



EASTERN SHORE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MINUTES OF DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, August 16, 2023, 5:00 p.m.
USDA Service Center, 22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301

ATTENDANCE:

The following Board members, Staff and Partners were in attendance:

- **Directors:** Nick Thomas, Sands Gayle and Sally Williams
- **Associate Directors:** Edwin Long
- **Staff:** Carmie Savage, Julie Head, Bill Savage and Palmer Smith
- **Partners:** Ben Young- NRCS and Olivia Leatherwood- DCR

The following Board Members and Staff were unable to attend:

- **Directors:** Jim Evans and Kyle Sturgis
- **Associate Directors:** Robbie Lewis, Chip Turlington, Hunter Blake, Norman Pitt, Matt Hickman, Ursula Deitch, Brian Broadwater, and Rick Hall.

CALL TO ORDER: Nick Thomas- Chair, called to order the August 16, 2023, District Board Meeting of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District.

MINUTES and FINANCIAL REPORTS: Chair Nick Thomas made a motion to approve the June 21, and July 14, 2023, meeting minutes as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously. Chair Nick Thomas made a motion to approve the June and July 2023 financial reports as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. n/a

NEW BUSINESS:

A. FY23 Final Cost Share Reports: The balance of obligated funds for Poultry projects totals \$65,532.76 in FY20 Ches Bay VACS and \$0 in FY20 OCB VACS along with a remaining balance of \$108,403.53 in obligated FY22 Ches Bay Transfer funds. The FY23 VACS allocation totals \$1,945,741.00 in Ches Bay VACS and \$1,051,251.00 in OCB VACS. Interest earned through June 30, 2023, of \$2,255.84 and BMP repayments of \$1,293.66, and an additional \$500,000 VACS allocation left a balance of \$2,449,290.50 of Ches Bay VACS funds. Interest earned in OCB VACS through June 30, 2023, of \$1,268.70 and BMP repayments of \$46.00 left a balance of \$1,052,565.70 in OCB VACS funds. Cost share payments through June 30th totaled \$253,676.25 in Ches Bay VACS along with a \$1,903,313.10 VACS funds transfer to Ches Bay WFA, return of unobligated

APPROVED: _____ **SIGNED:** _____
BOARD CHAIRMAN BOARD SECRETARY

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'23 Ches Bay VACS totaling \$240,178.54 left an unobligated balance of \$52,122.61 in Ches Bay VACS funds at the close of FY23. Cost Share payments through June 30th totaled \$282,902.40 in OCB VACS along with the transfer of \$750,450.61 in OCB VACS funds to WFA OCB, left an unobligated balance of \$15,223.29 in OCB VACS funds at the close of FY23. Unobligated OCB WFA funds will be transferred back to OCB VACS to fund the need. The transferred Ches Bay VACS to WFA give a beginning balance of \$1,903,313.10 in Ches Bay WFA. The transferred OCB VACS to WFA gave a beginning balance of \$750,450.61 in OCB WFA. Cost Share payments in WFA Ches Bay totaled \$1,890,163.50 which left a remaining unobligated balance of \$13,149.60 WFA Ches Bay funds at the close of FY23. The approved WFA OCB Cost share requests total \$1,317,145.40, transfer of WFA OCB cost share funds from DCR totaled \$566,694.79 left a remaining balance of \$0.00 in WFA OCB funds at the close of FY23. Carmie also presented a report containing the breakdown of cost share funds disbursed by practice, basin, county and acres. A total of \$3,987,832.61 in cost share funds were disbursed to Eastern Shore producers in FY23. **Director Sands Gayle made a motion to approve the final FY23 Costs Share report as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.**

B. FY24 Cost Share Report: One poultry project is in the final stages of completion and will be paid from local funds. The FY24 VACS allocation totals \$2,689,088 in Ches Bay VACS and \$1,208,491.00 in OCB VACS. Sign up for FY24 is underway. **Director Sally Williams made a motion to approve the FY24 Costs Share report as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sands Gayle, was carried unanimously.**

C. VCAP Report: Living Shoreline Project 20-22-03 has been completed. VASWCD has issued the VCAP check to the District which included \$12,318.40 for the participants and \$1,200 to the District for technical assistance. Living Shoreline Project 20-22-05 was permitted by VASWCD to extend the project. **Director Sally Williams made a motion to approve the FY23 VCAP Report as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sands Gayle, was carried unanimously.**

D. Operations Committee Meeting- June 21, 2023, draft minutes: The draft minutes from the June 21, 2023 meeting were presented for approval. A verbal report of the meeting was given during the June 21st District Board meeting. **Director Sands Gayle made a motion to approve the draft Operations Committee minutes from the June 21st meeting as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.**

E. Designated Funds Report as of June 30, 2023: The breakdown of the designated contingency funds totaling \$843,062.70 as of June 30, 2023, were presented. At the end of FY23 a total of \$342,715.61 were unobligated. After much discussion, the Board decided to designate the total unobligated funds for projects directly related to soil and water conservation on the Eastern Shore. The Operations Committee may look closer at the designation at the next Operations Committee meeting. **Chair Nick Thomas made a**

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motion to approve the Designated Funds report as of June 30, 2023, and to designate the unobligated funds from FY23 as recommended by the Board. The motion, seconded by Director Sands Gayle, was carried unanimously.

F. DCR's FY23 Assessment of the Eastern Shore SWCD: Olivia Leatherwood, DCR CDC, presented the signed assessment to the Board with fully satisfying requirements of both the Admin/Ops Grant (503OPS-23-10-GF) and the Cost Share and Tech Assistance Grant (503CTS-23-10). All deliverables were met and the District received an "A" score on both assessments. A copy of the signed assessment will be attached to the official minutes.

G. Update on Shepherd's Plan Easement (co-held by VESLT/District): Hali Plourde-Rogers emailed an update for the Board that stated that VESLT is still negotiating with Mr. Swarm at Shephard's Plain for the amendment. Currently, there is a draft amendment allowing the addition and a draft of a new easement protecting three additional parcels adjacent to the property and essentially adding them to Shepherd's Plain. The new easement is meant as an offset for any benefit Mr. Swarm will receive due to the addition.

- **VESLT Support Letter:** The District received a letter from VESLT asking for financial support. **Director Sally Williams made a motion to approve sending \$1,000 in support to VESLT. The motion, seconded by Director Sands Gayle was carried unanimously.**

H. Letter from Edwin Long- Dissolving of Eastern Shore RC&D: Edwin Long, RC&D Chair, stated that on July 25th, nine members present of the RC&D Council voted eight to one to dissolve the ES RC&DC and one vote to continue operations. He on behalf of the Board thanked the District as a long serving partner. The District was asked to consider taking over the DEQ Grant from RC&D. **Chair Nick Thomas made a motion not to take over the DEQ grant from RC&D as the District has a large workload already. The motion, seconded by Director Sands Gayle was carried unanimously.**

I. District's Annual Awards Banquet: Carmie has reached out to Scott Hall, ESCC, for some available dates in October to hold the annual awards banquet.

J. Affordable Business Systems Ice Water Dispenser Program: The company that provides maintenance to the copier has started a new Ice Water Dispenser Program as well and asked the Board to consider. After much discussion, the Board decided with a staff of four it was not a good use of tax dollar's funds.

CORRESPONDENCE AND PRESS:

A. n/a

STAFF REPORTS:

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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 presented her report to the Board.

FY23 Cost Share

Agronomic: Completed processing and disbursing FY23 cost share payments. Completed the FY23 Cash Balance Report for all Cost Share accounts. Prepared a final summary report breaking down the cost share year by BMPs, county, drainage area, and acres.

Poultry: Updates on practices were given during the FY24 Cost Share Report.

FY24 Cost Share: Completed the Cost Share report for FY24. Sent an email to growers we had email addresses for announcing the sign-up period. Postcards were mailed to all growers. It's now the time of the year that we are strapped to our computers entering data as sign-up is received both in the spreadsheets and in the Tracking program.

FY24 ESSWCD Proposed Budget: Set up the FY24 budget in QBs and updated employees' salaries to reflect salary increases.

FY23 Self-Assessment Questionnaire: Completed and submitted the multi-page self-assessment questionnaire to Olivia. The questionnaire is basically a report of dates/approvals/and summarizes everything the District has completed over the past fiscal year from review of policies to trainings to committee meetings, board meetings and more. A copy was attached to Carmie's report.

Accounting: Daily accounting procedures and payroll are always ongoing. Carmie closed the books for FY23, all quarterly payroll reports were filed by June 30.

Attachment E and EOY FY23 Reports: The Attachment E report for Quarter ending 6/30/23 and the End of Year reports as well as the QBs Balance Sheet Report and Profit and Loss Reports were submitted to Olivia by the July 17 deadline.

FY24 DCR/ESSWCD Grants: Submitted the Board approved and signed FY24 grant agreements for both Admin/Ops and Cost Share/TA to Olivia.

Designated Funds Report as of June 30, 2023: Updated the Designated Funds Report as of June 30, 2023, with unobligated funds from year-end to designate. Presented for approval during New Business.

Coastal Resilience Steering Plan Committee Meeting: Participated in the meeting virtually on July 18th. Notes were attached to Carmie's report.

District Website: Updating the District's website as time allows.

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Webinars/Conference Calls:

- 7/20 Participated in WFA Tracking Training
- 7/26 Participated in the DCR Tracking Training

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 presented his report to the Board.

BMP - Cost Share:

- Finished filing FY23
- Worked on materials for FY 24 sign up.
- Ongoing: Taking FY24 sign up and entering data in tracking

VESLT Reports:

- No land trust reports filed this month.

VCAP:

- Explained in detail in the VCAP monthly report under New Business.

Trainings:

- 7/18 WFA Tracking – virtual
- 7/19 Tracking training

Meetings:

- Oyster Bed Restoration webinar
- 7/11- VCAP Webinar

Events:

- 8/3 Attended the 2023 VA Ag Expo at Land of Promises Farms in VA Beach.
- 8/7 The District hosted a Cost – Share Kick – Off Breakfast at the Sage Diner in Onley.
- 8/9 Delivered Soils Trailer to New Roots Event in Cape Charles.

Conservation Technician Report: Palmer Smith, Conservation Technician, included a written report in the meeting packet and it is on file in the District office. She presented her report to the Board.

BMP - Cost Share:

- Finished up FY23
- Helped Carmie create the sign up sheets and other materials for FY24
- Started taking the sign ups for FY24

No groundwater meeting in July.

Trainings and meetings:

- 7/11- VCAP Webinar & homeowner meeting in Smith Beach
- 7/18- WFA Tracking Training (virtual)

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- 7/19-Tracking Training (virtual)
- 7/24- RCPP Oyster Bed Restoration (virtual)
- 7/28 & 8/2- Ag Camp
 - Brought Rupert & Jolene
- 8/3- Ag Expo at Land of Promise Farms
- 8/7- Cost Share Breakfast
- 8/15- Groundwater Meeting (?)

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 presented her report to the Board.

Ag Camp – Both camps sold out. We had 12 at Junior Ag Camp and 13 at Ag Camp. It was a VERY busy 4 days. Thank you to Maggie for helping. We definitely needed a 3rd set of hands.

Programming – I have done several educational presentations at New Roots. Their summer program ends tomorrow. New programs created: a fruits/vegetables/Virginia agriculture Who am I game; Source Search (store, factory, farm, natural resource); fruits vs vegetables and healthy eating

Upcoming programming – School is almost back in session, and I have school districts and teachers beginning to reach out. Please see attached list. I will be doing my best to keep a full schedule while working around my mother's health needs.

Local and Area Envirothon – it is our turn to host the regional Envirothon for 2024. The current plan is to have our local Envirothon at AREC again. The Area Envirothon has to be held at a different location. I have been talking to VIMS about the possibility of having it there as we need access to several rooms with electronic presentation capabilities. The one issue is a soils pit. Dick Snyder is checking with the fire department about digging a soils pit at their site.

Upcoming Dates

- 8/17 – New Roots what do plants need
- 8/21 – NCPS New Teacher Breakfast and Presentation
- 8/21 – Boys and Girls Club
- 8/22 – meet with new teacher – Hunt – 4th grade- about working science and agriculture into core subjects.
- 8/24 – NCPS district welcome and info day
- 8/28 – Project Learning Tree professional development -Cape Charles Christian
- 9/9 – ACPS parent university
- 9/15 – Waste Watchers Community Forum
- 9/19 – Accomack Farm Tour
- 9/20 – Northampton Farm Tour
- 9/23 – Otter Fest
- 10/7 – Northampton Ag Fair

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PARTNER AGENCY REPORTS:

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

ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS

- **COIA Training for Directors:** The Code of Virginia requires locally elected officials to complete COIA training once every two years. Most Directors completed this between July and December of 2021. The training can be accessed at <https://ethicswebinar.dls.virginia.gov/>. Each module is specific to your role so select “Local Elected Officials or EDAs/IDAs” in order to complete the correct training. Please remember there is no completion certificate for this training, so my suggestion is to take a screenshot of your completion message. I’ve been informed that returning Directors will have an opportunity to complete this training at Annual Meeting in December.
- **2023 Clean Water Farm Award Applications:** A memo from Director Wells was released on July 28 with information regarding this year’s Clean Water Farm Awards. Local winner information and grand basin nominations are due to me October 2. Signatures and approvals should be obtained by your September board meeting. New forms can be found at the following links: CWFA Application; Grand Basin Award Application.

AG COST SHARE

- **End of Lifespan (EOL) Verifications:** Reminder EOL verifications are loaded in CAS through 2025. Practices expiring at the end of 2023 are due by September 30, 2023 in order to receive compensation for work done. Each verification completed will receive \$200, and any 2024 and 2025 verifications completed will receive an early bonus of \$50.
- **Quarter 1 Cost-Share Disbursements:** Letters will be sent to Districts on August 24. Please let me know of your anticipated need for the first disbursement.

GRANT DELIVERABLES

- **FY23 Annual Report:** for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 should be completed by September 30th
- **Dedicated Reserves:** On page 14 of the 2022 Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations is guidance regarding Reserve Fund balances: “Public funds...are provided to districts not for savings, but strictly for the performance of conservation.” Board action is necessary to dedicate for specific purposes any amount above twelve months of routine operating funds (undesignated reserve funds). Once the books are closed for FY23, this action should be placed on District board meeting agendas. This should happen before September 30 in Quarter 1 of FY24 so that necessary transfers can be made on the Q1 Attachment E Report.

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- **Outreach Event:** Begin planning for the required outreach event. Conditions for this deliverable are outlined in Attachment C and Attachment F of the Admin/Ops grant agreement.

DATES TO REMEMBER

August

- Aug 22-24 – VACDE Annual Summer Training, Graves Mountain Lodge
- Aug 29 – Regional VACS/Conservation Planning Training: Livestock; Thomas Jefferson SWCD, Register Here

Other Dates

- Sept 15 – Return of Cost-Share funds to DCR due
- Sept 25 – VSWCB Meeting – Audit Subcommittee 9:00, Full Board 10:00, Bear Creek Lake State Park
- Sept 26 – Regional VACS/Conservation Planning Training: Crops; Peanut SWCD, Register Here
- Sept 30 – Deadline for EOL Verifications for 2023 Reimbursement
- October 2 – Local CWFA winner applications and grand basin nominations due to DCR
- December 3-6 – VASWCD Annual Meeting, Norfolk Marriott

Accomack Field Office NRCS Report: Ben Young, NRCS Soil Conservationist, gave a verbal report to the Board.

VA NRCS Operational/Personnel Updates:

- Jake Browder is the acting District Conservationist while Jenny Templeton is working on a State level Easement Team for the next few months.

FY23 programs

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - 6 Black Duck Initiative
 - 1 Forestry CAPs
 - 2 Poultry

• Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Ongoing restoration work on 1 WRE (Wetland Reserve Easement) in Northampton County. Field Office working with NRCS Easement Team & Engineering Staff, Northampton County, DEQ, USACE, VMRC for permitting purposes. 13 Wetland Easement on-site annual monitoring visits will be scheduled for this winter/spring.

- Working on CSP rankings
- September 30 is the end of the fiscal year for NRCS
- Soil Con Tech Position closed on August 14th

Meeting minutes were recorded by Carmie M. Savage

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