

NORTHERN PANHANDLE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' MEETING
April 10, 2025
10:00 a.m.

Supervisors Present

Jim Anderson, Hancock County – Vice-Chairman
Chuck Glenn, Hancock County – Treasurer
Steve Paull, Brooke County
Eric Freeland, Brooke County
Robert Luchetti, Jr., Ohio County
Amy Wade, Ohio County – Secretary
David McCardle, Marshall County
Mark Fitzsimmons, Marshall County – Chairman

Others Present

Veronica Gibson, Administrative Specialist, WVCA
Don Whetzel, District Operations Manager, WVCA via Teams
Devon Kokoska, Watershed Manager-East, WVCA
Victoria White, District Administrator, NPCD
Katie Fitzsimmons, District Conservationist, NRCS
David Shipman, Soil Conservationist, NRCS
Heather Duncan, Executive Director, WVACD via Teams
Bob Straub, CPA, Hartley & Straub

Chairman Mark Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at the USDA Service Center, McMechen.

Pledge of Allegiance – The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Minutes

- **Chuck Glenn made a motion to approve the March 2025 board meeting minutes and the March 27, 2025, special meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Eric Freeland. Motion passed.**

Financial Report

- Bob Straub reviewed the March 2025 NPCD funds.
- Chuck Glenn reviewed the March 2025 co-administered funds.
Jim Anderson made a motion to file the February co-administered financials and the February NPCD financials for audit. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.

Reports

- District Crew (NPCD)
 - Mark Fitzsimmons reported that at the SCC meeting, Judith Lyons said the WVCA budget has been cut. The WVCA gives districts \$195,000.00 combined for district employees. She said the WVCA may cut back. Additionally, 17 of 18 dams that need rehabbed have been placed on hold.
 - Mark Fitzsimmons said the NPCD truck needs an alignment and tires. Harry Aston will take it to Tire America for repairs.

- Farm Service Agency (FSA) – No Report
- WV Division of Forestry (WVDOF) _ No Report
- WV Conservation Agency (WVCA)
 - Devon Kokoska gave an update on UGC including a report from Alliance.
 - Don Whetzel reviewed a written report.

April 2025 WVCA Report Draft

Request to Conservation Districts

The WVCA is encouraging Conservation Districts to review and update your District Policy Manuals. In addition to your policy manual, you are encouraged to review your CD Employee Manual (if you have one) and your CD Plan of Work. If you are already doing these reviews, please disregard this request.

Annual Work Plan

Reminder - District annual work plans are due **June 30** to Guthrie.

Conservation Farm Tour

It is time for districts to think about the conservation farm families to be awarded. CDs should have their district farm selection to their Area Directors by June 16.

O&M Agreements:

CD's are encouraged to continue to work with local sponsors for O&M funding. The change will be that these agreements will not be matched dollar for dollar as they were in the past. The WVCA will be allocating funds on a watershed basis moving forward to help with O&M costs.

Ag Enhancement Program Timeline

- May/June/July – CDs to finalize upcoming FY program, update AgEP agreement addendums, take action to approve LORs Mid June – Deadline for CDs submit final practice list to WVCA (CDs can submit final list any time after SCC approval of practice list)

Press contact reminder

The WVCA wants to remind all CDs that the WVCA Communications specialist is available to help districts with press releases, and media contacts, especially if it the situation involves WVCA programs or staff.

- WV Association of Conservation Districts (WVACD)
 - Heather Duncan reviewed a written report.

April 2025 Board Report from Heather Duncan, WVACD Executive Director

NACD Spring Fly In

The NACD Spring Fly In on March 26 went very well. Donnie Tenney, Joe Casto, and Wayne McKeever represented WVACD very well to the staffers of each office. We also had representation from WVCA with Gene Saurborn and Jennifer Skaggs. The importance of funding and partnerships were highlighted. I encourage everyone to attend at least one NACD Fly In during your tenure as a supervisor.

April Quarterly Meeting

The Spring Quarterly Meeting will be held at the main Assembly Hall at Cedar Lakes on Monday, April 14th beginning at 9:00 am. This is a one-day meeting. I expect the meeting to run until 3:30-4:00 pm. Information will be coming soon on the WVACD website under quarterly meetings. If you would like to stay at Cedar Lakes, you may stay at the Holt Lodge for

\$94/night. You can call the main office at (304) 372-7860 and mention WVACD. If you are staying for Envirothon, you may make your reservation for that as well so you can stay in the same room for the week. Hotel rooms are available from Sunday, April 13 – Friday, April 18th. Committees will meet in the morning.

Federal Funding Pause

As you are aware, there is still a federal funding pause on agreements and our Community Outreach and Development grants are affected by this. We hope to hear good news soon and will keep everyone updated as best we can.

We were made recently aware that a portion of my agreement funding is not related to IRA funds. With this, the WVACD executive committee met on February 27th and has agreed to continue funding my position through April 30th. While the funding is there, there is the current concern for timely reimbursement. This holds true on reimbursement for the TA positions as well. We must be appreciative of the conservative and conscious efforts of those before us to allow a reserve to be built to allow for situations just like this. I will keep everyone updated as I receive information.

Local Work Group (LWG) Meetings

LWG meeting season is upon us. PLEASE utilize these meetings to think of ways to reach cooperators that you may have not reached before. Maybe it's changing the time and location. Maybe it's offering an online option. Maybe it's having an open house or inviting your area partners to attend, too. Maybe send out a survey to your cooperators and also post it on social media. There's a long list of "maybes" that you can do. Reach out to Julie, Vanta, and/or me if you would like to discuss ways to expand your LWG meeting. This is the time that your constituents have an open invitation to come to you and tell YOU what THEY need. Maybe think of it as a town hall where you can lay out what is offered and your constituents can provide feedback. Use these meetings to not only plan for NRCS programming, but for your CD as well.

Grazing for Appalachian Sustainability Grant (GRASS Grant)

The goal of this grant is to improve knowledge and management practices for Appalachian beef producers. An online form is available for interested applicants to sign up. WVU staff has recently been attending board meetings re-introducing everyone to the grant and explaining the LOR and application process. This is a great way to get good management practices onto farms and incentives to do so. The interest form can be found here:

https://wvu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3mfJaZPTU1b709g

Sustainable Management in Agriculture using Regenerative Techniques Grant (SMART Farms WV Grant)

This grant is through NASDA and is available to non-Chesapeake Bay draining counties to establish native warm season grasses into pastures and log landing sites focusing on Historically Underserved producers. This grant is a partnership with WVCA, WVACD, and WVDOT. This is a great grant to reach out to someone who is not currently a cooperator with the district to help get their foot in the door. Please contact myself or Dylan Johnson, WVCA, for more information.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI)

This grant is housed by WVCA with funding coming from NRCS. This is to develop conservation district field days, create learning stations, and hold virtual pasture walk. \$3,000 is available to conservation districts to host a workshop on grazing and soil health topics. Conservation districts may combine funding and workshops to host a larger scale event. \$400 is available for a learning station at the conservation district office.

Grasslands Committee

If you are interested in becoming involved with the Grasslands Committee, please let Heather know. The committee would like to see 1-2 supervisor members from each conservation district represented. Currently, the committee meets quarterly at the WVACD office and a virtual option is

available as well. Please contact Heather or committee chair, Jim Anderson for more information. Assistance from supervisors is desperately needed for the Grasslands Evaluation Contest which will be held on April 11 at the WV Beef Expo at Jackson's Mill. Setup for the contest is April 10th.

WVACD Communication and Outreach Employees

Please do not forget to contact Julie Simmons (wvacdoutreach2@wvacd.onmicrosoft.com) and Vanta Coda (wvacdoutreach@wvacd.onmicrosoft.com) for your outreach needs. Rather it's developing printed or online materials, assisting with outreach events, or coming up with ideas to reach new producers or CSP outreach, they are here to help!

Membership and Educational Needs

If you would like to discuss your membership needs, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Also, please let me know what other continuing education and training you need to be a better supervisor and/or director. I especially want to hear what type of training, educational events, and the format you would like to see at quarterly meetings. We've had in depth and updates at various quarterly meetings, but I'm still hearing there are questions and confusion even with offering various topics of concern.

Upcoming Dates

Central Area Meeting: April 3, 2025 at Elk CD

Grasslands Committee Meeting: April 4, 2025 at WVACD Office/Teams

Flood Resiliency Day at Capitol: April 4, 2025

WV SCC Meeting: April 8, 2025 at Cedar Lakes

WV Grasslands Evaluation Contest: April 10 set up and April 11, 2025 contest at Jackson's Mill

Spring Quarterly Meeting: April 14, 2025 at Cedar Lakes Conference Center

WV Envirothon Competition: April 16-17, 2025 at Cedar Lakes Conference

- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
 - Katie Fitzsimmons reviewed a written report.

April 2025

NRCS Report: Northern Panhandle Conservation District

Trainings/Upcoming Events/Outreach

- No upcoming trainings

Programs

- EQIP assessments due 4/30/25
- CSP Round 2 Sign Up Deadline – 4/18/2025

Field Visits/Conservation Planning

- Staff completed field visits for conservation planning, technical assistance, and practice certifications.
- Staff are reviewing contracts to ensure designs are completed.

Misc.

- Hancock County Office Hours – we still have people coming in to meet with us!
 - April 17th
 - May 15th
 - June – TBD due to holiday

West Virginia State Conservationist's Report

April 2025

Program Priorities

NRCS WV began the 2025 fiscal year with a focus on obligating Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) funds. Sixty-two FY2020 CSP contracts were renewed for an additional five years, totaling over \$3 million across 10,376 acres. An additional 179 CSP – Classic contracts were obligated totaling over \$4.5 million across 14,336 acres.

Field Office staff are currently working on assessing and ranking 1,301 EQIP and 311 AMA applications received prior to September 13, 2024. Funding is expected to be competitive across all funding pools, with an EQIP allocation of \$8.8 million and an AMA allocation of \$598k.

Payments on CSP & EQIP contracts that were obligated using Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding were briefly paused, however on February 20th Secretary Rollins instructed NRCS to resume issuing payments. Secretary Rollins continues to evaluate other paused funding as she ensures that programs are focused on directly supporting America's farmers and ranchers. Over the next few months, our District Conservationists will be assisting Conservation Districts to hold Local Working Group (LWG) meetings in each of the 14 Districts. These LWG meetings are an essential component in NRCS programming. We rely on local input to help set program priorities and focus funding to directly meet locally identified resource concerns.

Drought Recovery

NRCS WV is assisting the Farm Service Agency with the implementation of their Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). ECP provides emergency water for livestock and existing orchard and vineyard irrigation systems. To date, NRCS has assisted with 485 applications with the majority of applications Monongahela, Potomac Valley, Greenbrier Valley, Little Kanawha, and Western Districts. Designs for these watering systems will be developed and delivered to FSA by April 30, 2025.

Staffing Updates

A national level contract that supported 10 employees in WV was terminated on March 28, 2025. This impacted positions that provided administrative assistance to both the field and state offices as well as our Public Affairs Specialist. We are developing new payment review and contract management processes to ensure that our customers are minimally impacted and are utilizing staff from bordering states for public affairs assistance.

NRCS WV lost 21 probationary employees on February 14, 2025. This decision was since reversed and as of April 7th several of those employees have returned to work or are in the process; a few have taken other employment opportunities.

The Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) was made available to NRCS employees in late January as part of a national effort to reduce the federal workforce. Two NRCS WV employees took this opportunity in early February. On April 1, an additional DRP opportunity was announced giving employees until April 8th to opt in. We will continue to update partners as staffing changes occur.

On March 17, we welcomed 8 formerly remote NRCS employees to WV offices. We anticipate more USDA Food Production and Conservation (FPAC) employees will report to our offices in the coming weeks.

Other Updates

Several USDA Service Center leases have been flagged for termination across the nation, however no offices in West Virginia have been impacted.

All official, overnight travel has been paused. NRCS employees may continue to use government vehicles for local travel for meetings and farm visits. We will work with partners to continue to support events such as the Envirothon, Grassland Evaluation Contest, land judging and conservation district meetings and events to the best of our ability.

NRCS is assisting USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) by providing staff to complete poultry house inspections- identifying potential points of entry for wild birds and other animals that may transmit Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). NRCS WV is providing employees to assist with this effort, as a USDA priority.

Payments towards cooperative grants and agreements with partnering organizations that were funded utilizing Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds are still paused. This affects several agreements in West Virginia.

Payments toward 17 of 18 dam rehabilitation projects through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPA) utilizing Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds have also been paused. This pause also affects several watershed planning efforts. Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) work is continuing but has been slowed due to contracting issues and additional NEPA considerations.

- Wheeling Creek Watershed Commission (WCWC)
 - The next meeting is April 17.
- Administrative Specialist (WVCA) – No Report
- District Administrator (NPCD)
 - Victoria White reviewed a written report

NPCD District Administrator April

Updates:

General Updates:

If you have items that need added to Facebook or website, please email with necessary information

April schedule is now available for all supervisors

Moundsville Middle and St Paul School submitted Samara Testing Scores

Oak Glen High School Envirothon Team to compete at WV Envirothon April 16th and 17th

Moundsville Middle and Hilltop Elementary submitted Poster Contest winners

- Judging after or during board meeting

Grants:

Awaiting information regarding **WVACD Community Outreach Grant** and **WVACD Community Development Grant** funding

The Bee Cause Grant: NPCD award \$2,500 and check has been deposited

- Programming beginning Sunday, April 13th at 3 pm

High Tunnel/Garden:

Ethan Bloomfield (WPHS Horticulture) and Peyton Berturm (JMHS Horticulture) starting plants

High Tunnel: prepped and ready for planting – tomatoes have been planted

Garden: irrigation needs updated (plan day for supervisor help) and schedule trencher rental – one potato tower planted

Upcoming Events:

Swarm Catching Class (Tri-State Beekeeping Assoc.) Friday May 2nd @ 5 pm

- Interested in using schoolhouse/district grounds

Grazing Field Day Sat. May 17th @ Brooke or Hancock County Farm

Women in Ag Day Sat. June 7th @ Moundsville Center

- Visitors - None
- Committee Reports
 - Equipment – Mark Fitzsimmons rented the Cricket spreader. He said there were a lot of grease fittings underneath that have not been greased and are rusted. Victoria White provided a written rental report. There was a discussion regarding purchasing rain barrels and kits.
 - Building – Jim Anderson said the fan in the men's restroom needs replaced.
 - O&M – Amy Wade discussed the poison hemlock that is at the Harmon Creek dams. The WVDA will send information to the district office pertaining to spraying the

poison hemlock. Devon Kokoska said managing it with timed mowing would be better than spraying. Jim Anderson asked when the district will receive the O&M work orders. Devon said he will get them to the district.

- High Tunnel – David Shipman reported that repairs need to be done to the top of the high tunnel. Victoria White and Robbie Luchetti have been working in the high tunnel and the raised beds. The vent controller needs replaced and has been ordered.
- Grassland – Jim Anderson reported the competition is tomorrow.
- Education – Victoria White will provide a list of events to the supervisors.
- Safety – Eric Freeland will update the safety policy.
- Bee – Victoria White gave an update.

Old Business

- Wheeling Creek 25 O&M Agreement
 - No updates.
- Upper Grave Creek #7, #8, & #9 – ACNR Mining
 - An invoice from the attorney was presented for payment in the amount of \$18,655.55. **Chuck Glenn made a motion to pay the invoice to Bailey & Wyant, PLLC in the amount of \$18,655.55. Seconded by Robert Luchetti, Jr. Motion passed.**
- NPCD Work Crew
 - Interviews will be held today.
- Summer Soil Tester
 - Two resumes were received. One applicant pulled their resume.
- Grazing Field Day-Hancock/Brooke County, May 17 – Farm to Host
 - To be determined.
- Inf/Outreach Dinner-Brooke/Hancock County, May 16 – Location
 - To be determined.
- Conservation Farm Contest
 - Marshall County – Dan Lucey
 - Hancock County – Jim Gibson
 - Brooke County – none
 - Ohio County – Bob Fowler

The district farm tour will be held on May 15. The tour will begin in Marshall County.
- WVCA Recalling SPRP Funds
 - **Amy Wade made a motion to return funds that are in the SPRP-McElroy-Middle Grave Creek program funds account as requested by the WVCA. The balance as of March 31, 2025 (\$196,313.59) and any accrued interest shall be transferred. Seconded by Robert Luchetti, Jr. Motion passed.**

- Tygarts Valley CD Lawsuit
 - No updates.
- Manure Spreader
 - Amounts for a manure spreader from two vendors for two different sizes of a manure spreader were presented. **Jim Anderson made a motion to purchase an NH 145 manure spreader in the amount of \$15,738.75 from Vernon Dell Tractor in East Liverpool, OH. Seconded by Eric Freeland. Motion passed.**

New Business

- Schedule Local Work Group Meetings
 - May 8 – USDA Service Center, McMechen – 6:00pm
 - May 15 – New Manchester VFD – 6:00pm
- State Fair Promotional Items
 - **Jim Anderson made a motion to donate some of the promotional items that the district currently has to the State Fair. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**
- Review Language Concerning Dam Coverage
 - Table
- SB941
 - A copy of SB941 was in the supervisor packets and was reviewed.
- WV Watershed Network
 - **Jim Anderson made a motion to donate \$100.00 to the WV Watershed Network. Seconded by Chuck Glenn. Motion passed.**
- Judge District Poster Entries
 - Posters will be judged following the meeting.
- NPCD Personnel
 - Jim Anderson reminded the board that Victoria Whaite has been employed for one year with the district. Victoria will receive 3 days for vacation and 2 days for sick leave as discussed when she was hired.
- Ability to Accept Credit/Debit Card Payments
 - **Robert Luchetti, Jr. made a motion for the NPCD to accept credit/debit card payments online through Squarespace with a 3% processing fee per transaction. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**
- Conservation Agreements
 - Nathan & Yolanda Blake/Ohio County/<1 acre
 - Randy Young/Marshall County/173 acres
 - Richard S Reineke/Marshall County/109 acres
 - Kelly Argent/Hancock County/19.99 acres
 - **Jim Anderson made a motion to approve N. & Y. Blake, R. Young, R. Reineke, and K. Argent as new cooperators. Seconded by Amy Wade. Motion passed.**

At 1:00 pm the meeting broke out for lunch and interviews for the work crew. The meeting resumed at 2:20 pm.

- Ag Enhancement
 - FY26 AgEP Administrative Agreement
 - **David McCardle made a motion to approve the FY26 AgEP Administrative Agreement as presented. Seconded by Eric Freeland. Motion passed.**
 - Payment – Frederick Dague/Seeding/\$469.80
 - **David McCardle made a motion to approve the payment for the completed AgEP practice for F. Dague. Seconded by Chuck Glenn. Motion passed.**

Correspondence

- Amy Wade, Secretary, reviewed the following correspondence: (1) An invitation from Center McMechen Elementary School for Career Day to be held on May 16.

Supervisor Reports – No reports

NEXT MEETING

The next board meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.**, at the USDA Service Center in McMechen.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Mark Fitzsimmons, Chairman

Amy Wade, Secretary

Minutes submitted by Veronica Gibson