's Report

September 15, 2022

Prepared by James E. Martin;
Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation, DCR

Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program Implementation

With the PY23 VACS Program underway, and the record levels of cost share allocations, we want to take the opportunity to pause and recognize the significant efforts underway by Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Their efforts to efficiently implement the program are greatly appreciated. We recognize that the increased funding brings with it increased pressure for SWCDs to obligate their allocations and put practices on the ground. The record levels of funding also brings increased scrutiny from the General Assembly members and Stakeholders about whether the dollars are being spent wisely to improve water quality. At the recent VASWCD Board meeting I stressed the importance of everyone maintaining our focus on the Program's mission, manual, and procedures to ensure we are implementing properly designed and installed practices that produce the greatest water quality benefits for the taxpayers of the Commonwealth. I encouraged any District that has concerns about their ability to effectively utilize the funding that has been allocated, to contact their assigned Conservation District Coordinator to discuss available options. This message will also be carried by CDCs out to individual SWCDs at their next meeting.

USDA Climate Smart Commodities Grants

USDA recently announced awards in their Climate Smart Commodities Grant Program. DCR was a partner on three of the 70 funded projects. Virginia Tech was awarded \$80M for their project titled "Rural Investment to Protect our Environment (RIPE) Partnership: Supporting Agricultural Producers at All Scales to Deliver Productivity, Market Opportunities, and Enhanced Soil, Water, and

Climate Benefits”, about \$18M of that is for Virginia. The University of Tennessee was awarded \$30M for “Climate-Smart Grasslands: The Root of Agricultural Carbon Markets”, approximately \$3M of that is flowing through VSU and VT to Virginia. Finally, the Conservation Innovation Fund was awarded \$25M for “The Mid-Atlantic Conservation Innovation Fund Climate-Smart Commodities Project”. Additional information on these projects can be found at: <https://www.usda.gov/climate-solutions/climate-smart-commodities/projects>

Nutrient Management Direct Pay Program

With the significant increases in Cost-Share funding allocated this year, there will be an associated increased demand for the development of nutrient management plans to support potential VACS program participants. In addition to the NM-1A practice that is part of the program, the Division manages a program that pays private sector planners directly for the development of NMPs for producers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. These Direct Pay plans fully satisfy the VACS Program requirements for a nutrient management plan and may help ease the workload burden on SWCDs associated with NM-1A. Districts that are interested in connecting a potential program participant with a direct pay nutrient management planner should contact Dave Kindig at Dave.Kindig@DCR.virginia.gov

Resource Management Plan Direct Pay Program

Payment rates for the Resource Management Planning Direct Pay Program have been increased this year to \$13 per acre for plan development and \$4 per acre for SWCD Certification of the plan.

Poultry Litter Transport Program

Payment rates for the Poultry Litter Transport Program have been increased this year by \$10 per ton. The revised rates range from \$17.50 to \$30 per ton depending on the location of the litter source and the end-user farm. The program requires the end user to have a current nutrient management plan. Several informational meetings promoting the program have been conducted in Augusta, Campbell and Charlotte Counties as well as the City of Suffolk.

Department Staff Updates

Conservation District Coordinator in Suffolk – Olivia Leatherwood assumed Suffolk CDC Position on July 25th. She can be reached at 757-353-7973 or by email at olivia.leatherwood@dcr.virginia.gov.

Conservation District Coordinator in Abingdon – Mandy Fletcher assumed the Abingdon CDC Position on August 10th. She can be reached at 276-451-5821 or by email at mandy.fletcher@dcr.virginia.gov.

Positions Currently Under Recruitment: Conservation Data Specialist, Nutrient Management Planning Specialist in Radford, Environmental Program Planner (Environmental Education, 2), Agricultural Engineering Specialist, Dam Rehabilitation Construction Inspector.

Attachment #3

NRCS REPORT
Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board Meeting
September 26, 2022 • 10:30 a.m.
Department of Forestry
900 Natural Resources Drive, #800 • Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

STC Highlights

- Conducting meet and greet sessions with staff and district partners during a statewide tour to learn more about partnership initiatives and outreach activities in each service area. (Visited NRCS Area II in July, I in August and IV in mid-September. Will travel to Area III in October.)
- Recruiting for new Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and Initiatives who will play a pivotal role in strengthening existing collaborations and exploring new opportunities for joint initiatives. This manager will supervise the newly hired state Outreach Coordinator.
- Hit a major milestone with ACEP-ALE funding this fiscal year, obligating 4 ACEP-ALE contracts on 1,692 acres for \$5.6 million using \$4.75 million from an additional Chesapeake Bay allocation.
- Collaborated with VCE to design and host an Advanced Agronomy Education Area at the Aug. 4 Virginia Ag Expo, which featured a soil pit and deep root displays to highlight how soil types can impact yield potential and environmental risk. A Virginia Soil Health Coalition booth also showcased our 4theSoil partnership initiative.
- Coordinated a Sept. 8 day of service at Feed More in Richmond as part of USDA's annual Feds Feed Families summer food drive. The State Conservationist joined representatives from NRCS, FSA and RD in packing prepared food items for distribution to food insecure individuals in Central Virginia.

ASTC-Programs (ASTC-P)

EQIP, CSP, RCPP, VPA-HIP, CIG, TSP and Easement Programs

Field staff are currently managing 2,344 active conservation program contracts with our participants. These contracts represent \$151 million in financial assistance to Virginia farmers on nearly 484,784 acres.

- **Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)**
Obligated 451 contracts for \$24.6 million (92% obligated). Approved 32 applications for \$1.5 million and preapproved 17 applications for \$190k.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)–Classic, Renewals & GCI**
Obligated \$5.9 million for 82 CSP renewals on 45,686 acres, a 57% increase in contracts obligated and a 53% increase in acres enrolled over FY21. Funded 13 CSP-GCI contracts for \$26,560 (all applications submitted). Obligated 50 CSP Classic contracts for \$3.8 million and approved 19 applications for \$1.3 million with 36 preapprovals remaining for \$3.3 million. Received 136 FY23 CSP renewal applications.

NRCS REPORT
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- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**
Obligated \$857k for 15 RCPP-TNC contracts in Lee, Scott and Russell counties. Selected an Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley RCPP project proposal focusing on easement acquisitions for funding.
 - **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**
Obligated 4 Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) applications on 1,692 acres for \$5.6 million, a milestone for Virginia ACEP-ALE. The team is currently working on 7 ALE acquisitions and 2 Wetland Reserve Easements.
 - **Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)**
Selected two state CIG proposals focused on soil health on grazing land and pollinator habitat restoration for FY2022 funding. More information on these selections will be made available after the agreements are finalized.
-

Engineering (SCE)

Dam Rehabilitation

- **Beaver Creek 1**
The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) is overseeing the locally led planning effort and has retained Schnabel Engineering as their consultant. The National Program Manager is reviewing the draft environmental assessment, which is projected to be finalized by late Fall 2022.
- **Cherrystone Creek 1 and Cherrystone Creek 2A**
Pittsylvania County is spearheading the locally led design effort for rehabilitating the structures. NRCS and the county have signed separate cooperative agreements to obligate the funding. The county is now procuring A&E services for the design, which is estimated to take 18 to 24 months.

EWP

Providing disaster assistance to Buchanan County for an Aug. 30 rain event in the Hurley area (estimated 6-8 inches). NRCS and Buchanan County completed damage survey reports (DSRs) for 4 county-identified sites with 3 deemed eligible. Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) funding was received in mid-January 2022 and the EWP agreement was finalized on March 15. Buchanan County is currently working through the engineering design, permitting and scheduling for the approved sites.

State Resource Conservationist (SRC)

Technical Tools (Field Office Technical Guide)

Continue to maintain the Virginia Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) as a repository of technical resources and references to include conservation practice standards, technical notes, planning

NRCS REPORT
Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board Meeting
September 26, 2022 • 10:30 a.m.
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criteria, resource concerns, conservation practice physical effects, cost lists and the Virginia Plant Establishment Guide.

- Released Virginia Bulletin 180-22-9, updating the Virginia Conservation Planning Policy.
- Posted new state and county climate data on historic and projected temperatures, precipitation and sea level rise.
- Collaborated with Public Affairs to develop a press release highlighting the impacts of NRCS financial assistance on the Virginia economy.

Training to Field Staff

- Continued using SRC webinars in place of tradition in-person meetings to disseminate information quickly and efficiently to field staff:
 - June 15 – Urban Agriculture & Forestry (110 participants)
Joint agency urban ag and forestry webinar to highlight partner efforts (VCE, VSU, SWCD, DOF, FSA) which complement NRCS urban ag offerings.
 - June 22 – Conservation Planning Policy with VA Supplement, Spot Check Policy and NCPP update (72 participants)
 - July 27 – CRP Grasslands Grazing Planning and CRP Re-enrollment Reminders (63 participants)
 - Continuing to offer RUSLE2@2 office hours help sessions for staff and partners.
 - Holding regular soil health assessment workgroup discussions and soil health outreach meetings to emphasize and evaluate the effectiveness of assessments and outreach/training.
- Scheduled in-the-field JED trainings for the first time in over two years due to COVID training and travel restrictions, focusing on outdoor events with less than 50 staff attendees:
 - June 6 and 14 – Delivered CREP partnership trainings at the DCR VACS meetings
 - June 30 – Conducted Business Tools Training
 - July 19 – Delivered the VA NRCS Prescribed Burning Awareness training
 - August – Provided RUSLE2 field and indoor training for SWCD staff at Graves Mountain
 - Partnered with VSU and VA Tech to facilitate and conduct a technical JED training at VSU's demonstration farm to highlight the successful conversion and establishment of warm season perennial grasses and novel endophyte fescue in grazing systems. Classroom instruction supported the field training to emphasize the technical recommendations for conversion and establishment.
 - Helped Dr. Pent plan, coordinate and conduct a JED training at VSU's Randolph Farm that focused on the conversion of toxic endophyte fescue to native warm season perennials in support of his CIG project.
 - Partnered with Virginia Tech and a local grazer/grassland mentor to conduct a JED training that showcased a high-level grazing system as part of a CIG deliverable.

NRCS REPORT**Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board Meeting**

September 26, 2022 • 10:30 a.m.

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Enhanced management includes stockpiling and strip grazing tall fescue, establishing and grazing native warm season grasses. Participants learned how the native grass stands were established, evaluated soil health and regenerative properties using our assessment tool and then compared soil aggregate stability from soils on the farm.

Customer Service and Outreach

- Announced the formation of a new subcommittee charter for urban agriculture at the state technical committee meeting and asked for volunteers to serve.
- Held first Urban Agriculture Subcommittee session in August.
- Planned and moderated a discussion of soil health and nitrogen fertilization interface issues at the quarterly Virginia Soil Health Coalition meeting, kicking off a strategic initiative to promote enhanced nitrogen fertilizer management with a focus on better crediting N cycling and supply from improved soil health and associated practices.
- Helped edit a series of four excellent partner videos highlighting Virginia cover cropping role models.
- Partnered with the VFGC and National Grazing Lands Coalition to host a pasture walk highlighting use of Northern Bobwhite in Working Grassland funding (Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative) to convert pastures to native warm season grasses for grazing. Participants learned about the conversion process and managing livestock on these grasses as well as NRCS technical and financial assistance available to help plan and implement practices to support grazing systems.
- Assembled a team of NRCS staff and partners to plan and deliver demos at the Virginia Ag Expo's VCE/NRCS Advanced Agronomy Educational Area on Aug 4. At least 150 individuals visited our exhibits, which included a soil pit and deep rooting demos.
- Helped VCE partners plan and conduct the VCE Central Virginia Crops Expo, featuring a NRCS Soil Health and Rainfall Simulator presentation. Attendees included at least 80 farmers and industry representatives.
- Coordinated and planned a pasture walk with Dr. Gabe Pent highlighting establishment and management of NWSG's in support of a CIG deliverable. Our Area PLB and local DC outlined technical and financial assistance potentially available to producers through the WLFW program to establish these forages.
- Also partnered with Dr. Pent to showcase the native warm season grass species and variety trials during the SVAREC Research Tour in Raphine and share how this state CIG project will benefit farmers across the commonwealth (130 farmer participants).
- Planned and implemented four on-farm twilight meetings for growers to visit test plots in support of enhanced nitrogen management, soil health and education. Partners included VCE, VANTAGE, VSHC and local partners like NRCS.
- Helped plan and host an Innovative Crop Farmer Roundtable at Anthony Beery's farm in Cumberland.

NRCS REPORT
Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board Meeting
September 26, 2022 • 10:30 a.m.
Department of Forestry
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State Soil Scientist (SSS)

Continuing NRI grazing land field data collection through September. The LDSI annual local data collection will begin in October.

Soil Survey Update

The Annual Soil Refresh ran from Aug. 29 to Sept. 16. All 108 soil survey areas around the state were reviewed and uploaded to the soil warehouse from NASIS. The new data will be posted and available for use on the Web Soil Survey in mid-October. Changes for this year include visible Camp Peary's soil lines with soil data and tweaks to some national soil interpretations. Water table heights in Virginia Beach soils have also been added to better reflect field situations with surrounding areas.

House Bill 894 workgroup has been meeting to fulfill the state charge for a public prime farmland map. NRCS has this map on Web Soil Survey and is advising the committee.

Public Affairs (PAS)

Communications/Outreach

- **Conservation/STEM Education.** Collaborated with Harvie Elementary School staff to deliver an educational program on agricultural professions for CAMP3401 on July 26. This summer career exploration camp used project-based learning and real-life experiences to introduce rising fifth and sixth graders to various occupations and demonstrate how the required skills are connected to reading and math. The Henricopolis SWCD donated ice cream for a wrap-up activity highlighting the food value chain. Many of the rising sixth graders will attend Fairfield Middle School, where NRCS is already working to support Virginia's new People's Garden.
- **Feds Feed Families.** Kicked off state activities for this annual summer food drive with a July 21 gleaning event at Holyoke Farm in Lancaster. A team of 11 volunteers harvested 2,965 pounds of sweet corn for distribution through the Healthy Harvest Food Bank that services the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula and Greater Richmond areas. Seven USDA agency volunteers also packaged prepared food products at Feed More on Sept. 8 for distribution to Meals on Wheels and other clients.
- **Minority Farmer Recognition.** Solicited statewide nominations for the Virginia NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee's 2022 Farmer of the Year award to be presented at the Virginia Small Farm Conference on Nov. 3-4 in Portsmouth. The outreach subcommittee received six strong nominations this year, the highest number submitted since the inception of this recognition effort in 2009.

NRCS REPORT
Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board Meeting
September 26, 2022 • 10:30 a.m.
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- **NRCS in the News.** Released a story map on the Fairfield Middle School People's Garden on July 6 through the state website, Twitter and GovDelivery. An "Augusta Free Press" article was picked up in the July 7 NRCS national news clips and generated an invitation to appear on the July 29 "12 About Town" noon show ([view the segment](#)).
- Also showcased the strength of our district partnerships in the June 28 Water & Runoff episode of "Virginia Home Grown," which featured an in-studio interview with Mat Lyons and a pre-recorded segment with Harrisonburg DC Cory Guilliams and Shenandoah SWCD District Manager Megan Dalton at the Hone Quarry Dam.
- **Social Media Engagement.** Leveraged state Twitter account to publicize programs, tie ag to current events and implement campaigns like 4theSoil. Posted **12** tweets between June 20 and Sept. 2 that yielded more than **2.7K** impressions. Top tweet: #Throwback Thursday Launch of 4theSoil (**297** impressions).
- **Summer Meetings.** Shared information on NRCS programs and services at the Virginia Ag Expo in Port Royal (Aug. 4), Ethnic Crop Production and Marketing workshop in Orange (Aug. 13) and the Nansemond Indian Nation Pow Wow in Suffolk (Aug. 20-21). Staff members networked with many of the more than 2,700 producers, community members and students attending these three outreach events.

Earth Team Program

Co-hosted a joint training webinar with VASWCD on July 22 to update district and NRCS staff on recent changes in the process for registering new volunteers and tracking their service. Toni Flax from the national office provided a comprehensive overview of program changes and introduced attendees to the new tracking system to help them understand the rationale behind them. Attendees and registrants received the meeting recording, presentation, and current forms.

Reached out to NRCS and district staff to solicit nominations for 2022 state and national Earth Team awards. Interested districts should use the new nomination form, which requires state conservationist endorsement to be considered for regional and national recognition. The Earth Team Advisory Committee will review submissions and select state winners at the next quarterly meeting in early October.

Attachment #4

Virginia Cooperative Extension

September 2022

VCE and VAES are experiencing several leadership transitions, as follows:

- Dr. Michael Gutter, Associate Dean for Extension & State Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development, Families and Communities for the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida has been named as the next Associate Dean and Director of Virginia Cooperative Extension. Dr. Gutter's appointment begins on November 1, 2022.
- Dr. Robert N. Corley, III, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Virginia State University, is serving as the Interim Dean of the VSU College of Agriculture following the retirement of Dr. M. Ray McKinnie.
- Dr. Brian Bond has been named as the incoming Associate Dean for Extension, Outreach, and Engagement in the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment. Dr. Bond has served as a professor and extension specialist in the area of wood products in the Department of Sustainable Biomaterials since 2002. He started his academic career as an extension specialist in forest products at the University of Tennessee, Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries in 1998. Dr. Bond's extension, research and teaching program focuses on improving the sustainable use and manufacturing of wood products. He has over 20 years of experience in wood drying, sawmill performance, and the wood product performance (flooring, furniture, etc.). During his career, Dr. Bond developed a strong interest in leadership and teaching students about leadership roles in natural resources. In addition to his roles as Associate Dean, Professor, and Extension specialist Dr. Bond is Director of the College of Natural Resources and Environment Leadership Institute.
- Dr. Saied Mostaghimi, H.E. and Elizabeth F. Alphin Professor and Director of the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station (VAES), has announced his plans to retire in April 2023 following 38 years of service to the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Virginia Ag Experiment Station. Together, Virginia Cooperative Extension and VAES are known budgetarily as Agency 229.
- Virginia Cooperative Extension has been charged under HB894 Section 3 with developing a map or repository of prime farmland in consultation with relevant and necessary state agencies to assist localities with solar project siting considerations. An initial report on the development of the project is due to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 2022. Thus far four meetings of the HB894 Section 3 workgroup (1) and subcommittee (3) have been held and the team is making very good progress.
- Congratulations to Saunders Brothers, Inc. <https://saundersbrothers.com/Meet-Our-Staff> for earning the 2022 Swisher/Sunbelt Southeastern Farmer of the Year State Winner from Virginia.

Saunders Brothers, Inc. will now compete for the title of “Regional Winner” which is awarded annually at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, GA. (The Swisher/Sunbelt Farmer of the Year Program nomination and judging processes are administered through VCE at the state level).

- 2022 was the 100th anniversary of State 4-H Congress <https://ext.vt.edu/4h-youth/state-congress.html> . Virginia 4-H State Congress is the premier, statewide annual 4-H event for outstanding 4-H teens and adult volunteer leaders. Its mission is to provide competitive and non-competitive educational experiences to Virginia teens and the adults who work with them, helping them to develop life skills and leadership abilities to become contributing citizens in their communities. This was also the 96th anniversary of the Virginia FFA State Convention. FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. Both the 4-H and FFA programs are administered through Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Selected Extension faculty areas of emphasis that relate to Soil and Water Conservation Board interests:

- Dr. Benham <https://www.bse.vt.edu/people/faculty/brian-benham.html> works with state and federal agencies and citizens to develop watershed management plans that, when implemented, reduce the level of pollution in surface waters. He also works with homeowners reliant on private water supplies (wells, springs, and cisterns) to empower them to better care for and maintain their private water supply systems to improve the quality of their drinking water while protecting groundwater quality, a shared resource.
- Turf and landscape workshops have been held this year providing technical plan writing assistance to turf and landscape nutrient management plan writers in the private and public sectors. Attendance included many nutrient management planners in Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and private planners. Topics in these workshops included: soil testing, updates from VT Soils Lab notes, matching N-P-K needs with guidelines in Virginia Nutrient Management Standards and Criteria, required elements and expectations of a NMP, and sports field and golf course plan writing. Speakers in these workshops included faculty from Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, private sector consultants, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Continued diverse collaboration in future turf and landscape programming is expected in trying to obtain mutual goals of the partner agencies and stakeholders. Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension faculty also contribute to nutrient management programming short courses in which the session’s cover soil science, soil fertility, organic nutrient sources, and turf and landscape production. Helping students without previous training in understanding how nutrients react and interact when applied to the soil and also prepare students for the core component of the turf and landscape certification exam. Another collaborative program is Healthy Virginia Lawns in which Master Gardener Volunteers in individual Cooperative Extension programs directly help guide the individual home owner into responsible nutrient management by producing nutrient management plans and educational opportunities.

quality parameters such as pH and hardness can seriously impact the efficacy of some pesticides, costing producers time and money. The Spray Water Assessment Program (VT-SWAP) was initiated in several Virginia counties in 2019. In 2020, faculty from Biological Systems Engineering who coordinate the Virginia Household Water Quality Program, which focuses on water quality testing and education for well and spring users, received a VDACS-USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) to expand this pilot program, reach 305 specialty crop growers with water testing and education and create a sustainable program offering water testing regularly for Virginia agriculture and horticulture producers. Producers that participate in SWAP have their spray water source(s) (i.e., pesticide carrier water) tested by a Virginia Tech research lab for 12 water quality parameters that commonly affect pesticide (i.e., herbicide, insecticide, and fungicide) efficacy. Using an existing network of county-based VCE agents trained to offer drinking water clinics for Virginians who rely on wells and springs, and the analytical (laboratory) capacity available through VCE's Virginia Household Water Quality Program (<https://www.wellwater.bse.vt.edu/>), the objectives of the SCBG grant project are to: 1. characterize the extent to which water quality/pesticide compatibility is a problem for Virginia's specialty crop producers; 2. enhance VCE agent capacity to advise producers on this topic; 3. develop a series of VCE publications and short videos to share information with producers, agency partners, and Extension agents in Virginia and other states, and 4. develop the capacity to offer spray-water compatibility testing, results interpretation, and targeted recommendations to support Virginia's agriculture producers in the long-term. These objectives and associated deliverables will be completed by September 2023.

- Dr. David Sample is a Professor and Extension Specialist with research interests in urban stormwater management, watershed modeling, and design of best management practices. Recently, his research group finished a study of the quality of urban runoff by land use in the City of Fredericksburg. This report updates previous work done 3-4 decades ago. Preliminary results indicate the runoff is either the same or cleaner than historical Virginia values. This information informs models, which will be used to assess potential reductions in treatment volumes of best management practices and potential cost savings. This work is part of a VT-led effort to support water-focused research in the Rappahannock Basin. We have also participated in assessing monitoring and modeling needs for utility scale solar sites to improve design, reduce runoff and erosion, select BMPs and improve water quality.
- Dr. Rory Maguire is supervisor of the [Soil Testing Laboratory at Virginia Tech](#), and also conducts training for nutrient management planners, who must become certified before they can write nutrient management plans for regulated farms.

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