



**White River
Natural
Resources
Conservation
District**

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**White River NRC Board of Supervisors Meeting
October 15, 2026, 10:00 AM - 12:00 AM**

In person, 28 Farmvu Drive, White River Jct., NRCS Conference Room

Or Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/9tJfKwWS9aUpbfmpU0OgA>

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Jennifer Byrne, Olivia Carlson, Kate Willard, Phyllicia Moore, Sabra Ewing, Alvina Harvey, and Jaiel Pulskamp

Welcome: The meeting was called to order. Board members and attendees were welcomed.

Adjustments to the Agenda

Jennifer noted that election information had been added to the agenda, along with a link to the Two Rivers Regional Planning Commission (TRORC) comments. The board also anticipated entering executive session to discuss two pending CREP conservation contracts.

Board Member Check-In

Board members shared brief personal and seasonal updates, including observations about this year's fruit harvest and other local activities.

Approval of September Meeting Minutes

Kate Willard moved to approve the September 2026 meeting minutes. Alvina seconded. Minutes were approved.

USDA Updates (NRCS/FSA)

- NRCS reported that the organic certification cost-share deadline is December 31st.
- The dairy margin coverage deadline is December 18th for 2027. Sign-up provides financial support for commercial dairy operations when milk prices are low and feed costs are high.
- The Agricultural Risk Coverage Price Loss Coverage Program (ARCPLC) deadline is December 11th for 2026 and March 1st for 2027.

- The fall crop reporting deadline for fall-seeded small grains planting is November 15th.
- NRCS and FSA recommend that any producer who is an entity and will receive NRCS payments contact FSA, because any farm operating plan or 902 form needs to be updated. To keep payments moving quickly, producers should contact FSA.
- There is a bedded pack workshop with NRCS and the Orleans County Natural Resource Conservation District in Greensboro on October 29, from 10 AM to 12 PM. This training is valuable for producers looking to install bedded pack waste storage facilities and assess bedding needs for effective operation.
- The Vermont NRCS Conservation Plan and Guidance was updated for fiscal year 2027.
- NRCS is ready to approve payments for the Conservation Stewardship Program for the 2026 calendar year by December 11th, and then has until February 12th, 2027, to approve payments for next year's calendar year.
- Annual reports and accomplishments are due as part of the memorandum of understanding by the end of the year.
- Civil rights responsibilities training is expected during the first or second quarter of the fiscal year, preferably before February or March.
- The updated Vermont NRCS Conservation Plan and Guidance document will be shared with the board.
- The district discussed coordinating with FSA and NRCS to help producers obtain the eligibility documents needed to enter agency systems and proceed with conservation planning.
- The district discussed CREP forms from FSA, which require District signatures.

District Updates

CEMA 216 Soil-Health Testing Contracts

- The district has created CEMA 216 contracts and is providing soil-health testing services, including planning support, sample collection, shipping, reporting, and interpretation.
- Willie is the lead Qualified Individual for the CEMA 216 work.
- The district is covering staff time and expenses while awaiting reimbursement from NRCS.
- Under Option A, the \$520 payment would go directly to the district, which would advance laboratory and shipping costs until NRCS reimbursement is received.
- Under Option B, the farmer pays laboratory and shipping fees directly.
- Some farmers have chosen both SHREC laboratory testing and nutrient testing.
- Board members emphasized maintaining a spreadsheet to track participating farms, expenses, submitted information, and expected reimbursement dates.

Past Events

- Two public banking virtual follow-up meetings took place September 30 and October 1.
- A virtual soil-health follow-up meeting was held October 7 following the CEMA 216 Soil Health Academy, which brought 23 conservation professionals to Vermont.

Upcoming Events

- October 15: Farm Force work brigade with Vermont State University and Vermont Law and Graduate School.
- October 17: Dirt & Democracy: A Vermont Land Use Panel.
- October 22–24: Public Banking for Prosperity Conference in Philadelphia.
- October 28: Public Banking Vermont Network meeting.
- October 31: White River NRCD autumn tree sale.
- November 13: First AgLearn Accountability Network meeting.
- February 18–25, 2027: Water Engineering Bootcamp on St. Croix.

Urban Biodiversity and Food Forests

Sabra raised the possibility of pursuing mini-grants for urban biodiversity plantings and food forests. The board discussed opportunities to establish food forests in local communities and expand these efforts as the district grows its own trees.

Executive Session: Pending CREP Contracts

The board discussed concerns about being brought into CREP conservation planning too late, including being asked to review and sign two conservation plans on short notice. One farm appeared to be a potentially good fit for CREP, while the district had concerns about the other.

Kate Willard moved to enter executive session to discuss pending contract matters and invite Jennifer Byrne, Phyllicia Moore, Olivia Carlson, and Jaiel Pulskamp to participate. Alvina Harvey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the board entered executive session at 10:42 AM.

The board exited executive session at 11:25 AM following a motion by Kate Willard, seconded by Sabra Ewing.

Following executive session, the board approved a motion to request a meeting involving the board, FSA, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture to identify improvements to the CREP planning and contract review process. The board also requested a definite due date for FSA contracts. Kate Willard made the motion, and Alvina Harvey seconded it; it passed unanimously at 11:28 AM.

Two Rivers Regional Planning Commission (TRORC) Comment Review and Vote

The board discussed the district's comments concerning TRORC and the Land Use Review Board (LURB).

- The comment period had closed, and the board discussed submitting comments after the deadline.
- Members agreed to review the updated document and provide any objections or requested changes by the end of October 22.
- If no objections were received by that deadline, Jennifer would forward the comments to TRORC and LURB.
- Responses regarding the TRORC comments were expected by October 22.

Newbury Easement Memo and Site Visit

The easement memo was finalized after review by Vermont Law and Graduate School.

- The board tentatively scheduled a site visit to the Newbury easement for the afternoon of October 29.
- The landowners would receive a courtesy call before the visit.
- Participants would circulate their findings by email after the site visit.

District Elections

The board reviewed the upcoming district election process.

- The election was scheduled for December 4, 2026, with candidate petitions due November 20.
- Alvina Harvey's supervisor term was ending, and she expressed interest in continuing to serve.
- Members discussed the five-supervisor limit and the option of associate memberships.
- Jaiel will revise the election notice to remove the specific number of vacancies and instead indicate that one supervisor seat is open, while also mentioning the option to serve as an associate member.
- The board discussed whether other supervisors were considering stepping down.

NRCC and VACD Updates

Clean Water Budget

The board identified the need to address comments on the Clean Water budget.

NACD Resolutions

- NACD resolutions are due November 3.

- Members discussed the importance of national advocacy for conservation district funding and ensuring Vermont's voice was represented.
- The board supported forwarding its previously approved request for \$100,000 per conservation district through the Farm Bill to Michelle and requesting VACD support for consideration through the NACD resolution process.

VACD Dues and Working Relationship

The board discussed outstanding VACD dues and unresolved concerns regarding the district's relationship with the association.

- VACD dues were \$3,000 annually. The district had paid its 2026 dues but had not paid the outstanding 2025 dues.
- Members discussed the history of the dues arrangement, prior compensation for district work, and concerns about information-sharing, governance, staffing, and collaboration.
- Members noted that districts not current on dues may retain membership but lose voting rights.
- The board discussed whether the district had received sufficient benefits from VACD during the disputed period and whether outstanding concerns should be resolved before further payment.

Next Steps

- Kate Willard would contact Michelle and Claire to explore dates for an in-person or hybrid meeting before the VACD annual meeting on November 17.
- The board discussed holding a special meeting to address the matter.
- The board deferred further payment of disputed dues pending the meeting and clarification of the district's dues status.

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

Adjournment

Alvina Harvey moved to adjourn the meeting. Kate Willard seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:50 PM

.Minutes prepared by Jaiel Pulskamp from notes and Otter recording.