



MINUTES OF DISTRICT BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, September 16, 2020

EASTERN SHORE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Due to COVID-19, this meeting was held virtually
via WebEx at 5:00 p.m.

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

Robin Rich-Coates, Chair
Ursula Deitch, Director
Kyle Sturgis, Director

Nick Thomas, Director
Fred Holland, Director

Others present were:

Carmie Savage, District Manager
Bill Savage, Conservation Specialist
Jane Corson-Lassiter, NRCS

Julie Head, Education Director
Jaclyn Friedman, DCR CDC

Ursula Deitch moved and it was seconded by Nick Thomas to approve holding the September 2020 District Board meeting electronically while VA is still declared to be in a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ayes: 2-Kyle Sturgis, Fred Holland; Nays: 0

CALL TO ORDER: Robin Rich-Coates, Chair, called to order the September 16, 2020 District Board Meeting of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District.

MINUTES and FINANCIAL REPORTS: Nick Thomas moved and it was seconded by Ursula Deitch to approve the August 12, 2020 meeting minutes and August 2020 financial reports. Ayes: 2-Kyle Sturgis, Fred Holland; Nays: 0

OLD BUSINESS: There was not any old business discussed.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. FY21 Cost Share Report- Carmie Savage: 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 August 31, 2020 total \$458.20 towards Ches Bay funds and \$59.57 towards OCB funds. Carmie reported the sign-up period from July 15 through August 17 was a huge success resulting in the largest year of agronomic cost share requests. Last year's record of \$1,717,713.00 in agronomic cost share requests was

APPROVED: *Robin Rich-Coates*
BOARD CHAIRMAN

SIGNED *Carmie M. Savage*
BOARD SECRETARY

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superseded by this year's cost share requests totaling of \$2,325,737.90. After funding adjustments were applied for participant caps, the requests reduced to \$2,095,239.42 of which \$1,196,130.20 totaled requests for Ches Bay funding and \$899,109.22 totaled requests for OCB funds. Cost share requests for the Whole Farm Approach Pilot and Resource Management Plan Development were not included in those totals. Due to a potential conflict of interest, Fred Holland and Nick Thomas left the virtual meeting. Carmie presented the ranked cost share and/or Tax Credit requests that had been reviewed by the Rick Hall, Technical Review Committee Chair, earlier in the day for approval. She reviewed the ranking procedures of funding the High, Medium and Low hydrologic priority units with Highs funded first, then Mediums, then finally Lows and using the Cost Efficiency Factor (CEF) as a sorting tool, which is populated by DCR's tracking program, within each hydrologic priority unit. Since there is a significant amount of more funding available for the Ches Bay drainage areas, those requests were ranked first and then the OCB funds were ranked. Some had already met participant caps in Ches Bay cost share requests and requests were then adjusted in OCB funds. **Kyle Sturgis moved and it was seconded by Ursula Deitch to approve the ranked cost share and/or Tax Credit requests for both Ches Bay funds and OCB funds as presented contingent on funding.** Carmie presented the RMP-1 cost share requests for contract 20-21-0126 which totaled \$17,822.00 for approval. She explained that the funding source for this contract is currently set at Statewide Source funds, not VACS funds, and once the Whole Farm Approach Pilot grant is awarded that the funding source for the Bay acres will put from those special grant funds. **Kyle Sturgis moved and it was seconded by Ursula Deitch to approve contract 20-21-0126 as presented.** Carmie presented to the Board that three participants have requested participation in the Whole Farm Approach Pilot with those cost share requests totaling \$339,119.95 once the grant is awarded. Those special funds are separate funds from VACS and do not have a participant cap and are not required to be ranked. For the Eastern Shore, the development of a Resource Management Plan is required. Two participants have contacted planners to begin the RMP process while one is already in the process and near development completion. **Kyle Sturgis moved and it was seconded by Ursula Deitch to approve cost share requests totaling \$339,119.95 to be funded by the Whole Farm Approach Pilot grant contingent on funding.** During the July 16, 2020 District meeting the Board approved the remaining FY20 VNRCF TA funds totaling \$449,471.87 to be applied to the FY21 Cost Share Program. Rick Hall asked Carmie to recommend to the Board on his behalf that the full amount of FY20 VNRCF TA be applied to the OCB Cost Share requests since unobligated OCB funding is harder to obtain from other Districts. **Kyle Sturgis moved and it was seconded by Ursula Deitch to approve the cost share report as presented including the full \$449,471.87 to be applied to OCB cost share requests.** At this time, Fred Holland and Nick Thomas re-entered the virtual meeting. Carmie reported that Jaclyn Friedman, DCR CDC has already contacted David Bryan, DCR's program manager to make him aware of funding needs on the Eastern Shore.

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- B. Whole Farm Approach Pilot Program Update:** Carmie included in the meeting packet an email from Darryl Glover, DCR Division Director of Soil and Water Conservation dated September 10, 2020 where he stated that it remains their understanding that EPA must award the grant no later than September 30 because the funding for the grant is part of their FY20 federal budget.
- C. DCR's Direct Pay Option for NMP Planners:** Carmie included in the meeting packet specifications for the Direct Pay program she had received from Dave Kindig, DCR. This program allows direct payment to planners for nutrient management planning for all Ches Bay acres. The Ches Bay acres would not pull from the VACS funding. This option would free up VACS funding typically paid on Ches Bay plans. The plans are required to be written for three years and include one verification in the three-year period. Seaside acres within the plan would still be eligible for NM-1a funding through VACS. Mr. Kindig is working to develop the best way to split the Ches Bay acres from the OCB acres as he realizes that most plans on the Shore include both drainage areas.
- D. Clean Water Farm Award:** Bill Savage updated the Board on the changes as a result of COVID-19. DCR will not providing signs this year but Districts can purchase at their own expense. Since the VASWCD Annual Meeting which is typically held in December has been cancelled due to the pandemic, the awards will not be presented at that time. After much discussion the Board decided to not participate this year but will start again next year as with all other District awardees.
- E. VACAP Update:** Bill Savage and Norman Pitt presented an update to the Board on the VA Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). The sign-up period at the District started September 1 and will run through October 31. As of the Board meeting, they have 10 applications underway. Most of the interest on the Shore is in living shoreline projects. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of funding available this year for VCAP projects at the State level. Two of the projects have been submitted to the VCAP steering committee for review and approval. Norman has been conducting site visits and helping Bill with associated paperwork. With an increased workload in the VACS cost share program requests along with an increased interest in VCAP on the Eastern Shore, the administration of the District's VCAP program is the process of transitioning from Bill to Norman. This will be a great fit with Norman's background in shoreline protection and restoration. There will be a virtual training in VCAP in the near future that Norman will be attending.
- F. End of Lifespan BMP Verification Inspections:** Once a BMP's lifespan has ended, it no longer is given nutrient credits in the Bay Model; therefore, verifications are needed to document the ongoing functionality to continue to receive the important credits. Two BMPs from 2010 were selected for verifications this by December 31, 2020. Norman will be conducting the verifications in November and documenting the conditions as required.

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- G. VCE Director Re-appointment of Ursula Deitch:** Ursula Deitch's current term will expire on December 31, 2020 and she has agreed to serve another four-year term on the District Board. **Fred Holland moved and it was seconded by Kyle Sturgis to approve the reappointment of Ursula Deitch to the District Board for another four-year term starting January 01, 2021 through December 31, 2024. Ayes: 1-Nick Thomas Sturgis; Nays: 0, Abstention: Ursula Deitch**
- H. Record Retention Officer for Eastern Shore SWCD:** Julie Head has tackled purging through the massive pile of District boxed files stored in the attic since in-person planned educational programs and events were cancelled during the pandemic. She has agreed to take this duty on and replace Carmie Savage as the District's Record Retention Officer. **Fred Holland moved and it was seconded by Nick Thomas to approve the appointment of Julie Head as the District's new Records Retention Officer. Ayes: 2-Ursula Deitch, Kyle Sturgis; Nays: 0**
- I. Update on District's FY19 & FY20 Virtual Audit:** Due to the pandemic, the audit for the District program year 2018-19 and 2019-20 will take place electronically. Required files will be scanned and uploaded to a secure portal for the auditor's retrieval. Carmie has sat in on two virtual trainings, one as an introduction to the auditing firm and second to learn how to upload and navigate the secure portal. Now that cost share requests are entered into tracking and ranked, she plans to devote time to the audit.
- J. Required On-line FOIA training for Elected Directors by December 31, 2020:** The Board was reminded of the required and expressed concern over not being able to access the link to the online training. Jaclyn Friedman stated that they are aware of the concerns regarding the link issues and DCR is working with the FOIA Council and VASWCD to plan to host a webinar to cover the required training.

STAFF REPORTS

District Manager Report: Carmie Savage, District Manager, gave an oral report to Directors. Her written report was included in the meeting packet and is on file in the District office.

FY 2020 Cost Share Program:

Agonomic Update: First Sign-up period deadline ended August 17th. Staff has been glued to the computers entering data for weeks but completed all data entry and ranking for Board approval. Details were given during New Business under the Cost Share Report. Considering COVID-19 restrictions and the new appointment process for sign-up, the first sign-up period was successful and resulted in requests for cost share of cover crop, continuous no-till, nutrient management planning, and nitrogen application practices. Carmie created ranking spreadsheets making sure the FY21 State cap of \$100,000 was applied to all participants.

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- **Whole Farm Approach Pilot Program (WFA-1):** Three large growers will be enrolling all of their bay acreages into the program, just waiting on funding to begin the process. Carmie entered all data into spreadsheets with all components of the practices marked. Two have already contacted RMP planners to begin the process of obtaining an RMP as required for participation in this program, one is already in the process of obtaining an RMP and has had six of his sixteen plans reviewed by the TRC and approved by the Board with the remaining ten near completion.

Poultry Update: FY20 carryover poultry practices are moving forward. The first pre-construction meeting was held on August 13. A few are waiting on the County to complete the site plan revisions. A few are in the design process by the private engineer. One is currently obtaining contractor bids and then a preconstruction meeting will be set, one design was just approved by the State Engineer, two are waiting for DEQ Ag Loan funds to finalize. The increase in lumber prices since the pandemic is a huge concern to some growers.

District Audit: The District is due to be audited for FY19 and FY20 by a different auditing firm than has audited us in the past- Clifton, Larson, Allen (CLA), LLP. Carmie attended an Audit Entrance Conference on August 12th which explained the procedure as this audit. Due to COVID-19, this audit will be completed virtually which will require her to scan/ upload all requested information to a secure portal. She attended another virtual conference on August 26th which gave instructions on how to use the secure portal. Carmie has not had time to begin uploading yet as nearly all of her time has been focused on getting the cost share sign-up entered into tracking for ranking. The audit is next on her list.

BMP Verifications: Two 2010 cost share practices (poultry) were selected by DCR for verification. This fall, Norman will conduct these verifications. Although coming out of lifespan, they must be verified to still receive credits in the Bay model. The verification will be noted in the Tracking program.

Virtual Training Blitz: Since Graves Mountain Employee Training and the Annual Meeting have been cancelled due to COVID-19, several trainings are being offered virtually and more are to come.

- 9/08/20- Carmie attended a virtual engineering training: Animal Waste Management: Planning, Design, and Construction hosted by Amanda Pennington, DCR State Engineer and received 2 CEUs towards maintaining her conservation planner certification.
- 9/09/20- She attended a virtual Admin/ Ops training hosted by VASWCD which discussed many of the requirements of VA for operating during the pandemic.
- 9/28/20- She plans to attend a virtual Erosion Fundamentals and RUSLE 2 training to be hosted by Chris Lawrence, NRCS

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- 10/7/20- She plans to attend a Personnel Management Training to be hosted by Terri Higgins, HR Specialist and VASWCD

Accounting: Accounting procedures are always ongoing.

District Laptop Update: The District's laptop contracted the "Blue Screen of Death" which resulted in a new hard drive but now is back up and running.

Conservation Specialist Report: Bill Savage, Conservation Specialist, gave an oral report to Directors. His written report was included in the meeting packet and is on file in the District office.

BMP - Cost Share:

- Bill has been entering sign-up data in the tracking program on a daily basis since the sign up ended on August 17th. We had a very good participation effort this year despite the difficulties of conducting a cost – share sign up during a pandemic.

VCAP:

- The FY21 VCAP sign-up started on Sept. 1st.
- We have had 9 potential applicants to date.
- Bill submitted the first two FY 20 VCAP project Payment Requests to VCAP. They will be reviewed by the Steering Committee and if approved, funds will be transferred to ESSWCD for disbursement to the project participants along with the \$1,000.00 (\$500 each) Technical Assistant payment to the District.
- Since the staff meeting on Sept. 3rd Bill has been working with Norman Pitt to begin the process of transitioning the VCAP program over to him.

Groundwater Committee Meeting:

- No Ground Water Meeting was held in August.

Training (Virtual) and (in-person):

- Bill attended the (virtual) Animal Waste Practices training webinar on Sept. 8th
- He plans to attend the (virtual) Measures of Soil Nitrogen Cycling training webinar on Sept 17th.
- He will be attending the (virtual) Erosion Fundamentals and RUSLE 2 training webinar on Sept. 28th.

VESLT Reports:

- One monitoring report was received this month.

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Conservation Technician Report: Norman Pitt, Conservation Technician, was unable to attend. His written report was included in the meeting packet and is on file in the District office.

Education Director Report: Julie Head, Education Director, gave an oral report to Directors. Her written report was included in the meeting packet and is on file in the District office.

Butterfly Life Cycles – So far we have haven't had any schools willing to commit to this. We will keep trying.

A Long Walk to Water -

- a. Delivered 50 copies of this book to Nandua Middle School. All of their hybrid learning students in the 6th grade are going to be reading the book and using the materials that we put together this summer.
- b. Trying to get the middle school tag teacher at Northampton Middle to use the materials. If he does, Julie will need to purchase more books.

Wednesdays in the Park

- c. In cooperation with Erin Sill, the Northampton 4-H Extension Agent, we are going to do outreach STEM activities in some of the local parks on Wednesdays. The first round will be owl pellets, origami parts of a flower, and bee communication. The second round will be pollinator bombs, make your own cow genetics, another agricultural topic, maybe the soils trailer and make your own soil horizon tubes if Bill isn't too busy. We will take temperatures, wear masks, and use hand sanitizer liberally.
 - i. Cheriton Firehouse – 9/16 and 10/14
 - 9/16 resulted in zero attendance but will keep trying.
 - ii. Nassawadox Sawmill - 9/23 and 10/21
 - iii. Exmore Town Park – 9/20 and 10/28
 - iv. Cape Charles Town Park – 10/7 and 11/4

2. Homeschool Outreach

- a. Julie had a homeschool group reach out to her about doing some programming once a month. Our first date was set for September 15th at Quail Cove in Machipongo but has been rescheduled. They are going to cover pollination (origami parts of a flower, pollinator bombs, and the poster contest).

3. Growing Up Wild Training

- a. Combination of on-line and self-paced. The on-line portion is Saturday, September 19. Julie has started the self-paced portion.

4. Other

- a. Continuing to go through 40 years of records from the attic. Julie thought she was done but then she found some more. Did you know they wanted to hijack the Pocomoke River in the 1950's for irrigation on the middle and lower shore?

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- b. Conference calls and virtual trainings/events as scheduled

5. Upcoming

- a. 9/19 – Growing Up Wild
- b. 9/29 Envirothon Town Hall Virtual
- c. 10/2 – Kegotank Outdoor Classroom Cleanup
- d. 10/6 – homeschool outreach
- e. 10/9 – Keogtank Teacher PD – Getting Kids Outside
- f. 10/13 – VASWCD Education Panel
- g. 10/16 & 10/17 pd with DOF and DCW at KSP
- h. 10/20 – VASWCD presentation on A Long Walk to Water
- i. 10/22 to 10/23 Project Learning Tree Facilitator Workshop in Charlottesville

PARTNER AGENCY REPORTS:

Department of Conservation & Recreation Update: Jaclyn Friedman, DCR CDC, gave an oral report to Directors. Her written report was included in the meeting packet and is on file in the District office

Administrative and Operational Items

- **FY21 1ST Quarter Attachment E and QuickBooks Reports:** Due on or before Thursday, 10/15/20. The Attachment E submittal includes the Excel spreadsheet submitted via e-mail and an original, signed hard-copy. The QuickBooks *Profit & Loss Statement* and *Cash Balance Sheet* for the quarter must also be submitted.
- **Status of Audits Scheduled for Fall 2020:** Clifton, Larson, Allen (CLA), LLP will be completing audits for Appomattox River, Chowan Basin, Eastern Shore, and Virginia Dare the 2-year period ending 06/30/20. Two informational webinars were held (08/12/20 & 08/26/20). Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person site visits will not be possible so portals are being set up for each district to upload data.

VA Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program

- **Status of Administrative Reviews:** Jaclyn will be in touch with each district to complete administrative reviews of Cost Share files. For districts having in person meetings, she will try to coordinate file reviews for prior to/after the board meeting, if possible.
- **BMP Verifications:** Structural BMPs coming out of lifespan 12/31/20 & 12/31/21 must be verified to continue to receive nutrient reduction credits in the Chesapeake Bay model. Districts may choose to do the inspections themselves or DCR will work with the district and assign Jason Wilfong, DCR engineering technician, to complete the inspections. Data is being uploaded to the BMP Verification Module in Tracking.

Reminders

- **Extension Agent Appointment:** Remember that current VA Cooperative Extension (VCE) agent appointments to the SWCD Board of Directors will expire 12/31/20. If the SWCD has not yet approved a nomination for the local VCE agent appointment, please complete this task at September or early October board meetings. A copy of the board meeting minutes and *DCR Form 199-014*

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Nomination for Appointment must be submitted to Blair Gordon via email with a cc to the CDC by **October 15, 2020**.

FOIA Training for Locally Elected Officials: Elected officials have until Dec 31, 2020 to complete the training. Pursuant to § 2.2-3704.3 of the *Code of Virginia*, as of July 1, 2020, each SWCD elected director is required to complete the FOIA training for **Locally Elected Officials**. DCR is working with the VASWCD and FOIA Council to offer a FOIA webinar for SWCD Directors, likely in mid-December.

Other Information of Interest

- **Status of VA General Assembly Special Session:** Session started 08/18/20. No decisions yet to report.
- **Virtual Training Blitz:** The VASWCD and the VACDE are teaming up to offer a virtual training blitz this fall to replace the employees training at Graves and the VASWCD Annual Meeting. This will be a series of virtual trainings for staff and directors offered throughout the fall and winter. Be on the lookout for emails from VACDE or the association (all district) for a list of trainings.
- **Clean Water Farm Award (CWFA) River Basin Nominations:** Due to DCR-Assigned CDC by close of business **11/01/20** (deadline extended due to Covid-19). Nomination application packet should be submitted via e-mail and include the application (available on DCR-DSWC website), 1-2 page narrative and 6 PPT slides.
- **Clean Water Farm Award (CWFA) Local Recipients:** SWCDs may choose to give the CWFA exclusively at the local level (not submitting a Basin Award nomination). In this case, please submit only a completed CWFA application. Signed certificates will be provided to local nominations, like normal. The traditional metal signs provided for local nominations will not be provided by DCR this year due to budget constraints. The signs can be ordered by the District for presentation to the award winners. Additional information for ordering signs will be coming out soon.
- **VA Soil and Water Conservation Board New Membership:** In August, the Governor appointed two new members to the VSWCB. Next Virtual Board Meeting September 23, 2020 at 10 AM.
 - Jay C. Ford of Belle Haven, Virginia Policy and Grassroots Advisor, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Owner Shine and Rise Farm (Farmer)
 - Pamela Mason of Yorktown, Research Scientist, Virginia Institute of Marine Science (Director Colonial SWCD)
- **Library of VA (LOV) Updates Records Destruction Process:** The LOV has announced the electronic records destruction certification process, known as the eRM-3. The LOV's goal was to take an entirely paper-based process and convert it to what they describe as "**an entirely web-based, software-independent, simple to use, captured all the necessary data about destruction, and had strong authentication components for future defensibility**" process. **The eRM-3 is scheduled to go live 11/16/20**, at which time it will take the place of the RM-3. The LOV plans to offer training for Records Officers on how to use the eRM-3 in the immediate future. The LOV has also developed a FAQ on the eRM-3 that is available on their website. The designated SWCD Records Officer should have received an email from LOV on this topic. There is a database of Records Officers on the LOV website should you need to check the contact information on

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file. If the SWCD's Records Officer has changed (or contact information has changed) complete an RM-25 and file with the LOV.

- **Update District's ASA Policy Form-** Due back to Darrell Marshall. If there are new staff or if there are changes needed to your existing ASA policy, please complete & return the form Darrell provided. If there are no changes to your point of contact & alternate or how your district prefers to respond to Ag. Stewardship Act complaints, just send Darrell an email letting him know there are no changes. He also provided the ASA Policy Guidance on discussions of complaints during SWCD Board Meetings to be reviewed each year by districts.

Important Dates:

- **September 23, 10:00 AM:** VSWCB Virtual Meeting (more details to come)
- **September 29, 10:00 AM:** VASWCD Board of Directors Virtual Meeting (more details to come)
- **September 30:** FY20 Annual Report Due to DCR
- **October 15:** Paperwork for appointment of Extension Agent to District Board due to DCR
- **November 1:** CWFA Local and Basin Nominations Due (deadline extended 30 days due to COVID-19)
- **December 7:** VASWCD Virtual Board Meeting 9:00 am – Noon Stay-tuned for more details from VASWCD
- **December 7:** VASWCD Virtual Business Meeting 2:00-4:00 pm Stay-tuned for more details from VASWCD

NRCS District Conservationist: Jane Corson-Lassiter, NRCS District Conservationist, gave an oral report to Directors. Her written report was included in the meeting packet and is on file in the District office

New State Conservationist in Virginia: Jane announced NRCS has selected Dr. Edwin Martinez as Virginia's next state conservationist. He will assume his duties on Sept. 14, 2020, providing leadership and direction for conservation activities in the Commonwealth. Jane attached a bio of Mr. Martinez to her report to the Board.

Local NRCS Office Staff Update: Accomac's newest Soil Conservationist Brad Carter has moved to Roanoke to continue his career outside the agency. Brad came into NRCS through the PATHWAYS program where current college students work summers for the agency. Upon graduation, they are eligible to join the NRCS team. We anticipate that this opportunity will be advertising for a PATHWAYS student for the Accomac Field Office in October/November. Jane asked that if any know of any students that might be interested, please feel free to have them contact either Jenny or Jane to learn more about the program.

2020 Fiscal Year Wrap Up: The Field Office is wrapping up the 2020 fiscal year.

FY 20 funding allocations:

- EQIP Black Duck –5 contracts \$44,200
- EQIP Poultry – 3 contracts \$585,920

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- EQIP Organic Transition -2 contract \$7,330
- EQIP Energy Audit – 1 contract \$2,570
- CSP– 3 contracts – 8,200 acres \$420,470

Other: On September 10, Accomac NRCS hosted research faculty from GWU, UMD, UDE and VIMS at pollinator plantings on salt-influenced sites. This team is looking for possible research locations to understand salt impacts on crops along shorelines and to evaluate how these edges are losing ground to saltwater conditions. One promising research location is on the seaside outside of Accomac where producer worked with NRCS to plant wildflower species having some salt tolerance. In the second year since planting – the site is well-established with the seeded species.

NEW LOCAL Appointee to the VA Soil and Water Conservation Board: Carmie reported to the Board that Jay Ford contacted the District to introduce himself as a new Eastern Shore appointee to the VA Soil and Water Conservation Board. It has been a good while since their and Eastern Shore resident has been appointed. He is excited to serve in this capacity and offered himself as a local contact. He asked Carmie to pass along to the Board to please not hesitate to contact him whenever he could be of service.

The September 16, 2020 Board meeting was adjourned.

Meeting minutes were recorded by Carmie Savage