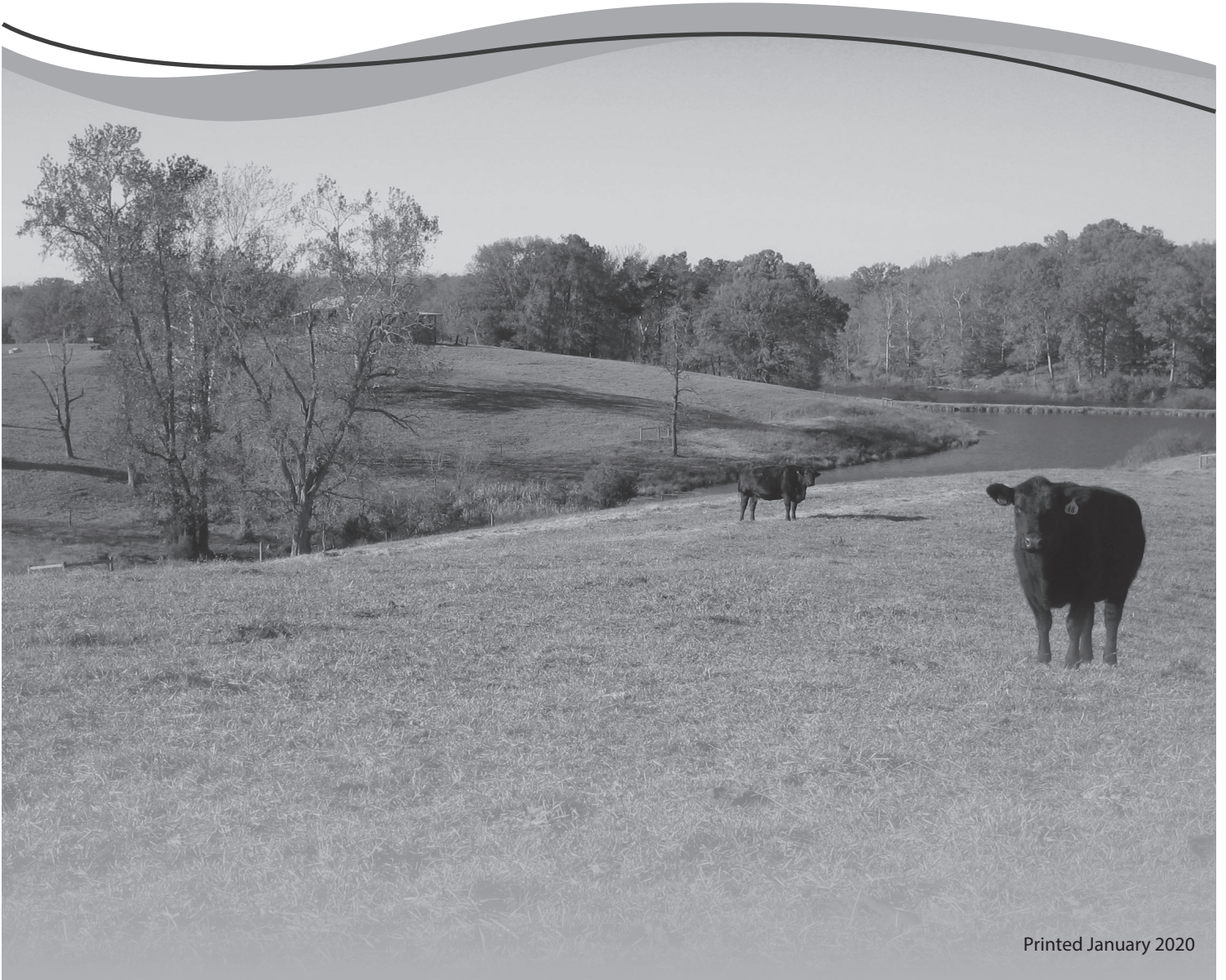


SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK



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Prepared by Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation



A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO DIRECTORS

You have been selected for the important responsibility of conserving your community's soil and water resources. Both the local economy and quality of life in your community are dependent upon your good work.

Never has the challenge been greater. New demands are placed on the environment daily. Citizens insist we listen and be responsive to their needs. Your efforts and actions directly affect generations of Virginians now and in the future.

A district director has the responsibility to weigh, balance and act upon important conservation issues. The job is complex, stimulating and difficult. We ask that you step forward as a conservation leader and exert a powerful, but tempered, influence on natural resource management in your community, giving full consideration to the citizens you represent.

The goal of this handbook is to hasten your ability to effectively fulfill your role as a director, and to enable you to grow within that role. The handbook provides basic information and background in many conservation programs. It reviews prominent issues, roles, agencies and programs. Please keep it accessible and use it as a reference.

On behalf of the leadership of your conservation partners, we extend our appreciation and thanks to every SWCD director!



LESSONS FROM GEESE

By Milton Olson

1. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird following. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if the bird flew alone.

Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

2. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the "lifting power" of the bird immediately in front.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed where we want to go (and be willing to accept their help as well as give our's to the others.)

3. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position.

Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. People, as geese are interdependent on each other.

4. The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging and not something else.

5. When a goose gets sick or wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own with another formation or catch up with the flock.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we too will stand by each other in difficult times, as well as when we are strong.

MILESTONES AFFECTING SWCDS

1933 – Soil Erosion Service (SES) established within U.S. Department of Interior (Eventually moved to U.S. Department of Agriculture).

1935 – Congress passed Public Law 46, the Soil Conservation Act, SES endorsed as federal agency, resulting in name change to Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and moved to U.S. Department of Agriculture.

1937 – President Roosevelt urged the creation of districts by state law.

1938 – Virginia passed Soil Conservation District Law; the first Virginia SWCD organized in Tidewater.

1940 – State Association of Conservation Districts (now the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts) formed.

1952 – First aerial photo-based soil survey map published in the United States, Culpeper County.

1966 – All counties (except Arlington) encompassed in SWCDs with formation of the John Marshall SWCD.

1972 – Clean Water Act passed by U.S. Congress.

1973 – Virginia General Assembly passes Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law.

1975 – Highest watershed dam in the eastern United States built on Lower North River in Rockingham County.

1978 – Chesapeake Bay Program initiated with extensive research on nonpoint source (NPS) pollution.

1980 – Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service began.

1983 – Virginia General Assembly funds the first Chesapeake Bay NPS clean-up initiatives.

1985 – Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Commission merged with state agencies and evolved into the present-day Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

1985 – USDA Food Security Act (Farm Bill) ties continued farming of highly erodible lands to certain program benefits causing significant changes in conservation and the work of the SCS.

1987 – Clean Water Act is amended to fund NPS pollution (runoff).

1989 – Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act; EPA study reveals NPS pollution is dominant form of water pollution; EPA approves Virginia's NPS Management Program.

1990 – Virginia General Assembly passes Stormwater Management Law.

1992 – Watershed concepts are implemented in Virginia for NPS control.

1995 – USDA reorganization. SCS becomes Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

1996 – Virginia General Assembly established a process for addressing complaints of NPS from farm operations (Agricultural Stewardship Act).

1997 – Virginia Water Quality Improvement Act (WQIA) is established to restore and improve the quality of state waters and protect them from impairment and destruction.

2004 – Virginia General Assembly clarifies the water quality role of SWCDs in state law: The Department of Conservation and Recreation shall be assisted in performing its nonpoint source pollution management responsibilities by Virginia's soil and water conservation districts.

2011 – Virginia General Assembly established the Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Fund "solely for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation".

2013 – Virginia General Assembly amended the duties of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board to include "[t]o oversee the programs of the districts".

2014 – Resource Management Plan review and approval responsibilities began in 2014 upon the effective date of the RMP regulations.

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CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

*“The conservation of natural resources and their proper use
constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost
every other problem of the national life...”*

— **Theodore Roosevelt**

SWCD MAKEUP AND PURPOSE

In 1935, the U.S. Congress declared soil and water conservation and wise land use a national policy through the passage of Public Law 46. This action was prompted by a growing public concern for the poor condition of the nation's natural resources. In 1937, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt wrote to the governors of each state recommending state legislation to form soil and water conservation districts. Within a year, Virginia's Soil Conservation District Law was passed. This legislation was an effort to provide local citizens the opportunity to shape soil and water conservation and resource planning in their communities.

Today, there are 47 soil and water conservation districts in Virginia. The districts are directed by boards composed of:

- Locally elected directors

If a district encompasses only one county or one city, there are three elected directors.

If more than one county or city is represented, there are two elected directors for each entity.

- An extension agent appointed by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (VSWCB) upon recommendation of the Virginia Cooperative Extension State Program Leader for Agriculture and Natural Resources and after consultation between VCE and the local district.
- An at-large director, recommended by local SWCDs and appointed by the VSWCB.

In Virginia, district boards range in size from five to 12 director members. These directors are empowered by state law to fulfill many responsibilities related to the management of soil and water resources and the conservation of natural resources. To achieve their missions, they may receive technical and limited financial assistance from cooperating local, state and federal sources such as local government, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Cooperative Extension and others.

Cooperation by districts with other organizations focuses on issues such as:

- Water quality and control of nonpoint source (NPS) pollution.
- Soil erosion control and prevention.
- Development and land-use patterns.
- Prevention of flood water and sediment damage.
- Watershed management to control and reduce NPS.
- Preservation of wildlife.
- Conservation planning for multiple natural resources on private and public lands.
- Soil survey and database development through the Virginia Cooperative Soil Survey program.

DISTRICT DIRECTORS

*“Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if
ever he had chosen a people, whose breasts He has made His
peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue ...”*

— **Thomas Jefferson**

DIRECTORS

District directors are local citizens elected or appointed to a four-year term of office. They serve as the legislatively mandated voice for local natural resource concerns. For several decades, directors were typically local landowners. However as the scope of conservation has grown, so has the diversity of board members, lending broader perspective and credibility to the district's positions. Today, district boards are made up of bankers, teachers, homemakers, farmers, educators and business owners. They represent a variety of local environmental concerns.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Directors are not public employees and receive no salary. However, they may receive reimbursement for expenses, including travel expenses that are incurred in the performance of their duties. They voluntarily assess local conservation needs and encourage cooperative efforts in achieving district conservation goals. At a minimum, directors should attend 75% of the regular monthly board meetings and ensure a quorum is present at every meeting. Each district should develop a job description clarifying director roles and responsibilities to be used when recruiting new directors. The following requirements should be considered when developing the director's job description.

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Duties of district directors §10.1-529.1
(Code of Virginia)

In addition to other duties and powers, district directors shall:

1. Identify soil and water issues and opportunities within the district or related to the district and establish priorities for addressing these issues.
2. Seek a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues that impact soil and water, and assist in resolving the identified issues at the watershed, local, regional, state and national levels.
3. Engage in actions that will improve soil and water stewardship by use of locally led programs.
4. Increase understanding among community leaders, including elected officials and others, of their role in soil and water quality protection and improvement.
5. Foster discussion and advancement within the community of positions and programs by their district.
6. Actively participate in the activities of the district and ensure district resources are used effectively and managed wisely.
7. Support and promote the advancement of districts and their capabilities.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Identify local conservation needs.
- Represent local citizens in conservation issues.
- Educate others about conservation issues and programs.
- Work effectively with local, state and federal agencies to resolve conservation problems.
- Attend regularly scheduled board meetings, and meetings of allied organizations.
- Serve on standing and ad hoc district committees.
- Recognize and act upon natural resource management needs.
- Establish district policies and develop programs to meet those needs.
- Promote the district as a reliable source of natural resource information and policy.
- Help district citizens resolve problems related to soil and water conservation.
- Provide guidance and direction to employees of the district for the efficient operation of the district office.
- Provide financial direction by taking responsibility for the proper expenditure and management of public funds; review monthly and annual financial statements; maintain a working knowledge of the budgetary process, and approach local boards of supervisors/city council when requesting county or city public funds.
- Develop and maintain a progressive public information and education program to keep citizens informed about conservation issues and programs.
- Speak publicly about conservation issues such as providing testimony at public hearings.
- Serve on the district's personnel committee and participate in aspects of district personnel management including hiring; conducting staff personnel reviews; and developing and maintaining fair personnel policies.
- Cultivate and recruit potential directors and associate directors.
- Maintain adherence to the policies of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board.
- Acquire and enhance the skills essential to effective directors to include leadership capabilities, personnel management, public speaking, negotiation, fiscal management and environmental policies.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Each new director is expected to:

- Attend at least one local and one regional orientation training session within first year of taking oath of office.

All directors must:

- Meet training requirements as set forth by the district, grant agreements with DCR or policy of the VSWCB.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Develop a thorough knowledge of conservation needs in the areas of soil, water and other natural resources.
- Develop a working knowledge of environmental sciences, agriculture, engineering, local, state and national legislative processes, and parliamentary procedures.

FAILURE TO MEET REQUIREMENTS

As an elected official, directors are required to take an oath of office and make a personal commitment to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. On occasion, a director may fail to meet the criteria established for the office. In this case, fellow directors should consult with the individual to determine a cause for the shortcoming(s) and attempt to develop a plan to remedy the situation. The board should make an effort to motivate the official and address the unsatisfactory behavior at the district level. If the behavior does not improve through discussion and encouragement to a satisfactory level, the directors may proceed through a more formal process to seek the removal of the district director. This course of action is addressed through state law. (§10.1-536. Removal from office)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*“The history of every nation is eventually written
in the way it cares for its soil.”*

— **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

PLANNING

As with any sound organization, planning is essential for deciding future courses of action. Planning processes occur at many levels of the organization of districts and for varying lengths of time. Annual plans specify what a district aims to accomplish during a calendar or fiscal year. A longer-term four-year plan is developed using a facilitated strategic planning approach with stakeholder input and is designed to align closely with the district director election cycle. The plan guides a district's actions over a four-year period and must be reviewed annually during a board meeting.

In multi-year planning, directors and staff invite key district clients to participate in a planning event. The plan prepares a district to ready itself for the future, to accomplish change and to be proactive. Annual plans provide the year-to-year incremental basis for achieving goals of a district's longer-term plan.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Conservation districts encourage voluntary cooperation of landowners and the general public through information and education. Persuading landowners to adopt conservation values and practices begins with the process of instilling awareness and building conservation messages through information and education.

The broader public must be reached for people to understand their stake in conservation and to contribute their financial, political and volunteer support to district programs. Local, state and federal legislators must also be informed about conservation implications of issues and decisions.

To have effective informational and educational programs, directors should understand their clients and the most appropriate methods to reach them. Each type of client must be recognized and addressed according to their particular needs. This "marketing" approach to helping district constituents is essential to involving citizens.

Directors should integrate public relations into each conservation program and be aware of how the media can communicate a message.

General Public

District directors work with many adult audiences, including landowners, land managers, community leaders, civic clubs and cooperating agency personnel. Speaking to local civic organizations is one of the most effective ways to advance conservation actions. Audience learning styles usually change with age. Adults have more life experiences, want educational experiences to be applicable to their present needs and expect teachers to be sensitive to their particular questions. Adults also have the freedom to decide whether or not to participate and whether or not to be supportive. Here are a few methods to consider for adult education:

- Personal contact
- Community meetings
- Newsletters
- Field days and open houses
- Demonstration plots
- Presentations

- Invitations to district board meetings
- Annual meetings
- Legislative breakfasts
- Workshops, conferences and panel discussions
- Social media outlets

Legislators

Legislators are a unique audience. District programs are often directly affected by local, state or federal laws. The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) are the principal legislative arms for conservation districts. Therefore, directors should inform them of district legislative concerns.

Youth

A major goal in conservation education is to heighten awareness and enrich conservation values. Youth are one of the most fertile grounds for enriching the general public's conservation values. To be most effective, think about the age and environment of the youth group and present information for the appropriate level. For example: teens vs. kindergartners; agricultural vs. urban. Consider these methods:

- Develop conservation programs and projects that can involve youth.
- Sponsor youth to attend annual Youth Conservation Camp or create a local "Youth Conservation Day Camp."

- Train teachers and youth group leaders in conservation and support the Envirothon Program.
- Provide educational materials for conservation components of youth group programs.
- Consider youth group leaders as associate members of the district board.
- Provide youth conservation education scholarships through VASWCD Educational Foundation.
- Seek sponsors for awards and other conservation programs for youth.
- Encourage youth groups to implement conservation plans on youth group facilities and property.
- Coordinate with local schools to host youth-oriented field days that are focused on grade-specific standards of learning.

VASWCD and NACD have a variety of ready-made educational materials for working with youth. There are also materials developed and promoted by other groups, agencies and organizations such as Envirothon, Project Learning Tree, Project Wet and Project Wild, Master Gardeners and Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC), which provide adult instructors with ready-made, fun conservation training modules.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations by members of a district is a continuous process of building understanding among people concerning what a conservation district is, what it does and why it is important. A good public relations program will:

- Inform the public about the conservation district and its purpose.
- Promote favorable recognition of the district.
- Ensure that potential cooperators are aware of the availability of district assistance.
- Build rapport with other groups.
- Increase the amount of funding districts receive.
- Increase the quality and amount of assistance the district obtains from cooperating state and federal agencies.
- Improve local corporations, foundations, counties, cities and the quality of people who serve as conservation district directors or on district committees.

One director on each board should take the lead for district public relations. An annual "PR" strategy should be developed and followed. Each district should set goals that permeate all aspects of the district's plans and programs.

Consistent information is a vital key to good public relations. Written, graphic, verbal and non-verbal aspects of the programs must be consistent to create credibility, recognition and have the desired impact. Here are a few key points to a positive public relations program:

- Directors should represent the board in person if possible; sending a staff person is rarely as effective.
- Sometimes it's the little things that people remember. Details are important. A couple of examples include a personal letter or phone call from a director to the new county supervisor or handwritten thank you notes for financial contributions. Actions as small as these can prove very effective in building rapport.
- Always follow through on commitments.
- Recognize and appreciate cultural differences.

Give recognition to agencies, associations and other groups for their support. They'll be more eager to support you again if they are recognized for their efforts.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Whether you are engaging in information, education, public relations or all three, you will use a wide range of media:

- Personal telephone or conference calls
- Personal letters
- Direct mail to target specific audiences
- Interview shows
- Free public service messages
- Columns or regular features in newspapers, magazines or newsletters
- Films, movies and videos
- Website
- Events such as Soil Stewardship Week, (Virginia) Natural Resource Conservation week, NACD Conservation Education Awards Program and others
- Displays, shows and fairs
- Field demonstrations (with signs)
- Newsletters and annual reports
- Press coverage of meetings

- Public service announcements (PSAs) on radio and TV (including cable)
- Press releases to newspapers and magazines
- Calendar listings
- Brochures, handouts and mailers
- Social media outlets
- Photos or other artwork, posters and banners

It is important to establish friendly, mutually helpful relationships with media representatives. Work to persuade them of the importance of your district programs and they can be an advocate to the public. A media relations committee for the district may be developed to decide:

- Which issues or programs should be promoted;
- Primary audiences for particular issues and interests; and
- The most effective media type for reaching target audiences.

HUMAN RESOURCES

People are a conservation district's primary resource. Part of the responsibility of a district director is to offer guidance and foster good relationships among directors, associate directors, district staff, committee members, volunteers and partners.

Associate Directors

Associate Directors are appointed by the district board and are advisers and representatives of particular interests that are critical to the district they serve. They may have varied backgrounds but the common link should be a concern for natural resource conservation. Associate directors don't vote on board decisions but augment the knowledge and experience of directors. Many boards have developed terms of office for associate directors. Associate Directors are encouraged to serve on district committees and attend monthly board meetings. Because their experience and knowledge are valuable to the board, it is wise to provide them the same initial orientation as a director and involve them in the work of the district as much as possible. They may also receive reimbursement for travel-related expenditures.

Personnel

There is flexibility in the structure of each district's personnel because of the varying needs of districts and their boards. However, the combination of employees should result in a smoothly implemented conservation program with effective policies. Board member roles versus staff roles should be very well defined. A general rule of thumb is that the

board sets policy and the staff implements it. When staff assumes a policy-making role, the board of directors can lose credibility in the community. Some responsibilities fulfilled by staff should include:

Many of the policies governing staff are established in the Personnel Policy created and approved by each District Board. The Personnel Policy should include specific items such as:

- Definitions of employees and status
- Work hours, holidays, leave, emergency closure procedures
- Benefits description
- Reimbursement and procurement procedures
- Grievance procedures
- Probationary, resignation and termination information
- Statements of compliance with nondiscrimination and fair labor act/laws and FMLA requirements
- Additional information as approved by the District Board

The personnel policy should be reviewed and approved annually.

Staffing

It is the board's role to identify needs and develop a support staff to address those needs. Staff positions may include:

- **District Manager** – a leadership role as the supervisory staff person; mediates district problems; works with cooperating agencies to gather information for planning efforts; assists with staff recruitment and may supervise other district employees; primary representative and point of contact (other than Board officers) for the District.
- **Administrative Secretary/Assistant** – initial contact for callers to the district; assists in the preparation of written materials including correspondence, agendas, minutes, plans, reports, newsletters and news releases; performs clerical work; maintains district files; assists directors with fiscal management.
- **Secretary-Treasurer** – maintains all accounting records; prepares financial and budget reports; assists in the preparation of correspondence, agendas and minutes. Approval of the VSWCB is required if a district wants to appoint an employee as secretary/treasurer. (Code of VA § 10.1-532)
- **Conservation Specialist/Technician** – administers DCR's Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share and Tax Credit Program (VACS), the state's portion of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and certain BMP loan program functions; designs and lays out BMPs; manages the SWCD's equipment program; reviews erosion and sediment control plans; assists with local watershed planning and with the district's role with SWCD owned dams, and other NPS prevention activities; provides nutrient management, resource management and related advice to landowners.
- **TMDL Agricultural Specialist and Urban or Residential Specialist** – administers DEQ's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) agricultural and residential cost-share program. These positions are funded through special funding sources including federal EPA 319 grant funds and special state appropriations.
- **Information/Education Specialist** – assists with all aspects of information, education and public relations; writes newsletter and newspaper articles; prepares radio and TV coverage; and works with cooperating agencies in planning and conducting tours, demonstrations, youth programs and related activities.

In addition to the paid staff employed by a district, needs may arise for contractual services that may be met through independent consultants. The work performed may be due to a short-term need or to provide expertise in a specialized area such as developing an environmental display. Consultants are not true district employees but rather work on a contractual, as needed basis.

Position Description/ Performance Expectation

Position descriptions should be developed for all district employees to include all roles and responsibilities, performance expectations, qualifications, benefits and salary. A position description may combine tasks typically associated with more than one job title if there is not a full-time need in one area (for example, Conservation Technician/Equipment Manager).

Performance expectations are statements that capture the quantity, quality and timeliness of activities performed by staff. They are developed annually and provide a basis for measuring and evaluating the work by district employees.

The District Board approves position descriptions and performance expectations for each district staff member. The position descriptions and performance expectations should be reviewed and approved annually.

Hiring

The entire board should help determine the district's staffing needs and agree on candidate(s) before hiring. Recruitment and selection of new employees require knowledge of fair employee practices. There must be continuity between the position description, advertisement, application screening criteria, interview questions and reasons for selection. DCR Conservation District Coordinators (CDCs) may be consulted in this process. Choosing an effective combination of staff and compensating them appropriately can multiply the efforts of the board many times over. The following should be considered in developing an employee compensation package:

- Salary
- Professional development opportunities
- Fringe Benefits: Health insurance, Dental Insurance, etc.
- Leave: annual/vacation, sick, etc.
- Paid holidays
- Retirement

The district must also be aware of legally required employee programs, such as:

- Social Security
- Unemployment insurance
- Workman's compensation
- Civil rights laws
- State and federal income tax
- Affordable Care Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Family and Medical Leave Act
- Equal Employment Opportunity

New employees should receive orientation and training to:

- Explain specific district policies, including a review of the District's personnel policy.
- Assure a mutual understanding between the board and staff as to roles and responsibilities of each.
- Strengthen their understanding of conservation issues.

- Communicate their precise job duties formalized in a position description and performance expectations, as determined by the board.
- Be provided a copy of DCR's Operations and NPS (Cost-Share) Grant Agreements to gain an understanding of District and DCR deliverables.
- Receive and review the SWCD Employee Checklist.

Districts are encouraged to identify one district director as a contact director (usually the personnel committee chair) who should serve as the liaison between the staff and the board. The contact should:

- Maintain a keen awareness of employee concerns.
- Initiate evaluations and salary increases (evaluations should occur at least once each fiscal year).
- Oversee any personnel actions.
- Develop and implement an employee individual development plan.

VOLUNTEERS


In many ways, supervising volunteers is similar to supervising employees. The first step is to clearly define the tasks to be performed by one or more volunteers. Establishing position descriptions for volunteers clarifies their roles and enables greater focus on district needs. A position description can also be a written agreement, legally protecting the volunteer and the district. Once the district needs and the functions of volunteers have been defined, the next step is to develop programs for the recruitment, orientation, training and evaluation of those that volunteer their time and expertise. Districts are encouraged to designate someone to serve as the district's volunteer coordinator to oversee all volunteer efforts.

Developing volunteer support is an important mechanism for broadening the district's sphere of influence and ultimately achieving district conservation goals. In recruitment efforts, directors should seek citizens with areas of expertise not represented on the existing board.

Volunteers have individual motivations for contributing to district initiatives such as self-expression or philanthropy. In order to maximize volunteer efforts, these motivations must be realized and fulfilled. Volunteers may be motivated and encouraged by:

- Being allowed to help shape district plans and programs.
- Seeing positive results from their efforts.
- Realizing their efforts are appreciated.
- Being entrusted with increased responsibilities.
- Being recognized for their contributions with awards and letters of commendation.
- Having good working conditions and a pleasant working environment.
- Receiving reimbursement for appropriate expenses.

ADMINISTRATION



“Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is headed away from, rather than toward, and intense consciousness of the land. Your true mode is separated from the land by many middlemen, and by innumerable physical gadgets.”

— Aldo Leopold

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Conservation district administration is led by board officers and carried out through committees.

OFFICERS

- **Chair** – Must be an elected or appointed member of the district board. The chair sets the meeting agenda, appoints committees and assigns their responsibilities, and orients new directors. The chair may entertain a motion. Robert's Rules of Order provides for the chair to vote if he/she wants; however, it is good practice for the chair to abstain from participating in debate and voting unless the chair feels a responsibility to take a position or to break a tie vote.
- **Vice Chair** – acts in place of the chair when needed and advises the chair on programs and policies; arranges special programs for regular board meetings; serves as chair for at least one standing committee.
- **Secretary** – notifies members of each meeting; provides the chair a list of business items for the agenda; signs board meeting minutes and records of committees; transmits correspondence on behalf of the board; prepares district reports for review by the board; ensures that all forms of communication are documented in accordance with pertinent policies.
- **Treasurer** – oversees the district finances and usually serves as chair of the finance committee; leads budget development; receives deposits and disburses funds; keeps complete financial records; contributes to the development of the district fund raising plan; presents financial statements at meetings.

Many districts combine the responsibilities of Secretary and Treasurer into one position as Secretary/Treasurer. In situations where the district wishes for the Secretary/Treasurer to be a staff member, the VSWCB must approve the appointment. When responsibilities are combined, it is recommended that a second individual other than the preparer review, initial, and date the bank reconciliations, invoices etc.

COMMITTEES

Committees study and conduct business in a specific area, such as finance, personnel and legislative. They implement and monitor decisions made by the board, gather support from organizations and agencies, and are an excellent training ground for those who may eventually become district directors. Committee meetings are required to be recorded in minutes. There are two basic types of district committees:

- **Standing Committee** – a permanent committee charged with developing one basic aspect of the district. Typical standing committees include but are not limited to finance, personnel, technical, public relations and education.
- **Ad-Hoc** – a short-term committee charged with a specific task. Examples of tasks might include legislative issues, elections, awards and grant solicitation

Committee meetings are considered open meetings and subject to the requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Minutes should include attendance and actions recorded.

MEETINGS

Monthly board meetings are held to share information and ideas, hear from constituents, develop district policies, direct activities, and monitor implementation of programs. As public bodies, districts are bound by requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). District board meetings and all committee meetings are open to the public, unless there is a specific exception permitted by the Virginia FOIA. Even then, the board must carefully follow statutory procedure for closing a meeting. Directors participate in meetings of committees, district associations and representative groups. In order to maximize meeting productivity:

- Participants should be notified at least one week prior to the meeting and should be provided a complete agenda. Participants should be prepared to discuss the business at hand.
- Arrangements for the meeting should include: a comfortable room, reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities, parking, appropriate seating arrangements for participants and audience, and audio-visual resources.
- The chair should ensure that all views are presented and disallow time-consuming repetition or undirected dialogue.
- Participants should be familiar with parliamentary procedure or Roberts Rules of Order. Use of Roberts Rules is not required but should be generally followed for the conduct of district business.
- Minutes must be taken to provide a written record. They should be sent to all participants immediately following the meeting as a reference to commitments made, and they should be approved at the beginning of the following meeting. Minutes should capture the essence of a meeting, the decisions reached and not the content of every conversation.
- Conduct all transactions in ways that maintain the trust of all contributors (which includes the general public).
- Obtain adequate district funding; account for all dollars and district assets. All directors, district employees and those approved to act on behalf of the district are covered by bonding insurance.

FINANCES

Securing funding is a board function and not one of paid staff. The board should establish a committee to develop a fundraising plan and decide how to implement it.

Each board should have a finance committee to oversee all financial aspects of the district and advise the board in financial matters. The committee should

- Review all sources of funding and develop reliable acquisition strategies.
- Develop budgets and budget reports.
- Ensure finances are handled according to sound accounting principles and in accordance with the Desktop Guide for Fiscal Operations.
- Arrange required audits.
- Check the reliability of financial information.

The first step in district funding is to define the needs and assess available funding in relation to those needs. The following is a summary of typical funding sources:

Federal – a district may develop a cooperative agreement or apply for a grant for a specific purpose. These sources may require matching funds from the district.

State – Virginia, primarily through DCR, makes funding available for district operations, NPS implementation programs and other mutual projects and programs. This money may be used for, but is not limited to:

- Cover costs associated with district operations and employ district staff.
- Implement NPS soil and water quality management projects.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) offers a loan program for the implementation of certain agricultural conservation practices.

Local Funding – Districts develop fundraising activities to provide additional funding for programs. The primary local donors are the counties and cities. Other local development activities take on many forms, such as contractual agreements, fundraising drives, special events, direct appeals, honorary gifts, bequests, sponsorships and advertisements.

BUDGET

The budget is the most important tool for the board to use when deciding how to allocate district funds. A budget should be prepared annually by the finance committee and should include:

- Consideration of unexpended funds from the previous year as presented in the financial statement.
- Projected revenue and expenses.
- A detail of actual income and expenditures for the previous year.
- An estimate of staff and costs to accomplish proposed activities.
- A narrative summary.
- Annual reports are developed and provide a public record of accomplishments, financial status and volunteer support. They may include a message from the chair, statement of the district's financial condition, highlights of the year and remaining problems to be solved. These reports can be used effectively for education, public relations, and fundraising with local governments and businesses.
- Quarterly and special reports describing project accomplishments, remaining tasks, problems encountered and fiscal data are often required by grant sources.
- Property inventory is developed and updated annually, with a copy filed in an offsite location for security purposes.

Budget requirements vary for different grants. All requirements must be met prior to submission.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As public officials, directors are accountable for all funds, property and equipment belonging to the district. Accountability requires documentation, as well as maintaining public trust that the district is applying all funds entrusted to it in a manner that the public will accept and support.

Districts must periodically accommodate an audit of accounts, receipts and disbursements, as well as adhere to the guidance in the Desktop Guide for District Fiscal Operations.

- To receive monies from DCR, districts must fully disclose their financial situations by submitting certain information in a quarterly financial report (Attachment E) to DCR.

- Accountability is a legal obligation. Directors have some protection from liability while discharging their official duties and are named as insured's within the Commonwealth of Virginia's Risk Management Plan. Further, districts may request the assistance from a local, public or private legal source or the Office of the Attorney General should legal advice be needed. A bonding insurance policy secured through the Division of Risk Management covers all SWCD directors and employees. To minimize legal liability, each director should gain a thorough understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the office and should fulfill those responsibilities as conscientiously as possible.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Public officials in Virginia, including district directors and SWCD staff, should identify any potential conflict of interest, including the approval of a cost-share application for an operation in which that director or staff member has a direct or indirect material personal interest. Directors and/or staff members should identify the potential conflict and remove themselves from the room until all discussion about that application has been completed. Specific questions pertaining to conflict of interest should be posed to the Office of the Attorney General. (Code of Virginia, Title 2.2 Chapter 31 State and Local Conflict of Interests Act § 2.2-3100 - 3131). For more information visit <http://leg1.state.va.us/>

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Districts must provide a work environment free from discrimination, intimidation, coercion and sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unlawful and intolerable. For more information visit: http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/hrpolicy/web/pol2_30.html

CIVIL RIGHTS/EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

In dealing with both clients and employees, district directors must comply with all federal and state laws established to protect citizens' civil rights and employment opportunities. For further information, contact the Office of the Attorney General, Division of Human Rights at 804-225-2292 or <http://www.oag.state.va.us/index.php/programs-initiatives/human-rights> or the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) at <http://www.eeoc.gov/>

THE BASICS OF NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION (NPS) AND WATER QUALITY

“The days have ended when the forest may be viewed only as trees and trees viewed only as timber. The soil and the water, the grasses and the shrubs, the fish and the wildlife, and the beauty that is the forest must become integral parts of the resource manager’s thinking and actions.”

— **Hubert Humphrey**

THE BASICS OF NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION (NPS) AND WATER QUALITY

District directors are elected or appointed to represent the conservation needs of their communities. Therefore, the goals of each board will vary, as will its community's needs. For example, districts in the eastern half of the state may be strongly governed in their conservation planning by the Virginia Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. Some districts have responsibility for maintaining earthen flood control structures and therefore are guided by the Virginia Dam Safety Act. Still, others may be influenced by the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law due to construction activity in the district.

Many issues are common to all districts:

- Water quality
- Addressing NPS pollution
- Land-use planning
- Land-use changes, open space and preservation of productive farm land
- Use of natural resources

Water quality issues gained greater recognition in 1987 when the Clean Water Act was amended to provide additional funding to control NPS pollution, any type of water pollution that cannot be linked to a specific location. There are four major categories of NPS pollution: sediments, nutrients, toxic substances and pathogens.

- Sediments are soil particles transported by water into streams, lakes, rivers and bays. By volume, sediment is the greatest pollutant of all and originates from soil erosion.
- Nutrients are substances that help plants and animals grow. However, in large doses, nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus can cause excessive plant and algae growth in lakes and streams, suffocating the natural system.
- Toxic substances cause human and wildlife health problems. They include chemical wastes, metals, pesticides, formaldehyde, household chemicals, gasoline, motor oil, battery acid and roadway salt.
- Pathogens are disease-causing microorganisms (actually bacteria) and include those present in human and animal wastes.

Every board faces both common and unique environmental challenges. However, one fact remains the same: the quality of life in any area is dependent on the stewardship of its natural resources.

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

“The central thing for which conservation stands is to make this country the best possible place to live in, both for us and our descendants. It stands against the waste of natural resources which cannot be renewed, such as coal and iron; it stands for the perpetuation of the natural resources which can be renewed, such as food-producing soils and forests...”

— **Gilford Pinchot**

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

Programs exist to address soil and water conservation issues and are funded by state and federal monies allocated to conservation districts on an as-needed or competitive basis. District boards implement the programs and help develop and approve the conservation plans on a local level.

Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost-Share Program, Virginia Ag BMP Tax Credit Program and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

These programs provide incentives for farmers to install conservation practices. Funding needs are determined by an integrated analysis of the area. Partial assistance is available year-round for individuals who carry out a district board-approved conservation plan. The programs consist of a few dozen practices, including:

- No-till
- Cover Crops
- Livestock Exclusion
- Riparian Buffers
- Nutrient Management

DEQ Agricultural BMP Loan Program

Funds for loans are generally made available to farmers having the greatest potential for actual pollution resulting from surface runoff, erosion, leaching or intense production of animal waste.

Watershed Management Programs

Increasingly, government and private organizations are recognizing that it makes sense to assess water quality problems and develop solutions on a watershed basis.

In Virginia, two primary state conservation agencies (DEQ and DCR), along with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), have divided the land surface of the state into over 1,200 6th order specific watersheds (NWBDs). These watersheds have been evaluated and ranked based on land use and water quality factors. The ranking helps agency resources be directed to watersheds with the greatest water quality problems.

No single entity can solve the state's water quality problems. Ultimately, those that live and work within a watershed must accept personal responsibility for the stewardship of Virginia's soil and water resources.

Partnerships are being established within specific watersheds among concerned citizens, government and industry to identify and solve water quality problems. These partnerships are an effective way of bringing government closer to the people and offering services that are needed and supported by local citizens. Districts are ideally positioned to be effective local leaders and coordinators for these partnerships.

Nutrient Management Program

Virginia's Nutrient Management Program assists farmers and other constituents to protect water quality by encouraging efficient use of manures, fertilizers, sewage sludge and other nutrient sources for crop production. DCR nutrient management specialists prepare site-specific nutrient management plans, review plans prepared by others, and conduct technical and educational programs. Plans are required for large permitted confined animal operations and for certain sewage sludge application sites in order to be eligible for certain cost-sharing and tax credits. DCR's voluntary certification program allows individuals to take an examination and be certified to write nutrient management plans. DCR also negotiates more efficient use of non-agricultural fertilizers with lawn service companies and homeowner fertilizer retailers to assist in reducing nutrient pollution from urban areas.

The primary objectives of this program are to:

- Improve water quality by minimizing application of excess nutrients.
- Maximize crop use of applied nutrients.

Resource Management Plans

The Resource Management Plan (RMP) Program is a voluntary program that allows agricultural landowners or operators to have a resource management plan written by a certified RMP plan developer. Each plan must contain minimum standard best management practices. When a participant has fully implemented the plan, the planned acreage is granted "certainty," meaning that it is considered to be in full compliance with a load allocation contained in a TMDL established under the §303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act addressing benthic, bacteria, nutrient or sediment impairments; any requirements of the Virginia Chesapeake Bay TMDL: Watershed Implementation Plan; and applicable state water quality requirements for nutrients and sediment. The primary role of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in this program is to function as the review authority, reviewing plans and conducting verification and compliance inspections.

Food Security Act (FSA)

Provisions of the federal 1985 Food Security Act and subsequent federal Farm Bills (1990, 1996, 2002, 2008, 2014 and their amendments) require producers with highly erodible cropland to completely implement conservation plans to obtain benefits, such as price support and crop insurance. Highly erodible land has a potential erosion rate at least eight times the rate at which soil maintains its productivity. The development and implementation of conservation plans helps reduce soil loss to levels that are technically and economically acceptable.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act

In Tidewater Virginia, soil and water quality conservation plans must be established and approved by the district board for agricultural land in locally designated Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas. These areas are divided into two categories:

- Resource Protection Areas (RPA) – sensitive lands at or near the shoreline, which, by nature, affect water quality.
- Resource Management Areas (RMA) – land adjacent to RPAs, which protect RPAs and water quality.

Soil and water quality conservation plans are developed in accordance with state regulations carried out by DEQ and county ordinances. The plans address:

- Soil erosion control
- Nutrient management
- Pest management
- Required vegetated buffers adjacent to RPAs

URBAN PROGRAMS

Erosion and Sediment Control Program

In accordance with the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law, Regulations, and Certification Regulations, effective July 1, 2013, DEQ is responsible for implementation of the Virginia ESC Program. The purpose of the program is to help prevent destruction of property and natural resources caused by soil erosion, sedimentation and nonagricultural runoff from regulated land-disturbing activities.

ESC regulations specify the “minimum standards” that must be followed on all regulated activities including: criteria, techniques and policies. State law explains the rights and responsibilities of local and state governments to administer ESC programs, as well as those of property owners who must comply with them.

A network of local and government programs regulates most private land-disturbing activities, while DEQ oversees state and federal activities. Throughout the Commonwealth, Districts assist local governments with ESC programs at varying degrees. Districts may be the designated ESC plan review and approval authority, ESC inspector, ESC administrator or a combination of roles.

Stormwater Management Program

DEQ is also the lead agency for developing and implementing statewide stormwater management programs to protect the Commonwealth's water quality and quantity.

In response to the Virginia Stormwater Management Regulations, some Districts provide assistance to local entities similar to that provided for ESC programs.

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)

A pilot project was started in 2012 with four Districts within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed for the purpose of increasing public awareness about conservation practices on urban and residential properties and installing such practices. Practices include rain gardens, reduction of residential fertilizer and urban forest buffers. Today, the program is state wide and managed by VASWCD.

Dam Safety Program

In order to protect public safety, dams impounding water are regulated by permits according to the height of the structure and the size of the water surface area impounded. Districts owning dams must provide for their operation and maintenance and adhere to permit requirements. Maintenance may

involve annual structural checks, mowing and fertilization of sod earthen structures. DCR staff provides technical and administrative support to districts for dam safety. This presents several two-way opportunities such as:

- Meetings with directors and district employees on-site to inspect the dam.
- Review of spillway design modifications with DCR's consulting engineers.
- Review of Emergency Action Plans.
- A partnership opportunity between district directors and DCR to bring all dams in the district into compliance.

Floodplain Programs

DCR assesses flooding problems in Virginia, and identifies strategies for solutions. DCR also:

- Provides mitigation planning, technical workshops and community visits.
- Responds to inquiries from insurance representatives, real estate agents and lending institutions.
- Maintains a centralized state-wide database.
- Assists with floodplain district zoning and local ordinances.
- Administers the Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund.

SHORELINE PROGRAMS

Virginia has more than 5,000 miles of tidal shoreline. DCR provides technical expertise to localities and private property owners to address shoreline erosion prevention and management.

Impaired Waters Program

Increasing numbers of Virginia's waterways are being included on the 303(d) impaired waters list. When waters are designated as impaired, they are referred to as Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) watersheds. A study is conducted on the impaired watershed to outline the source(s) of the impairment followed by the formulation of an implementation plan (IP). The IP reviews possible solutions to the impairment and involves stakeholder participation as well as partnerships between agencies such as SWCDs, DCR, DEQ and localities. Districts are often the resource needed to carry out the implementation plan and are often provided funding opportunities to implement the IP.

Awards Programs

Virginia has an extensive awards program offering recognition to those who excel in the conservation of natural resources. Nearly all districts have active awards programs. By promotion of these programs, districts can recognize individuals and promote district programs.

Some of the more widely used programs are:

- VASWCD – Conservation Teacher and Conservation Education District of the Year Awards

- VASWCD – E.C. Compton Meritorious Achievement Award for Associate Directors
- VASWCD – R.E. “Bobby” Wilkinson Award for District Director
- Dora and Wilkie Chaffin Award for district staff
- DCR-DSWC Clean Water Farm Awards
- VASWCD – Watershed Connections Outstanding Director Award
- VASWCD – Director Years of Service Pins
- VASWCD – Legislator of the Year Award
- VASWCD – Forestry Awards
- VACDE Outstanding Employee Awards
- NACD Awards
- Earth Team Volunteer

In addition to those listed, many districts sponsor and promote their own awards programs to increase public awareness.

OTHER PROGRAMS

A variety of programs have been developed to address different issues related to soil and water conservation. Many of these programs are funded by both state and federal monies allocated to conservation districts on an as-needed or competitive basis. District boards implement the programs and help develop and approve the conservation initiatives at the local level.

SWCD PARTNERS

“There cannot be a more rational principle in the code of agriculture, than that every farm which is in good heart should be kept so; that everyone not in good heart should be made so...”

— **James Madison**

SWCD PARTNERS

Districts rely on assistance and funding from federal, state and local governments; various associations; private organizations, businesses and individuals. Many agencies have a strong interest in the same natural resource issues; therefore, combining efforts can save time and money.

Cooperative assistance with joint projects can be formally documented through a cooperative agreement, or a Memorandum of Understanding. Less formal involvement can take the form of appointing representatives from interested groups to be associate directors, advisors or committee members. Further positive relationships can be built if directors serve on a committee or task force of cooperating organizations.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

USDA is the umbrella under which the following cooperating agencies are found:

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The working relationship between districts and NRCS began in the 1930s as the legislation that created the federal conservation system and allowed state governments to create districts. The NRCS, operating through a series of cooperative agreements, provides staffing to advise and assist districts with technical assistance to producers and to carry out federally mandated conservation programs. The main focus of NRCS technical assistance is planning and implementation of conservation practices to protect the soil and water resources. This includes soil surveys, watershed planning and management, technical soil assistance, engineering assistance, and emergency flood protection. NRCS maintains a series of field offices across Virginia. Many SWCDs are co-located with NRCS at these locations through additional cooperative agreements that may include items such as phone service, equipment use and other shared technical resources.

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

FSA administers programs for farmers related to production and conservation practices. It also provides aerial photos for conservation work, assistance for land treatment and development, and natural disaster relief.

Rural Development (RD)

RD makes loans for farm ownership, operating expenses, livestock emergencies, soil and water conservation, grazing, tribal land acquisition, recreation and subsidized and unsubsidized housing.

U. S. Forest Service (USFS)

The Forest Service carries out its mission through five main activities:

- Protection and management of natural resources on National Forest System Lands.
- Research on all aspects of forestry, rangeland management, and forest resource utilization.
- Community assistance and cooperation with state and local governments, forest industries, and private landowners to help protect and manage non-federal forest and associated range and watershed lands.
- Achieving and supporting an effective workforce that reflects the full range of diversity of the American people.
- International assistance in formulating policy and coordinating U.S. support for the protection and sound management of the world's forest resources.

Department of the Army

United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE)

The Corps of Engineers plans and constructs reservoirs and local measures to control floods and improve navigation. It is active in flood control, wetlands protection, hydroelectric power, municipal and industrial water supplies, and recreation, as well as planning for all functions of water resource development.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The EPA carries out federal pollution control laws covering air, land, waste and water. The EPA has delegated many pollution control programs to state governments. State agencies carry out many natural resource management activities. The mission of the EPA is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment – air, land and water– upon which life depends.

Department of the Interior

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The USFWS's major responsibilities involve migratory birds, endangered species, certain marine mammals, and freshwater and anadromous fish. The USFWS mission is, working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The agency conducts research, environmental impact assessments and manages wildlife refuges.

National Park Service

The National Park Service preserves the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

United States Geological Survey (USGS)

The USGS conducts studies on public lands as well as research in geology, geophysics, hydrology, water quality, cartography and related sciences. It also studies natural hazards, such as earthquakes and volcanoes and identifies flood hazard zones.

STATE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (VSWCB)

As the oversight body for certain state soil and water conservation programs, the VSWCB helps guide the delivery of soil and water conservation services to the citizens of the Commonwealth, provides expert advice to the governor and has authority over several DCR programs. The VSWCB provides oversight to the districts, establishes financial policy regarding operational and administrative funding to districts, appoints directors for at-large positions, approves the Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share and Tax Credit Program, and oversees the programs associated with the Virginia Dam Safety Act. It approves equipment and water resource loans.

As referenced in Virginia Code (§10.1-502) the Board shall consist of nine voting members. All voting members are appointed by the governor and serve four-year terms. At least two of the at-large members must have a demonstrated interest in natural resource conservation with a background or knowledge in dam safety, soil conservation or water quality protection. Additionally, four members shall be farmers and two members shall be farmers or district directors.

The DCR director, or his designee, shall be a nonvoting ex officio member of the Board. The Board may invite the Virginia State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, to serve as an advisory nonvoting member. The VSWCB is supported mainly by staff of DCR's Division of Soil and Water Conservation and Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management.

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

DCR has seven divisions: Administration and Finance, State Parks, Planning and Recreation Resources, Natural Heritage, Land Conservation, Soil and Water Conservation, and Dam Safety and Floodplain Management. DCR maintains a close and important relationship with SWCDs. The department, primarily through the Division of Soil and Water Conservation, provides financial, administrative and technical assistance to districts; disseminates information to statewide and national associations of conservation districts; informs the public about district programs; and assists with coordination of NPS pollution programs, as well as programs for urban conservation, district dam safety and shoreline erosion.

Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)

As protector and developer of Virginia's forest resources, DOF prevents and suppresses forest fires, enforces forest fire laws, encourages good forestry practices and conducts reforestation programs. It also implements programs to control insects and diseases that attack and injure Virginia's forest resources.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)

VCE is part of the Land Grant College/University System and is an arm of the USDA with funding from federal, state and local sources to carry out its mission. VCE's primary focus is on education programs targeting farmers, 4-H Club members (youth), families and consumer groups. By law, an Extension agent is a director on every district board.

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

DEQ combines the staff from six regional offices covering more than 30 program areas to take a comprehensive and unified approach to managing environmental issues. DEQ is concerned with water and environmental policy focusing on protecting Virginia's environment and promoting the health and well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth. DEQ is the lead non-point agency in Virginia.

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)

VDACS, located within the governor's Secretariat of Agriculture and Forestry, has both economic development and regulatory responsibilities. It is responsible for over 60 laws and more than 70 regulations relating to consumer protection and promotion of agriculture. VDACS is organized into four units - the Commissioner's Office, Division of Animal and Food Industry Services (AFIS), Division of Consumer Protection, and Division of Marketing. VDACS focuses on the economic growth and development of Virginia agriculture, encourages environmental stewardship and provides consumer protection. VDACS administers the Agricultural Stewardship Act with close cooperation from soil and water conservation districts.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF)

The mission of DGIF is: To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; and to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

State Water Control Board (SWCB)

The SWCB enforces the Virginia Water Control Law, which provides for clean ground and surface water throughout the state (Code of Virginia, Title 62.1, Chapter 3.1). The board performs water resource planning, establishes standards for water quality and is the lead for both nonpoint and point sources of pollution. It also issues permits to agricultural operations with large numbers of livestock under the Virginia Pollution Abatement permit program.

Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)

VMRC manages the Commonwealth's marine fisheries and habitat resources. It emphasizes a decision-making process that is science-based, balanced and open to wide public participation to ensure healthy resources and maximum benefit to all citizens. It re-seeds publicly owned oyster beds, leases oyster planting grounds, constructs artificial reefs to enhance habitat and is responsible for Virginia's streambeds and tidal bottomlands, wetlands and dunes. The Virginia Marine Patrol enforces boating, fishery, and habitats management laws and regulations in tidal waters. It also provides search and rescue services, and public health services related to seafood.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS**County/City**

All conservation districts in Virginia are defined geographically along county and city boundary lines. Cooperation with cities and counties is mutually beneficial. While there is no legal mandate to work cooperatively, each can be beneficial to one another in many ways. Local governments are empowered to effect land-use patterns through zoning, and are natural allies with districts because they share a keen concern for land and its use. Counties and cities can provide funding, office space, co-sponsorship and operation and maintenance for watershed projects; cooperation on county parks; and funds for soil surveys. Resource contacts include: board of supervisors, administrators, county administrators and city managers, treasurer, clerk of the court, engineers, assessor, highway superintendent, health officer, planning commission, school board, parks and recreation department, zoning administrator, and others.

Regional Planning District Commissions (PDCs, also known as Regional Commissions)

PDCs are voluntary associations created in 1969 pursuant to the Virginia Area Development Act and regionally executed charter agreements. Their purpose is to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation and state-local cooperation in addressing problems of greater than local significance. There are 21 PDCs in the Commonwealth representing various local governments on a regional basis. Many prefer to be known as regional commissions.

Universities, Colleges and Local School Systems

Educational institutions help carry out conservation education plans and cooperate by delivering many public service and outreach activities. School contacts include: faculty and staff, school board members, principals, superintendents, vocational agriculture instructors, and science and natural resources teachers.

DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)

The NACD is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization representing nearly 3,000 districts and their state associations in the 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It unites districts to develop national conservation policies, influence lawmakers and build partnerships with other agencies and organizations. NACD also provides services to its districts such as brochures and report printing, distribution of conservation films, and training and education.

Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD)

The VASWCD is a statewide, nonprofit organization, organized to collect and address needs of local districts. It speaks for districts before state and federal agencies and governing bodies. The VASWCD provides districts with model policies and programs and training opportunities and serves as a forum for idea exchange among districts. Standing committees coordinate most of the association's activities and workload.

Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees (VACDE)

The VACDE mission is to provide professional development, leadership and a voice for communicating issues and solutions on behalf of district employees.

Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS)

The SWCS is a private, nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to fostering the science and the art of soil, water and related natural resource management to achieve sustainability. It promotes and practices an ethic recognizing the interdependence of people and the environment. The Virginia chapter of SWCS works to achieve this goal through lobbying, public information, awards programs and conferences. There is a Virginia Tech Student Chapter of the SWCS that supports the missions of the national and state organizations by engaging in a variety of service and social activities such as stream monitoring, trail maintenance, hiking and caving.

PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS, BUSINESSES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Private industries are often interested in conservation. In particular, natural resource industries frequently share interests with districts. These industries include lumber, mining, power, environment and engineering consulting. Private organizations such as civic organizations, fishing and hunting clubs, and environmental groups often have a strong interest in promoting conservation.

Private organizations can be an excellent resource for volunteers and other district partnerships. The following is a partial list of possible organizations:

- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Boy and Girl Scouts
- Chambers of commerce
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- 4-H Clubs
- Virginia Farm Bureau
- Future Farmers of America (FFA)
- Garden clubs
- Homeowner associations
- Izaak Walton League of America
- Lake and river associations
- Piedmont Environmental Council
- Trout Unlimited
- Virginia Cattlemen's Association
- Virginia Chapter of Ducks Unlimited
- Virginia Conservation Network
- Virginia Corn and Soybean Association
- Virginia Dairyman's Association
- Virginia Poultry Federation
- Virginia Forage and Grassland Council
- Virginia Quail Unlimited
- Virginia Grain Producers Association
- Virginia Agribusiness Council

CONSERVATION ABBREVIATIONS

ACE – Advanced Conservation Engineering	NASCA – National Association of State Conservation Agencies
APA – Administrative Process Act	NIMBY – Not In My Back Yard
APW – Annual Plan of Work	NM – Nutrient Management
ASA – Agricultural Stewardship Act	NMP – Nutrient Management Plan
BMP – Best Management Practices (s)	NPS – Nonpoint Source Pollution
CB – Chesapeake Bay	NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)
CBF – Chesapeake Bay Foundation	OAG – Office of the Attorney General
CBLA – Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance	OCB – Outside the Chesapeake Bay
CDC – Conservation District Coordinator	PY – Program Year
CEF – Conservation Efficiency Factor	RMP – Resource Management Plan
COIA – Conflict of Interest Act	RFP – Request for Proposals
CRP – Conservation Reserve Program	RCPP – Regional Conservation Partnership Program
CREP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	SEAS – Shoreline Advisory Service
CWFA – Clean Water Farm Award	SOS – Save Our Streams
DC – District Conservationist (NRCS-USDA)	SWCD – Soil and Water Conservation District
DCR/DSWC – Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation/Division of Soil and Water Conservation	T – The amount of soil that any given soil type would be able to lose and have a zero net soil loss (usually calculated on tons/acre/year basis – NRCS)
DEQ – Department of Environmental Quality	TA – Technical Assistance
DGIF – Department of Game and Inland Fisheries	TAC – Technical Advisory Committee
DMLR – Department of Mined Land Reclamation	TMDL – Total Maximum Daily Load
DMME – Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy	USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
DOF – Virginia Department of Forestry	USFS – United States Forest Service
EJAA – Engineering Job Approval Authority	USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service
E&S – Erosion and Sediment Control	USGS – United States Geological Survey
EPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency	VASWCD – Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program	VACS – Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share
FLSA – Fair Labor Standards Act	VACDE – Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees
FMLA – Family & Medical Leave Act	VCE – Virginia Cooperative Extension
FOIA – Freedom of Information Act	VDACS – Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
FSA – Farm Service Agency (USDA)	VMRC – Virginia Marine Resource Commission
FTE – Full-time Equivalent	VOF – Virginia Outdoors Foundation
FY – Fiscal Year	VSWCB – Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
HEL – Highly Erodible Land	WIP – Watershed Implementation Plan
HU – Hydrologic Unit	WQIA (F) – Water Quality Improvement Act (Fund)
ICE – Introduction to Conservation Engineering	
IDP – Individual Development Plan	
MOU/MOA – Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement	
NACD – National Association of Conservation Districts	

COUNTIES/CITIES BY DISTRICT

COUNTIES/CITIES BY DISTRICT:

Accomack Co	Eastern Shore SWCD	Fredericksburg, City of	Tri-County/City SWCD
Albemarle Co.	Thomas Jefferson SWCD	Galax, City of	New River SWCD
Allegheny Co.	Mountain SWCD	Giles Co.	Skyline SWCD
Amelia Co.	Piedmont SWCD	Gloucester Co.	Tidewater SWCD
Amherst Co.	Robert E. Lee SWCD	Goochland Co.	Monacan SWCD
Appomattox Co.	Robert E. Lee SWCD	Grayson Co.	New River SWCD
Augusta Co	Headwaters SWCD	Greene Co.	Culpeper SWCD
Bath Co.	Mountain SWCD	Greensville Co.	Chowan Basin SWCD
Bedford Co.	Peaks of Otter SWCD	Halifax Co.	Halifax SWCD
Bland Co.	Big Walker SWCD	Hanover Co.	Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Botetourt Co.	Mountain Castles SWCD	Harrisonburg, City of	Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Brunswick Co.	Lake Country SWCD	Henrico Co.	Henricopolis SWCD
Buchanan Co.	Big Sandy SWCD	Henry Co.	Blue Ridge SWCD
Buckingham Co.	Peter Francisco SWCD	Highland Co.	Mountain SWCD
Buena Vista, City of	Natural Bridge SWCD	Isle of Wight Co.	Peanut SWCD
Campbell Co.	Robert E. Lee SWCD	James City Co.	Colonial SWCD
Caroline Co.	Hanover-Caroline SWCD	King George Co.	Tri-County/City SWCD
Carroll Co.	New River SWCD	King & Queen Co.	Three Rivers SWCD
Charles City Co.	Colonial SWCD	King William Co.	Three Rivers SWCD
Charlotte Co.	Southside SWCD	Lancaster Co.	Northern Neck SWCD
Charlottesville, City of	Thomas Jefferson SWCD	Lee Co.	Daniel Boone SWCD
Chesapeake, City of	Virginia Dare SWCD	Lexington, City of	Natural Bridge SWCD
Chesterfield Co.	James River SWCD	Loudoun Co.	Loudoun SWCD
Clarke Co.	Lord Fairfax SWCD	Louisa Co.	Thomas Jefferson SWCD
Covington, City of	Mountain SWCD	Lunenburg Co.	Southside SWCD
Craig Co.	Mountain Castles SWCD	Lynchburg, City of	Robert E. Lee SWCD
Culpeper Co.	Culpeper SWCD	Madison Co.	Culpeper SWCD
Cumberland Co.	Peter Francisco SWCD	Mathews Co.	Tidewater SWCD
Dickenson Co.	Lonesome Pine SWCD	Mecklenburg Co.	Lake County SWCD
Dinwiddie Co.	Appomattox River SWCD	Middlesex Co.	Tidewater SWCD
Essex Co.	Three Rivers SWCD	Montgomery Co.	Skyline SWCD
Fairfax Co.	Northern Virginia SWCD	Nelson Co.	Thomas Jefferson SWCD
Fauquier Co.	John Marshall SWCD	New Kent Co.	Colonial SWCD
Floyd Co.	Skyline SWCD	Northampton Co.	Eastern Shore SWCD
Fluvanna Co.	Thomas Jefferson SWCD	Northumberland Co.	Northern Neck SWCD
Franklin Co.	Blue Ridge SWCD	Nottoway Co.	Piedmont SWCD
Frederick Co.	Lord Fairfax SWCD	Orange Co.	Culpeper SWCD

Page Co.	Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Patrick Co.	Patrick SWCD
Petersburg, City of	Appomattox River SWCD
Pittsylvania Co.	Pittsylvania SWCD
Powhatan Co.	Monacan SWCD
Prince Edward Co.	Piedmont SWCD
Prince George Co.	James River SWCD
Prince William Co.	Prince William SWCD
Pulaski Co.	Skyline SWCD
Rappahannock Co.	Culpeper SWCD
Richmond Co.	Northern Neck SWCD
Roanoke, City of	Blue Ridge SWCD
Roanoke Co.	Blue Ridge SWCD
Rockbridge Co.	Natural Bridge SWCD
Rockingham Co.	Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Russell Co.	Clinch Valley SWCD
Scott Co.	Scott County SWCD
Shenandoah Co.	Lord Fairfax SWCD
Smyth Co.	Evergreen SWCD
Southampton Co.	Chowan Basin SWCD
Spotsylvania Co.	Tri-County/City SWCD
Stafford Co.	Tri-County/City SWCD
Staunton, City of	Headwaters SWCD
Suffolk, City of	Peanut SWCD
Surry Co.	Peanut SWCD
Sussex Co.	Chowan Basin SWCD
Tazewell Co.	Tazewell SWCD
Virginia Beach, City of	Virginia Dare SWCD
Warren Co.	Lord Fairfax SWCD
Washington Co.	Holston River SWCD
Waynesboro, City of	Headwaters SWCD
Westmoreland Co.	Northern Neck SWCD
Williamsburg, City of	Colonial SWCD
Winchester, City of	Lord Fairfax SWCD
Wise Co.	Lonesome Pine SWCD
Wythe Co.	Big Walker SWCD
York Co.	Colonial SWCD

CITIES/COUNTY NOT COVERED BY SWCDs:

Alexandria	Manassas
Bristol	Manassas Park
Clifton Forge	Martinsville
Colonial Heights	Newport News
Danville	Norfolk
Emporia	Norton
Fairfax	Poquoson
Falls Church	Portsmouth
Franklin	Radford
Hampton	Richmond
Hopewell	Salem

Arlington County

CALENDAR OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

January

- Election of district officers if not done in December.
- Appoint SWCD committees.
- Set meeting dates and times for year.
- Appoint/reappoint SWCD associate directors.
- Review annual plan of work.
- VASWCD Legislative Day.
- Quarterly reports due to DCR.
- Continue working with local government on local budget requests.
- Conduct mid-year personnel evaluations.

February

- Review 4-year longer term plan.

March

- Begin SWCD annual planning process.
- Conduct area spring meetings.

April

- Prepare an annual SWCD operating budget for the coming fiscal year (beginning July 1).
- Educational Foundation Scholarship applications due to VASWCD.
- Conduct area Envirothon competitions.
- Quarterly reports due to DCR.
- Conduct area spring meetings.

May

- Soil and Water Stewardship Week.
- Approve SWCD operating budget.
- Youth Camp participant forms due to VASWCD.
- State Envirothon event.
- Update and approve personnel policy.
- Update and approve employee job descriptions.

June

- SWCDs take action on DCR/SWCD grant agreements.
- Approve annual plan of work.
- Conduct year-end personnel evaluations.
- Nominating petitions, declaration of candidacy form and certificate of candidate qualifications due to local registrars by 7 p.m. of the second Tuesday for candidates seeking the office of SWCD director in the general election (every fourth year 2019, 2023).
- State Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program year ends.

July

- District annual plan of work begins.
- VASWCD Youth Conservation Camp at Virginia Tech.
- Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program year begins.
- Quarterly and year-end reports due to DCR.
- Suggestions for upcoming VACS program year due to Ag TAC.
- Ag BMP spot checks begin.

August

- Prepare SWCD annual report.
- Complete Criteria/Nominations forms – R.E. “Bobby” Wilkinson/E.C. Compton Meritorious Achievement Award nominations due.

September

- Conservation Award entries due.
- SWCD annual report due.

October

- Natural Resources Conservation Week.
- Begin working with local governments on local budget requests.
- Quarterly reports due to DCR.
- Submit Clean Water Farm Award application for Grand Basin nominations.

November

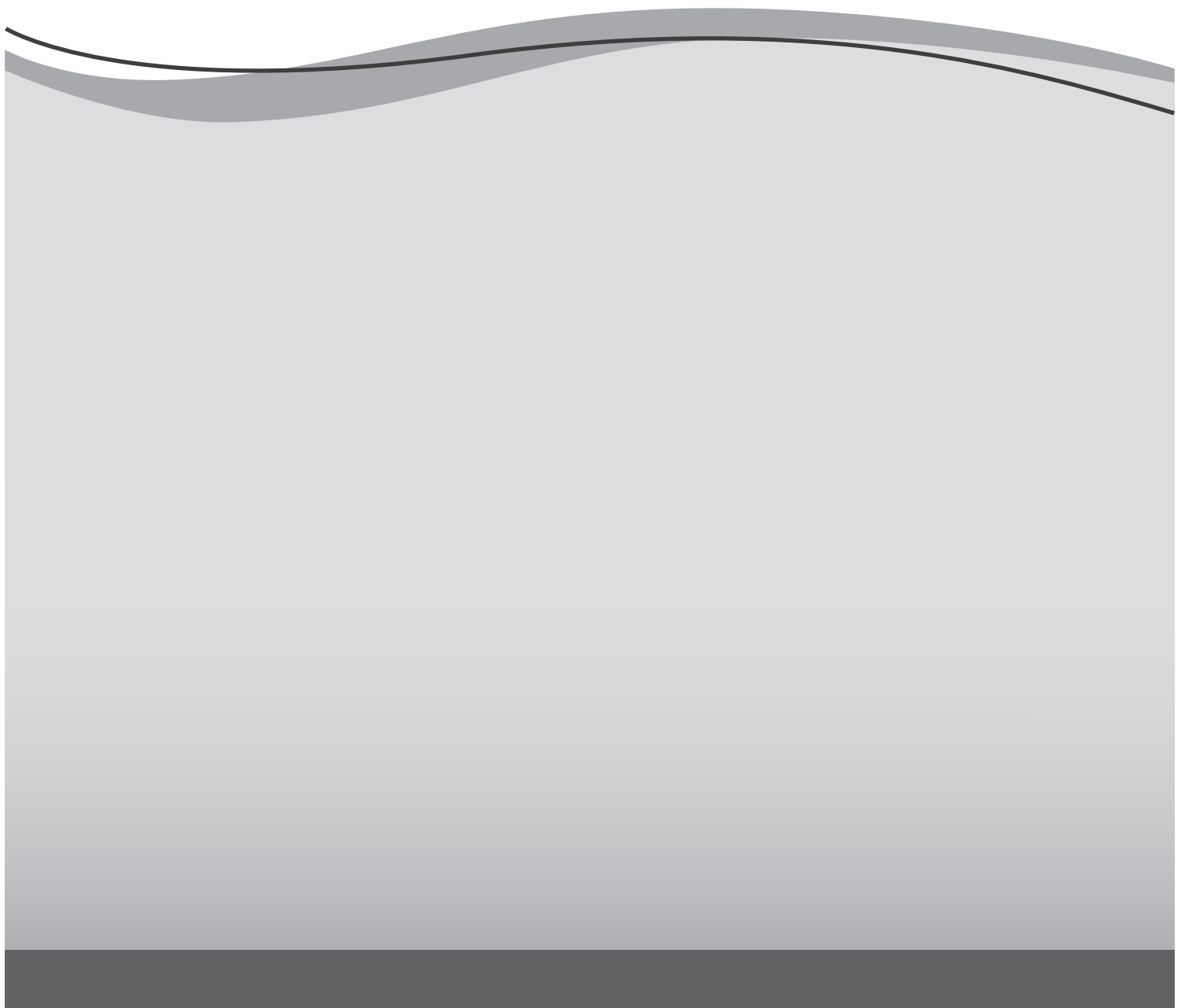
- General election including election of SWCD directors for all SWCDs every fourth year (2019, 2023).
- Appoint nominating committee to present slate of officers at December/January board meeting.

December

- VASWCD annual meeting.
- Approve nutrient management plans -equipment tax credit - BMP Tax credits.
- Appoint nominating committee to present slate of officers at January board meeting (recommended).
- Newly elected or appointed directors take oath of office.

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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