White River
Natural
Resources
Conservation
District

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White River NRCD Board of Supervisors Meeting
September 17, 2026 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
In person: 28 Farmvu Drive, White River Jct, NRCS Conference Room
or join Zoom Meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/J4NK7klyRVeOzeFneMDRhQ

APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Jennifer Byrne, Sabra Ewing, Alvina Harvey, Didi Pershouse, Kate Willard, Jaiel Pulskamp, Phylicxia Moore

Welcome and Board Check-In

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. Supervisors participated in a board circle check-in and shared announcements.

Approval of August Minutes

The Board noted a correction to the spelling of Sabra's last name in the August minutes.

Motion: Kate moved to approve the August minutes as amended.
Second: The motion was seconded.
Vote: Unanimous approval.

NRCS Updates

The Board received an update on NRCS workload, FY26 closeout, FY27 planning, conservation delivery, and District capacity.

- NRCS applications should be submitted as soon as possible. The first application deadline discussed was September 25.
- FY26 closeout work is underway, and staff is compiling information on how conservation was delivered during FY26, including the types of applications funded and resource concerns addressed. Additional information is expected to be shared with the Board in November.

- The American Farmland Trust Regional Conservation Partnership Program (AFT RCPP) contract is scheduled to end September 30. The District currently does not have an agreement to perform new RCPP work.
- The District is seeking funding for one FTE under a new agreement. The agreement is expected to be decided within the next several months.
- Once the AFT agreement ends, the District expects to temporarily use AgCWIP funding to support work previously covered by the agreement.
- Staff discussed workload and capacity, including resource concern assessments, pasture condition score sheets, job approval authority, conservation planning, whole-farm interviews, and potential use of FarmOS/OurSCI conservation-planning technology.
- Staff noted the need to be selective about additional work undertaken when the District does not have an agreement with NRCS.
- Staff discussed the eventual handoff of work to NRCS and agreed to revisit workload and capacity at the next workload meeting.
- The Board discussed whether the District should review, in executive session, information about farms receiving federal conservation funding and what information may be shared under the District's 1619 agreement.
- It was noted that 1619 training would be beneficial and that the agreement addresses what information may and may not be shared.
- NRCS is expected to provide additional data in November.

District Updates

Soil Health/CEMA 216 Training

The District reported on the CEMA 216 Soil Training CEMA 216 Training held September 10–12 at Vermont State University Randolph.

- Twenty-three qualified individuals from six states and territories participated.
- Training included field assessments, soil pits, laboratory testing, soil mapping, and demonstrations of conservation-planning processes.
- Willie and Bruce were recognized for their work describing the CEMA 216 process.
- The UVM laboratory is preparing for the anticipated CEMA 216 workload.
- The Board discussed training costs and the use of AgCWIP funds.
- The Board discussed the potential for repeating the training and providing participants with shared training materials.
- Questions were raised regarding the RPP contract if qualified individuals do not complete their CEMA requirements.

Free Trees for Livestock Farmers

The final report for the Free Trees for Livestock Farmers project was submitted to Xerces.

Over three seasons, the project distributed and planted 5,420 trees and shrubs, 2,250 tree guards, mulch, and other materials across approximately 22 acres on 42 livestock farms in the Connecticut River Valley. The project also included 11 Farm Force volunteer planting days.

Future Events and Activities

The Board reviewed upcoming District activities and opportunities, including:

- FarmOS/OurSCI Conservation Planner Technology Pilot.
- Farm Force activities with VTSU and VLGS students on October 8 and October 15. https://www.whiterivernrcd.org/farm-force
- AgLearn Accountability Network beginning November 13.
- Agriculture Engineering Bootcamp in St. Croix in February 2027.
- Public Banking for Prosperity Conference in Philadelphia, October 21–24.
- Updates from Canaday, VTSU, VLGS, and Envirothon.

Dirt & Democracy Land-Use Panel

The Board discussed the October 17 Dirt & Democracy Land-Use Panel and Freedom & Unity Concert at the VTSU Randolph Student Center.

Discussion focused on the District's role in the event, constituent engagement, political neutrality, balanced representation, sponsorship, and the distinction between facilitating discussion and endorsing particular viewpoints.

The Board discussed having the District logo on the event flyer and facilitating the Dirt & Democracy portion of the event. Members also discussed inviting additional perspectives to the panel, including Roger Allbee.

Motion: Kate moved that the District support the land-use panel for the purpose of soliciting input from constituents and not supporting or endorsing the opinions of the panelists.
Second: Alvina seconded the motion.
Vote: Three in favor; one abstention. **Motion carried.**

The Board emphasized that District participation is intended to provide an opportunity to meet with constituents and gather information and does not constitute political support for any particular position or panelist.

Regional Plan

The Board discussed the draft 2026 TRORC Regional Plan and the District's proposed comments.

Discussion of final comments was postponed because Board members had not yet had sufficient opportunity to review the Draft White River NRCD Comments on the Draft 2026 TRORC Regional Plan document in depth.

Action Item:

- Board members will review the draft regional plan and return to the matter for further discussion and consideration of final comments.

VACD Updates

The Board discussed the upcoming VACD advocacy meeting in Berlin on September 23 and broader regional advocacy coordination.

Members raised questions concerning:

- The purpose and agenda of the advocacy meeting.
- Communication with Action Circles.
- The Board noted that the District had not yet received a response to its previous letter requesting clarification and a meeting with Michelle.

Members agreed that clarification should be sought before the September 23 advocacy meeting.

NRCC UPDATE

Finance and Contract Updates

The NRCC Finance Committee reported on draft contracts with the Vermont Association of Rural Development and VACD.

The Finance Committee had reviewed and approved the draft contracts, subject to amendments.

The amounts discussed were:

- **$22,500** for rural development.
- **$7,500** for VACD.
- The NRCD Board discussed whether to accept and sign the amended contracts and noted that the allocation of related funds and services among districts remained an open question.
- No funds were identified as being directly designated for individual conservation districts.

Meeting Schedule

The Board discussed changing the regular meeting time from noon to 10:00 a.m.

Motion: The Board approved moving regular Board meetings from **12:00 p.m. to 10:00 a.m. on a trial basis**.

The Board agreed to revisit the meeting time if the new schedule does not work effectively.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.