

## **WCNRCD Board Meeting**

June 12, 2025 6:30 PM

301 Barrows Rd, Brattleboro, VT 05301 and over Zoom

**Present:** Cory Ross, District Manager; Meg Kluge, Linda Corse, Geof Dolman, and Pieter van Loon, and Katie Morrison, board supervisors; Isabel Bowman, Conservation Specialist; Heather Blunk, Ag Resource Specialist; Arrow Kitchens, Administrative Assistant; Garrett Manchester, Conservation Assistant; Heather Blunk, Ag Resource Specialist

**Zoom Participants:** Olivia Carlson, NRCS Acting District Conservationist for the South Zone.

**Land Acknowledgement:** *We respectfully acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Abenaki People, who have stewarded this land throughout the generations.*

Need to update the agreement that says we can only have 5 people working out of the office; Phylixcia said it will be fine to have 6 people during the time when Garrett and Arrow will overlap, as long as the board approves.

*Motion to approve the change to the agreement to allow Arrow work out of the NRCS office.  
Motion approved.*

### **NRCS Updates:**

- Over halfway in the process obligating EQIP funds.
- The RCPP preapprovals are fully obligated.
- For the local fund pool for fiscal year '25 a lot of the applicants that applied received funds.
- Congrats for receiving the local fund pool for fiscal year '26.
- There will be reviews of the ranking questions to make sure all relevant requirements are included.
- Aug 22, 2025 - deadline producers need to submit applications for NRCS programs: EQIP, CSP, AMA, and RCPP.
- New programs from the Farm Service Agency are forthcoming but haven't been released yet.
- Chad did soil screening for lead at the Brattleboro Farmers Market in May. Another one is happening on July 5.
- He can visit and bring PXRF, so let him know if there's an opportunity to come down, for a farm/ other outreach opportunity for instance.
- Usually does testing around houses; detects other metals too, such as arsenic.
- Soil health training is being held on June 23 for field staff.

- Wetlands restoration training is being held on June 26, location tbd.
- Wetlands id and delineation training is being held on July 25, location tbd.
- Joe Bondi will be in the office in Bratt July 28 to answer questions (does a lot of wetland delineations).
- Engineer Les Wright was irrigation engineer and he will be taking another position; Ally Hook will be heading to Windham once a month, to answer engineering related questions. Jake Senegal has been working on a lot of Windham projects also.

**Draft District Vehicle Policy:**

- Meg's address is 795 Bonnyvale Rd (not 790)
- Page 1: Add "Employees and supervisors" to folks eligible to drive: add "and supervisors" wherever employees are mentioned.
- Shared other typos.
- Page 2: Change: when needing to transport flammable items, they must ride in the bed of the truck.
- Move sentence starting "Oversight of this maintenance will..." to the beginning of the Vehicle Maintenance section. Change "Every driver is expected" to "Every driver may be asked..."
- Don't capitalize "district."
- July 30 at 10am Heather will be hosting a workshop to review tasks such as changing a tire and using jumper cables.
- Add to the parking section that the vehicle can be parked at Meg's house as well.

*Motion to approve the vehicle policy as presented and discussed.*

*Motion approved.*

**Proposed Fiscal Year '26 Budget:**

- Cory met with Dave Dore with Structural Integrity. He had many suggestions and questions.
- Best practice - do one budget and then at the end of the year report how you did. You can do your best to estimate the budget, and the actual budget doesn't have to match exactly.
- Why is 'Cost of Goods Sold' in the Income section? Not clear to Cory.
- Funds from the state will be forthcoming (\$53,350); we will need to report how we spend it but we can spend it on whatever we need.
- In the past we've adopted a cost of living increase on July 1; Cory is not 100% confident that he can recommend that we do that on July 1 this year. It might make sense to wait 6 months to make sure we have the funds and can pay it as a lump amount.

*Motion delay annual cost of living increase and to revisit the question during the December meeting.*

*Motion approved.*

*Motion to approve the FY '26 budget as presented and discussed.*

*Motion approved.*

### **Update on Federal Funding and Policies**

- A lot is going on behind the scenes with the budget.
- Overall there's optimism about the status of the Farm Bill. There likely will be cuts with SNAP benefits and FTS expenditures, which will impact local farmers.

### **Strategic Plan Update:**

- Elise did a retreat with the staff this past Monday.
- She has reached out to various folks with hopes of interviewing them.
- Will ask Peter Miller for an interview.
- Will also send shorter surveys to a group of other folks, including Cheshire County, Olivia, etc.
- The 3 hour retreat, which will include staff and supervisors, is scheduled for Sept. 16, 5-8 pm.

### **VACD Update:**

- The annual meeting is scheduled for Nov. 6 at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Montpelier.
- There will be a dinner.
- Costs will be covered for two people from every district.
- Folks travelling from over 1.5 hours away (75 miles) will also get the discounted room rate.
- Heather is wondering if we have any suggested trainings:
  - Same types of trainings as staff (i.e. wetland)
  - Financial literacy
  - What is part of a supervisor's role?
  - Suggestion that new supervisors should get a one day training (similar to what happened in the past)
- Walter Medwid, member of the executive committee and the capacity committee has resigned from the executive committee for personal reasons. He is staying on as a supervisor in his local district.
- When Vicky Drew agreed to join the executive committee she said it would be only for a couple years. She plans to be done when her term expires this year
- Rick Hopkins is retiring in December from the VACD executive committee as well as from the NRCC where he serves as chair.

- Linda has an idea for another supervisor to add.
- Michelle is settling into her role. NACD meetings are coming up and she thinks it's important to maintain that relationship.
- She wants to get a number of things in writing, such as making sure VACD policies are up to date.
- The next full board meeting is in August.

### **Report on District Activities:**

- Isabel was able to find a home for the blueberry plants.
- Heather took soil samples for Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health (CASH) testing; the program funds testing for farms.
- UVM opened up their new shrek soil lab, in which you can pick and choose soil tests.
- Do we need to limit the number of soil tests because demand for testing has increased?
- Perhaps we can suggest that farms test 1/3 of their fields each year.
- It used to be that with NMP we were able to bill for individual line items. Now it's all rolled into AGCWIP and tracing the funding for the testing is more complicated.
- Dave doesn't like the billable rate; we can charge fringe though which helps quite a bit.
- Quickbooks migration has been completed. Overall the process was challenging.
  - The payroll data didn't come over and needs to be entered manually.
  - Some reimbursement items have been incorrectly entered as taxable.
- A lot of the new system is automated.
- It currently looks like we paid the feds more than we needed to.
- Michelle got a spam message that looked like it was from Quikbooks. She opened it and now their account is frozen.
- Shed update: the walls are up, roof is next. It still needs a door. The site is not level and there is a drop from the front door to the ground, so the shed will need a ramp.
- The kayak trailer arrived in 11 boxes, which was unexpected! Emma and Madeline will assemble it next week.

*Motion to accept the May minutes with discussed additions.*

*Motion approved.*

Next meeting: August 20 at Geoff's, 6:30 pm

*The meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.*