



# EASTERN SHORE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# MINUTES OF DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

**Wednesday, January 17, 2024, 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, Sally Williams, and Jim Evans
- **Associate Directors:** Hunter Blake
- **Staff:** Carmie Ross, Bill Savage, Julie Head and Palmer Smith
- **Partners:** Ben Young and Maggie Herrmann- NRCS; Olivia Leatherwood- DCR

**The following Board Members and Staff were unable to attend:**

- **Directors:** Kyle Sturgis
- **Associate Directors:** Robbie Lewis, Chip Burlington, Norman Pitt, Matt Hickman, Ursula Deitch, Edwin Long and Brian Broadwater

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Nick Thomas called to order the January 17, 2024, District Board Meeting of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District.

**MINUTES and FINANCIAL REPORTS:** Director Jim Evans made a motion to approve the December 8, 2023, meeting minutes as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously. Director Sands Gayle made a motion to approve the December 2023 financial reports as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.

## OLD BUSINESS:

**A. VA Soil and Water Conservation Board minutes- 12/06/23 meeting:** A copy was provided in the meeting packets for review.

## NEW BUSINESS:

**A. VESLT: Rayfield Farm Amendment- Hali Plourde-Rogers:** Hali Plourde-Rogers, VESLT Executive Director provided maps and information for the meeting packet. She gave a presentation on the request for an amendment to add approximately six (6) acres to the original easement. The easement is co-held by both the VESLT and the District. **Director Sands Gayle made a motion to approve the Rayfield Farm amendment which would include the addition of approximately six (6) acres. The motion, seconded by Director Jim Evans, was carried unanimously.**

**B. FY24 Cost Share Report:** The FY24 Ches Bay VACS allocation is \$2,689,088 plus interest

through December 31<sup>st</sup> of \$ 613.03 and a bank fee of \$24.00 for falling under minimum in August and September before first allocation was direct deposited, bringing the total available funds to \$2,689,677.03. The FY24 OCB VACS allocation is \$1,208,491.00 plus interest through December 31<sup>st</sup> of \$230.93 bringing the total available funds to \$1,208,721.93. The cost share requests approved and reported planted through December 31<sup>st</sup> total \$273,077.85 in Ches Bay VACS and \$254,116.90 in OCB VACS leaving a balance of unobligated VACS funds totaling \$2,416,599.18 in Ches Bay VACS funds and \$954,605.03 in OCB VACS funds. Total approved and planted requests for Whole Farm Approach through December 31<sup>st</sup> total \$2,568,190.40 in Ches Bay WFA and \$1,696,580.40 in OCB WFA. Total cost share requests of \$47,174.80 in Ches Bay WFA and \$44,596.55 in OCB WFA as mostly additions to existing contracts were brought to the board for approval. A copy of all the contracts presented for approvals will be attached to the official minutes. **Director Jim Evans made a motion to approve the additional cost share requests as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.** The unobligated funds from VACS will transfer to fund the WFA requests plus there will be a need for more funding. The District is taking sign-up through January 31<sup>st</sup> for split app and sidedress BMPs. Carmie stated that as spot checks are underway, the total of unobligated VACS funds will change. **Director Jim Evans made a motion to approve the FY24 VCAP Report as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.**

**C. FY24 VCAP report:** Bill stated that several projects are waiting for more information to move forward. He and Palmer met with a landowner in Jamesville regarding a potential living shoreline project. SEAS was also present for the meeting as required now by the VCAP Committee. **Chair Nick Thomas made a motion to approve the FY24 VCAP report as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.**

**D. FY24 Eastern Shore SWCD Officers/Committees:** A list of updated officers and committee members was included in the meeting packet. The addition of Palmer Smith to the Technical Committee (TRC) was added to the list. **Chair Nick Thomas made a motion to approve the updated list of officers and committee members with the addition of Palmer Smith to the TRC. The motion, seconded by Director Jim Evans, was carried unanimously.**

**E. Review of FY24 Annual Plan of Work for quarter ending December 31, 2023:** A copy of the monthly chart included in the Annual Plan of Work for the last quarter ending December 31<sup>st</sup> was included in the meeting packet. Carmie stated that the District is on target for meeting its monthly goals.

**F. 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Agricultural Ag Conference:** A copy of the program was included in the meeting packet for review. The ES Ag Conference is scheduled for January 24- 25<sup>th</sup> and the District will have a booth set up. Carmie stated that if any Directors or Associate Directors would like oyster roast tickets for the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> please let her know.

## **CORRESPONDENCE AND PRESS:**

**A.** n/a

## **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 presented her report to the Board.

**FY 2024 Cost Share:**

- **Agronomic:** Tracking is being kept up to date. Currently taking sign-up for cost share for the split application of N on Small grains and sidedress of N on corn BMPs through January 31st. Adjusting acreages/ funding as results of spot checks as needed.

**Accounting:** Daily accounting procedures and payroll ongoing. All payroll reports for the quarter ending 12/31/23 have been submitted. W2s Forms have been processed and will be mailed to employees by January 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Local Funding FY25 Budget Requests:** Submitted budget request to both counties for FY25:

- a. Accomack County for \$21,154.00- level funding
- b. Northampton County for \$10,898 – level funding

**2023 Tax Forms:** All 2023 Tax forms have been completed electronically. This year the IRS has started requiring electronic submittals of 1099s. Carmie used Track1099.com to process the electronic forms and the participants will be mailed a copy by January 31<sup>st</sup> by the company. Participants who received over \$600 in payments will receive 1099-G, VCAP participants who received payments in 2023 will receive a 1099-MISC, and nutrient management planners (TSPs) who received over \$600 in payments will receive a 1099-NEC. The 1096 Forms corresponding to the 1099s and the 1099s were mailed to the IRS. W2s have been completed as well as the W3 Form to the State. By processing electronically, the 1096 form is no longer required.

**Workers Comp Audit:** The workers comp audit for period 12/22/22 through 12/22/23 was completed on January 9<sup>th</sup> and submitted along with copies of the 941 Forms as requested.

**Attachment E Report:** The Attachment E report was completed and submitted on Jan 11<sup>th</sup> to DCR along with the QB Balance Sheet Report and the QB Profit & Loss Report for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter ending 12/31/23.

**VASWCD Annual Meeting:** All staff and Chair Nick Thomas attended the VASWCD Annual Meeting in Norfolk this year December 3-5. The District took the Soils Trailer for Display.

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**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:**

- Since the October meeting Bill helped to complete bringing the approval money down in tracking and completed mapping the cover crops for spot checks.
- Bill has begun cover crop inspections on 1/1/24 - ongoing.

**VESLT Reports:**

- Ten (10) land trust reports have been filed since October.

**VCAP:**

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

**Trainings:**

- Attended the Annual Meeting and trainings on 12/1-12/5 and set up the Soils Trailer for display at the event.

**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:**

- All approval money has been brought down in tracking
- All changes according to the reported sheets have been entered
- Crop cover inspections began 1/2/24-ongoing

**Groundwater Meeting:** 10/17/24 (most recent)

- A small business owner was in attendance and spoke about HRSD & the water treatment facilities in rural environments
  - Committee members noted that ESVA is not ready for this kind of urbanization
- Britt- Arcadis presentation
  - Advised not pulling from the confined aquifer-no water pressure

**Trainings and meetings:**

- 11/1-11/3 → DCR Conservation Planning Training
  - Last training, waiting on Carl to come review a plan so I can be certified
- 12/3-12/5 → Annual Meeting in Norfolk

**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.

**Programming** – Ongoing as requested.

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**Local and Area Envirothon** – it is the District's turn to host the regional Envirothon for 2024. The current plan is to have our local Envirothon at AREC again. Dates for the area Envirothon have been confirmed. Training Day is February 13, 2024, and competition day is March 19, 2024. Both days will be held at AREC. The Area VI Envirothon will be on April 16, 2024, at VIMS in Wachapregue.

**Decals on vehicles** – Installed on both vehicles.

**Promotional Items** – The District now has buckets, first aid kits, notebooks, and hats. If there are funds, Julie would like to have some bookmarks printed to hand out at educational activities.

**Junior Ag Camp/Ag Camp** – The dates for one of the camps will be July 2 -3, 2024, at BIC. This will probably be Ag Camp. Julie is working on dates for the other camp from BIC.

**Eastern Shore Regional Science Fair** – April 20, 2024, at the VIMS campus. Rules and scoresheets have been developed. Info has been sent to all local schools and as many homeschooled groups as we have contacts for along with offers to come in and work with their teachers and/or students.

**Arbor Day** – plans are underway for 2024 Arbor Day. This will most likely be in Cape Charles again at Strawberry Square. Tree seedlings have been ordered. They include: elderberry, persimmon, redbud, box elder, and white dogwood. Additional details to follow

**Adventures in Nature Camp** – Erin and Julie are investigating the possibility of working with Kiptopeke National Wildlife Refuge to hold a 2- or 3-day camp that would focus on natural resources. Current discussion is to focus the topics around Envirothon learning objectives such as forestry, wildlife, and aquatic topics.

### **Upcoming Dates**

- 1/23 – Occohannock ES Science Fair presentation
- 1/24 – Ag In The Classroom winter ambassador's meeting
- 2/6 – Kiptopeke ES – Poulihan – Gyotaku painting
- 2/13 – Envirothon Training Day
- 2/29 – NoHS Reality Store
- 3/19 – Local Envirothon Competition
- 3/22 – AES Science Fair

### **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**

- **Second Quarter Reports**: due January 16, 2024

- **IRS Mileage Rate:** As of January 1, 2024, the IRS mileage rate is \$0.67
- **Oath of Office for New Directors:** Congratulations to the elected and reelected Directors! Please make sure to provide a copy of your executed oath to your SWCD admin staff and scan/email a copy to Blair Gordon. Remember, the Oath must be executed BEFORE a director can vote on SWCD business. Appointed At-Large and VCE Directors do not need to take an oath at this time.
  - Newly elected Directors also need to make taking COIA and FOIA training a priority, as the Code of Virginia requires newly elected officials to do so within two months of assuming office.
- **New Calendar Year Planning Items:** typically Committee Appointments, Officer Elections, and 2024 calendar changes (meeting dates/times) take place in January when elected directors officially take office. Send updates to VASWCD, assigned CDC, and other partners.

## AG COST SHARE

- **EJAA Updates in Tracking:** (Engineering Job Approval Authority) Additional EJAA information is now required to be entered in to the Tracking Program where applicable. SWCD staff has been given until 1/31/24 for all PY24 structural BMPs and 2/29/24 for all Carryover structural BMPs (including those that have been completed and paid since 7/1/23) to input additional EJAA information. Lists of BMPs have been provided to staff where EJAA information is needed. A webinar is planned for January to update staff – more information to come.
- **Conservation Planner Certification:** Staff that are already certified, please review your expiration date and plan for renewals accordingly.
- **Aq BMP Tax Credits:** The Department of Taxation (TAX) is eliminating the April 1 deadline to submit Agricultural BMP tax credit applications. Taxpayers will now have until December 31 of the year following the credit year to submit their application and supporting documentation, although they should still submit their documents prior to filing their return so that the credit is "in the bank" when they claim it. Applications will be processed and letters issued on a rolling basis, as they are received. The \$2 Million statewide cap is still in effect and will now be enforced on a first-come, first-served basis. Revised template letters are available in CAS for District staff to access and we are working to make the revised Form ABM available as well. TAX has confirmed that should anyone accidentally submit their information using the old form, it will still be accepted.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### January

- Jan 4-5 – Soil Science, Soil Fertility, and Crop Production School; Virtual 9:00-4:30
- Jan 9-11 – Agriculture Nutrient Management Plan Writing School; Brightpoint Community College
- Jan 10 – VA General Assembly convenes

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- Jan 11 – VASWCD Legislative Day; contact VASWCD for details
- Jan 31 – Deadline for PY24 approved structural BMPs to have all required EJAA information entered in Tracking

#### Other Dates

- Feb 29 – Deadline for carryover structural BMPs to have all required EJAA entered in Tracking
- March 6 – Area V Spring Meeting; Charlotte County

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

#### Updates:

- 2 interviews for the Soil Conservation Technician position 1/22/24
- Jenny will be back in the office as District Conservationist 2/12/24
- Ben and Maggie are currently in the process of assessing and ranking all EQIP and CSP applications for FY 24, doing cover crop spot checks and working on various contract management tasks
- Ben and Bill from the district agreed during the January Groundwater Committee meeting to provide input to a subcommittee of the groundwater committee addressing ditch maintenance for farmers
- Attended VESCA meeting 1/9/24 and discussed state agencies purchasing property on the southern tip of Northampton County to create songbird habitat. I voiced my concern about the threshold of acceptance for more public land. It was suggested that NRCS pay landowners to implement song bird habitat practices

#### CSP:

- 8 applications for FY 24 currently being assessed and ranked
- 4 contracts being spot checked for cover crop
- Several contracts to be spot checked for no till in next couple of months

#### EQIP:

- 14 applications for FY 24 currently being assessed and ranked
  - 3 high tunnels
  - 1 livestock watering system
  - 5 poultry operations (litter sheds and/or concrete pads)
  - 5 wildlife
- Work in progress on several shallow water impoundments, concrete pads and litter sheds from FY 22 and FY 23

#### CRP:

- Funding currently unavailable for new General Signup CRP contracts until a new farm bill is passed
- Funding is still available for Continuous Signup

*Meeting minutes were recorded by Carmie S. Ross*

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