

NORTHERN PANHANDLE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
January 11, 2024
10:00 a.m.

Supervisors Present

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

Others Present

Veronica Gibson, Administrative Specialist, WVCA
Jennifer Kile, Conservation Specialist, WVCA
Kim Fisher, District Operations Manager-West, WVCA
Don Whetzel, Watershed Manger-East, WVCA
Katie Fitzsimmons, District Conservationist, NRCS
David Shipman, Soil Conservationist, NRCS
Kevin Paul, NRCS – via teleconference
Rafael Mendez, Assistant State Conservationist, NRCS
Bob Straub, CPA, Hartley & Straub
Karen Cox, WVU Extension, Ohio County
TK Lawncare – Dan, Terry, and Kevin Strope

Chairman Mark Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order on Thursday, January 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the USDA Service Center in McMechen, WV.

Pledge of Allegiance – The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Minutes

- **David McCardle made a motion to approve the December 2023 board meeting minutes with the correction of the dollar amount for an approval of an invoice from Vincent Excavating. The minutes listed the motion as approved dollar amount of \$45,584.46. The correct amount was \$42,584.46 as listed in the discussion. Seconded by Jim Anderson. Motion passed.**

Financial Report

- Bob Straub reviewed the NPCD financials for December 2023.
- Chuck Glenn reviewed the December 2023 co-administered funds. A deposit is needed for the dormant Soil Survey account. A check for \$1.00 will be deposited to the Soil Survey account from the General Fund.

Reports

- District Crew (NPCD)
 - Both PA dams have been mowed. Tree removal is still needed.
- Farm Service Agency (FSA) - No Report
- WV Division of Forestry (WVDOF) – No Report
- WV Conservation Agency (WVCA)
Kim Fisher reviewed a written report.

January 2024 WVCA Report

Conservation Day/Legislative Meet and Greet

Conservation Day will be held February 8th. WVCA will provide a shuttle service from/to Laidley Field and staff will be in attendance to assist supervisors.

February Quarterly Meeting

The February Quarterly Meeting will be held on February 7th at WVSU (the same location as last year). Special thank you to Capitol CD who has arranged the facility and will be providing breakfast and lunch.

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 the reviews, please disregard this request. However, please let us know with a written response that you are already reviewing or will be reviewing the documents.

The **district personnel plan is due to SCC in March**, so please add to your February agenda for review and approval.

Conservation Districts are asked to begin the **Agreed Procedures Engagement (APE) audit** if you haven't already. Please check your current agreement to make sure it is valid.

Agricultural Enhancement Program (AgEP) Administrative Review

Each District's Administrative Specialist will conduct a review of 10% or a minimum of 3 files with applications that fiscal year and submit the Administrative Review Form to their District Operations Manager by January 31st. By completing this review halfway through a fiscal year, staff will have time to find possible procedural errors and take steps to prevent them from happening in the future.

The Administrative Review process will allow WVCA to ensure that all proper documentation is physically accessible in the district cooperator file, and that the districts' online database records system is in agreement with WVCA financial records system.

Ag Enhancement Program Timeline FY24timeline may be adjusted***

January - Presentation of upcoming FY AgEP to SCC

May/June/July – CDs to finalize upcoming FY program, update AgEP agreement addendums, take action to approve LORs June 15 – Deadline for CDs submit final practice list to WVCA (CDs can submit final list any time after SCC approval of practice list)

O&M Agreements

CDs 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.

Travel and Per Diem Update

AG opinion

Don Whetzel reported the following:

- Working on channel estimates and work orders to be sent in March.
 - Two potential projects
 - Possibly a debris boom on Wheeling Creek #7.
 - Possible investigation of a new seep on Harmon Creek #2.
- WV Association of Conservation Districts (WVACD) – A written report was provided.
January 2024 Board Report from Heather Duncan, WVACD Executive Director

District Travel Policy and Procedures

HIGHLY encourage district boards to look at their current travel P&P manuals and make those solid. This is where it should be indicated what is and is not allowable for district expenses to be captured. This takes the added pressure from the treasurer/other board members on making personal decisions on what is an allowable or not allowable expense. Things to consider include: traveling outside of the county and district, visiting worksites where non-workers are not allowed, attending meetings that you would already attend, etc.

Be mindful of the GSA Rates. Mileage starting January 1, 2024 goes up to .67 cents/mile for personal vehicles. Below is the copy of current GSA rates from the website:
https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/per-diem-rates-results?action=perdiems_report&fiscal_year=2024&state=WV&city=&zip= . Remember that Morgantown was dropped from the destination list and Charles Town (Jefferson Co) was added.

February Quarterly Meeting

The February Quarterly Meeting will be held on February 7th at WVSU (the same location as last year). Special thank you to Capitol CD who has arranged the facility and will be providing breakfast and lunch. The following day will be Ag & Conservation Day at the Capitol. More information will be forthcoming in January for both events. Districts should be planning for Conservation Day and ordering any table supplies and other handouts needed.

NACD Annual Meeting & Other NACD News

The NACD Annual Meeting is fast approaching! It will be held in San Diego, CA February 10-14, 2024. More information can be found here: <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/annual-meeting/> This is a great way to network and to see what other districts are doing. I still believe that a supervisor should attend at least one annual and regional meeting with NACD. It's a great experience and opportunity!

I am excited to announce that the NE NACD will present a resolution on Wildlife Control Fencing at the annual meeting. This was brought forth by WV delegation and received unanimous approval from all NE states from start to finish. We look forward to seeing if the resolution is approved at the annual meeting.

The Spring NACD Fly In will be held March 20, 2024. More information will be coming.

Questions for Upcoming Area Meetings

Recently, conservation leaders in WV were asked the following questions on WV's conservation districts. At the upcoming area meetings, we will be discussing the following questions. Please discuss these questions as a board and be prepared to answer these questions as a group at the area meetings. This would also be a great opportunity to invite your local partners to your area meeting to have their input as well.

- 1) What is being done to strengthen districts? (Can include if partners are doing anything to help strengthen districts)
- 2) What is a district's greatest weakness? (Can be overall or for your district in particular)
- 3) Is there a group not engaged in districts that should be? (Can be overall or for your district in particular)
- 4) What resources are needed to strengthen districts? (can be overall or for your district in particular)
- 5) What are key strategic points to act on now?

Other

I will be away February 10-17 and will be slow to respond to messages.

Project and financial reports are due for those districts with an NRCS community outreach grant. Please finalize those ASAP and e-mail reports and receipts to both hduncan@wvca.us AND wvacd@wvca.us. *I would like to start featuring projects in upcoming publications, please send any photos, quotes, and other information not included in your reports.*

Upcoming Dates

- January 2, 2024: Eastern Area Meeting @ TVCD, 10 am
- January 3, 2024: Legislative Committee Meeting, 1 pm
- January 8-27, 2024: Candidacy Filing Period with County Clerk
<https://sos.wv.gov/FormSearch/Elections/Informational/Running%20for%20Office.pdf>
- January 9, 2024: Awards Council and SCC Meeting
- January 26, 2024: Central Area Meeting @ SCD, 10 am
- January 31, 2024: Western Area Meeting @ LKCD, 10 am
- February 7, 2024: Quarterly Meeting @ WVSU
- February 8, 2024: Ag & Conservation Day at the Capitol

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

Trainings/Upcoming Events/Outreach

- **Hancock County Office Hours –**
 - **January 18th** – 10am – 3pm
 - **February 15th** – 10am -4pm
- **February 15, 2024 – there will be a Spotted Lantern Fly focused outreach event at the New Manchester Vol. Fire Dept. following office hours.**

Programs

- Currently working on farm visits and assessments for current applications.
 - Applications – EQIP, AMA, CSP
 - Round 1– 39
 - Round 2 - 4
- FY2024 Sign Ups
 - Round 2 sign up ends March 15, 2024

Field Visits/Conservation Planning

- Staff completed field visits for conservation planning, technical assistance, and practice certifications.
- Completed new producer visits which turned into new applications.

Attached is the bi-monthly State Conservationist report and well as information on a collaborative WV NRCS & FSA Climate Monitoring project.

- Wheeling Creek Watershed Commission (WCWC)
 - Next meeting will be held on January 18.
- Administrative Specialist (WVCA) – Veronica Gibson
 - The NPCD quarterly newsletter was mailed on January 9. Veronica thanked Jennifer Kile for doing all that was needed to print and prepare the newsletter for mailing.
 - The Samara and Poster contest materials will be sent to schools next week.
 - Updated the equipment rental lease to include the cooperator requirement to provide a hitch pin.
 - Jenn Kile created an excel spreadsheet with emails of cooperators for a mailing list for the constant contact program. Veronica updated the Conservation Agreement to include the email address of new cooperators.
- Visitors
 - TK Lawncare – Dan, Terry, and Kevin Strobe
 - TK Lawncare expressed interest in placing a bid to mow the dams. They would use their own equipment. Don Whetzel said that the mower would have to be designated as a slope mower. Mark asked if they had chainsaw safety training. Robert and David said if it is contracted out that the training would not be a concern of the district. It would only be a concern if they are a district employee. Veronica will email a list of the dams to TK Lawncare.
 - Karen Cox, WVU Extension, Ohio County
 - Karen thanked the district for their sponsorship of the winter dinner meetings.
 - Karen is planning a watershed tour that would focus on the reduction of flooding and awareness. Karen invited the district to speak about what a dam does, why the dams are there, etc. It was discussed and suggested to Karen that

Wheeling Creek #3 would be the best dam for the visit. The tour is scheduled for the third week of May.

- Committee Reports
 - High Tunnel
 - David Shipman reviewed upcoming plans for the high tunnel and raised beds. Jim Anderson made a motion to purchase vegetable seeds. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.
 - Grassland
 - Jim Anderson reported that a meeting will be held tomorrow, and he plans to attend.
 - AgEP
 - Jennifer Kile needs a FY25 planning meeting scheduled.
 - Safety
 - Robert Luchetti, Jr. will schedule a meeting in the next month or two.
 - Eric Freeland is not sure if there will be a safety field day this year.

Old Business

- Wheeling Creek #3 Condition Update
 - Don Whetzel submitted the following update of Wheeling Creek #3/debris removal condition:

The seeding and mulching were completed on Thursday, December 21, 2023. We will continue to monitor the conditions and evaluate what additional work may be needed after the winter freeze and thaw cycles.

New Business

- 2024 Mileage Reimbursement
 - The 2024 IRS mileage rate has increased to \$.67. As per the district policy, the NPCD follows the IRS rate.
- FY25 District Personnel Plan
 - **Robert Luchetti, Jr. made a motion to approve the FY25 NPCD District Personnel Plan as submitted. Seconded by Chuck Glenn. Motion passed.** The personnel plan will be submitted to the State Committee.
- Refreshments for Spotted Lantern Fly Training
 - NRCS is holding a spotted lantern fly and tree of heaven field training on February 15. **Jim Anderson made a motion to provide refreshments for the upcoming NRCS training up to \$600. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**
- 2024 Appalachian Grazing Conference Donation
 - **Jim Anderson made a motion to donate \$1,000 to the Appalachian Grazing Conference. Seconded by Chuck Glenn. Motion passed.**

- Ag & Conservation Day at Capitol – February 8
 - The supervisors were reminded that Ag Day at the Capitol will be February 8.
- Bee Hotels
 - Mark Fitzsimmons would like to have a boy scout troop build bee hotels. They could possibly receive a merit badge. This could be part of the WVACD grant funds. Katie Fitzsimmons will determine the cost of the materials. **Jim Anderson made a motion to purchase materials for bee hotels using the WVACD grant funds. Seconded by Eric Freeland. Motion passed.**
- Blue Bird Boxes
 - There was a discussion about painting bird boxes as a contest. The district still needs to find someone to build the bird boxes.
- Century Farm Applications
 - The Century Farm applications are due to WVACD April 1.
- February Board Meeting Date
 - **Jim Anderson made a motion to hold the February board meeting on February 2 at 10:00am. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**
- 2024 Supervisor Elections
 - Expiring supervisor terms was discussed.
- Conservation Agreements
 - Matt Amaismeier/Brooke County/261 acres
Jim Anderson made a motion to approve the conservation agreement for M. Amaismeier. Seconded by Steve Paull. Motion passed.
- Ag EP
 - An AgEP planning meeting was scheduled for February 2 at 1:00pm.
 - Payments

Name	Practice	Amount	Cost Share
Joseph Klug	Lime	38.12 Tons	\$857.70

Jim Anderson made a motion to approve the completed AgEP practice for J. Klug as presented. Seconded by Chuck Glenn. Motion passed.

Correspondence – None

Supervisor Reports

- Chuck Glenn will attend the Hancock County Commission meeting on January 25. The Murray farm will be recognized.
- Mark Fitzsimmons gave a copy to each supervisor of the approved WV Conservation Awards Program.

NEXT MEETING – The next board meeting will be held on **Friday, February 2, 2024**, at the USDA Service Center, McMechen at 10:00 a.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Mark Fitzsimmons, Chairman

Amy Wade, Secretary

Minutes submitted by Veronica Gibson