

Virginia Association of RC&D Councils
2010 Annual Spring Meeting Draft Minutes of Business Meeting
Wednesday, April 28, 2010 and Friday, April 30, 2010
Smithfield Conference Center - Smithfield, VA

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Judy Lyttle, Chairwoman-South Hampton Roads RC&D Council (SHR), welcomed attendees, recognized SHR attendees who are local hosts, and Yamika Stokes, NRCS and current NRCS Acting Coordinator Patrick Vincent. Judy also acknowledged the new Black Diamond Coordinator KD Cook. Al Casteen, Supervisor with Isle of Wight County and member of SHR Council, welcomed us to Smithfield.

VARCDC Business Meeting – April 28, 2010

Welcome and Roll Call: Chairman Bill Smith called the meeting to order at 12:58 pm. He stated we will be flexible in our schedule to accommodate folks. Joan Comanor, VARCDC Secretary, called the roll of Council delegates (see attached list).

Consent Agenda: A motion by Mo Lynch, seconded by Don Bagshaw to approve the proposed agenda as written, was approved unanimously.

- **Minutes of Fall 2009 meeting:** A motion to approve the draft fall 2009 meeting minutes made by Jim Boland, seconded by Judy Lyttle, passed unanimously.
- **Treasurer's Report:** A motion by Jim Boland, seconded by Stacey Bradshaw, to accept the Treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

Constitution and Bylaws Amendments:

Bill described the process that was followed for changes to the Constitution. Roger Blackstone reported the results of the votes cast by mail: A total of 122 vote postcards were mailed to members of Councils; there were 89 responses, or a total of 72.9% votes returned; 85 voted to approve changes to the Constitution and 4 voted against. There were 33 non replies, which counted as no votes. 81 yes votes were required (2/3 majority), so the Constitution changes were approved. The change allows any applicant areas to be members of VARCDC. A comment was made that there was some confusion by Council members on the voting process and need for postcards to be returned. **Bylaws:** Bill Smith stated these proposed changes included technical changes (e.g., number of Councils, etc) and a major change describing key duties of Vice Chairman. A motion to approve the proposed by-law changes made by Eugene Morris, seconded by Mo Lynch, (21 eligible voters), passed unanimously.

Affiliate Updates:

Southeastern Association of RC&D Councils: Jay Hubble, secretary, represented the Southeastern Association. He reported that Jeannette Jamieson sent her regards and that she was unable to attend. Bill Smith commented on efforts underway by Jeannette in behalf of the Southeastern Association to restore RC&D Program funding.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Report:

Ray Dorsett, Assistant State Conservationist and RC&D Program Manager, talked about policy change to RC&D Program. A survey was circulated in February-March, to Council members and the results were used to help develop a performance improvement system to demonstrate that Councils are fully functioning (an issue that arose in last year's budget process). The purpose is to demonstrate that RC&D is prepared to meet the Administration's priorities, address "meritorious level" of performance – will be done by a Council self-assessment, offer training to coordinators and councils, consider how USDA can better support, especially applicant areas; characteristics of highly successful councils. Every Council needs: 5 year plan that is current; current annual plan of work; annual report; nonprofit status, either audit or financial review annually. The NRCS RC&D Program Manager will do a program and civil rights review of each council at least once every 5 years and role of coordinator.; Virginia Councils must bring in at least \$137,961 (cash or in-kind) to match USDA support, unless there are extraordinary circumstances (e.g., natural disaster, economic distress, coordinator vacancy). Initial assessment must be done by May 30, 2010. Nationwide, Councils must meet all the criteria by 9/30/2011. Financial contributions must be documented by source and related to projects. In response to follow-up questions, Ray stated that work done to develop a project counts toward the contribution; work done with a partner organization involved in a project also counts. He indicated this in no way guarantees full program funding in the future, but will hopefully lay to rest questions that have risen in the past couple of years. An attendee suggested that NRCS should also calculate how many people would have to be hired if Councils no longer existed to carry out work

Virginia Department of Forestry: Carl Garrison, State Forester, expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to meet with attendees. Department of Forestry (DOF) has been affected over past 5 years by several outside influences (economy, global marketing, energy and environmental issues). He stated that DOF is not the traditional agency of 10-15 years ago, focusing on assistance to landowners and firefighting. Now they have broader roles in protecting and developing healthy, sustainable forest resources. Virginia is losing approximately 27,000 acres net of forestland annually. Forestry and Agriculture are still the largest economic drivers in Virginia, and DOF is adjusting to reflect that. Forestry and related products creates the most jobs per dollar invested, in fact, leading the nation. Landowners need viable markets for forest products. DOF created new division Forestland Conservation Division to identify ways to conserve forestland base (easements, acquisition in limited circumstances, new markets based on ecosystem services, such as carbon or water markets). They started a new grant "Forests to Faucets" in Rivanna watershed. American Forest Foundation, NRCS, USFS have agreed to accept Tree Farmer and Stewardship Plans interchangeably. This will help landowners obtain forest/wood certification in the international marketplace. DOF is completing a state forest assessment by mid-June for submission to USFS. Governor McDonnell wants to increase emphasis on alternative energy sources, bio-fuels, biomass. He also has a strong economic development agenda. The Secretary of Agriculture is tasked as chief marketing

development representative for agriculture and forestry. The Governor is opening marketing offices in Asia and elsewhere. Lou Brossy thanked the State Forester for support and partnership. An attendee asked about the potential to expand partnership if RC&D funding improves. Garrison responded that he is committed to maintaining a presence with RC&D and in better economic times would like to have 2-3 foresters working with RC&D. Mo Lynch (Tidewater) mentioned they used the DOF survey information re underutilized wood to help start a wood energy project in their Area. Bill Smith asked what RC&D's could do to help DOF. Garrison responded that a number of programs such as BCAP require stewardship plans for landowners to be involved. He said RC&Ds could help get information out to landowners about the importance of having a management plan to help them qualify for opportunities. Dave Richert is working with New River Highlands on a new Extreme Forest Makeover project; others may find it of interest for their Areas.

Committee Reports:

1. Legislative: Joan Comanor pointed out the written Committee report and encouraged attendees to read the attachment that summarized the Federal budget process. She said that Council members need to continue efforts in contacting their Congressional representatives about program funding. Finally, she said that Shenandoah RC&D Council is working with the National Association on a show-me trip for OMB and USDA officials, and Hill staffers on May 13. Draft materials were handed out and attendees were encouraged to provide any suggestions.
2. Public Relations: Joan Comanor briefly pointed out the written Committee report and noted that the latest annual report had additional data in it, summarizing accomplishments.
3. Nominations and Elections: Don Bagshaw gave a brief report in behalf of chairman Jerry Walker. Brenda Holden reported on their April 20 conference call. They are seeking nominations for Treasurer at the 2010 Fall Meeting, with duties beginning at the end of the Spring 2011 meeting.
4. Forestry: Lou Brossy reported the Committee has been focused on CSP and EQIP program projects; he noted NRH is working on Extreme Forest Makeover project involving 25 landowners; BD is working with DOF on abandoned mine land reclamation; Tidewater has hosted a bio-fuels forum on pellets from woodwaste; Shenandoah is doing Pogue Run watershed project with stimulus funding. He said attendees could get a copy of their Committee Plan of Work at the display. In a new effort in partnership with DOF, they will identify barriers to landowners participating forest certification and are looking for Council representatives. They will meet in June in Charlottesville to do their plan of work for next year.
5. Awards: Steve Pope thanked Kathy Holm for technical assistance. He mentioned that from now on, the awards ceremony will also recognize members who have passed away, beginning this year. They have used a photo with each award plaque and had good support from outside judges to review nominations. He referred attendees to their written report for changes re Hall of Fame and NRCS employee awards.

6. Status of VARCDC Award Fund (\$32,000): Bill Smith reported that all Councils have now received \$4,000 grants, including: Tidewater, waste wood biomass energy study; New River-Highlands, community scale alternative energy workshop; South Centre Corridors, farm efficiency symposium; Black Diamond, alternative energy workshop for contractors and home owners; Eastern Short, native plant landscape at Onley Community Health Center; Old Dominion, Longwood College energy feasibility study; Shenandoah, Virginia on-farm energy resource center; South Hampton Roads, Isle Be Green project.

Annual Plan and 5 Year Plan Review: Steve Pope reviewed the Strategic Plan vision and mission, and observed we look at the annual report to measure progress. He discussed the purpose of a strategic plan as well as the annual plan which focuses on specific actions to make progress toward strategic plan. He will be asking for help in updating strategic plan which had tiered goals based on priority, importance, and also help in developing a new annual plan. He concluded by stating that plans are important because our rural areas are struggling and there is a need to focus our efforts to address concerns.

Tidewater Council Report: Robert Mallory discussed the 'Wood Waste as Bio-Fuels' project. He said this is a good project to highlight effectiveness of RC&D Councils and program. This effort will provide income to landowners, loggers, new jobs. They got data on waste wood in 50 mile area from DOF, analyzed information, held forum with landowners and timber industry representatives. They have gotten funding to develop brochures and marketing efforts to recruit new businesses. This project has potential for up to 4 new businesses and a number of new jobs.

At 3 pm, Bill Smith announced the business meeting would break until 8:30 am on Friday, April 30.

At the conclusion of the training session, Bill called on John Haugen, Executive Director, of the National Association of RC&D Councils, to provide his report. John apologized for his late arrival. He said he was from Minnesota originally, had working in Washington DC since 1975. He retired, moved to Florida, and discovered he missed working. So he applied for the NARC&DC vacancy and was hired last fall. He commented that everyone was disappointed in President Obama's zero budget for next fiscal year. There is good support in the House and Senate, but overall money is very tight. He urged attendees to ask their Congressional members to write Senator Herb Kohl (WI) and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT) to support program funding. He agreed that Councils are not doing enough to inform the public and members of Congress about what is being accomplished. They are updating NARC&DC website and will be profiling Council successes especially related to jobs, energy (audits, alternative fuels, etc), environmental issues. He has met with Health and Human Services to explore potential partnerships with RC&D on prescription drug access, local fresh food and other mutual interests. The National Board is promoting 100% participation in the Circle of Diamonds program. He reminded attendees that

NARC&DC will help in grant research, support of the list-serve, and training on a wide variety of topics. NARC&DC is a tool of advocacy for all Councils and their commitment is to be helpful and accessible. He then briefly mentioned the OMB Tour that NARC&DC is coordinating with Shenandoah RC&D in hopes of having better understanding and support.

VARCDC Business Meeting – April 30, 2010

Call to Order: Bill Smith reconvened the meeting at 8:40 am. Bill commented on the challenges of the last morning of a meeting. There will be no official break to maximize time.

Partner Updates

1. USDA Rural Development: Ellen Davis, State Director, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet with us, especially in the beautiful setting. RD serves as a 'bank' with a specialized mission to provide economic development, jobs, and create opportunities for rural communities. RD provides loans and grants for water/sewer, housing, hospitals, libraries, rural business start-ups, etc. RD has worked with RC&D's in the past, such as Eastern Shore on recycled black plastic. In renewable energy, RD wants to work with Councils on wood waste, chips. RD has projects on dairy waste and anaerobic digesters, and with poultry litter to produce income stream and/or reduce energy costs on-farm. RD has value-added grants to increase farm profitability, and to protect working farm and forest land. RC&D's can help market RD programs. RD spent \$680 million in rural Virginia last year, and this year has \$1 billion for rural communities. She provided handouts re total programs available. In response to a question, she stated they have 25% cost share grants to improve energy use and can help retrofit/upgrade facilities to make them more energy efficient.

2. USDA Farm Services Agency Mike Wooden, State Executive Director, complimented SHR for their tremendous effort as meeting host. He mentioned that FSA has worked with Councils in Virginia for years to help preserve agriculture and rural landscape. He has personally worked in many parts of Virginia and knows the challenges that Councils are facing. FSA is committed to providing customer service to agricultural producers and other customers. FSA has variety of programs, including loans, disaster assistance. Last year, FSA spent \$101 million, plus \$5.7 million in stimulus funds in Virginia, in support of export markets and year round supply of safe food, fruits and vegetables. Environmental programs are important, such as CRP, CREP and ECP (\$7 million last year). CRP is largest environment program in the country. There are 28,000 acres in CREP. In spite of successes, there is a need to beef up CREP and work harder in certain areas. He said FSA is committed to help RC&D Councils. He then introduced Linda Cronin who is FSA's liaison with RC&D in VA, and encouraged folks to call on her or contact him.

3. VA Association of Conservation Districts: Ed Overton, 1st Vice President of VaSWCD, said that Wilkie Chaffin sends regrets and appreciation for the invitation to

speak. He addressed how Districts and RC&Ds can collaborate more. In some cases, the organizations don't know as much about each other as they should. SWCD's are an outgrowth of the Dust Bowl era and the ecological damage that resulted. Congress adopted a soil and water conservation policy and worked with states to establish SWCD's to help private landowners. Private landowners organized the first SWCD in Brown County, NC. Virginia districts started in 1930's, some single county, while others are multi-county and include cities. Directors are locally elected officials and have similar authorities to other local officials (except taxation). Priorities are set locally and address nonpoint source pollution solutions. More urban districts are trying to develop similar programs to ag BMP's (Districts' largest program). Virginia funding comes from Virginia General Assembly through Department of Conservation and Recreation. NRCS is also a key partner, enables Districts to work with landowners on technical assistance and cost share. Districts have environmental education programs for youth and adults. There are a number of examples where Districts and RC&D Councils work closely together in Virginia, which he highlighted. He concluded by stating that if RC&D Councils are not working with their counterpart SWCDs, he encouraged them to explore opportunities. One attendee commented that there would be a value in having a District employee designated as liaison to RC&D Councils and would help bring younger perspectives and ideas.

4. VA Rural Development Council: Carlyle Wimbish, VARCDC representative on the Rural Council's board, introduced Glenn Sink, Exec Director. Virginia RC&D's helped establish the Virginia Rural Council and Center. At their meeting this week, Virginia's Lt. Governor met with them. Glenn Sink provided a 1 page handout. The Rural Center is a partnership organization, working with the Governor and legislators. The new Governor's emphasis on rural job creation is a direct result of those interactions. The Center is focused on 6 economic essentials to community sustainability (community capacity, education, health care, natural resources protection, infrastructure, economy) to help leverage resources. Rural partners are critical components and work in leadership teams. Visit their Website: www.cfrv.org for more information. There is a Southern Region Leadership Conference on May 11-12 in NC to address economic, workforce development, energy resources, broadband (see website for details). The Rural Center is holding 8 VA regional conferences for planning district commissions, local legislators and local elected leaders this year, followed by Rural Summit in September (see website). RC&Ds can address regional needs and issues and bring them to the attention of localities and help shape regional cooperation (shopping shed, workforce shed, entertainment shed) which can help attract key businesses.

5. Smithfield Corporation: Joe Barlow (SHR) introduced Smithfield Corporation representative Stewart Leeth, Vice President of Smithfield Corporation for environmental and corporate affairs and Senior Regulatory Counsel. Leeth is responsible for environment stewardship, animal welfare, food safety, employee welfare, etc. Leeth gave a slide presentation overview of company operations with a focus on environment efforts. Smithfield is an international corporation with operations in 13 countries, the largest pork and turkey processor in world. Their sustainability program addresses several components: environment (e.g., 100% ISO certified

operations), community programs for education, and feeding hungry people (partnership with Paula Deen). The company has been honored as 1 of 100 best corporate citizens, recognized by Fortune magazine and others. Bill Smith suggested there is an opportunity for a partnership between Smithfield and RC&D Councils nationwide and encouraged him to meet with John Haugen, National Association of RC&D Councils, Inc. Executive Director. He thanked him for meeting with us.

Council Reports

1. New River Highlands: Christine Smith Hammond appreciated opportunity to attend the meeting; she is a SWCD employee. She highlighted NRH grant writing program in a slide presentation. They held courses in May 2009 and July 2009. There was a \$50 registration fee that was refunded on successful completion of course. Both sessions had waiting list for attendees (20 slots per session). They did follow-up with participants, and found that 7 grants had been awarded for \$385,000 from 17 proposals attendees had submitted.
2. Upper James pending applicant: Genevieve Goss described their Council's organization, which grew out of the James River Roundtable. The area has 6 counties and 3 cities; have headwaters of South Branch of Potomac, Maury River, Cowpasture River, Jackson River, and Upper James River. Their focus is protection of water quality, and they also have cultural resources such as Appalachian Trail, Natural Bridge, hot springs, George Washington-Jefferson National Forest. They have had a water quality monitoring project in partnership with a cement plant and volunteer monitors; a rain barrel workshop; working on development of a blueway; and working on convening a land conservation summit.
3. South Hampton Roads: Rachel Chieppa discussed Isle Be Green program. They received a \$4000 grant from VARCDC for the green initiative, which was combined with other funds from DEQ and others. The project addresses plastic shopping bag pollution problems. They established the Virginia Plastic Bag Advisory Group and developed educational campaign about litter, proper disposal of plastic bags, emphasizing use of recyclable bags, starting in August 2009. They sponsored a recycled art workshop using discarded plastic bags, cardboard, bottle caps, newspapers, etc, for attendees to make works of art. They will hold another session this fall, as well as a county fair bag giveaway, competition on collecting bags, other materials. For more information, see their website, www.IsleBeGreen.com.
4. South Centre Corridors: Stacey Bradshaw (and 18 month old daughter) reported on their Buy Fresh Buy Local project. Helping farmers is part of their Area and annual plans. They received a \$20,000 grant from Virginia Tobacco Commission and an additional \$20,000 grant is pending. Working with Virginia State University and James River SWCD, they held outreach meetings. They started September 2009, received the grant in January, finalized the local Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapter in March, and will have local guide available in July.

5. Old Dominion: Susan Adams reported on Eco Kids Kollege 2009 to get up close and personal with nature, and a focus on recycling. Several sponsors and collaborative efforts converged into a regional pooling of resources on recycling. They got retired teachers to form a committee and do community workshops; each school has a designated 'go green' leader. Then developed EKK (ages 9-12, half day for 1 week) to have a summer break education opportunity on recycling and natural resources. They formed the event committee, planned program, handled \$30 registration fee, provided event insurance, daily set up and maintenance. They used local resources, to have a quality program at minimum expense, and enthusiasm and experience by the students with nature. They plan to do this again.

6. Black Diamond: Roger Blackstone mentioned past/ongoing efforts in energy, trails, and litter control. He profiled environmental education programs at several sites. Now they are developing a publication using \$1200 grant for distribution to all schools, and environmental and agriculture instructors, that describes all the available environmental education programs, sites, and contacts.

7. Eastern Shore: Edwin Long discussed their project to provide a community model for low impact, environmentally friendly development. They worked with Eastern Shore Rural Hospital Systems on a new site for a health clinic, serving 20,000 visitors each year. The ESRHS agreed to include sustainable landscape design concepts for their building site. The landscape will also be used for educational purposes and a place for patients and family to enjoy as part of their health care visit. Total project cost is \$60,000, including \$4,000 VARCDC grant.

8. Shenandoah: Kathy Holm described the Virginia On-Farm Energy Resource Center, an alternative energy (solar and wind-power) project to include a website and 2 fact sheets. This project is being implemented using the VARCDC grant. Any suggestions to improve information in the draft fact sheet would be appreciated.

Final Committee Reports and Actions

1. Budget Committee: Judy Lyttle mentioned the budget report that was included in the advance meeting materials. All Councils have received \$4000 grants. All dues have been paid. The 2010 Spring Meeting silent auction proceeds were \$944, half of which goes to VARCDC, the other half to South Hampton Roads.

2. Fall Board Meeting 2010: Bill Smith indicated the meeting would be in the Charlottesville area. Information will be distributed as soon as possible.

3. Annual Meeting Spring 2011: Lou Brossy reported that April 27-29, 2011 is the proposed date for next year's meeting. It will be in the Blacksburg area, to be hosted by New River-Highlands. Specific information will be provided in the near future.

4. Open Discussion: Bill Smith commented that our meetings allow us to learn more about each other, get new ideas, and have a renewed sense of purpose and commitment. Carlyle mentioned that the guest speakers each evening (local legislators)

admitted they weren't familiar with RC&D; he challenged attendees to increase efforts over the next year to make sure our state legislators are informed about our activities. Bill reminded attendees to fill out evaluation forms before leaving and take snacks. He thanked John Haugen for spending time with us; John asked folks to not hesitate to contact them for any assistance. Bill expressed appreciation for ongoing excellent help of RC&D Coordinators and Ray Dorsett. He thanked South Hampton Roads Council members for an excellent meeting and tour, and complimented their ongoing work. He challenged attendees to look for ways to involve the younger generations in our work. Finally, he wished everyone safe travel home.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn (motion by Jay Hubble, seconded by Don Bagshaw) unanimously passed at 11:20 am.

Virginia Association of RC&D Councils
2010 Annual Spring Meeting Attendees at Business Meeting
Wednesday, April 28, 2010 and Friday, April 30, 2010
Smithfield Conference Center - Smithfield, VA

(Delegates are voting members):

Black Diamond: Bill Smith and Roger Blackstone- delegates;
K D Cook, NRCS Coordinator

Eastern Shore: Edwin Long, Ray Rosenberger, Brenda Holden- delegates;
Jane Corson-Lassiter, NRCS Coordinator

New River-Highlands: Christine Hannen, Jay Hubble, Jack Asbury-delegates;
Lou Brossy, attendee
Gary Boring, NRCS Coordinator

Old Dominion: Susan Adams, Eugene Morris, Carlyle Wimbish-delegates;
Dave Roberts, NRCS Coordinator

Shenandoah: Jim Borland, Joan Comanor-delegates;
Kathy Holm, NRCS Coordinator

South Centre Corridors: Stacey Bradshaw, Don Bagshaw-delegates;
Patrick Vincent, NRCS Coordinator, Meredith Wilson,
Program Assistant

South Hampton Roads: Judy Lyttle, Joe Barlow, Daniel Baltimore, Rachel Chieppa,
Al Casteen, Kathleen Hickman, Keith Seward, Cindy Taylor,
(applicant area) Patrick Vincent, NRCS Acting Coordinator

Tidewater: Robert Mallory, Mo Lynch, Steve Pope-delegates;
Pat Tyrrell, NRCS Coordinator

Upper James: Genevieve Goss
(unofficial applicant area) Kathy Holm, NRCS Acting Coordinator

Other Attendees

Ray Dorsett, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist
Yamika Stokes, NRCS District Conservationist
John Haugen, NARCDC Executive Director
Mike Wooden, FSA Executive Director
Linda Cronin, FSA Liaison to RC&D Councils
Ellen Davis, RD State Administrator
Carl Garrison, Virginia State Forester
Ed Overton, Va Association of SWCDs
Glenn Sink, Va Rural Center Executive Director
Robert Smith, Virginia Tech
Neil Clark, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Glenn Slade, Cooperative Extension-Surry County