

April 23, 2025

MINUTES

Watauga Soil & Water Conservation District

971 West King Street, Boone NC 28607

April 23, 2025

Present:

Denny Norris, Chair
Chris Hughes
Jennifer Hanifan
Bill Moretz

Michelle Kasey
Brian Bonville
Brandon Turlington

1. Denny Norris called meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

2. Denny Norris opened the meeting in prayer.

3. Ethics Awareness and Conflict of Interest Reminder:

In accordance with the State Government Ethics Act, it is the duty of every board member to avoid both conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict. Does any board member have any conflicts of interest or appearances of conflict with respect to any matters coming before the board today? If so, please identify the conflict or appearances of conflict and refrain from any undue participation in the particular matter involved.

4. Statement of Professionalism:

Supervisors are reminded of their responsibility to uphold the laws of the United States and North Carolina and their constitutions. Business is to be conducted in a professional manner, free of bias, of interactions that violate policies or individual liberties and that address business issues only. Interactions are to be held with integrity, courtesy, honesty and in compliance with the highest ethical standards.

5. **Approval of the minutes** –Jennifer Hanifan made a motion to accept; Chris Hughes 2nd. Minutes accepted.

6. **Approval of the agenda** – Jennifer Hanifan made a motion to accept with amendment; Bill Moretz 2nd. Agenda accepted.

7. District Report: Brian Bonville

New Applications: None

Contracts needing approval: None

Contract Updates:

A. ACSP:

95-2025-004 Diane Deal – Will notify cooperator of 1/3 start date.

95-2023-003 Ronnie Joe Brown – Expires June 30th, 2025; construction delayed due to Helene damage. Will need extension.

95-2023-004 Michael Greene – Expires June 30th, 2025; sent certified letter; no reply from coordinator.

95-2021-004 Kris Kuhn – Ag Road Repair. Expires June 30th, 2025; sent certified letter. No reply from Coordinator. Brian Bonville to go to farm. Bonville asked for photos. Denny Norris to go out and see if project is damaged due to Helene.

95-2023-001 Scott and Dawn Jensen – Spring development, tanks and exclusion fencing. Construction to restart this spring. 1/3 of project is complete. Fencing in progress.

95-2023-006 Bart and Robina Walker – Livestock Exclusion system. Expires June 30th, 2025. Sent certified letter. Cooperators do not agree with design done by Technician. Brian Bonville to contact and visit site. Design may need to be changed.

95-2024-003 Charles Norris – Feed pad, HUAP, Diversion. Construction delayed due to Helene damage; Bonville to visit farmer.

95-2024-006 Valley View Land Company – Design approved by NRCS and farmer has been notified.

95-2024-007 Al Zimmerman – Wetland restoration system. Project to begin in spring. Pre-construction meeting complete. Waiting on contractor.

95-2025-001 Will Kulczyk – Ag Road Repair. Waiting on cooperator to sign contract.

95-2025-002 Holland Whitesides – Waiting on engineer's design.

95-2025-003 Larry Kitchens – Preliminary design given to cooperator; Cooperator deciding whether to proceed.

B. AgWrap updates:

95-2025-802 Daniel Brown – Field visit conducted with Engineers.

Contract signed. Engineers to redraw road plans. Funding will be insufficient. Supplemental funding contract will be needed.

C. CAP updates:

95-2025-501 Kellwoods 1 Townhomes POA – Streambank restoration.

Visit site last week. Waiting on Engineer to submit a design review.

95-2022-502 Blue Ridge Conservancy – Waiting on funding from cooperator.

95-2023-501 Valle Crucis Community Park – Construction complete.

Engineers signed off on project. Reimbursement process initiated.

95-2024-501 New River Conservancy – Division review of private engineer design is underway.

D. StRAP:

2022 Funds – Stream assessment complete; waiting to see what USACE and EWP will cover.

2024 Funds – County attorney approved of contract in email. Bonny will talk to Mikey Woodie and to Matt Stafford to decide on where to focus funding.

11. General updates: Bonville asked Board for guidance on requesting funds from The Soil & Water Commission for Technical Assistance help due to Helene. The program will pay for an employee for up to three years to do Helene Damage mitigation.

Survey deadline is April 24 and financial information is needed. Chris Hughes stated that Bonville should request funding for a whole employee that is housed in Watauga County but we are willing to share employee with adjacent Counties if needed. Jennifer Hanifan stated that Bonville's financial request should mirror Bonville's salary and benefits. Chris Hughes made a motion for Bonville to fill out survey to request Technical Funds for a full-time employee; Bill Moretz 2nd. Motion carried.

Chris Hughes mentioned site visits. Bonville stated that he has drafted a site visit list and intends to contact landowners. Jennifer Hanifan volunteered to go if she is available. Chris Hughes stated that he would help, but he was unavailable the last week of May and the first week of June. Hanifan to share her schedule with Bonville. Denny Norris stated he would also go if no one

else was available.

Bonville stated that Steven Porson was coming to train him on EWP.

- 12. NRCS Samantha Dame** – Dame reported to the Board that David Tucker will be retiring on 4/30/25. That will leave Renee Ray and Zach Davis in addition to Samantha Dame and Brandon Turlington to cover Ashe, Allegheny, Watauga, Yancy and Mitchell counties.

EWP update – making site visits along with Bonville to people that have contacted the office. These will require National approval, then County approves the projects.

EQUIP has closed for applications. The six-county team has requested \$9 million in funding – which is currently paused. The contracts may be approved 5/2/25.

NRCS is doing Conservation Compliance site checks in six counties. Letters were sent out to owners.

NRCS is attending the weekly Corp of Engineers meetings and also EWP training.

Bill Moretz asked if Soil & Water and NRCS should re-map the damaged areas with drones. Samantha Dame stated that no drones were used initially due to needing permission from all landowners adjacent to the water. The Corp. of Engineers is using a contracted service to get permissions for the Corp. to access the water thru landowners' property. At this time there is no plan to re-map. There is a non-profit submitting best practices to the Corp. to keep habitats in tact for endangered species in our waterways.

- 13. RC&D – Chris Hughes** – There is a fire management program in the Toe Watershed in June. The plan is to visit two projects.

- 14. Division Report – Elise McLaughlin** No report.

- 15. Admin Report: Michelle Kasey**

Tree sale over. Sold 490 trees plus over 100 tree protectors.

Kasey helped with Education Night in Ashe County 4/15/25. Kasey asked Board if that is something we should have in Watauga County. Denny Norris replied that we held Education Night in Watauga County before COVID.

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Planning has begun for the 5th Grade Environmental Field Day, 9/4 & 9/5 with Rain dates of 9/11 & 9/12. Event to be held at Brookshire Park this year. Jennifer Hanifan volunteered to help again this year. Samantha Dame volunteered to help set up and break down after event.

Kasey to take the Master Agreement before the Watauga County Commissioners for approval on May 6th.

Chris Hughes stated that we should invite our RCW Camp student to give a report to the board and also put a note in the Watauga Democrat. He also asked that the award be put in the paper prior to the student attending the camp.

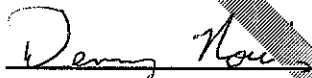
Brian Bonville stated that New River Conservancy had asked him prior to working here, to give a talk on pollinating plants May 17th from 1-7pm. He asked the Board if there would be a Conflict of Interest. The Board stated that no, there isn't a problem.

Kasey asked for funds, \$150, to order a stand-up banner from canva for marketing Soil & Water. Chris Hughes made a motion to allow a banner to be purchased for up to \$180. Bill 2nd the motion. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 am.

Next meeting will be May 28, 2025.

Minutes submitted by: Michelle Kasey


Denny Norris, Chair

Signed 5 - 28 - 25

Dated

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DRAFT