

Southern Conservation District

Special Board/Committee Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2026

10:00 AM

The Southern Conservation District Board of Supervisors met on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 10:00 AM in the conference room of the district office located at **463 Ragland Rd. Beckley, WV 25801**

Those in Attendance:

Supervisors:

Randall Patton, Chairman

Bill Harris, Vice-Chair

Edgar Hendrick, Secretary

Randy Prince (Teleconference)

Rachel Prince (Teleconference)

Steven Johnston

Curtis Murphy

Ron Testerman

Others:

Jesus Nandi Roman, WVCA

Shane Pettrey, WVCA

Jacob Lavender, WVCA

Jeremy Salyer, WVCA

Brian Fry, WVCA

Morgan Dial, WVCA

Julie Simmons, WVCAD

Dave Parkulo, SCD

Doug Wood, Mtn RC&D

Open & Welcome

Randall Patton, Chairman

- Curtis Murphy led the Pledge of Allegiance; Ron Testerman led the opening prayer.

Southern Conservation District Operations and Business

Transfer of Remaining Funds Between Projects:

Doug Wood, Mtn RC&D

Doug Wood, Chairman of the Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Area, presented a report regarding the West Virginia Land Trust Little Bluestone Community Forest Erosion Control Project. The project involved installing limestone gravel and replacing a culvert on a 0.45-mile access road to prevent sediment from reaching the Little Bluestone River. Due to the frugal application of stone on vehicle tracks rather than the full road width, the project was completed for \$2,946.40, \$1,553.60 under the original \$4,500 budget. Wood requested that the remaining \$1,553.60 be reallocated to the Piney Creek Preserve Erosion Control Project to help mitigate a funding shortfall caused by the elimination of National Coal Heritage Authority budget support. He noted that Judith Lyons, director of the West Virginia Conservation Agency, deferred the decision to the Southern Conservation District Board.

Following Doug Wood's report, Bill Harris moved that the Southern Conservation District Board concur with the Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Area Board in using the remaining funds from the Little Bluestone Community Forest project for the Piney Creek watershed project. Ron Testerman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Senate Bill 631 Discussion:

Jeremy Salyer, representing the West Virginia Conservation Agency, provided a briefing on Senate Bill 631, which was introduced in the West Virginia Senate on January 27, 2026. The bill proposes transferring all ownership, sponsorship interests, liabilities, property, and associated funds for flood control dams and similar structures from the conservation districts to the West Virginia Conservation Agency. This transfer would include all structural infrastructure, channels, dikes, levees, and the authority to enter into related agreements. The legislative intent appears to be a consolidation of authority and liability following previous legislative actions regarding third-party agreements and flood control.

Board members expressed significant concerns regarding the loss of local control and the potential impact on established operations and maintenance agreements. A primary point of discussion was the transfer of funds, specifically whether sponsored dollars from local county commissions and cities would remain earmarked for projects within the district or be absorbed into a general state fund. The Board noted that while this district has successfully maintained separate accounts for sponsor and state funds, many other districts have not, which could complicate the transfer process.

Concerns were also raised regarding the legal and administrative costs of renegotiating easements and memorandums of understanding if ownership is transferred. Further questions were posed regarding whether funds would be frozen upon passage of the bill or whether

districts would retain the authority to use existing budgets until the mandated transfer date of July 1, 2026. Board members noted that the Natural Resources Committee, which includes local representation, has not yet set an agenda for the bill. It was emphasized that the district should engage with committee members to express opposition, as the loss of equipment and funding could jeopardize the specific watershed work currently performed by the district.

Following the discussion, the Southern Conservation District Board determined that it will draft a formal letter to the Senate opposing Senate Bill 631. The Board concluded that they would continue with planned projects and easement violation proceedings as originally scheduled until the legislation reaches a final determination. Following these statements, Bill Harris made a formal motion to oppose Senate Bill 631. Ed Hendrick seconded, motion carried.

Compliant Letter on BC Site 12:

Bill Harris informed the Board of Supervisors that he has maintained communication with the Southern Conservation District attorney, John Wooton, regarding the easement violation at Brush Creek Site 12. Mr. Wooton confirmed that the formal letter addressing the violation has been drafted and dispatched to the appropriate parties. Harris provided the Board with an update on the status of this correspondence and noted that the district will proceed with the matter as scheduled.

Review/Approval of December Financial Reports:

The Board reviewed the December financial reports, specifically the first five sections of the documentation. During the review, an inquiry was made regarding a disbursement from the District Operations (CDO) account totaling over \$4,000.00. It was clarified that this payment was issued to cover credit card expenses for district-related items, including costs associated with the winter banquet, apparel such as jackets and hats, and other operational expenses appropriate for CDO funding. Following the clarification of these expenditures, the Board proceeded with the review of the district accounts.

*District Operating Account
District Building Account
Supervisor Travel & Per Diem
CDO Account
District Reserve Account*

Following the discussion, Steven Johnston made a motion to approve the December Financial Reports, and Ed Hendrick Seconded. Motion carried.

Review/Approval of Accounts Receivable/Aging Summary:

Following the discussion and review of the aging summary, Curtis Murphy made a motion to approve AR/AS as presented. Steevn Johnston seconded, motion carried.

Review/Approval of Co-Administered WVCA Financial Reports:

The Board further reviewed the co-administered and restricted fund reports with a specific focus on the Operations and Maintenance restricted accounts. A detailed inquiry was made regarding a statement showing expenses of \$108,897.97, which appeared to leave an interest-bearing account with a remaining balance of \$81.49 as of December 31. Parkulo clarified that invoices are often coded across multiple accounts to balance state and restricted funds to zero, and the Board noted that significant expenses may be attributed to ongoing watershed projects and outstanding payments from the conservation agency.

Following review and discussion, Steven Johnston made a motion to approve Co-Administered funds, Curtis Murphy seconded, motion carried.

Conservation Specialist Report:

Brian Fry, WVCA

The Board reviewed the cost-share report regarding second sign-ups for the Nutrient Management and Frost Seeding programs. It was reported that 28 cooperators signed up for Nutrient Management, totaling a cost share of \$29,884.25. Additionally, six cooperators signed up for Frost Seeding, totaling \$2,219.12. The total requested funding for these second sign-ups is \$32,103.25. The Board noted that \$31,819.96 remained available from the first sign-up period, which included obligated district funds. ***To fully fund all eligible second sign-up cooperators, Steven Johnston made a motion to approve allocating an additional \$283.41. Bill Harris seconded, motion carried.*** During the approval process, Supervisors who had signed up for practices were approved by Jeremy Salyer of WVCA.

Following a detailed discussion regarding the drought exigency reimbursement for water supply materials submitted by Chase and Jeffrey McLaughlin, it was noted that while temporary fencing claims were verified, the water supply receipts included collapsible water tanks purchased from Amazon. One receipt was dated December 22, the day before the district contacted the cooperator, while the second was dated December 26, after the contact was made. Despite concerns regarding the timing of the purchases and the lack of a specific purchase deadline in the original drought program guidelines, the Board noted that there were no written specifications prohibiting these reimbursements. A copy of Brian Fry's report is attached below.

Curtis Murphy moved to pay and approve the water trough payments for the water supply tanks for Chase and Jeffrey McLaughlin at 50% of the cost, up to \$500.00. Ed Hendrick seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Century Farm Application Review:

The Board discussed the review of Century Farm applications, noting that although the district received four applications, only two are currently complete. It was noted that although the necessary deeds and applications have been provided, the required farm photographs have not yet been included in the physical files. However, they are available on mobile devices. The Board referenced guidance stating that cooperators may have additional time to finalize these details, provided the district is satisfied with the approval process. To ensure all materials are complete and to allow supervisors additional time to review the documentation sent to their electronic devices, the Board decided to table the applications for the next board meeting.

RCC, City of Beckley, Beckley Sanitary Board:

The Board discussed the status of funding contributions from the Raleigh County Commission and the City of Beckley for local flood control projects. Ed Hendrick reported that previous contributions from the County Commission totaled \$30,000.00. This total includes \$10,000 for Little White Stick, \$15,000 for Soak Creek, and \$5,000 for Cranberry Creek. It was noted that the contribution for Cranberry Creek was intentionally kept at \$5,000.00 to encourage the City of Beckley and the Sanitary Board to increase their respective funding for that project. Jay Quesenberry of the County Commission has ensured that these checks will be forthcoming following their next meeting.

Regarding the City of Beckley, the Board reviewed an inquiry from Jeremiah Johnson requesting detailed financial histories and partner contribution data for the last five years. The Board consented to provide this information, noting it is public record, but emphasized that the city should also be aware of the funding shortfalls the district has had to cover from restricted accounts due to insufficient local contributions. The Board clarified that while funding agreements with the city may be revised, the language of existing maintenance agreements cannot be altered.

Elkhorn Letters:

Jesus Nandi Roman provided a brief update in regards to the Elkhorn letters. Several board members asked whether letters had been sent, and Nandi Roman informed them that an email update would be provided once he received updates from the relevant parties. As no other updates were available, the meeting proceeded, and the conversation was tabled.

Special Board Meeting Adjournment

Following the completion of all agenda items, Ed Hendrock made a motion to adjourn the special board meeting. Steven Johnston seconded. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 AM EST.

Southern Conservation District Committee meeting

Equipment:

Dave Parkulo provided an update on the current status of district equipment and maintenance efforts. The district is in good standing with its equipment, having recently updated most of the fleet. Current maintenance tasks include replacing a hydraulic pump and seal on one of the mowers and installing new tires on existing rims. The previously reported electrical ground issue on one of the mowers has also been resolved. The Board discussed the recent purchase of a new pickup truck for approximately \$64,000.00. It was noted that this purchase price was \$2,000.00 less than a similar vehicle purchased two years ago and nearly \$5,000.00 less than a 2017 model. The Board confirmed that the vehicle was not financed and was paid in full from the operating account.

Building:

Dave Parkulo provided an update on the internal renovation projects currently underway. Work has commenced in the hallway adjacent to the downstairs conference room, including the area near the mailbox and the hallway leading to the restrooms. The crew is expected to complete these sections shortly, using the time available during the winter season to stay ahead of scheduled improvements. The Board discussed the next phases of the renovation plan, prioritizing high-traffic areas to ensure administrative excellence. The following priorities were established: The crew will focus on the section at the bottom of the stairs leading to the Farm Service Agency area, including moving heavy equipment and map cabinets, as this is the primary public thoroughfare. Subsequent work will address the area containing the sinks and the transition toward the offices. Renovations to Dave Parkulo's office are also planned. Subsequent work will address the area containing the sinks in the NRCS area towards the offices. Supervisors emphasized the importance of protecting the flooring during the moving of heavy furniture. Bill Harris requested an update regarding winter maintenance, whereas Dave Parkulo reported that the parking lot and walkways are being maintained. While there has been a shortage of bagged salt, the district has secured bulk salt to ensure the facility remains safe for NRCS/SCD staff and visitors.

Finance:

Curtis Murphy discussed the management of the district's CDs, noting that several are due for renewal in July. It was emphasized that banks such as MCNB and Truist often use automatic renewal clauses if action is not taken within a 10-day grace period after maturity. Supervisors noted that failing to renew within this window manually can result in automatic renewals at significantly lower interest rates, sometimes as low as 0.5%. To ensure the best financial return, the Board advised that all renewals should be completed within the specified ten-day period and that physical receipts must be obtained. These receipts serve as essential proof of the agreed-upon rate and transaction date in the event of a discrepancy. Murphy concluded the

discussion by noting the disparity between low deposit interest rates and current mortgage rates, which range from 6.5 to 7%.

Ag Enhancement:

Morgan Dial and Brian Fry presented recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year AgEP agreement. The Board discussed shifting to a single sign-up period to streamline administrative rankings and field inspections. It was suggested that the AgEP agreement include a provision allowing for a second sign-up period only if sufficient funding remains after the initial round to ensure the full allocation is utilized.

To improve operational efficiency, the district is considering moving the sign-up period earlier than the traditional first two weeks of June. This change would provide staff more time to complete rankings and property inspections before the final budget allotments are received in July. The Board also reviewed funding percentages from the previous year, noting that lime accounted for approximately 30% of total funding, followed by nutrient management and heavy use area protection. A review of recent sign-ups revealed that 10 cooperators applied during the second sign-up period despite existing restrictions, with 5 approved twice in a single fiscal year. This resulted in an estimated \$5,000.00 of unnecessary expenditure from district funds. To prevent future errors, the Board emphasized the need for a single sign-up process with a delegated approval authority granted to the Committee Chairman to fund previously unfunded, ranked applicants as cancellations occur. The Board also discussed the following policy changes: Cancellation Penalties: A new policy was proposed requiring cooperators to cancel within 30 days to avoid penalties. Failure to do so without a valid excuse may result in ineligibility for the program for 1 year. Completion Deadlines: Despite some discussion about extending deadlines for fencing or pond cleanouts, the Board determined that existing deadlines should remain to discourage procrastination and ensure timely payments. pH Requirements: The Board noted state-level changes to pH eligibility criteria. Frost seeding now requires a minimum pH of 5.8, while the nutrient management threshold has been adjusted to 5.6. The district will update its local AgEP agreement to reflect these state standards for the next fiscal year. The West Virginia Conservation Agency will provide a finalized statewide practice list following the State Conservation Committee meeting later this month. A draft AgEP agreement will be presented at the next board meeting for review and finalization by March 2026.

Education and Marketing:

Ron Testerman provided a report on recent outreach activities, including his attendance at a Farm Bureau meeting where he announced the district's ongoing assessment management program and noted that most participants were aware of the need for updated soil samples. He also attended a recent session with approximately 20 participants that focused on pasture management. Future sessions are expected to cover the use of drones in agriculture, specifically for the aerial spraying of invasive species such as autumn olive. The Board discussed the potential for drone technology

to manage invasive plants along roads and in difficult terrain, noting that compliance thresholds for Federal Aviation Administration regulations vary by drone size.

Discussion followed regarding various regional agricultural conferences and educational opportunities. The upcoming Appalachian Grazing Conference will be held at the State Fairgrounds with an early sign-up fee of \$25.00 if completed ten days in advance. Promotional items such as first aid kits, pasture sticks, and stockman books will be available. Additionally, a series of webinars hosted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service will run from February through October, covering a diverse range of livestock topics from bison to insects. The Board noted the availability of a \$3,000.00 grant for local demonstrations, which remains available through September. These funds can be utilized for equipment demos, guest speakers, or purchasing technology to facilitate educational videos. The Board of Supervisors also discussed various ways to collaborate with local districts to host additional grazing demonstrations/workshops in support of the local Appalachian Grazing conference scheduled in Lewisburg in 2026.

Meeting Schedule Adjustments:

Due to personal family health matters and the need to ensure a quorum, the Board discussed rescheduling the next regular meeting. It was moved and approved to reschedule the next Southern Conservation District Board meeting from February 12 to February 19, 2026. Jesus Nandi Roman will ensure that all relevant parties are notified of the schedule change.

Meeting Adjournment:

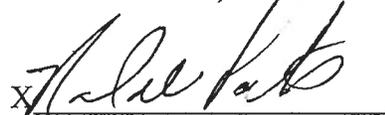
Upon the completion of all agenda items, Randall Patton adjourned the Southern Conservation District's February 3, 2026, committee meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 PM EST.

Dates To Remember:

SCD Committee Meeting: February 3, 2026, at 10:00 AM @ 463 Ragland Rd, WV, 25801.

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

Randall Patton, Chairman

X 

Edgar Hendrick, SCD Secretary

X 

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Motions Summary

Special Board/Committee Meeting – February 3, 2026:

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A motion was made by Bill Harris that the Southern Conservation District Board concur with the Mountain RC& Ds Area Board in using the remaining funds from the Little Bluestone Community Forest project for the Piney Creek watershed project. The motion was seconded by Ron Testerman and carried.

Page 3

A motion was made by Bill Harris to formally oppose Senate Bill 631. The motion was seconded by Edgar Hendrick and carried.

Page 3

A motion was made by Steven Johnston to approve the December Financial Reports. The motion was seconded by Edgar Hendrick and carried.

Page 4

A motion was made by Curtis Murphy to approve the Accounts Receivable/Aging Summary as presented. The motion was seconded by Steven Johnston and carried.

Page 4

A motion was made by Steven Johnston to approve the Co-Administered West Virginia Conservation Agency Financial Reports. The motion was seconded by Curtis Murphy and carried.

Page 4

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Page 5

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