

Windham County Natural Resource Conservation District Minutes

Wednesday, October 8th, 2025, 6:30 pm

Geof's house, 301 Barrows Road, Brattleboro, VT

Present: Meg Kluge, Geof Dolman, Linda Corse, Pieter van Loon board supervisors, Cory Ross: Executive Director; Heather Blunk: Agricultural Specialist; Arrow Kitchens; Administrative Assistance; Emma Gregg, in person;

On Zoom: Isabel Bowman: Conservation Specialist and Michelle Monroe; Executive Director of Vermont Association of Conservation District.

Government Shutdown:

- This shutdown is unprecedented for a variety of reasons:
 - NRCS is funded through 2027 as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds are now NRCS funds
 - WCNRCD's TA grant (administered through NRCC) is federally funded from fiscal year 2026 and cannot be worked on
 - For producers, the shutdown comes during prime certification time for practices paid for by NRCS. This is a narrow window for practices to be visible. Heather is recommending to farmers that they should document what they can during this time as it will likely be on them to provide proof of practice implementation.
 - Practice implementation may be a leap of faith for farmers as the possibility of them not getting paid back is looming
 - Impacts to wetlands are high. The removal window of invasive species in wetlands is October – November. This protects vulnerable species. However, the staff that certify this are unable to work.
- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is halted. This includes American Farmland Trust work. The only work allowed in this realm is pay for performance, but that program does not extend to Windham County.
 - State of Vermont is challenging the legality of this halt
- VACD flooding contract was frozen because of the stop in IRA funded and is now cancelled. VACD was planning to have districts do outreach to help those impacted.
 - State of Vermont is challenging the legality of this cancellation.
- VACD staff are getting paid to work on a variety of grants and projects that can be worked on during the shutdown. VACD is expecting to be able to pay districts for invoices and VACD will be getting paid on any state contracts this month.

- For WCNRCD: No office, no government computers, loss of access to certain programs, and how we approach work has had to change
- Heather found us a meeting space at UVM extension for staff meetings!
- Arrow saved financial records that were in the office

VACD update:

- Engineer Reed Cunningham will start on October 14th working out of Rutland. He will focus on small and medium-sized farms in the southern zone.
- GIS specialist, Matthew, has a PHD in Ecology where he taught classes in GIS. He will provide Technical Assistance, training, and instruction about GIS to Districts and NRCS. His position is funded with an NRCS cooperative agreement.

Proposed revision to Financial Policies and Procedures –

- This revision impacts the Treasurer position. Our treasurers should know QuickBooks online or accounting well.

Motion to approve revisions to the Financial Policies and Procedures.

Motion Approved.

Motion passed.

Annual Gathering Planning:

- Moved to March 20th (the first day of spring) as we did not have a speaker or band
- Conservation Contra Dance!
 - Dinner, present about us
 - Have a Contra Dance
 - Hire callers and a band
 - Need a location with heat

Strategic Planning Update

- Cory has a draft of the plan that will be updated alongside Elise and then sent to the board
- Board reflections:
 - The process was handled well
 - No aha moment at the end but look forward to the plan

Monthly report on district activities:

- NACD TA application: the Request For Proposals amount has increased since last year as the government is expecting districts to do more NRCS work.

- o We are asking to double our current amount to fund 1 FTE
- Introduced plant work:
 - o Water chestnut work: Finished the job this season! We still need repeat visits for each site (expected to be a 12 year-long process for elimination)
 - o Stiltgrass work: We have finished out the funds on this work. We will need to figure out alternative funds for this work
 - o Pieter had reports of stiltgrass on the main trail at the top of the ridge in Westminster along Rocky Ridge (landowner claims he pulled it all but a trail walk is still needed)
 - o Lotus at Retreat launch: Kim Jensen has been monitoring the spread of this plant and Laurie Callahan recommended that she push for introduced plant status of this plant.
 - o Spotted Lanternfly was found at the Guilford Rest Area. The Lanternfly was squashed and no others were found.
 - How can we do education for this? Timing should be early spring for materials so that we hit the first instar cycle.
 - Trees of interest: Tree of Heaven and Sumac
- Jacksonville project: Knotweed work completed: Stem injection and cutting. This caused an increased fee for this work but state okayed amending the agreement
- Farm pet calendar – Need a few more photos!
- Syracuse meeting: Great representation from WCNRCD and the Vermont Conservation Districts
- Our Americorps will start in January

Next Meeting:

November 4th, 2025, 6:30pm at Geof's place 301 Barrows Road, Brattleboro, VT

Motion to enter executive session for personnel issues at 8:02pm.

Motion Approved.

Motion passed.

Executive Session ended at 8:24

Motion to appoint Emma Gregg to the position of Agricultural Resource Specialist

Motion Seconded and Passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:26.