

# ***Southern Conservation District***

## Regular Board Meeting Minutes

December 11, 2025

10:00 AM

The Southern Conservation District Board of Supervisors met on Thursday, December 11, 2025, at 10:00 AM in the conference room of the District Office located @ **463 Ragland Rd. Beckley, WV 25801.**

### **Those in Attendance:**

#### Supervisors:

Randall Patton, Chairman

Bill Harris, Vice-Chair

Edgar Hendrick, Secretary

John Farrell (Teleconference)

Randy Prince (Teleconference)

Rachel Prince (Teleconference)

Bill Cook

Curtis Murphy

Ron Testerman

Steve Johnston

#### Others:

Jesus Nandi Roman, WVCA

Jacob Lavender, WVCA

Dave Parkulo, SCD

Morgan Dial, WVCA

Katy McBride, NRCS

Ruby Daniels-Holland, NRCS

Beth Villers, WVU/NRCS

Heather Duncan, WVACD (Teleconference)

Jeremy Salyer, WVCA (Teleconference)

Hannah Thacker, NRCS

Brain Fry, WVCA

Open & Welcome

Randall Patton, Chairman

Ron Testerman led in prayer, Bill Cook led in Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Southern Conservation District Operations and Business**

#### **Approval of Minutes**

***Following review, Bill Harris made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2025 Regular Board Meeting. Ed Hendrick Seconded, motion carried.***

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***Following review, Steve Johnston made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2025 Special Board/Committee Meeting. Ed Hendrick Seconded, motion carried.***

#### **Conservation Technician Supervisor Report:**

Dave Parkulo, SCD

Dave Parkulo updated the board on ongoing field work throughout the district. He reported that channel-cutting on Brush Creek has been completed with only minor cleanup remaining, which he expects to finish once weather conditions improve. Work on the several District projects are also nearly complete, though recent snow and cold weather have delayed the final stages. Parkulo noted that he has delivered nearly all cost-share lime, with only a few deliveries outstanding, and anticipates the need for extensions on certain projects due to weather-related delays. He stated that all scheduled pond cleanouts have been completed with the exception of one remaining site, which will require an extension. Parkulo further reported that the District has received the Mercer County sponsor dollars, totaling approximately \$35,000. He explained that he will begin reviewing current expenditures and preparing updated estimates to determine how the funds should be allocated across Brush Creek and other Mercer County creeks/dams. Because proper budgeting will require reviewing account structures and projected costs alongside recent payments, the board agreed to table further discussion and revisit the matter during the Special Board/Committee meeting scheduled for the end of December.

#### **Conservation Specialist Report:**

Brian Fry, WVCA

Brian Fry presented the Conservation Specialist report and provided the Board with an overview of completed AgEP practices, pending payments, cancellations, and remaining program funds. He explained that the first page of his report listed all practices completed since the last meeting and noted that the associated payments had already been approved under delegated authority. Fry identified two additional payments requiring Board action: one for Curtis Murphy in the amount of \$125.62 for a water tank installation, and one for Sara Jones in the amount of \$2,312.00 for a pasture division fence. He then summarized a significant number of program cancellations received this season and directed the Board to the total listed in his report. The second page included a summary of all completed practices for which checks had already been issued, and the final page outlined total program funding, obligations, expenditures, and the remaining balance. Fry also requested extensions for several projects delayed due to weather, including one

remaining pond cleanout and a pasture division fence installation for which materials had been delivered but work remained unfinished. Because Curtis Murphy was a program participant, he exited the room prior to the Board's consideration of his payment.

***Following discussion, Bill Harris made a motion to approve exigency for Curtis Murphy, Steven Johnston seconded. Motion carried.***

Following the motion, Curtis Murphy entered the room and the meeting resumed.

***Following the previous motion, Bill Harris made a motion to approve payment for Sara Jones, Steven Johnston seconded, motion carried.***

***Following the previous motion, Bill Harris made a motion to approve all AgEP cancellations, Steven Johnston seconded, motion carried.***

Following the approval of cancellations, the Board held an extensive discussion about the unusually high number of cancellations this program year and ways to minimize them in the future. Morgan Dial explained that many cooperators either did not understand the project specifications or waited until the final deadline to begin work. She suggested that requiring approved participants to return to the office to review their landowner agreements in person, rather than relying solely on mailed documents, might help reduce confusion and prevent unnecessary cancellations. Dial also emphasized that last-minute cancellations restrict the District's ability to assist unfunded applicants, many of whom could have completed their projects if notified earlier.

The Board also discussed implementing penalties for approved applicants who cancel without cause. Dave Parkulo suggested establishing a one-year ineligibility period for any cooperator who cancels a funded practice, noting that the current ranking-point deduction is not an effective deterrent. Jacob Lavender stated that several other districts use similar penalties and have seen improved follow-through from participants. Board members further discussed whether unfunded applicants could be moved into available funding slots resulting from cancellations, particularly given the remaining state allocation of approximately \$21,392.14. Fry and Dial clarified that while this could be feasible, deadlines may need to be adjusted, and the AgEP Administrative Agreement may require revision to accommodate such a process. The Board agreed to continue sign-ups during the first two weeks of January as scheduled and to revisit the matter after reviewing the number of new applicants. Members expressed interest in prioritizing unfunded applicants after the initial sign-up period if funding remains available, while also considering whether modifications to deadlines, agreement language, or program procedures could improve completion rates. The Board will revisit these options during a future meeting once additional information becomes available. A copy of Fry's report is attached below.

District Conservationist Report:

Katy McBride, NRCS

The Southern Conservation District's field offices in Beckley and Princeton are currently prioritizing the preparation of applications for Fiscal Year 2026, encompassing the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA). Significant progress has been made, with field work finalized on the majority of the pending applications; however, a number of applications still necessitate final field visits to be completed. The offices are now in a waiting period for official FY26 program guidance, payment schedules, timelines, and other essential directives. Interest in these programs remains high, as evidenced by the current application counts: 24 total AMA Applications, 98 total EQIP Applications, and 15 total CSP Applications. Regarding the work already completed, the Princeton office certified \$154,852.06 in completed practices, utilizing funds across CSP and various numerical practices including 574, 516, 382, 472, 314, 666, 530, and 430. Meanwhile, the Beckley office certified a total of \$92,007.00 for completed practices involving CSP and practice 666. A copy of Katy McBride's report is attached below.

Katy McBride further reported that staff in both the Beckley and Princeton offices have been working to catch up on CSP payments following an earlier delay and are also addressing expiring contracts and engineering design needs in coordination with the area office. She announced an agency meeting scheduled for Monday, December 15 at 2:00 p.m. in the downstairs conference room to allow all agencies in the building to discuss safety concerns, including interactions with difficult landowners and recent incidents affecting NRCS employees in other locations. McBride also informed the Board that the Forest Service lease for the NRCS office space in Princeton expired at the end of September and that, although proposed lease terms had been considered acceptable before a furlough period, no formal extension has yet been finalized. She is working with Forest Service and area leadership to address the situation and evaluate options should the building be sold.

Hannah Thacker provided an update on ongoing flood buyout projects. She reported that the WVU Law Clinic is drafting offer letters for the Elkhorn Creek buyout area, with separate versions for properties that have clear title and those with outstanding title issues. Each landowner will be given 90 days to consider the offer, and those with title issues will receive information on legal resources to assist them. Thacker stated that draft letters are expected to be reviewed in the coming weeks, with final mailings likely to occur after the first of the year due to the holidays. She also reported that the Beckley Sanitary Board has identified several frequently flooded properties on Nebraska Avenue for a voluntary buyout and is preparing to advertise for a surveyor to evaluate those parcels.

Watershed Manager South Report:

Jacob Lavender, WVCA

Jacob Lavender provided an update on the Paint/Pax Creek meeting held on December 12, 2025, noting that agency staff have been working extensively to finalize assessments related to recent flooding impacts in the area. He explained that, following the earlier meeting with county representatives and the coal company, all tasks assigned to the district have now been completed. This included identifying and documenting both short-term blockage removal sites and longer-term potential benching locations throughout the affected reaches. Lavender reported that between 14 and 17 individual blockages were identified for removal, along with an additional six to seven sites that may require more extensive future work, pending survey and design. He stated that a follow-up meeting is scheduled for the following day at the SCD office, during which he anticipates receiving updates from the coal company on which sites they intend to address, as their ability to proceed remains subject to internal approval and funding decisions at multiple levels.

Lavender added that once the coal company confirms its scope of work, the remaining sites—if any—can be evaluated by the District to determine potential costs should the District be asked to complete them. He also noted that the county is expected to secure any necessary land rights requested by the coal company before work begins.

Area Operations Manager Report:

Jeremy Salyer, WVCA

Jeremy Salyer presented his report and stated that the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) is requesting that Conservation Districts (CDs) review and update their District Policy Manuals, and also review any existing CD Employee Manuals. Regarding the Agricultural Enhancement Program (AgEP) Administrative Review, each District's Administrative Specialist must conduct a review of either 10% or a minimum of three files from that fiscal year, submitting the Administrative Review Form to their District Operations Manager (Jeremy or Don) by January 31st. This mid-year review is intended to allow staff time to identify procedural errors and implement preventative steps, while also ensuring that all proper documentation is physically accessible in cooperator files and that the online database aligns with WVCA financial records. Key dates for the AgEP program timeline include a State AgEP committee meeting on December 15th to finalize the upcoming FY program, with a presentation to the SCC scheduled for January, and the deadline for CDs to submit the final practice list to the WVCA being June 15th. Additionally, the district personnel plan is due to the SCC in March, requiring review and approval on the February agenda. A final upcoming event is the Ag Day/Legislative Meet and Greet on February 18th.

Salyer also mentioned that his report included an opportunity with the WV DEP to provide free, non-regulatory air sensors to state, county, and local agencies for educational and informational purposes. These sensors measure particulate matter (PM) and are being obtained through a federal grant with the goal of placing at least one or two sensors in all 55 counties. Operating the sensor requires only 1 watt of electricity and about 150 MB of data per month, and the DEP will ship the sensor, mounting bracket, and power supply cord for free. The sensors, specifically the

PurpleAir Classic Plus, measure the fine inhalable particles known as PM2.5, and the data is accessible on the EPA's Air Quality Index (AQI) map, available at <https://fire.airnow.gov/>. It is important to note that this program is not Agency related, and Slayer encouraged anyone interested to contact DEP for more information. A copy of Jeremy Salyer's complete report is attached below.

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During discussion of the upcoming AgEP Enhancement Committee meeting, the Board reviewed the proposed agenda, practices under consideration, and the suggested revisions to the statewide allocation formula. Staff noted that the final agenda, solar practice letter, FY27 timeline, and call-in information had been circulated, and Curtis Murphy confirmed that he intends to participate in the meeting by phone, with the Board agreeing that if technical issues prevent his participation, staff may relay the district's established positions. The Board reiterated its opposition to the proposed allocation formula—which would distribute 15 percent of funds based on unfunded applications, 35 percent based on county farm numbers, and 35 percent based on county farm acreage—because the district believes the method disadvantages districts like Southern Conservation District that actively fund practices beyond their state allocation. Members emphasized their ongoing support for using USDA Farm Service Agency data or Census of Agriculture data, which they believe more accurately reflect agricultural activity, rather than county farm tax-exemption records, which are often incomplete. The Board also reviewed the proposed new practices expected to be discussed at the meeting, including additions to soil health practices, separation of existing pollinator practices into distinct categories, and proposed solar components for livestock water systems under the exigency program. The Board agreed that continued advocacy for fair allocation criteria will be necessary, as the statewide allocation formula is expected to remain a recurring discussion.

#### Parking Lot Repairs (Beckley Sanitary Board) | Double Parking Issue (Silver Lexus):

Dave Parkulo next discussed the status of the parking lot repair previously requested from the Beckley Sanitary Board. No update had been received from the City of Beckley, and staff noted that communications from the Sanitary Board have been limited. He stated he would attempt to obtain an update and determine whether plans have been forwarded to the Sanitary Board. The Board also discussed ongoing concerns regarding a repeated double-parking issue involving a Rural Development employee. Several Board members noted that the matter had already been raised during a previous FAC meeting and will be addressed again at the upcoming meeting on Monday. Several Members expressed frustration that the issue continues despite prior attempts to resolve it, emphasizing that limited parking should be respected and that designated customer parking near the main entrance must remain accessible. Katy McBride of NRCS confirmed that the matter will remain with the FAC committee unless further action becomes necessary.

Childers Inc. Parking Lot Usage:

The Board then addressed concerns regarding parking lot use by Childers, which had been raised during the previous committee meeting after SCD staff observed approximately ten of their vehicles using the parking area adjacent to the district offices. Members discussed the need to protect parking availability for district operations and visitors, particularly as the district prepares to renew its federal lease. Dave Parkulo explained that the parking use appears to have originated from an informal allowance for one or two vehicles, which expanded over time without authorization. He stated that he will address the matter directly by informing Childers that, because the Federal Government pays for the leased parking spaces, those spaces must remain available exclusively for Federal and District use, and their Childers staff will need to park on their own property. Parkulo noted this approach should resolve the issue without creating unnecessary conflict with neighboring tenants. The Board then agreed to revisit the matter if unauthorized parking continues.

WVACD Technical Assistance Grant:

The Board received an update on the WVACD Technical Assistance Grant, which had been previously discussed at committee level. Heather Duncan, WVACD, joined the meeting to review the grant structure and funding requirements, noting that three technical assistance positions are being proposed statewide, with one assigned to the Southern Conservation District. The position would focus primarily on grassland management, conservation planning, practice implementation support, and assisting with landowner outreach such as field days and grazing workshops. Duncan presented the draft budget model, explaining that the position would be hired as a 1099 contractor, tiered between \$20 and \$35 per hour depending on conservation planning certification level. She clarified that NACD will fund 80% of the total cost, with the district responsible for a 20% cash match. Based on the projected wage and travel costs, the district's estimated cash match obligation is approximately \$2,200, which the Board had previously approved. Duncan also noted that while in-kind match (such as supervisor time or office space) will count toward reporting requirements, federal resources such as NRCS office space or vehicles cannot be counted as match. The Board discussed potential use of NRCS vehicles to help reduce travel reimbursement costs, pending confirmation through NRCS leadership. Duncan further explained that the position is intended to help fill statewide capacity gaps caused by agency hiring freezes and will allow districts to reintroduce more direct, on-farm technical assistance, including soil sampling, grazing plan development, irrigation assistance, and general conservation planning. Staff confirmed that space is available within the district office for the position, and that a qualified candidate has already expressed interest. Duncan also stated that she is preparing a Memorandum of Agreement to outline responsibilities between WVACD and participating districts, including reporting, payroll coordination, and monthly financial submissions required under the grant. She anticipates submitting the application prior to the early-January deadline. The Board expressed support for moving forward, noting the opportunity to enhance grazing-focused technical assistance in the district and to coordinate

outreach efforts with neighboring districts, WVU Extension, and West Virginia State University programs. No further questions were raised.

Scale Purchase:

The Board next discussed a proposal for the District to purchase a large certified livestock scale, estimated at \$40,000 to \$45,000, for potential use by area producers. Staff explained that the vendor had expressed interest in presenting the equipment as part of the upcoming grazing conference, and the idea had been brought forward to evaluate whether such a purchase could provide service to producers or generate revenue for the District. Board members expressed significant concern that the scale would not receive enough use to justify the cost, noting that similar portable scales in the county are seldom used and that producers typically rely on market scales or smaller portable units for routine weighing. It was also noted that producers are unlikely to pay substantial rental fees for occasional use, particularly 4-H and youth exhibitors who generally need only periodic weight checks. Board members discussed whether smaller-scale options might be more practical but ultimately agreed that the proposed large certified scale would not be cost-effective. The Board determined that the matter should be referred to a committee meeting for further review, including identifying what smaller or existing scale resources may already be available within the county and whether any feasible alternative would better serve local producers. Following Discussion, it was agreed to table this matter for the committee meeting at the end of the month.

SCD Sponsor Dollars (Beckley Sanitary Board/ RCC/City of Beckley/MCC):

Jesus Nandi Roman informed the board and SCD staff that the District had received the sponsor dollar payment of \$35,000.00 from the Mercer County Commission, and is still expecting payments from the City of Beckley, Raleigh County Commission and the Beckley Sanitary Board. Nandi Roman stated that although he had mailed the agreements (July 2025), he had not received a response from any organization and decided to follow up via email. He informed the Board that he had established contact and that each entity had received the funding request, but he is yet to hear back from any of them (excluding Mercer County Commission). Randall Patton stated that he would potentially follow up come January 2026, should the District not receive any response in the month of December.

Building Renovations (Discussion):

The Board discussed the possibility of continuing renovation work in the downstairs foyer area, extending the updates previously completed in the FSA and NRCS office corridors. Staff noted that the section from the main entrance toward the conference room would benefit from similar improvements, and preliminary estimates place the cost of materials and labor at approximately \$4,000–\$7,000. Parkulo reported that 16–18 new LED fixtures have recently been installed throughout the downstairs area, including hallway and conference room lighting, significantly improving visibility. He stated that additional renovation work could be completed as time

permits. Parkulo also provided an update on parking lot maintenance, noting that parking spaces will need to be repainted in the spring, including the addition of an ADA-accessible space and appropriate markings. He advised that several cracks are beginning to form in the pavement and recommended addressing them with sealant in the spring to prevent further deterioration. Parkulo further reported that the fire escape project remains underway, but the placement of exterior air-conditioning units has required adjustments to the stairwell design to ensure adequate clearance for installation. He is continuing to work on a structural solution and preparing to order the stairwell components.

Site 12 Easement Violation:

No Updates were provided as of now. Dave Parkulo informed the Board that he would follow up with John Wooton and provide the following meeting.

Winter Banquet Updates/Discussion:

Several options for the SCD Winter Banquet were discussed. Jesus Nandi-Roman informed the Board that reservations for Twin Falls fell through. The Board agreed on a simple lunch at a local restaurant. Nandi Roman informed the Board that he would make the arrangements and communicate them to all staff.

Meeting Adjournment:

*Upon the completion of all agenda items, Randall Patton made a motion to adjourn the Southern Conservation District's December 11, 2025 regular Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Ed Hendrick . The Board Meeting was adjourned at 12:18:12 EST.*

Dates To Remember:

SCD Committee Meeting: December 30, 2025 at 10:00 AM @ 463 Ragland Rd WV, 25801.


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Respectfully Submitted: Jesus Nandi Roman, West Virginia Conservation Agency,  
Administrative Specialist

**F. William Harris, SCD Vice-Chairman**

X 

**Edgar Hendrick, SCD Secretary**

X 

BH/EH/AS

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## Southern Conservation District — Motions Summary

### Regular Board Meeting — December 11, 2025 *(Draft)*

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**Motion:** Approve the minutes of the November 13, 2025 Regular Board Meeting

**Made By:** Bill Harris

**Seconded By:** Ed Hendrick

**Result:** Motion Carried

[Page 2]

**Motion:** Approve the minutes of the November 25, 2025 Special Board/Committee Meeting

**Made By:** Steve Johnston

**Seconded By:** Ed Hendrick

**Result:** Motion Carried

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**Motion:** Approve exigency for Curtis Murphy

**Made By:** Bill Harris

**Seconded By:** Steven Johnston

**Result:** Motion Carried

[Page 3]

**Motion:** Approve payment for Sara Jones (AgEP – Pasture Division Fence)

**Made By:** Bill Harris

**Seconded By:** Steven Johnston

**Result:** Motion Carried

[Page 3]

**Motion:** Approve all AgEP cancellations

**Made By:** Bill Harris

**Seconded By:** Steven Johnston

**Result:** Motion Carried

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**Motion:** Adjourn the Southern Conservation District Regular Board Meeting

**Made By:** *Randall Patton*

**Seconded By:** *Ed Hendrick*

**Result:** Motion Carried