



**White River  
Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
District**

28 Farmvu Drive  
White River Junction, VT 05001  
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**White River NRC D Board of Supervisors Meeting  
February 11, 2026, 10 am - 3 pm  
Hybrid**

**APPROVED Board Meeting Minutes**

**☰ Holistic Context – White River NRC D draft Working Document holistic context, quality-of-life, and resource-based statements**

**Attendees:**

Jennifer Byrne; Didi Pershouse; Willie Gibson; Abe Collins; Sabra Ewing; Michael Fernandez; Lauren Weston; Anna Hubbard; Kate Willard; Karen Ganey; Lyle Nicholes; Henry Harris; Jaiel Pulskamp; Alvina Risinger-Harvey, Bruce Howlett

**Meeting Purpose**

To establish a **holistic management context** for the District that will guide decision-making, define a shared **vision and mission**, and align board and staff actions with long-term community and land stewardship goals.

**Key Discussions**

**1. Establishing Holistic Context**

- Jennifer Byrne opened by emphasizing the need for a **clear management context** to guide all future policy and decisions.
- The District currently lacks a formal **vision and mission statement**, and this process is intended to develop both.
- The holistic context will serve as a **decision-making filter**, ensuring alignment with long-term goals and addressing root causes rather than symptoms.

**2. Role of AI and Data**

- Discussion on the use of **AI tools** to:
  - Support consensus-building
  - Process community input and data



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- Capture authentic language from participants
- Emphasis was placed on maintaining the **human element** while leveraging technology.

### 3. Introductions and Board Alignment

- Participants shared expectations, highlighting:
  - Desire for a **collective purpose**
  - Importance of **in-person engagement** for trust and cohesion
  - Interest in clearer alignment across board members

### 4. Holistic Management Framework

- Abe Collins introduced **holistic management principles**, including:
  - Defining the “whole” (people, land, economy)
  - Understanding **social, ecological, and economic systems**
  - Tools such as **planned grazing** and land-use planning
- Discussion included scaling these approaches to **watershed-level management**.

### 5. Decision-Making and Governance

- The group explored **holistic decision-making**, focusing on:
  - Identifying weak links in systems
  - Iterative and adaptive processes
  - Importance of **trust, reciprocity, and community participation**
- Examples included applications to farms, community systems, and district-wide planning.

### 6. Best and Worst Outcomes Analysis

- Participants identified potential **worst-case scenarios**, including:
  - Declining human and ecosystem health
  - Loss of local decision-making power
  - Workforce skill gaps and social inequities
  - Over-reliance on external funding and top-down control
- **Best-case outcomes** included:
  - Strong local governance and community engagement
  - Improved soil health and reduced flood impacts
  - Thriving local food and fiber systems
  - Resilient, circular local economies
  - Inclusive, democratic participation and partnerships



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### 7. Beliefs and Behaviors for Success

- Key values identified:
  - Local self-determination
  - Stewardship of public lands for public good
  - Lifelong learning and technical skill-building
  - Collaboration, trust, and resilience
  - Commitment to **holistic land management practices**

### 8. Vision, Purpose, and Quality of Life

- The group emphasized creating:
  - A **Statement of Purpose**
  - A **Quality of Life statement**
  - A **Future Resource Base statement**
- These should reflect **authentic language**, emotional resonance, and full group buy-in.
- AI may assist in drafting, but outputs must remain grounded in participant input.

### 9. Process Reflections

- Positive feedback on the **circle process**, including its roots in the Vermont Abenaki model of governance.
- Recognition of the need to balance **discussion with practical, hands-on action**.
- Strong agreement on the importance of a **shared vision** moving forward.

### Decisions / Agreements

- Proceed with developing a **holistic context framework** for the District.
- Use AI to support drafting while preserving participant voice.
- Commit to refining a shared **vision, mission, and quality-of-life statements**.
- Align the **Conservation Action Plan** with holistic management principles.

### Action Items

#### From Session 1:

- Email presentation slides and materials to participants

#### From Session 2:



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- Jennifer Byrne to:
  - Draft and distribute summarized meeting notes (~4 pages).
  - Develop **holistic context, quality-of-life, and resource-based statements**.
  - Compile notes from the session.
- Coordinate a **recurring meeting schedule** (proposed: every two months).
- Organize an **in-person social gathering** for continued relationship-building.

### Next Steps

- Review and refine drafted **holistic context and vision statements**.
- Integrate outputs into the **Conservation Action Plan**.
- Continue building alignment through regular meetings and collaborative processes.

### Adjournment

 Holistic Context – White River NRCD draft Working Draft **holistic context, quality-of-life, and resource-based statements**