



EASTERN SHORE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MINUTES OF DISTRICT BOARD MEETING Wednesday, February 10, 2021, 5:00 p.m. Due to COVID-19 concerns, this meeting was held virtually via WebEx

ATTENDANCE: The following Directors and Associate Directors were in attendance:

Robin Rich-Coates, Chair
Jim Evans, Director
Kyle Sturgis, Director

Nick Thomas, Director
Ursula Deitch, Director

Others present were:

Carmie Savage, District Manager
Bill Savage, Conservation Specialist
Julie Head, Education Director

Jane Corson-Lassiter, NRCS
Jaclyn Friedman, DCR CDC

The following enabling motion was made by Robin Rich-Coates and seconded by Kyle Sturgis:

The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District Board certifies that the nature of the declared COVID-19 emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe for the Board to assemble in a single location and further that the agenda items to be taken up at this meeting are necessary to continue operations and discharge lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities of the Board.

Ayes: 3- Nick Thomas, Ursula Deitch, Jim Evans; Nays: 0

CALL TO ORDER: Robin Rich-Coates, Chair, called to order the February 10, 2021 District Board Meeting of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District.

MINUTES and FINANCIAL REPORTS: Jim Evans moved and it was seconded by Kyle Sturgis to approve the January 10, 2021 meeting minutes and the January 2021 financial reports. Ayes: 2 –Nick Thomas, Ursula Deitch; Nays: 0

OLD BUSINESS: There was no Old Business presented.

NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Remembrance of Vice-Chair Fred Holland (years of service: Jan. 1, 2004- Jan. 25, 2021): The Board discussed Fred's years of service to the District and the tremendous loss to the Eastern Shore community. Ursula Deitch moved and it was seconded by Jim Evans to donate \$100 in Fred's memory to his church, Salem United Methodist Church and to plant a tree in his memory. Ayes: 2 –Nick Thomas, Kyle Sturgis; Nays: 0

APPROVED: _____

BOARD CHAIRMAN

SIGNED _____

BOARD SECRETARY

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- B. Appoint Vice-Chair to District Board:** Kyle Sturgis moved and it was seconded by Jim Evans to appoint Nick Thomas as the new Vice-Chair effective immediately. Ayes: 1- Ursula Deitch; Nays: 0; Nick Thomas obtained.
- C. Discuss/ Nominate candidate(s) to approach for appointment to fill Fred Holland's remaining term through December 31, 2023:** After much discussion, Jim Evans moved and it was seconded by Nick Thomas to nominate Sands Gayle of Accomack County to the VA Soil and Water Conservation Board for appointment to fill the remaining term of Fred Holland. Ayes: 2- Ursula Deitch, Kyle Sturgis; Nays: 0
- D. FY21 Cost Share Report:** Carmie Savage presented the following report- Obligated funds for agronomic practices carried over from FY20 to FY21 total \$9,498.00 in Ches Bay funds and \$2,501.40 in OCB funds. FY20 Obligated funds carried over to FY21 for animal waste BMPs total \$1,784,934.17 in Ches Bay funds and \$228,611.87 in OCB funds. The FY21 VACS Allocation totals \$560,561.00 in Ches Bay funds and \$285,682.00 in OCB funds.

Interest accrued through January 31, 2021 total \$1,289.11 towards Ches Bay funds and \$203.95 towards OCB funds. The District has received repayments of Ches Bay cost share dollars for a non-compliant no-till contracts totaling \$284.67. VA Soil and Water Conservation Board reallocated and additional \$552,812 in VACS Ches Bay funds and \$145,291 in VACS OCB funds to the Eastern Shore SWCD. FY20 VNRCF TA remaining funds totaling \$449,471.87 were approved by the District Board to be used towards funding shortfalls as needed. After the addition of the reallocated OCB VACS funding there is still a funding shortfall of \$252,425.10 funded using the FY20 VNRCF TA funds. Approved ranked requests from September 14th District Board meeting total to \$1,212,362.45 for Ches Bay funding and \$1,113,375.45 for OCB funds. Actual requests have reported plantings and spotchecks reduced requests to \$720,195.20 in Ches Bay and \$683,573.65 in OCB. All Ches Bay VACS funding is fully obligated leaving a balance of \$394,751.58 of available funding in Ches Bay. OCB VACS funds have been fully obligated in addition to \$252,425.10 of the \$449,471.87 available FY20 VNRCF TA funds leaving a balance of \$197,046.77 in FY20 VNRCF TA funds unobligated.

At the September 16th District Board meeting, the Board approved WFA-1 costs share requests from three contracts totaling \$351,727.10. Staff is updating the requested amounts in tracking to reflect the actual plantings.

RMP-1 totals of \$17,822 were approved at the September 16th meeting using Statewide source funding but the Bay acreages will be funded under the WFA-1 grant funds.

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Two new BMP cost share requests were presented for Board approval to be funded by VACS Ches Bay funds:

- Contract 20-21-0172- SL-15A- 310 acres totaling \$21,700.00 Ches Bay VACS
- Contract 20-21-0173- SL-15A- 230.1 acres totaling \$16,107.00 Ches Bay VACS

Ursula Deitch moved and it was seconded by Jim Evans to approve the additional VACS cost share requests for contracts 20-21-0072 and 20-21-0173 as presented. Ayes: 2- Kyle Sturgis, Nick Thomas; Nays: 0

Nick Thomas moved and it was seconded by Kyle Sturgis to approve the FY21 Cost Share report as presented. Ayes: 2- Jim Evans, Ursula Deitch; Nays: 0

DCR/ ESSWCD Cost Share & TA related to Most Effective Basin (MEB)- Eastern Shore Project from the Commonwealth of VA (Whole Farm Approach- WFA-1) Grant: The Board was provided a copy of the grant in the Board meeting packet for review.

- Grant period March 1, 2021 through May 31, 2022
- Total available funds: \$865,241 (Chesapeake Bay acres only)
- Total Available Technical Assistance: \$111,610

After much discussion, Nick Thomas moved and it was seconded by Kyle Sturgis to approve the MEB grant as drafted. Ayes: 2- Ursula Deitch, Jim Evans; Nays: 0

E. Endowment Committee Meeting Minutes: February 9, 2021. Written draft minutes were included in the Board meeting packets. Robin Rich-Coates presented a summary of the minutes to the Board.

- 2020-21 Scholarship has been paid in full
- One of four 2020 spring grant evaluations were reviewed
- The financial report was presented by Frank Moore and the 2021 Budget (\$4,500) was set as follows:
 - Spring Grants (max \$400 each) - \$2,400
 - Scholarships- (offer 2 at \$1,000 each)- \$2,000
 - Youth Conservation Camp Scholarship (to be held virtually)- \$100
- The essay topic for the scholarship was selected.
- The Youth Conservation Camp Scholarship was renamed to the “Fred Holland Memorial Youth Conservation Camp Scholarship”
- Deadlines were set for the spring grants, scholarships, and camper scholarship
- Future meeting dates were scheduled in April and May

Nick Thomas moved and it was seconded by Jim Evans to approve the Endowment Committee meeting minutes as presented as presented. Ayes: 2- Kyle Sturgis, Ursula Deitch; Nays: 0

F. Area VI Spring Meeting: The Area VI Spring meeting will be held virtually on March 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. Information will be mailed to the Board once available. The Board

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moved the regularly scheduled District Board meeting time from 5:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. that day to have time to participate in the Area VI Spring meeting.

2021 Residue/ Tillage Survey: Eastern Shore SWCD has been contacted by DCR to participate in residue/ tillage surveys they would like to be conducted this spring. The District participated in 2015 to a similar survey. A total of 66,821 crop acres have been identified in Accomack County and 39,943 in Northampton County. As in 2015, the District has been asked to drive a predetermined route on the Bayside only and stop every .3 miles in Accomack County and .2 miles in Northampton County and note what crop is in the field and residue amount on each side of the road. Trainings will be scheduled soon on how to conduct the survey. There is a virtual meeting on 2/13 that Bill and Carmie will be participating in and more to follow. The estimated payment for the District is \$1,735 for Accomack County acres and \$1600 for Northampton County acres. **Ursula Deitch moved and it was seconded by Kyle Sturgis to approve District participation in the 2021 Residue/ Tillage Survey. Ayes: 2- Nick Thomas, Jim Evans Nays: 0**

G. **VASWCD Legislative Tracking Report as of 2/10/21:** The most recent legislative tracking report was provided in the District meeting packet for review.

STAFF REPORTS:

District Manager Report: Carmie Savage, District Manager, included a written report in the meeting packet and it is on file in the District office. She summarized her report to the Board.

1) FY21 Cost Share:

Agronomic Update:

- Tracking has been updated to reflect all actual plantings and an increase in both Ches Bay funds and OCB recently approved by the VA Soil and Water Conservation Board. All spreadsheets have been updated. Working with NRCS to locate funding requests for poultry to allocate some of the Ches Bay funding. Carmie has been working with two producers with new no-till cost share requests for Ches Bay funding and have been preparing their requests for Board approval. I have been processing payments for NM-1a as needed.
- **Whole Farm Approach Pilot Program (WFA-1):** The funding has been approved and awaiting details on how to proceed in moving forward. To help with a huge workload waiting we have started entering contracts into tracking so that once approved, we can change the status.

Poultry Update:

- FY20 carryover poultry practices are moving forward. Four virtual pre-construction meetings have been held. One poultry project has been completion and DCR Engineering Services will be coming on 2/11 to conduct the construction to as-built inspection. Once that inspection is over and

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hopefully no issues are found, then the first poultry project will be paid out. One more is close to being completed. One participant is in the process of obtaining contractor bids. Two participants are waiting for DEQ Ag Loan funds to finalize. One participant will not respond to emails or calls so expecting contract to cancel.

- 2) **Accounting/ Reports**: Daily accounting procedures and payroll are always ongoing. The Attachment E for quarter ending Dec. 31, 2020 was submitted by the deadline.
- 3) **Workers Comp Audit**: Carmie completed the workers comp audit for 2020 and submitted the requested documents by the deadline.
- 4) **District Audit**: The District is in the process of being audited for FY19 and FY20 by Clifton, Larson, Allen (CLA), LLP. Carmie has scanned and uploaded all requested documents into the secure portal as required. To date, other than taking longer than expected to complete the audits, she has not heard anything from the auditing firm.
- 5) **Resource Management Plans**. Carmie has been working with the State Office to distinguish which will be funded through the WFA-1 funding and which will be funded through a separate funding source the State has and how to move forward. She has requested TA funding from DCR for the 10 plans that we have reviewed and the 3 plans that we conducted certification inspections on.
- 6) **Eastern Shore SWCD Video Interview**: Theresa Pittman and Ursula Deitch (VCE) conducted a video interview in January of the District and its role. Look for more to come.
- 7) **Trainings/ Virtual Meetings**: Since Graves Mountain Employee Training and the in-person Annual Meeting have been cancelled due to COVID-19, several trainings are being offered virtually.
 - 01/25/21: Completed Federal IT Security Training
 - 01/28/21: Hosted virtual pre-construction meeting with participant, engineer, contractor, NRCS rep, Norman Pitt and myself participating.
 - 2/2/21: Hosted virtual pre-construction meeting with participant, engineer, contractor, Norman Pitt and myself participating.

Conservation Specialist Report: Bill Savage, Conservation Specialist, included a written report in the meeting packet and it is on file in the District office. He summarized his report to the Board.

BMP - Cost Share:

- Completed No-Till spot checks in Accomack County.
- Completed cover crop spot checks in Northampton County.
- Ongoing: Working on cover crop spot checks in Accomack County.
- Ongoing: Logging in spot check dates in DCR Tracking.

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AG Stewardship Concerns:

- Update from the January 7th Warehouse Prong meeting:
On January 21, 2021 VDACS Complaint # 1170 was determined to be a founded complaint by Darryl Marshall, VDACS Ag Stewardship Program Manager. The producer was notified via letter from VDACS on that date. Upon investigation of the site there were three areas of concern noted. Two of the areas are where storm water is leaving the field with enough velocity to cause minor erosion issues towards Tankard Pond. Neither of these was considered significant causes of significant sediment loss to the field. Recommendations were discussed onsite to prevent sediment loss from the field and prevent them from becoming an issue in the future. The third issue was an existing BMP located next to a farm lane that empties into Tankard Pond. This BMP was found to be in need of maintenance. The BMP contains material that is reducing storage capacity and causing erosion of the farm lane. The producer must establish a plan to address the maintenance of the BMP within 60 days or approximately March 23, 2021. The letter also recommended that the plan include measures to address the other two areas of concerns.

No-Till, Out of Compliance Contracts:

- Contract number 20-16-0030 Fields 6 & 7. These fields totaling (11.8ac.) were found to be in the process of being bulldozed and out of compliance during a spot check on 11/19/20. Bill called the producer on 12/8, 12/10, & 12/14 to determine at what point this tract had been turned into a construction site. Bill was not provided the information requested during these three calls, so I based my repayment calculations one month past the last in-compliance spot check date which was conducted on 1/10/20. He sent a certified repayment letter on 12/18/20 with 60 day deadline to repay the funds to the District. The total amount due to the District is \$302.94. Repayment is due by February 18, 2021.
- Contract number 20-16-0030 Field 1. This field totaling (18.5ac.) was found to be fenced in and converted to permanent goat pasture and out of compliance during a spot check on 11/18/20. Bill called the producer on 12/8, 12/10, & 12/14 to determine at what point this tract had been turned into a goat pasture. Bill was not provided the information requested during these three calls, so I based my repayment calculations one month past the last in-compliance spot check date which was conducted on 4/23/20. He sent a certified repayment letter on 12/18/20 with 60 day deadline to repay the funds to the District. The total amount due to the District is \$690.56. Repayment is due by February 18, 2021.
- Contract number 20-16-0013 Field 5. A portion of the field (2.7ac.) was found to be out of compliance during a spot check on 11/13/20. This portion of the field had been tilled and planted in potatoes. Bill called the producer on 11/17 and sent a repayment letter on 11/18/20 with 60 day deadline to repay the funds to the District. The total amount due to the District is \$66.15. Repayment is due by January 18, 2021. **Update: Contract was repaid in full January 21, 2021 by Money Order: 26962008581**

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Groundwater Committee Meeting:

- Next meeting is scheduled for February 16th.

VESLT Reports:

- Three monitoring reports were received this month.

Training:

- Completed IT Security Training on Fed computer January 25, 2021.

Conservation Technician Report: Norman Pitt, Conservation Technician, was unable to attend.

Education Director Report: Julie Head, Education Director, included a written report in the meeting packet and it is on file in the District office. She summarized her report to the Board.

1. Education Outreach

- a. Working with middle school/high school teachers at Northampton to help them with lesson planning using our materials. Have been converting most soils materials to a system that allows for checkout because of COVID.

2. Plastic Pollution

- a. Have completed a unit on plastic pollution for grades 7 – 12 that involves scientific reading, analyzing information, and a student led action project. The goal is make students aware of the plastic pollution that is all around them and how it impacts water, soil, and them personally.

3. Envirothon

- a. This year's state Envirothon is going to be entirely online. After consulting with our local coaches, we are going to be doing an alternative competition. It is called Settlement 2021. Teams will be "traveling" back to the 1700's to settle a new island (actually one of the islands in American Samoa). Students will be putting together a proposal (written or power point) and a model to show how they will settle the island. Items they will need to consider include protection of native species (plants and animals), not introducing invasive species, sources of drinking water and their protection, use of sustainable forestry methods, appropriate uses of soil types for agriculture, building, sanitation, etc. ...

4. Kids Count Forum

- a. This will be a virtual forum that is being put together by Smart Beginnings Eastern Shore. In addition to being a presenter, Julie is also a co-host. Virtual program will be held on 2/23.

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5. Other.

- a. Working with Marcus Riley, Accomack 4-H agent, to see where we can collaborate on programming.
- b. VASWCDE board meeting on February 2, 2021. .
- c. Trying to convert many of our materials to boxes that could be checked out by teachers if Julie is not available or because of COVID
- d. Met with Bill Dyas about the possibility of doing some professional development with the teachers at Occohannock and Kiptopeke Elementary Schools.

6. Upcoming

- a. 2/23 – Kids Count Forum
- b. Most school programs are on hold with the uptick in cases. Many don't even want teachers to bring in outside materials for them to use so Julie is meeting with any interested teachers in an off-site location.

PARTNER AGENCY REPORTS:

Department of Conservation & Recreation Update: Jaclyn Friedman, DCR CDC, included a written report in the meeting packet and it is on file in the District office. She summarized her report to the Board.

1) Administrative and Operational Items

- **Directory Changes-** Please advise VASWCD of changes in district personnel, directors, officers, associate directors & meeting date/time changes for 2021 so your district's information will be correct in the 2021 District Directory.
- **FY21 3rd Quarter Operational, Technical Assistance (TA) and Cost-Share Disbursement letters** are scheduled to be sent out via e-mail 02/05/21.
- **General Assembly:** Your Association is providing weekly reports of legislative items of interest via "all district" email. Stay tuned to news from your local legislators and the VASWCD.

2) Governor's Budget Proposal included \$35 million for agricultural BMP cost share in FY22, \$4.55 million in SWCD technical assistance, \$500K for CREP, \$500K for VCAP, \$1 million for poultry litter transport, Resource Management Plans, and Nutrient Management Plans, as well as \$250K for a DSWC/VSU two-year outreach project to inform disadvantaged farmers in 52 counties about DSWC agricultural programs and encourage them to work with their local SWCDs. Nothing is certain until after the conferees are named and they complete their work.

3) Ag Cost Share - Conservation Tillage Survey: Once again DCR will be asking districts to help with a series of Tillage Surveys across VA to determine current conservation tillage acreages. Districts last participated in Tillage Surveys in the spring of 2015. The completion date will be June 30, 2021 and there will be funds available to the districts to assist with this effort. Much more to come in the coming weeks

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- 4) **Virtual Training Blitz:** Pre-registration is required to participate in any of these
- **March 3, 2021 – 9:00AM-12:00PM** *Cover Crop Training. Registration and Session Details: To Be Posted*
 - **April 7, 2021 – 1:00-4:00 pm** *Nutrient Management & Precision Ag Training. Registration and Session Details: To Be Posted*
- 5) **Review FY21 Grant Agreement Deliverables:** FY21 is half over; Reference
- **“Prepare and follow an *annual plan of work* ...”** with Board documented review at least twice annually.
 - **“Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations”** annually reviewed by the District Board or their Finance Committee and **documented in official minutes**
 - Annually update your district’s **Fixed Assets Inventory**. See Desktop Procedures
 - **“Develop and maintain a *long-term plan*...”** A **documented review of the long term/strategic plan at least annually during a scheduled meeting of the District Board** Due to Covid-19, if your Strategic Plan/4 year Long Range Plan has expired or will be expiring 6/30/21 **a district may extend their current strategic plan up to one year IF formal board action is taken and recorded in the board meeting minutes.**
- 6) **DCR-DSWC Update:** DCR-DSWC staff were notified of related COVID-19 restrictions for the division and therefore **CDCs are not permitted to attend in-person board or committee meetings** until otherwise informed. **All DCR-DSWC staff continue to be required to telework** until the end of February at a minimum. Please know that DCR has not, and will not, direct SWCDs regarding their office closure procedures. It is up to each respective SWCD to make the decision about staff teleworking and office closures due to Covid-19.
- 7) **Important Dates:**
- **February 15:** State Holiday – President’s Day

NRCS District Conservationist: Jane Corson-Lassiter, NRCS District Conservationist, included a written report in the meeting packet and it is on file in the District office.

Agricultural Conservation Easements Program, ACEP:

- The state easements team hopes to close on the 90-acre Northampton County Wetland Reserve Easement in March, a project that has been three years in the making. Closing is a major step, and restoration work will begin this summer.
- The 2021 ACEP program is accepting applications until February 26. ACEP has two programs; ALE- Agricultural Land Easement (using USDA funds matched by partner funds in co-hold agreement); and WRE – Wetland Reserve Easement (100% USDA funds for acquisition and restoration – held by USDA)

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP:

- Applications for the 2021 program year are being ranked, with a ranking deadline of 4/2/2021. This year there will be only one round of EQIP applications.
- EQIP Working Lands for Wildlife Black Duck Initiative: Accomac has three applications in the queue for 2021. Interest in the program is picking up and we have six site visits scheduled for applications in 2022.

Conservation Stewardship Program, CSP:

- The 2021 DEADLINE for applications is 4/30/2021.

Local Workgroups

- NRCS Field Office, working with ESSWCD, is to convene the workgroup to review federal programs and make recommendations for improvement to program delivery. The deadline for convening the LWG this year is 4/30/2021. Jane also attached a bulletin to her report about Local Workgroups.

The February 10, 2021 Board meeting was adjourned.

Meeting minutes were recorded by Carmie M. Savage