



Cecil Soil Conservation District

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Board of Supervisor's Meeting May 21, 2025

The Cecil Soil Conservation District held a Board of Supervisors meeting with a Zoom call-in option. The meeting was called to order at 8:31AM by Chairman – Bruce Yerkes. Attendees Supervisors – Van Funk, Willie Ewing, and Vic Priapi. Associate Supervisors – Alice Crothers. Other attendees: District Conservationist – Rob Weaver, District Manager - Chris Brown, District Coordinator, Tracey Rach and Administrative Assistant – Patty Pierce. Visitors: John Gonzalez

- Van Funk made a motion to accept the April 23, 2025 Board meeting minutes. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Bruce Yerkes asked if the board had reviewed the treasurer's report, expenses, and supplementary emails. There were no questions. Willie Ewing made a motion to accept the treasurer's report and pay bills. Vic Priapi seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Old Business

- Chris Brown reported on the success of the 7th Grade Ag Education Days. There were around 1,100 students in attendance. Two different County schools attended each day. Visitors attended from Cecil County Public Schools, representees from other Counties throughout the State, as well as NRCS Regional Conservationist, Kasey Taylor. The majority of the program went smoothly with the only struggle being bus arrival times and reworking the schedule for each day. The planning committee is in development of becoming an independent 501-C-3. As this develops, a bank account will be opened. Chris shared the list of partner agencies that coordinate the event and outlined the hopes for the structure of the entity which would include a representatives from CSCD.
- The Cecil County Envirothon Competition was held at the Fair Hill Nature Center on April 24th. There were fifty-five student participants. Rising Sun High School was the winner of this year's event, with School of Technology in second place, and Elkton in third. Rising Sun High School plans to attend the State Envirothon Competition. Tracey Rach applied for and received grants for support of the Envirothon. Chris Brown highlighted the wonderful partnership with the Fair Hill Nature Center who hosts our event. Chris highlighted that the District will also assist the FHNC with an upcoming "Teach the Teachers" and identify some Best Management Practices on the property. Alice Crothers suggested our district apply for the Land O'Lakes award for Ag Education in the fall.
- Sean McCandless and Lauren Gilbert attended the Rising Sun Middle School Science Fair as judges on 5/13/25. This is the third year that two staff members have been requested to volunteer as judges.
- Only two scholarship applications were received. Tracey Rach sent those out for board review and approval several weeks ago. Van Funk brought up discussions how to move forward with the District Scholarships since we are not receiving a high volume of applications like we had hoped. There are

other programs throughout the County that could use the money to reach more students. Other opportunities for utilizing this money were discussed. The group discussed allocating the funds from this year's un-awarded, Edgar "Duty" Hevelow memorial scholarship to Fair Hill Nature Center as a one-time donation. Suggestions were made to approach the School of Technology and Cecil College (Agricultural Sciences) to select a student every year to award a scholarship. This structure would retain one scholarship for open applicants. Chris Brown and Tracey Rach will investigate possibilities with Cecil College and CCST. Van Funk made a motion to allocate the third scholarship funds to Fair Hill Nature Center as a one-time donation. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. Motion carried.

- Chris Brown and Van Funk attended the County Budget hearing on May 13th. The hearing went well, and prompted good questions from County Council. Chris Brown asked the board for approval to utilize remaining County funds to purchase four new laptops for Tracey Rach, Mari McNinch, Patty Pierce and himself since warranties have expired on those laptops. Vic Priapi made motion to purchase the four new laptops. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Van Funk shared an update regarding the State Soil Conservation Committee meeting held in Denton on May 15th at the Caroline County District office. The committee will change the application and selection process for new board appointments. A closed meeting session will be held for review applications and wait until the next month to make recommendations. Revisions will be made to the current application. An update from MDA on the current status of the WIP from the Ag sector was presented by Alsha Mulkey. There were also discussions at the meeting regarding stabilization of using pollinator plants on solar sites. This topic will have further discussion next month. The next meeting will be in Davidsonville on June 26th and possibly meet on the lower shore for the following meeting.

New Business

- Rob Weaver presented the District Activities Report. Staff visited nine farms for Inventory & Evaluations for various practices. Two projects were surveyed. Three design was reviewed "in-house". Nine projects are in progress. Six "as-built" surveys were completed on grassed waterways. Two waterways were staked out and three grassed waterways were as-built. One application for best management practices was submitted to MDA/MACS. One approval for a grassed waterway, lined waterway or outlet and diversion was received from MDA/MACS. Rob Weaver shared NRCS financial assistance conservation program activities. Farm Conservation Plans Completed annual goal and year to date acres information was shared with the group. Four farm conservation plans were completed. Twenty-one conservation practices were applied. Thirty-one urban E&S plans were reviewed and fifteen urban E&S plans were approved. Four 378-Small Pond plans were reviewed and two 378-Small Pond plans were approved. Four urban meetings were attended. Staff visited one Inventory & Evaluation for ag fill plan. Four stream restoration/wetland creation/management projects are in progress. A suggestion was made to revise the "other government agencies and groups receiving assistance" section of the activity report. Seven information and education events were attended by staff. Staff attended two trainings and seven-monthly meetings. Chris Brown and Tracey Rach attended the MASCD virtual planning meeting. Staff attended ag preservation inspections with Cecil County Planning and Zoning. Van Funk made a motion to accept the activities report as presented. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Rob Weaver and Chris Brown presented the District Project Tracking/Planning Report and NRCS Updates. No issues at this time with engineering. The 505-process has greatly improved. Rob will contact the engineer Jacob Koenig regarding the pond in the southern portion of the county. Rob Weaver shared information regarding the state reorganization plan (the official release will be Tuesday, May 27th), and the small farm proposal in the "Big Beautiful Bill" (an FSA program).

NRCS is hoping to have a new farm bill at the end of this year. Farm Service Agency (FSA) are taking daily attendance in our office for occupancy. It is believed that they are looking for occupancy for other USDA employees if there is office space available. District space is maxed out.

- New Cooperators: N/A
- Vic Priapi made a motion to approve Jonathan Quinn and Willie Ewing's Spring cover crop claims. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Chris Brown shared Phase III WIP updates. CSCD sit well with things we have control over. Soil and Water Conservation Plans have a deficit. Currently our planning list is organized by acres until the end of next year to increase our numbers. It seems that conservation planning numbers struggle to varying degrees throughout the State. Locally, our implementation says we are down 10,000 acres due to attrition. Hopefully this number will reduce as our planners are settled in and have been churning out plans. Animal Waste Management System for Poultry continue to be a struggle. It appears that Cecil runs into deficit as they are an incredible number of turkeys reported either through Annual Implementation Reports and/or Ag Census errors. Cecil has no commercial size turkey flocks. Forest buffer and grass buffer are other deficiencies however forest buffer exclusions are at an all-time high.
- Chris Brown and MDA Update. Staff attended the MDA Area Meeting at Sandy Point State Park on May 14th. The proposed cover crop program revisions were discussed. The payment structure has changed as the base payment was reduced and incentive payments are being eliminated or reduced. The maximum payment has been reduced by thirty dollars. The group discussed the proposed manure application change. No manure or fertilizer is proposed to be allowed on any acres enrolled in the cover crop program in the fall prior to or after planting - lime and potash allowed. This will reduce participation as it will essentially exclude dairy farms from the program as they must spread collected manure. The group questioned if these restrictions were intentional due to budgetary constraints or environmental concern. The program needs to provide clarification. The group discussed the need to be vocal to keep manure application allowable by the program. A letter will be drafted to MDA opposing the new manure related restrictions to the cover crop program. Changes to the MACS Notice of Recordation requirement for Best Management Practices were discussed. MACS will now review recordation at the time of application rather than at the time of claim. Chris Brown indicated that this was a positive change. However, MDA has placed one of the districts cooperators on probation due to recordation issues on a project that had been installed, completed, and paid nearly two years ago. MDA indicated that they want title searches on properties prior to submitting new applications with no indication of who would pay for such searches. Additionally, they have indicated that districts are responsible for transfers of existing easements/recordation. The group discussed how this should be done at settlement on a property as the district will not know who the new owners are.
- Chris Brown provided an E&S plan update. County departments had an internal meeting to discuss a project to ensure that the District's 20-acre grading unit would not contradict other departments requirements. Steve O'Connor (DLUDS) will be crafting an overall list of outstanding requirements and passing along to Dan Schneckenberger (County Administrator) for review. Engineers/Developers are questioning the district's authority to enforce a 20-acre grading unit. Chris Brown has forwarded the request to the Attorney General's office for review and guidance.

The next meeting will be held on June 18th at 8:30 AM. The meeting will be held at the office with a teleconference option. The teleconference option will continue to be offered for those working in the field.

As there being no further general business, Bruce Yerkes called for a motion to adjourn the general meeting. Van Funk made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. The general meeting adjourned at 10:28 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia A Pierce
Administrative Assistant