PIEDMONT SWCD SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes - Farmville, Virginia
July 28, 2026, 11:00 a.m.

Board Members Present:

Larkin Moyer –Director, Amelia County / Chairman
Charles "Chuck" Arnason –Director, Nottoway County / Treasurer
Jennifer Morris – Director, Amelia County
Mackenzie Gunn – Appointed VCE Director, Amelia County & VCE ANR agent
Dr. James Gates, Jr.- Director, Prince Edward County

Board Members, Staff & Partners Absent:

Ricky Rash – Director, Nottoway County /Vice Chairman
Horace Adams –Director, Prince Edward County / Secretary
Haley Norton – Associate Director, Conservation Specialist, Fort Pickett
Dr. Kathy Gee - Associate Director, Nottoway County
Erin Small – Associate Director, VCE ANR Agent Prince Edward County
Kelly Atkinson – Education Specialist
Tara Ciavarella - NRCS District Conservationist, Amelia
Jeremy Evans - NRCS District Conservationist, Nottoway/Prince Edward
Cristy Cook – Farm Service Agency, CED
Patrick Murphy – Virginia Department of Forestry

PSWCD Staff Present:

Kevin Dunn – Senior Conservation Specialist
Deanna Fehrer – Finance and Records Manager
Claire Helmke – Program Support Specialist
Tyler Smith – Conservation Technician
Paula Totten – District Manager
Charlie Wootton – Senior Conservation Specialist

Partners Present:

Robert Hazlegrove, NRCS Soil Technician, Nottoway/Prince Edward
Denney Collins - Conservation District Coordinator, Dept. Conservation & Recreation
Jessica Showalter, Virginia Department of Forestry
Cody Noblitt, Virginia Department of Forestry

Visitors Present:

Adam M. Davis, Longwood University
Royce Coleman, Amelia County, Environmental Manager
Kyle Ashley, ARC, LLC
Betsy Jenkins, Boot Hill Dairy

CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

A regular meeting of the Piedmont SWCD Board of Directors was held at the Prince Edward County Agriculture building on Tuesday, July 28, 2026. Chairman Moyer welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 11:00 am. A quorum was present. No additions to the agenda were recorded.

Mr. Moyer asked for everyone to introduce themselves since there were some new people in the room. He welcomed Betsy Jenkins attending as a guest.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

On a motion by Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Arnason and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the June 23, 2026, minutes as presented.

TREASURER'S REPORT

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Ms. Morris and carried by unanimous vote, the Board accepted the June 2026 Treasurer's Report as presented to be filed for audit.

Mr. Kyle Ashley of Appomattox Resilience Corridor, LLC gave a presentation on the "String of Pearls" framework and discussed how a technical partnership with the District can support riparian management and long-term watershed stability for the Appomattox River corridor. Mr. Moyer thanked Mr. Ashley for his presentation and stated that if the Board had any other questions, Ms. Totten would send them by email.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Dr. Gates and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the following conservation plan:

(1) NRCS Conservation Plan signed

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Ms. Morris and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the following FY27 septic contracts, Spring Creek #16969 ($225.00), Flat Creek #16970 ($9,942.50).

SEPTIC PROGRAM APPROVALS

Spring Creek Grant #16969

Contract	Instance	Client	Practice	Date Approved	% Cost Share	Estimated Cost	Approved
05-27-0002	741209	Cathy C. Steward	RB-1	7/1/2026	50%	$450.00	$225.00

Flat Creek Grant #16970 (*Nottoway*)

Contract	Instance	Client	Practice	Date Approved	% Cost Share	Estimated Cost	Approved
05-27-0001	741208	Stanley E. Christopher	RB-3M	7/1/2026	50%	$1,300.00	$650.00
05-27-0004	747018	James S. Williams	RB-4	7/17/2026	90%	$10,325.00	$9,292.50

Mr. Smith reviewed the updates to the FY27 VACS program. He reported that the only change was the verification date for cover crops has been changed from January 31 to January 1. Mr. Dunn stated that the reason for the change was January 1 was 60 days past the late plant date for cover crops. There is enough time to establish cover and there are very few days in January when temperatures are warm enough for the cover crop to grow.

Ms. Totten stated that the staff had been working on a new way to market the VACS program. She reported that the plan would be to give producers who have participated in our programs an incentive for referring new producers. Ms. Totten stated that the type of incentive would be marketing merchandise with the District logo such as hats, rain gauges or similar items for the first referral and for multiple references the producer's name would be put into a drawing for a gift card for the Farmer's Cooperative, Tractor Supply or another local business. Ms. Totten clarified that for the referral to count, the new producer would have to schedule a field visit to discuss the potential project.

On a motion by Ms. Morris, seconded by Mr. Arnason and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the new marketing incentive project as presented.

FINANCE COMMITTEE – Chair Arnason

Ms. Fehrer reported that she had completed a review of the office inventory. A copy is on file in the office.

Ms. Fehrer reviewed the updates to the Financial and Office Policy with the Board. She stated that the two policies had been combined.

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Dr. Gates and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the Financial and Office Policy as presented.

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Ms. Morris and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the July 15, 2026, Finance Committee Minutes as presented.

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Dr. Gates and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved to delegate authority to the Treasurer, Mr. Arnason and in his absence, the chair, Mr. Moyer, to sign the DCR FY27 grant agreements upon receipt.

Ms. Fehrer reviewed the proposed FY27 budget. She stated that the budget was based on level funding as well as updated VACS cost share figures. She stated that the amount would be adjusted for the August Board meeting based on the FY2027 grant agreements. Mr. Arnason reported changes to staff compensation were based on performance evaluations and workload. Compensation increases for base salary range from 4-8%. It also includes a 2% increase in retirement bonus for each employee. A copy of the work papers and staff compensation changes are on file in the office.

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Ms. Morris and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the FY27 budget as presented $5,308,234 that includes changes to staff compensation effective July 1, 2026.

Mr. Arnason stated that the final grant agreements will be officially approved in August with slight changes to our budget based on final figures.

Ms. Fehrer reported the District had utilized the DEQ grant program to purchase no-till drills in the past. She stated that the program was still available and that this would be good time to purchase one or possibly two new drills if the program allowed multiple purchases. Mr. Arnason stated that if the District purchased two, then the oldest drill could be sold, this would give the District 5 drills to rent. He stated that Mr. Patterson, the Equipment Manager, would be able to keep 5 drills busy.

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Dr. Gates and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved staff to apply for the 50% loan forgiveness program through DEQ to purchase one (or two drills if eligible).

Ms. Fehrer stated that a copy of the FY27 Desktop Guide was sent out with the document packet. She stated that the Desktop guide is something that DCR prepares that districts follow for financial operations. The auditors also utilize to ensure we are complying when they do the audit. She reviewed the document and the changes for FY27.

Ms. Fehrer reported that the IRS mileage rate increased July 1st to 76 cents a mile.

PLANNING

Ms. Totten reviewed the FY27 Annual Plan of Work for August. She reported that the staff had already started working on the item for August.

Ms. Fehrer highlighted some of the accomplishments by staff for program year 2025-2026. She stated that the conservation staff should be very proud of the work they have completed this past year. The complete report is attached.

- Approved: 206 BMPs approved, 12 new participants.
- Cost share fund approvals **CB 2,136,617, OCB $176,907, WFA $212,052, CREP $1,170** (Total $2,526,746 does not includes cancelations); Cost share funds obligated **CB $1,852,805 OCB $140,352 WFA $159,577 = $2,152,734** (includes cancelations)
- Completed: 204 BMPs installed; **$2,139,722.13** in cost share payments.-Approved $7,272.20 tax credits.

	Cover Crops Acres	Nutr. Man. Practices acres	Stream Bank Protection Linear Ft.	Re-enrollment / Vol. Exclusion Linear Ft.	Cons. Perm. Cover acres	Grazing Land Protection acres	Installed Buffers acres	Total Cost Share Paid
Amelia	13,132.80	16,318.30	5,740	45,305	12.9	32.00	8.40	$1,214,597.20
Nottoway	5,202.00	3,387.20	9,935	21,910	45.9	120.52	14.41	$601,292.76
Prince Edward	2,481.90	1,779.39	1,900	49,945	95.5	49.25	3.97	$323,832.17
TOTALS	**20,816.70**	**21,484.89**	**17,575**	**117,160**	**154.30**	**201.77**	**26.78**	**$2,139,722.13**

- The District also reached over 4,000 youth and adults through educational programming.

WATERSHED - Chair Arnason

Mr. Arnason reported that the District had received a quote from Blueform Infrastructure, formerly Bander Smith for gate-valve inspections for Buffalo 5,6,7,8, and 9. He stated that this would complete all the gate-valve inspections for the dams.

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Ms. Morris and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the proposal for services from Blueform Infrastructure for $29,898.98.

Ms. Fehrer reported that there is a damaged culvert pipe under the access road to Bush #7 that has caused significant erosion to the creek channel causing it to widen and could continue to migrate towards the toe of the dam which could cause damage to the dam if not repaired. She stated that Schnabel Engineering is the engineering firm that districts can utilize without having to go through the request for proposal process for procurement. Ms. Fehrer stated that they can perform a site visit to evaluate the issue and make a recommendation for the scope of work.

On a motion by Mr. Arnason, seconded by Dr. Gates and carried by unanimous vote, the Board approved the proposal for engineering services from Schnabel Engineering for $4,200.

Ms. Fehrer stated that the District could submit a request for reimbursement from the Small Dam Repair Fund for the cost.

Mr. Arnason reported that the spring mowing and the work at Buffalo #1 were complete. Mr. Wootton stated that all the silt fence at Buffalo #1 had been removed by the contractor.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: - Chair Morris

Ms. Morris stated there was nothing new to report. Mr. Moyer welcomed Ms. Helmke to the District.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE - Chair Rash

Nothing to report

COMMUNICATION / EDUCATION – Chair Gunn

Ms. Totten reported that six posters from our conservation poster contest were submitted to the state contest from grades 1-7, Ms. Atkinson brought the Enviroscape to an enthusiastic bunch at the Save Our Streams training held at Twin Lakes State Park, she is preparing to begin training on the Project WET curriculum (now homed at the Virginia American Water Works Association, AWWA), working on strengthening relations with Amelia School while planning for the MWEE program and the September educators workshop. She stated that Ms. Atkinson started planning for our newest partnership with Blackstone Primary Schools. Ms. Totten reported that the plan was to work with all the 3rd and 4th graders once a month. She stated that Ms. Atkinson was working on the Annual Report and needed a new director photo.

Ms. Fehrer stated the District had received photos and thank you cards from Justin Reams and Mark Schlimel, who were our Youth Conservation Camp attendees this year.

DISTRICT MANAGER AND PARTNER AGENCY REPORTS

District Manager & Staff reports

Ms. Totten reported that the staff were busy wrapping up end-of-year tasks, planning for the new program year, working on marketing strategies, field visits, and wrapping up FY26 projects. She stated that Ms. Fehrer worked on filing, file and records management. Ms. Totten reported that she and Ms. Fehrer worked on end-of-year financial/grant reports and budget most of July.

Department of Conservation and Recreation (See attached)

Ms. Collins reported that DCR had finished end of the year reports and documents and everything looked good. She stated that the State Soil and Water Board met on Friday and approved the grant agreements and all the allocations. Ms. Collins reported that the District's disbursement letters would be sent out on July 30, which would include the exact numbers.

Ms. Collins reported that nominations for the At-Large Director position must be approved at the August board meeting and the paperwork is due to her by September 1.

USDA-NRCS – Farmville & Amelia (See attached)

Department of Forestry

Mr. Noblitt reported that DOF was taking new applicants for reforestation timberlands, hardwood program, as well as our new growing and protecting trees program and working with our summer interns. He reported that registration for Fall Fire Academy was open until August 3. Mr. Noblitt reported that fire season is halfway over and they had not had any excitement for fires so far.

Virginia Cooperative Extension – Amelia

Ms. Gunn stated that L. K. Mondrey would be leaving the Amelia office for a new position as the Natural Resources Specialist for VA Tech, so she is still with VCE but not in the Amelia office.

She reported that she graduated from VALOR this past weekend, which was the two-year agricultural leadership development program that she had been a part of since September of 2024.

Ms. Gunn reported that she was working with the District on planning a well and septic program and a small ruminant program for later this fall. She noted pesticide recertification programs will be held at Featherstone Farm in Amelia on August 6 and then the equine pasture management series August 27, September 18, and October 30.

Comments:

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:42 pm.

Submitted By ________________________________ Date: ________________
Paula Totten, Piedmont SWCD Staff

Approved By ________________________________ Date: ________________
Horace Adams, Director / Secretary