



EASTERN SHORE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MINUTES OF DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, February 21, 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:** Chair Nick Thomas, Vice Chair Jim Evans, Sands Gayle, and Sally Williams
- **Associate Directors:** Hunter Blake, Edwin Long, Norman Pitt, and Rick Hall
- **Staff:** Carmie Ross, Bill Savage, Julie Head and Palmer Smith
- **Partners:** Jenny Templeton, Ben Young and Maggie Herrmann- NRCS; Olivia Leatherwood-DCR, Helene Doughty- VCE

The following Board Members and Staff were unable to attend:

- **Directors:** Kyle Sturgis
- **Associate Directors:** Robbie Lewis, Chip Turlington, Matt Hickman, Ursula Deitch, and Brian Broadwater

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Nick Thomas called to order the February 21, 2024, District Board Meeting of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District.

MINUTES and FINANCIAL REPORTS: Director Sands Gayle made a motion to approve the January 17, 2024, meeting minutes as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously. Director Jim Evans made a motion to approve the January 2024 financial reports as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sands Gayle, was carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. n/a

NEW BUSINESS:

A. FY24 Cost Share Report: The FY24 Ches Bay VACS allocation is \$2,689,088 plus interest through January 31st of \$ 1,285.80 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 \$2,690,349.80. The FY24 OCB VACS allocation is \$1,208,491.00 plus interest through January 31st of \$533.19 bringing the total available funds to \$1,209,024.19. The cost share requests approved and reported planted through January 31st total \$251,481.35 in Ches Bay VACS and \$254,019.90 in OCB VACS. Total cost share requests of \$5,912.55 in Ches Bay VACS and \$2,319.60 in OCB VACS as additions to existing contracts or new NM-1a acreages were brought to the board for approval. After new

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

requests, a balance of unobligated VACS funds totaling \$2,432,955.90 in Ches Bay VACS funds and \$952,684.69 in OCB VACS funds remain. Total approved and planted requests for Whole Farm Approach through January 31st total \$2,494,872.45 in Ches Bay WFA and \$1,683,506.45 in OCB WFA. Total cost share requests of \$37,437.20 in Ches Bay WFA and \$20,906.00 in OCB WFA as additions to existing contracts or new NM-1a acreages were brought to the board for approval. A copy of all the contracts presented for approval will be attached to the official minutes. **Chair Nick Thomas made a motion to approve the additional cost share requests as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously. Director Jim Evans made a motion to approve the FY24 Cost Share Report as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.**

- B. VCE Appointed Director Nomination:** The new Northampton County VCE Ag Agent, Helene Doughty, was presented for nomination to fill the VCE Appointed Director vacancy. **Director Sally Williams made a motion to approve the nomination of VCE Agent, Helene Doughty, to serve as an appointed Director to the Board. The motion, seconded by Director Jim Evans, was carried unanimously.** After approval of the nomination, Carmie gave Olivia Leatherwood, DCR, the signed Form 199-014 to be presented to the VA Soil and Water Conservation Board for approval during their March meeting.
- C. FY24 VCAP report:** Bill stated contract 20-22-05 is currently under construction. Core logs are in place and plantings will begin soon. Contract 20-24-01 is a new living shoreline project near Jamesville. During the initial site visit, SEAS had some concerns regarding the design. The designs will be revised and the District will be provided with a copy of the revised design. New potential conservation landscaping project in Sandhill. Waiting for the landowner to move forward. **Director Sally Williams made a motion to approve the FY24 VCAP report as presented. The motion, seconded by Director Sands Gayle, was carried unanimously.**
- D. Request for Update to FY24 Budget Line Items:** Carmie stated that the District has stocked up on promotional give-aways at the District and will also have outreach costs at an upcoming small farmer workshop. She requested that \$1,000 be transferred from the line item "Cost Share Support" to the line item "Marketing and Outreach". The cost of Quickbooks payroll filings, reports and tax documents have increased so she requested that \$1,000 be transferred from line item "Cost Share Support" to the line item " Fees and Subscriptions". **Director Sands Gayle made a motion to approve the transfers from line item "Cost Share Support" to increase line items "Marketing and Outreach" and "Fees and Subscriptions" by \$1,000 each in the FY24 Budget. The motion, seconded by Director Sally Williams, was carried unanimously.**

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E. Camp Woods and Wildlife: Director Sands Gayle made a motion to approve \$300 in support for one camper to attend Camp Woods and Wildlife. The motion, seconded by Director Jim Evans, was carried unanimously.

F. VA Tech Soil Judging Team: Director Sally Williams made a motion to approve \$300 in support for student members of the VA Tech Soil Judging Team. The motion, seconded by Director Jim Evans, was carried unanimously.

G. Area VI Spring Meeting: The Area VI Spring meeting will be held at the Keystone Tractor Museum in Colonial Heights on March 7th. Staff and Nick Thomas have registered. Carmie asked that if anyone else wanted to attend she had to register by February 23rd. Sands Gayle stated he would like to also attend.

H. VA Soil and Water Conservation Board meeting: The next meeting will be held on March 27th at Bear Creek Lake State Park in Cumberland at 10:00 a.m.

CORRESPONDENCE AND PRESS:

A. Thank You note: Julie Head received a thank you note for educational programs from appreciative parents of a student.

STAFF REPORTS:

District Manager Report: Carmie Ross, 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:

- **Agronomics:** Tracking and funding spreadsheets are being kept up to date. All cost share sign-up requested for split app and side dress has been entered into the Tracking program and new requests have been reflected on the cost share report. Acreages/ funding adjustments as results of spot checks have been completed. Started paying out nmps- new acre cost share requested are reflected in cost share report. With such a large program year, our time is being spent primarily on administration.

Accounting: Daily accounting procedures and payroll ongoing.

Coastal Resilience & Sustainability Plan Steering Committee- As a member of this committee we were tasked with completing a very long and intense ranking of community projects in both counties to determine which projects need to be considered “actionable” so they can move forward with funding opportunities. Carmie did not participate in the ranking.

Webinars/ Conference Calls:

- Attended Ag Conference- January 24-25- Exmore Moose Lodge
- Attended Envirothon- February 13- Painter AREC

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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:

- Cover crop inspections on - ongoing.
- Lower and Mid Accomack Completed
- Pulling and adjusting Tracts & Fields in Tracking that do not meet specs.

VESLT Reports:

- Two land trust reports were filed this month.

Groundwater Committee Meeting 1/16/24:

- **Public Participation:** Ken Dufty spoke on the Potomac aquifer (Tidewater Region) being over pumped from the 1960's until 1997 when the Gaston pipeline added 60 million gallons per day. The estimated withdraw on the Eastern Shore with residential and commercial usage is 15 million gallons per day with a recharge rate of 9 million gallons per day. He would like to have the Groundwater Committee petition the Governor & State Water Control Board to require the use of the Columbia Aquifer.
- **Britt McMillian** gave an update on Perdue having to reduce groundwater usage in its latest permit. We are always withdrawing more water than recharging.
- **Steve Sturgis** wants farmers to be able to recharge irrigation ponds using ditches to divert water. Britt McMillian suggested forming a subgroup to investigate this. Ben Young agreed to serve on this subgroup and volunteered me to serve in the subgroup as well.
- **Supervisor Washington** was elected to the Vice Chair position and Supervisor Muhly was dropped off the committee.
- **Next meeting date is 2/20.**

VCAP:

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

Events:

- Helped set up and manned the ESSWCD booth at the Eastern Shore Ag Conference on 1/24 & 1/25.
- Assisted with the food deliveries and set up for the Envirothon Training Day 2/13.

Trainings:

- Attended the VCAP virtual training on 2/20.

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:

- Northampton cover crop checks completed

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- Adjusted all tracts that didn't meet specs
- As NMP's have come in, we've been making adjustments

Envirothon:

- Ben & I are wildlife judges so we created about an hour long training using the outline from the state
 - Duck calls are our unique subject

Trainings and meetings:

- Ag Conference- 1/24 & 1/25
- VACDE Board Meeting- 1/31
- Envirothon- 2/13
- VCAP virtual part 1 training- 2/20

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.

Local and Area Envirothon – training day has been held and everybody was flexible since the weather was so bad. Competition day is March 19, 2024 at AREC. The Area VI Envirothon will be on April 16, 2024, at VIMS in Wachapreague. Julie needs some volunteers to judge the oral presentations on April 16th.

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. We are 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 homeschool 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. Plant plugs have been ordered.

Adventures in Nature Camp – Erin and Julie are investigating the possibility of working with Kiptopeke National Wildlife Refuge to hold a 2-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. Dates are June 27th and June 28th.

Upcoming Dates

- a. 2/23 – meet with VIMS to finalize area Envirothon details
- b. 2/20 – NCPS – Kiptopeke – wind energy design
- c. 2/21 – CES – Neal – Natural resources

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- d. 2/22 – Classical Conversations Science Fair judging
- e. 2/23 – NCPS – Occohannock – wind energy design
- f. 2/29 – NoHS Reality Store
- g. 3/2 – Chris and Taylor’s wedding
- h. 3/6 – OES – Goetchius
- i. 3/7 – Area VI Spring Meeting
- j. 3/19 – Local Envirothon Competition
- k. 3/21 – OES -Goetchius
- l. 3/22 – AES Science Fair
- m. 4/3 – AES Career Day
- n. 4/11 – OES – Goetchius
- o. 4/12 – Kipto ES 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

- 3rd Quarter Disbursement Letters: sent February 9th, funds expected to follow in less than 30 days.
- Director Orientation: Per the FY24 Administrative and Operational Grant Agreement, Deliverable #13, all new directors are required to complete Director Orientation within six months of qualifying for office. DCR is partnering with the VASWCD to provide Director Orientation in two phases. Phase I and II must be completed by June 30, 2024.
 - Phase I is an online course available on the VASWCD website (<https://vaswcd.org/leadership-course/>). It is comprised of 10 individual modules that can be taken online at any time, they do not have to be completed all at once. If you take the online modules, you must complete the Final Quiz for credit. Mini quizzes currently on the website are for your own benefit and knowledge, the Final Quiz must be completed for credit. The modules are undergoing some minor updates and will continuously be reviewed by DCR and VASWCD to reflect updated information, so don’t be alarmed if you notice some changes between viewing sessions. We will also announce any updates or added resources as available. Directors can also have group viewings of the online modules and a sign-in sheet should be submitted to your CDC for credit.
 - Phase II is in-person. Each Area Spring Meeting will have a Phase II session in the afternoon and will provide an opportunity to hear from experienced Directors about your roles and responsibilities, and a chance to network with your neighboring District Directors. Additionally, a Director Resource Notebook will be provided, and we will review the helpful tools and documents of this notebook during Phase II. Although only new

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Directors are required to complete Director Orientation, all Directors are encouraged to participate, and all Directors will receive a Director Resource Notebook! Plan to attend your Area Spring Meeting!

AG COST SHARE

- EJAA Updates in Tracking: (Engineering Job Approval Authority) Additional EJAA information is now required to be entered into the Tracking Program where applicable. SWCD staff has been given until 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.
- Follow Up on Random BMP Verifications: Please continue to work with participants who have maintenance needs. Remember to update the Verification Module as repairs are completed.
- Carryover Requests: Any practices that require DCR approval for carryover should be submitted to the Ag Incentives Program Manager (Sara Bottenfield) by May 15th
- Conservation Planner Certification Courses: There are multiple courses for initial Conservation Planner Certification within the coming months. See below for details.
 - Feb 22 – VA Ag BMP and Cost-Share Program (VACS 101) - required for Conservation Planner Certification, 9:00am Virtual, Join Here, Password: vfM7WE3MbD
 - Feb 28 – RUSLE2 Part C Kickoff, 9:00am Virtual, Register Here
 - April 4-5 – Conservation Selling Skills, Central Virginia Community College, Lynchburg, VA
 - May 15 – Perennial Stream ID Course, 8am-4:30pm, Charlottesville, VA
 - Summer, TBD – Nutrient Management Courses
 - October 15-16 – Virginia Resource Training, Virtual
 - Fall TBD – RUSLE2
 - October/November – DCR Conservation Planner Course

GRANT DELIVERABLES REMINDER

- Annually review and document in minutes:
 - Strategic Plan
 - Annual Plan of Work
 - Desktop Procedures for District Operations
 - Fixed Assets Inventory
 - Personnel Documents: Personnel Policy, Position Descriptions, and Performance Expectations
 - Annual Employee Performance Evaluations

DATES TO REMEMBER

February

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- Feb 19 – Presidents Day Holiday, state offices closed
- Feb 29 – Deadline for carryover structural BMPs to have all required EJAA entered in Tracking

Other Dates

- March 6 – Area V Spring Meeting; 9:30am, The Barn at Pine View-Keysville
- March 7 – Area VI Spring Meeting; 10:00am, Keystone Truck & Tractor Museum-Colonial Heights
- March 19 – Area III Spring Meeting, 8:30am., St. Margaret's School-Tappahannock
- March 27 – VA Soil & Water Conservation Board Meeting, 10:00 am, Bear Creek Lake State Park, Cumberland; Audit Subcommittee 9:00

Accomack Field Office NRCS Report: Jenny Templeton, NRCS District Conservationist, gave a verbal report to the Board.

Updates:

- Jenny is back at the Accomack Service Center
- 2 interviews for the Soil Conservation Technician position, one offer has been extended
- 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
- Staff will be attending RCPP Training in Gloucester- February 22nd

EQIP:

- March 8- ranking deadline

Upcoming Events:

- Maggie will be representing NRCS with a booth at the Earth Day event in Exmore on April 20th
- Staff will be attending the Area VI Spring Meeting on March 7th in Colonial Heights

VCE Report: Helene Doughty, Northampton County VCE Ag Agent, gave a verbal report to the Board.

Updates:

- Growers in Northampton County have started planting potatoes.

Upcoming Events:

- March 20-21 Small Farm Workshop in Machipongo
- May 1st- Pesticide Recertification at Painter AREC

Meeting minutes were recorded by Carmie S. Ross

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