



**White River  
Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
District**

28 Farmvu Drive  
White River Junction, VT 05001  
www.whiterivernrcd.org  
whiterivernrcd@gmail.com  
(802) 369-3167

**Board of Supervisors Meeting  
November 4, 2024, 8:30AM - 10:30AM**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85303248749?pwd=V5riXArmZ8Mgopwb73i2UwXhkrhRAS.1>

+1 646 931 3860 US

Meeting ID: 853 0324 8749

Passcode: 333567

**Attendees:** Jennifer Byrne, Didi Pershouse, Niko Horster, Kate Willard, Karl Thidemann, Jaiel Pulskam, Sage Ruth, Olivia Carlson, Travis Thomason, David Blodgett.

**8:30 Welcome**

**8:35 [Approve September Meeting Minutes](#)**

- **Approval of Minutes:** Jennifer Byrne initiated the approval of the September minutes. Didi Pershouse confirmed they were acceptable, and the board approved them.

**8:40 VACD Annual Meeting Nov 19-20, Dues, [Survey due Nov 6](#)**

- Didi will attend on behalf of WRNRCD. The logistics for the scheduled meeting and its goals were discussed. The first day will not be a decision-making meeting but an informational gathering day.
- Niko appreciated the VACD survey. It asked productive questions.
- Jenn mentioned that WRNRCD has yet to receive a response from VACD to the board's letter. The District still needs payment for meeting presentations that the district has done. We are hoping to swap payment due for member dues.

**8:50 Nominate NRCC representative for Central Supervisory Union**

- Rick Hopkins is our supervisory Representative. There will be an election this year. The Central Vermont Union is a union comprising two members: a member from the WRNRCD and a member from the Winooski District. Alvina and Rick serve on the Union board. Kate will be nominated to sit on NRCC. Didi will sit on the VACD board. A stipend could be paid to council members. There is not a stipend for VACD meetings.



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**9:00 Board Introductions to Travis Thomason (USDA-NRCS) and the VACD facilitator:**

- Travis Thomason was introduced as the Vermont NRCS State Conservationist. He shared his background and underscored the importance of locally-led conservation. He is Responsible for everything that happens with NRCS in the state—partnership at the state, local, and federal level.
- Travis gave an overview of the work and a short history of NRCS
- Outlined his goals of prioritizing locally-led conservation.
- Emphasized the significance of a collaborative approach in conservation efforts.
- **Sage Ruth:** Introduced her role in collaborating with the VACD as the facilitator for the first day of the VACD annual meeting. She discussed a recent survey that she hopes the WRNRCD board members will complete.

The board introduced themselves and answered a list of questions that Sage provided:

- Please introduce yourself and share what you personally find most exciting about the work of your district.**
  - What's unique/special/particularly important for us to understand about your district?**
  - What are you especially proud of in your district – things that are going well, particular projects, etc?**
  - What are the biggest challenges you're facing in your district?**
  - What is working well about the relationship with VACD? What could be better?**
  - What is working well about the relationship with NRCS? What could be better?**
- Board members discussed challenges with VACD collaboration, stressing the need for improved communication and reliable funding. They expressed frustration that VACD gets most of the funding from NRCS and that the districts are statutorily supposed to be NRCS's partners, not a non-profit.
  - The Board expressed frustration with the short notice given to deadlines for the local funding pool and the fact that interested landowners did not have enough time to submit applications before the deadline.
  - VACD is hiring many technical staff to do the work districts are statutorily supposed to do.
  - Travis expressed his commitment to strengthening relationships with NRCDs and VACD.



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**9:40 Department Updates**

TA Department:

- Agroforestry plantings w/ Farm Force & Dartmouth, Grazing/Agroforestry cohort wrap up
  - Jennifer Byrne provided updates on the department's agroforestry and grazing plans.
  - Partnering with ten farmers in our districts with grazing and conservation plans written by our staff.
  - Lyle was funded to do conservation plans
  - The money comes through the local funding pool
  - Collaboration of money from NRACD, SARE, American Farmland Trust, and The Dairy Farmers Association.
  - It is satisfying to see the EQIP contracting and then see the projects completed
  - Look for some funding to see the staff implement work
  - The Working Lands Climate Corps money comes from NRCS
  - We are not able to fund the actual implementation
- Farm Teams
  - Jennifer introduced the farm team model, which aims to enhance service delivery. The board expressed support for the model's potential impact.
  - Shifting all TA work through farm teams
  - Get every farmer to have a farm team and every staff member to help facilitate the farm team model.
  - Have our team meetings in January and February and set the strategic plan for the farm.
  - District staff and farmers don't know when grants will come out, and the District receives many requests for help filling out grants.
  - The District will provide a farm team approach with two meetings a year.
- [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\) Assistance](#), no EQIP TA \$ for 2025
- Hickory Harvest, Landowner Contract
- EPA Environmental Justice Grant w/ USVI, PR
  - In collaboration with some scientists, the district is applying for an EPA grant to conduct Phyto remediation for yards and farms with heavily polluted soils. This EPA grant could also provide infrastructure, water catchment systems, and new roofs; they need new roofs and infrastructure in the US Virgin Islands.

Education Department



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- Farm Force, Boot Camp
- Soil Sponge Workshops
- Regeneration Corps - Composting Curriculum

### Research Department

- PFAS FOIA Request
- Jenn reviewed a recent FOIA request for herbicide and pesticide spending data in conservation practices. Due to redacted data, transparency and reduced chemical use were emphasized.
- Concern was expressed over PFAS in NRCS-approved applications, with limited federal guidance on addressing these chemicals.
- Noted potential insurance policies that might restrict farming due to PFAS contamination, highlighting the environmental and financial implications of PFAS on agricultural practices.
- Harvard Law School public banking partnership
  - [View Dirt & Democracy "What is Money?" video](#)

### Outreach Department

- Provided a [locally-led conservation training](#) to the state's districts
- Town [Appropriations Request Petitions](#) Update
- CT River Watershed Farmers Alliance - fiscal sponsor
- Board Elections

### HR/Admin Department

- Onboarded 30 Climate Corps/Farm Force members
- Bus purchase

### Action Items:

- **Public Hearing:** Schedule a meeting with Two Rivers for the regional plan hearing. Jaiel and Didi will try to attend a meeting.
- **Town Appropriation Requests:** Contact town clerks for deadlines and assist with gathering signatures.
- **NRCC Nominee:** Kate Willard needs a bio for NRCC representative consideration.
- **Regional Plan Feedback:** Attend public hearings to provide feedback.
- **Board Recruitment:** Recruit a new member to fill the open board seat.



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- **Elections:** Karl will replace Niko. Board members need to recruit someone to fill the open seat.

**10:30 Meeting adjourned at 10:55**