

THOMAS JEFFERSON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
November 18, 2020

Remote Participants:

Directors: Pratley (Chair), Campbell (joined at 10:16 a.m.), Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch (joined at 10:09 a.m.), Murray, Thompson

Assoc. Directors: Bartz, Daughters, Merle-Smith

Staff: Coates, DaMitz, Hyatt, Moyer, Talley, Abowd (present as needed), Eiserman (present as needed), Gyurisin (present as needed), Longanecker (present as needed)

Agencies: Cross (DCR, joined at 10:37 a.m.), Shoemaker (DCR, joined at 11:30 a.m.)

Absent:

Directors: Swanson

Assoc. Directors: Cowger, Tingley, Tweardy

The Board of Directors convened a decentralized meeting via Zoom due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Pratley called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Pratley called the roll to confirm a quorum of Directors. Attendance was confirmed as listed above.

Motion to Conduct Electronic Meeting:

MOTION: Mr. Lucas moved that the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors certify that the nature of the state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as declared by the Governor of Virginia, makes it impracticable or unsafe for the Board to assemble in a single physical location, and further that the purpose of the meeting, including all agenda items as reflected in the meeting's prepared agenda, is to transact or discuss business that is statutorily required or that is necessary to continue operations of the Board and the discharge of the Board's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. Ms. Murray seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Absent: Campbell, Murdoch

GUEST INTRODUCTIONS: Mr. Pratley noted that Robert Shoemaker from DCR will be a guest speaker later in the meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Pratley asked if any comments were received from the public. Ms. Moyer confirmed that no public comments were submitted.

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA: Mr. Pratley added strategic plan extension as an action item.

ACTION ITEMS:**Directors Meeting Minutes:**

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the Directors Meeting Minutes for October 28, 2020, as presented. Mr. Meeks seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0 by the following roll call vote, with one abstention:

Ayes: Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murray, Pratley, Swanson, Thompson

Nays: None

Abstain: Collins

Absent: Campbell

Agriculture Committee Report:

Transfer of Maintenance Responsibility Agreement for BMP from John Paulsen to Jared Harwood (Contract No. 02-15-0258): Mr. Thompson explained that the transfer agreement allows the new property owner to accept responsibility for maintaining the installed practice for the remainder of its contract lifespan. The Agriculture Committee recommends approval of this transfer of maintenance responsibility.

MOTION: Mr. Meeks moved to approve the transfer of maintenance responsibility. Mr. Murdoch seconded the motion. The motion passed 9-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Absent: Campbell

RCPP Grant Application with DCR: Ms. Coates explained that the Regional Conservation Partnership Program is a federal grant program, and the District is a partner on an application that DCR will be submitting. Ms. Coates has increased the request for technical assistance funding for staff to assist with NCRS workload, based on feedback on prior applications. The original application focused on the whole-farm approach, which is a specific bundle of agronomic practices, and Mr. Talley and Mr. Longanecker are compiling what acreages the District could do in that bundle. Additionally, DCR has agreed to allow the District to include work on bundles for grazing practices and healthy soils. This is a five-year grant application, which would start next summer. The primary agronomic practices will occur in Louisa County. Ms. Coates will be working with the DCR grant manager to submit the application by November 30.

Ms. Coates responded to questions from Directors regarding the grant application. Mr. Lucas noted that TJSWCD and NRCS staff would be doing the work. Ms. Coates added that DCR is providing 25 percent match. Mr. Thompson commented that the program is a way to amplify the efforts of individual entities like Districts, NCRS, and DCR by working together on a coordinated project. Ms. Coates said the bundling aspect is innovative in that they work with the whole farm to get more implementation per tract. Mr. Longanecker pointed out that this program gives a federal funding source specifically for this District, as opposed to EQIP where they are competing against practices statewide.

Agriculture Program Update: Mr. Longanecker reported that staff members are gearing up for cover-crop inspections over the first two weeks of December. They will also be doing 20 spot checks on practices coming out of lifespan; these inspections must be completed by December 31. Staff are also working on end-of-year tax credits and projects for approval in December. Mr. Longanecker plans to have an Agriculture Committee meeting in early December.

Mr. Thompson noted that the ratification agenda includes practices he approved by delegated authority in the interim, as there were so few those were not taken to a full committee meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the commitment to the RCPP partnership and application submitted by DCR, as it is now proposed. Mr. Meeks seconded the motion. The motion passed 9-0 by the following roll call vote, with one abstention:

Ayes: Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Abstain: Campbell

MOTION: Mr. Murray moved to accept the Agriculture Committee report. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Water Resources Committee Report:

Mr. Murray called attention to the projects approved by delegated authority and listed on the ratification agenda. The Water Resources Committee did not meet this month. Mr. Murray asked for any staff updates.

Ms. Coates related that Mr. Gyurisin is currently in the RSEP meeting. There will be series of Love Your Watershed educational outreach materials regarding leaf litter, oil down the drain, etc.

Mr. Murray noted the Rivanna TMDL meeting tonight. He has reached out to Mr. Gyurisin about scheduling a Water Resources Committee meeting next month.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the Water Resources Committee report. Mr. Lucas seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Budget/Finance Committee Report:

Mr. Meeks reported that the Budget/Finance Committee did not meet this month. October 2020 financial statements are included in the Board packet.

Mr. Campbell asked if the budget column is the annual budget or the prorated July through October budget. Ms. Moyer replied that the budget column is the full fiscal year annual budget, and the table at the bottom of the page shows the comparison of actual versus budget year-to-date. Ms. Moyer said that at 33.3 percent through the fiscal year, revenues were at 26.6 percent of annual budget amounts, expenditures were at 30.7 percent of annual budget amounts, and use of carryover funding was at 28.2 percent of the amount budgeted for the fiscal year.

MOTION: Mr. Easter moved to adopt the Treasurer's Report and financial statements for October 2020.

Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Dam Committee Report:

Remote Monitoring – Contract for Installation: Mr. Lucas reported that the Dam Committee met to review the two bids received for installing the monitors on the high-hazard dams on Route 15. The consensus was to award the bid to B. F. Wise and Sons, LC, as they were the low bidder and well-reviewed for their work on the Culpeper SWCD dams.

MOTION: Mr. Lucas moved to award the contract to B. F. Wise and Sons, LC, to install the monitors on the dams. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:
Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
Nays: None

Rain Gauge Purchase: Mr. Lucas explained the proposal to install rain gauges on the same posts as the monitors, at a cost of about \$1,600 to purchase four rain gauges.

MOTION: Mr. Collins moved to accept the proposal to purchase four rain gauges for the high-hazard dams. Mr. Campbell seconded the motion.

Mr. Meeks asked if the cost is in line with what they originally anticipated. Mr. Lucas replied that the cost is \$400 each plus shipping, which is about what they were quoted earlier. Mr. Pratley asked if the additional installation expense would be added to the contract or if it was already included. Mr. Lucas replied that it should be no more work for the contractor, as the rain gauges attach to the same mast with a cable to plug in to the monitor, or staff can put them on. Ms. Coates noted that DCR is covering the cost of the remote monitoring equipment, around \$1,200 for each unit, but the District has to cover the cost of the rain gauges if they want to add them.

Mr. Collins asked what drainage area these lakes carry. Mr. Lucas replied that they are hundreds and thousands of acres.

Mr. Pratley asked if DCR dam maintenance funds can be used for the purchase. Ms. Coates will check with DCR.

The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
Nays: None

Mr. Merle-Smith expressed concern that the monitoring equipment may be subject to tampering or theft. Ms. Coates said they can check with DCR and their insurance carrier, and Ms. Hyatt has worked on some signage. Mr. Lucas noted that the equipment will be mounted high on poles and well secured, and the monitors will send an alert if they stop transmitting. Mr. Pratley asked about vandalism issues at Shenandoah Valley SWCD dams. Mr. Longanecker replied that Shenandoah had some issues but has dams in national forests with public access, while TJSWCD's dams are on private farmland behind gates. Mr. Collins commented that the devices may have a sending unit with location tracking.

Climate Committee Report:

Mr. Bartz reported that the Climate Committee prepared a one-pager for Healthy Soils to give background information for the legislative agenda proposal. The Climate Committee also discussed potential contacts with partners and General Assembly members, but legislators can only introduce a limited number of bills for the upcoming session. Area II recommended that VASWCD put Healthy Soils back on the legislative agenda, and that will come up in the statewide meeting in December.

Ms. Coates commented that the goal of getting people talking about the proposal has been accomplished. She outlined her conversations with contacts since the Area II meeting. Now that the Virginia Soil Health Coalition has hired someone and has funding from NFWF, they are hopeful that VASWCD, SWCDs, VCE, NRCS, and other partners can work together over the next year to collectively come up with a game plan. Ms. Coates noted that Mr. Shoemaker will share more about what DCR has been doing. The thought is that they can hold off and work as a group with this coalition over the next year, given the limited legislative process this year. Ms. Coates will work with DCR on the healthy soils bundle and getting staff trained on COMET.

Mr. Bartz commented that he does not think anyone is against doing Healthy Soils, they are just debating whether the time is now or whether to wait a bit, and so it is in the policy book either way. Mr. Bartz said they should not focus just on this legislative piece but also on getting stuff on the ground. He has been talking with people from other districts, and there has been discussion of implementing a VASWCD climate committee.

Ms. Coates shared that the Virginia Soil Health Coalition met on Monday, they are putting together several working groups, and TJSWCD has been listed in at least one of the categories. The City of Charlottesville has requested the District's assistance on some climate work, and the District continues to engage with Albemarle County on its climate action plan.

Mr. Pratley asked about plans for the December VASWCD meeting. Mr. Bartz stated that Area II is going to suggest putting Healthy Soils back on the legislative agenda, and he will answer any questions people may have, but VASWCD has recommended that it go in the policy book. Ms. Jones noted that the 2021 legislative session is going to be 30 days, shorter than it has been since the 1970s, and bills are limited. Ms. Jones commented that while this is important, it may not be the year to take a stand from the floor on this, but rather continue to get their ducks in a row for next year. Mr. Bartz said they have talked with Delegate Hudson's office, and there are some piggyback options.

Mr. Thompson thanked Mr. Bartz and the Climate Committee for their great work on this. Mr. Thompson said the state association needs to be involved in this conversation, as this issue strikes at the heart of what they do. He noted bills for carbon credits and forest management may be reshaped to include soil sequestration.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to accept the Climate Committee report. Mr. Meeks seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Strategic Plan Extension:

Ms. Coates noted that the District held a strategic plan work session in February 2020, but there has not been much chance to revisit that due to COVID-19. DCR granted an extension to December 2020 on the four-year plan that was set to expire in June 2020. Ms. Coates explained the difficulties in meeting a December 2020 deadline, given locality reports, workloads, and holidays. An additional extension to June 2021 is available upon Board action. Ms. Coates expects to put the strategic plan on the January 2021 agenda.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to approve the strategic plan extension to June 30, 2021. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

CONSENT AGENDA

- Committee Minutes:** Budget/Finance Committee (10-28-20); Agriculture Committee (10-28-20); Climate Committee (11-4-20); Dam Committee (11-4-20)

MOTION: Mr. Meeks moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

RATIFICATION AGENDA:

- Ratification List:** Water Resources Committee; Agriculture Committee (see attached list)

Ratification Agenda - November 18, 2020										
Item	Delegated Authority	Last Name / Business	Contract #	Instance	Practice Code	Estimated Cost Share	Potential Tax Credit	Final Tax Credit	Conservation Plan Approval	Approval Date
Water Resources Committee										
1	Murray	MacRae	02-21-0055	421385	RB-1	\$ 262.50	n/a	n/a	n/a	11/3/2020
Agriculture Committee										
1	Thompson	Harrison Cattle Co. LLC	02-21-0057	421477	WP-2W	\$ 1,964.72	\$ 22.81	-	yes	11/12/2020
2	Thompson	Epps	02-21-0042	420355	CCI-SL-6W	\$ 8,315.00	n/a	-		11/12/2020
3	Thompson	Harrison Cattle Co. LLC	02-21-0057	421476	CCI-SL-6W	\$15,990.00	n/a	-		11/12/2020
Project Increases										
4	Thompson	Woodson	02-20-0182	387715	SL-7	\$ 199.37	-	\$ 406.17		11/12/2020

Mr. Pratley explained that the above-listed projects were approved by the Water Resources Committee and Agriculture Committee chairs under delegated authority, and now they are asking the Board to ratify those actions.

MOTION: Mr. Meeks moved to adopt the Ratification Agenda. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

COOPERATING AGENCIES REPORTS:

DCR: Ms. Cross summarized information from her monthly written report and shared other items of interest. The budget has gone to the Governor for signature. The budget includes WQIF agriculture program and dam renovation funding, and that would go to the SWCB for discussion on December 16 if approved. Area II elected new officers. Several options are available for Directors to take the required FOIA training. Ms. Cross noted upcoming training sessions, the VASWCD Annual Meeting schedule, and the Ag BMP Technical Advisory Committee meeting. Ms. Cross then gave an overview of items discussed in the DCR report from the Area II meeting, which Ms. Coates included in the Board packet as additional information.

Mr. Pratley noted the comment period on the perennial streams guidance. Ms. Cross encouraged Directors to submit comments by December 9. Mr. Murray remarked that, in Albemarle County, the difference between a perennial or intermittent stream means the difference of 100-foot buffer or no buffer

at all and the ability to erase the stream completely off the landscape. Mr. Murray said that a lot of times stream classification comes down to lack of data, and Albemarle had areas where streams were missing in the GIS layer. Mr. Murray stated that he encouraged Albemarle County to update the GIS layer to document those streams, but a lot of counties may have few staff who can verify streams on site to determine whether they are perennial or intermittent, and they are probably doing GIS analysis or looking at USGS maps. Ms. Cross replied that a lot of data analysis has been done using different layers from a variety of sources, and this particular exercise will be for the legislation that has passed, but will only become effective if Bay goals are not met, requiring the stream exclusion BMP where there are more than 20 cattle on perennial streams.

NRCS: No updates.

VCE: No updates.

FSA: Ms. Coates called attention to the FSA report received after the packet deadline and distributed by email.

DEQ: DEQ provided a written report.

TJWRPF: Mr. Thompson reported on easement inquiries and concerns expressed by an easement grantor in Crozet regarding a proposed subdivision adjacent to his property. Mr. Murray has contacted Ann Mallek to inquire about the Albemarle County water protection ordinance buffer and waiver process.

VASWCD/NACD: Mr. Meeks encouraged Directors to participate in the VASWCD Annual Meeting on December 7. The NACD Annual Meeting will be virtual in February 2021, with a cost of only \$50 to participate.

STAFF REPORTS: Ms. Coates offered to share any updates via email, in the interest of time. The Board packet includes the monthly site visit report.

GUEST SPEAKER: Robert Shoemaker, DCR

Mr. Shoemaker shared updates on the soil health work that DCR is doing. Last year Virginia Tech submitted a Soil Health Coalition grant to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that was accepted, but the March funding date was delayed due to COVID-19. This is a three-year grant to advance soil health in Virginia. Also, WIP III looks at expanding soil health and carbon sequestration. The coalition will help to build relationships, promote soil health, and look at implementation and research.

Mr. Shoemaker stated that water quality is the main driver of DCR's cost-share program, and his role in the coalition is to work with partners to look at how to integrate soil health into DCR's current cost-share programs. They are currently in the process of making recommendations to DCR, and initially it may be a pilot project similar to what Three Rivers did, and then hopefully it would get into the full cost-share setup. There is a definition in the grant of what soil health is to the coalition, but DCR will have to define what it wants to achieve and how to measure results. They can see obvious co-benefits to water quality, soil health, and possibly carbon sequestration. They are also looking at a soil health bundle. Many practices already recognized in the Bay model for water quality benefits may also have soil health and carbon sequestration benefits, and they may create new practices after research. One recommendation may be a soil health bundle in which not all practices must have a water quality benefit recognized in the Bay model. The Bay model is a good tool for water quality but changes take multiple years to implement, and soil health practices may be expedited if not every practice in the bundle has to have a water quality benefit. They are also doing on-farm field trials and looking at new technologies.

Mr. Shoemaker then responded to questions from Directors.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Mr. Meeks left the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

Mr. Murray reported that he received a comment from someone with concerns about invasive species spreading from an adjoining property that had a buffer established by the District. Mr. Murray asked what is done for landowner education and management of invasive species in buffers. Directors and staff discussed education efforts and the need for maintenance funding to address invasives. Mr. Longanecker noted that the majority of buffer projects are vegetative grass buffers, and the contract requires livestock exclusion and infrastructure maintenance, but there is no specification on what the buffer has to consist of. Mr. Thompson suggested continuing this conversation in the Agriculture Committee.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Lucas seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Collins, Jones, Lucas, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Not Voting: Easter

Absent: Meeks

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

Submitted by: _____
Recording Secretary

Approved: _____
Chair