



**White River
Natural
Resources
Conservation
District**

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White River NRC D Board of Supervisors Meeting

When: May 21, 2026, 12:00 - 1:30 PM

Virtual or In Person

28 Farmvu Drive, White River Junction, VT

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/A4bWAupCREiZTxedGgls4w>

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Anna Hubbard, Alvina Harvey, Sabra Ewing, Jennifer Byrne, Jaiel Pulskamp, Didi Pershouse, David Blodgett

Welcome

- The meeting was called to order at 12:24 PM.
- **Approval of [April Meeting Minutes](#)**
- **Motion:** Postpone approval of the April meeting minutes until all supervisors are present and have had an opportunity to review them.
Second: Received.
Vote: Motion carried unanimously.
- The Board discussed the draft April meeting minutes and the need for adequate review by all supervisors.
- Jaiel Pulskamp will distribute the all draft minutes to board members via email and post them to the district website.

NRCS Updates

- David Blodgett provided updates on current Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs and applications.
- **Program Status**
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications and contract development have been completed.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and American Farmland Trust (AFT) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) applications were ranked and pre-approved; contract development is underway.
- Eight applications were approved through the Local Funding Pool:
 - Five forest management plans
 - Three pollinator habitat projects
- One RCP project and two AFT plans received funding.

- The application deadline of May 20 was successfully met for all projects.

Discussion

Board members discussed concerns regarding:

- Alignment between Local Funding Pool awards and priorities identified through the locally led conservation process.
- Limited incorporation of local ranking priorities into funding decisions.
- The widespread use of pesticides within approved conservation plans and opportunities to encourage reduced pesticide use.
- The significant amount of district staff time required to support applications and contracts without dedicated funding.
- The need for dedicated funding to support Local Work Group meetings and Conservation Action Plan development.

Suggestions included:

- Creating funding mechanisms that prioritize locally identified conservation objectives.
- Establishing continuous planning funds that allow conservation planning before implementation funding is sought.
- Advocating for federal and state funding support for conservation district planning activities.
- Sending a letter and requesting meetings with Vermont's congressional delegation regarding Farm Bill implementation and conservation district funding.

AFT Program Outreach

The Board discussed how farmers learn about and access AFT conservation funding opportunities. Staff explained that many applications are submitted through the same channels as EQIP and other NRCS programs, while some AFT-funded opportunities operate independently.

Local Work Group and Conservation Action Plan

The Board discussed the district's role in:

- Reviewing conservation plans developed through local funding programs.
- Providing feedback to NRCS regarding local priorities.
- Ensuring that Conservation Action Plan recommendations are reflected in funding decisions.
- Securing resources to support future conservation planning efforts.

District Updates

Envirothon Programs

Jennifer Byrne reported on the successful Virgin Islands Envirothon program:

- Approximately 40 participants attended.

- Student teams from the U.S. Virgin Islands are eligible to participate in the national competition.
- Station leaders have expressed interest in joining the steering committee.

The upcoming Vermont Envirothon will be held on **May 27, 2026**, at Buck Lake Wildlife Management Area in Woodbury, Vermont. This year's theme is **Nonpoint Source Pollution**.

Tree Planting Program

- Approximately 6,000 free trees were distributed.
- Plantings occurred on roughly 20 farms across seven planting dates.
- Additional volunteers are needed to support remaining planting activities.

Vermont State University Partnership

[VTSU Update](#)

Jennifer Byrne discussed ongoing conversations with Vermont State University (VTSU/VSU), including:

- Potential use of university facilities for district programming.
- Development of a 3–4 day soil health and conservation planning training program in August.
- Opportunities for long-term collaboration and educational programming.

Summer Programs and Community Engagement

Upcoming activities include:

- Farm Force volunteer projects
- Invasive species removal opportunities with local conservation commissions
- Additional tree planting and conservation events throughout the summer
- Tree Planting Updates ~6,000 free trees distributed, [7 planting dates](#)

Jaiel Pulskamp will reach out to local conservation commissions regarding partnership opportunities, including invasive species management projects in Granville.

Public Banking Event Planning

Jennifer Byrne reported on discussions with Don Morgan, President of the Bank of North Dakota, regarding a Vermont public banking conference.

Potential goals include:

- Bringing together farmers, legislators, conservation districts, and community leaders.
- Exploring financing models that support local economies and conservation efforts.
- Hosting the event at Vermont Law School or Vermont State University.

The Board agreed that a planning group should be formed to organize the event and develop an invitation list.

Sheep and Wool Festival and Fibershed Outreach

The Board discussed participation in the Vermont Sheep and Wool Festival through:

- Educational workshops
- Community listening sessions
- Informational booths

Potential topics include:

- Biodiversity and grazing systems
- Silvopasture
- Local fiber economies
- Ecological and economic benefits of regional wool production
- Fiber Shed [Home - Fibershed](#)

Discussion highlighted challenges facing the regional Fibershed movement, including:

- High processing costs
- Competition from imported fiber products
- Limited local market infrastructure
- Lack of consumer awareness regarding environmental impacts of textile production

FY27 Budgeting and Staff Reviews

The Board reviewed upcoming priorities for Fiscal Year 2027:

- Budget development and work planning
- Staff evaluations
- Contract renewals scheduled for July

Jennifer Byrne will draft a staff review process for board consideration prior to contract renewals.

NRCC and VACD Updates

VACD

Board members reviewed recent activities of the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD), including:

- Agricultural Clean Water Initiative Program (AgCWIP) funding reductions.
- Ongoing advocacy efforts.
- Concerns regarding staffing and administration of the Pay-for-Phosphorus program.

Upcoming meetings:

- **VACD Board Meeting:** August 18, 2026 (6:00–8:00 PM)
- **VACD Annual Meeting:** November 17, 2026, at Lake Morey

The Board encouraged supervisor participation in VACD meetings to improve representation and communication.

Mileage Reimbursement

The Board discussed reinstating mileage reimbursement for supervisors attending district meetings and events.

Action: Consider incorporating supervisor mileage reimbursement into the FY27 budget process.

Supervisory Union Alignment

The Board discussed the possibility of withdrawing from the Winooski Supervisory Union and joining a supervisory union aligned with the Connecticut River watershed.

Jennifer Byrne and Kate Willard will prepare a report outlining options and requirements for consideration by the NRCC and Board.

Action Items

Jennifer Byrne

- Share videos and photos from the U.S. Virgin Islands Envirothon with board members and volunteers.
- Invite State Conservationist Travis and other NRCS representatives to a future board meeting.
- Develop a 3–4 day soil health training program with VTSU/VSU for August.
- Distribute the summer events calendar and upcoming event invitations.
- Convene a planning group for the September public banking event.
- Share NRCC meeting schedules and invitations with board members.
- Issue outstanding supervisor compensation payments.
- Draft a staff review process before July contract renewals.
- Coordinate with Kate Willard regarding supervisory union alignment discussions.

Jaiel Pulskamp

- Email and post draft meeting minutes.
- Track and share VACD meeting dates.
- Reach out to conservation commissions regarding invasive species and volunteer opportunities.

Board and Staff

- Explore opportunities to advocate for conservation district funding through congressional outreach.
- Evaluate methods for incorporating local conservation priorities into funding pool rankings.
- Assess feasibility of supervisor mileage reimbursement during FY27 budget development.
- Continue planning for public banking and community outreach events.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at **2:06 PM**.