

NORTHERN PANHANDLE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' MEETING
April 9, 2026
10:00 a.m.

Supervisors Present

Jim Anderson, Hancock County – Vice-Chairman
Chuck Glenn, Hancock County – Treasurer
Steve Paull, Brooke County
Eric Freeland, Brooke County
Robert Luchetti, Jr., Ohio County
Amy Wade, Ohio County – Secretary
David McCardle, Marshall County
Mark Fitzsimmons, Marshall County – Chairman

Others Present

Veronica Gibson, Administrative Specialist, WVCA
Don Whetzel, District Operations Manager, WVCA via Teams
Katie Fitzsimmons, District Conservationist, NRCS
Victoria White, District Administrator, NPCD
Abby Clegg, Soil Tester/Administrator, NPCD
Bob Straub, CPA, Hartley & Straub via Teams

Chairman Mark Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order on Thursday, April 9, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at the Appalachian Aquatic Conservation Center, West Liberty University, West Liberty, WV.

Pledge of Allegiance – The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Minutes

- **Amy Wade made a motion to approve the March 2026 board meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**

Financial Report

- Bob Straub was not in attendance at the meeting. **Jim Anderson made a motion to table the March 2026 NPCD funds. Seconded by Eric Freeland. Motion passed.** Shortly after the motion, Bob Straub joined the meeting via Teams and reviewed the March 2026 NPCD financials. Bob Straub said funds will be transferred from the Grant Funds account to the General Fund to cover payroll and payroll expenses for the last two pay periods. Amy Wade asked if a transfer of funds could go back further than the last two pay periods. Bob Straub said he could go back further. Veronica Gibson said that the transfer of funds should only go back to when the motion was made to use the grant funds to cover payroll and payroll expenses.
- Chuck Glenn reviewed the March 2026 Co-Administered funds and all bank statement reconciliations. There was a discussion regarding the funds from the matured CD that was deposited into the General Fund. It was decided to invest \$20,000.00 and leave the rest in the General Fund. Veronica Gibson will contact Community Bank to find the best rate on a checking account or short-term investment.
Chuck Glenn made a motion to file the March 2026 NPCD and Co-Administered funds for audit. Seconded by Jim Anderson. Motion passed.

Reports

- Farm Service Agency (FSA) – No report
- WV Division of Forestry (WVDOF) – No report
- WV Conservation Agency (WVCA) - Don Whetzel reviewed a written report.

April 2026 WVCA Report

Request to Conservation Districts

The WVCA is encouraging Conservation Districts to review and update your District Policy Manuals. In addition to your policy manual, you are encouraged to review your CD Employee Manual (if you have one) and your CD Plan of Work. If you are already doing these reviews, please disregard this request.

Annual Work Plan

Reminder - District annual work plans are due **June 30** to Guthrie.

Conservation Farm Tour

It is time for districts to think about the conservation farm families to be awarded. CDs should have their district farm selection to their Area Directors by June 16.

Ag Enhancement Program Timeline

- May/June/July – CDs to finalize upcoming FY program, update AgEP agreement addendums, take action to approve LORs Mid June – Deadline for CDs submit final practice list to WVCA (CDs can submit final list any time after SCC approval of practice list)

Press contact reminder

The WVCA wants to remind all CDs that the WVCA Communications specialist is available to help districts with press releases, and media contacts, especially if it the situation involves WVCA programs or staff.

HB5364

In the 2026 WV Legislative Session, HB5364 passed removing the Conservation Districts (CDs) from ownership and sponsorship interests in flood control structures and conveying those interests to the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) by July 1, 2026. We understand there are many questions regarding this matter and will do our best to address them as we navigate through this process.

We have a transition team within WVCA to handle this task and will report to the CDs through the District Operations Managers as information becomes available. We appreciate the work the districts have done regarding the flood control structures. We are in the beginning stages of this enormous transition and ask for your patience as we move forward.

- WV Association of Conservation Districts (WVACD) – No report
 - Veronica Gibson contacted Heather Duncan to check on the monthly report. Heather said to use the same report as last month. There is nothing new to add.
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
 - Katie Fitzsimmons reported on the attendance for the BQA trainings. There were over 40 attendees at the training at the Valley Grove Community Center and 12 attendees at the New Manchester VFD. The Grazing Filed Day will be held on April 25 at the Bonar farm.

- The NRCS would like to hold a “round table” discussion regarding the Conservation Practice Review. Katie Fitzsimmons suggested holding this at the NPCD Grazing Field Day on April 25. The session would take about an hour.
- There was a discussion to expand the NPCD soil testing program to help the NRCS to process soil health tests for their program. Amy Wade asked for more information at the May board meeting.
- Katie Fitzsimmons reviewed a written report for the district and a written report from the North Area Conservationist’s bimonthly report.

April 2026

NRCS Report: Northern Panhandle Conservation District

Training/Upcoming Events/Outreach

April 7th & 8th: Beef Quality Assurance

April 25th: Grazing Field Day

Programs

Regenerative Ag Program – talking points handed out in February
 FY 2026 EQIP/AMA/CSP – 51 eligible applications
 Ranking Deadline – May 6th

Field Visits/Conservation Planning

Staff completed field visits for conservation planning, technical assistance, and practice certifications.
 Staff are reviewing contracts to ensure designs are completed.

Hancock County Office Hours

Office hours will be held as weather dependent. If it looks clear, we will go up, if it looks like inclement weather, we will hold off.
 April 16th
 May 21st

Miscellaneous

David and Katie have been working on getting speakers and locations for upcoming field days.
 April 7-8: Beef Quality Assurance – Jerry Yates confirmed
 April 25: Grazing Field Day
 Dr. Amanda Grev – confirmed
 Walter Veselka, Drone Service – confirmed
 Kevin has been assisting area office engineering staff on a part time basis.
 Please review attached north area report

North Area Conservationist’s Bimonthly Report March/April 2026

Staffing Updates

Jared Beard, State Soil Scientist, retired February 28th. Brian Nestor will be acting for 120 days. Laura Smith, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, has taken a detail to our national office for 120 days. During her absence, Kyle Aldinger, State Biologist, will assume her duties. Dave Moore will serve as acting as District Conservationist in Greenbrier Valley North work unit for 120 days.

Jordan Roush remains acting District Conservationist in Western CD and Joe Wickline remains acting South Area Engineer. Brandon Duckworth remains acting as North Area Conservationist and Julie Stutler remains acting as South Area Conservationist.

West Virginia NRCS is in the process of developing a reorganization plan to best deliver conservation to our customers in the future with increased workload and limited staff. The goal is to increase time in the field serving customers, provide consistency across work units, and increase efficiency in program delivery. The target is to have this plan completed by the end of June.

Program Priorities

Field staff are working on completing field visits, planning, assessment, and ranking for applications received by January 15th for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA). West Virginia was allocated \$10.4 million for CSP, \$22.3 million EQIP, and \$485 thousand for AMA. We have 403 eligible CSP applications, 1237 eligible EQIP applications, and 192 eligible AMA applications statewide. Our assessment and ranking deadline is May 6th, 2026, with an obligation deadline of July 30th, 2026.

Twenty five percent of CSP and EQIP funding will be targeted to USDA's Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP), which aims to restore land health, improve long-term productivity, and ensure American grown production for the future.

As part of participating in Regenerative Pilot Program, producers must complete a Soil Health Testing (CEMA 216) through a "Qualified Individual (QI)". A QI ensures proper soil sampling, packaging, timely submission to the labs, and provide data interpretation. QIs may be certified professionals, degree holders, or experienced technicians. Conservation Districts can play an integral in identifying QIs for our shared customers. If you're interested in learning more about how districts can be involved in this process, please reach out to your District or Area Conservationist.

Upcoming Events

National Leadership Visit- North Region Assistant Chief, Walt Whitcomb, and Deputy Assistant Chief, Astor Boozer, are planning a visit to West Virginia the week of April 12th. We plan to highlight watershed projects, Emergency Watershed Protection, and Farm Bill program successes.

WV Beef Expo- April 9th-11th at Jackson's Mill

WV Envirothon- April 16th & 17th at Camp Caesar in Webster County

Appalachian Grazing Conference- April 30th at WVU Reymann Memorial Farm, Wardensville
May 1st at WV State Fair Grounds,
Fairlea May2, WV State Farm
Museum, Point Pleasant

Local Work Group Meetings Over the next few months, our District Conservationists will be assisting Conservation Districts to hold Local Working Group (LWG) meetings in each of the 14 Districts. These LWG meetings are an essential component in NRCS programming. We rely on local input to help set program priorities and focus funding to directly meet locally identified resource concerns.

To aid in LWG discussions and understanding of NRCS programs, please see overview of each program below:

AMA (Agriculture Management Assistance) - The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing or natural resource conservation practices. In WV this is mainly focused on High Tunnel and Irrigation systems.

Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) – The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps you build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation. If you are already taking steps to improve the condition of the land, chances are, CSP can help you find new ways to meet your goals.

NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines and enhances existing efforts, using new conservation practices or activities, based on management objectives for your operation. Producers implement practices and activities in their conservation plan that expands on the benefits of cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving their agricultural operations. For example, if you have been planting a cover crop, you may decide to try an enhancement for a multi-species cover crop or implement a deep-rooted cover crop to break up soil compaction and further improve the health of your soil.

CSP offers annual payments for implementing these practices on your land and operating and maintaining existing conservation efforts.

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) - The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.

NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm resource issues. Producers implement practices and activities in their conservation plan that can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving their agricultural operations. EQIP helps producers make conservation work for them.

RPP (Regenerative Pilot Program): Regenerative Agriculture is a conservation management approach that emphasizes natural resources through improved soil health, water management, and natural vitality for the productivity and prosperity of American agriculture and communities. This pilot program addresses whole-farm resource concerns through support for voluntary regenerative agriculture conservation plans. It puts American farmers first as a part of the solution to Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) by supporting access to American-grown whole foods, critical to addressing the chronic disease crisis nationwide.

Requirements for RPP:

- Work with NRCS staff, partners, or technical service providers to conduct a whole-farm assessment; (A complete assessment of all resource concerns is required, with the goal of establishing a whole farm plan before the end of the contract period. At a minimum, whole farm plans must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories. These plans may be developed by NRCS staff, partners, or technical service providers.
- Use at least one primary regenerative management practice (see list below); and
- Agree to perform soil health testing in the first and last year of the contract (at a minimum) to establish a starting baseline and to record the resulting changes.
 - Conservation Crop Rotation (328)
 - Contour Farming (330)
 - Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop (331)
 - Cover Crop (340)
 - Drainage Water Management (554)
 - Forage Harvest Management (511)
 - Forest Stand Improvement (666)
 - Irrigation Water Management (449)
 - Mulching (484)
 - Nutrient Management (590)
 - Pest Management Conservation System (595)
 - Grazing Management (528)
 - Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)
 - Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced (345)
 - Stripcropping (585)

RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program): The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation.

RCPP projects fall under two different categories: RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities, in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFAs, NRCS provides funding to partners to support conservation activities with eligible producers and landowners on eligible land. RCPP AFA funding reimburses partners for conservation activities done for or on behalf of producers, landowners, or other entities.

CRP (Conservation Reserve Program): CRP provides a yearly rental payment to farmers who remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are from 10 to 15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the program, and NRCS assists with technical assistance through conservation planning. FSA holds several CRP signups, including a General and Grassland signups with specific dates, as well as a Continuous signup, which is ongoing.

ECP (Emergency Conservation Program): - The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland and conservation structures damaged by natural disasters and implement emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought. NRCS is the technical service provider for this program.

EWP (Emergency Watershed Protection): The **EWP Program** offers technical and financial assistance to help local communities relieve imminent threats to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters that impair a watershed. EWP does not require a disaster declaration by federal or state government officials for program assistance to begin. The NRCS State Conservationist can declare a local watershed emergency and initiate EWP program assistance in cooperation with an eligible sponsor. NRCS will not provide funding for activities undertaken by a sponsor prior to the signing of a cooperative agreement between NRCS and the sponsor.

REHAB (Watershed Rehabilitation Program): The Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB) helps project sponsors rehabilitate aging dams that are reaching the end of their design life and/or no longer meet federal or state safety criteria or performance standards. Since 1948, NRCS has assisted local sponsors in constructing over 11,850 dams.

WFPO (Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations Program): WFPO helps units of federal, state, local and federally recognized tribal governments (project sponsors) protect and restore watersheds for the purpose of flood prevention, watershed protection, public recreation, public fish and wildlife, agricultural water management, municipal and industrial water supply, and water quality management.

- Wheeling Creek Watershed Commission (WCWC) – No report.
- Administrative Specialist (WVCA)
 - Veronica Gibson reported that she changed her work schedule to 8 am - 4 pm to be sure the office is open for the district equipment rental. The WVCA installed the new phones.
- District Administrator (NPCD)
 - Victoria White reviewed a written report.

NPCD District Administrator
April 2026 Updates:

General Updates:

If you have items that need added to Facebook or website, please email with necessary information
Beginning to draft the 2025-2026 Education District of the Year Binder – due at July WVACD Quarterly Meeting
Coordinating with NRCS on a Youth Gardening Program with Center McMechen Elementary students

RC&D Raised Bed Giveaway:

Raised beds have been picked up by the following schools and organizations that were awarded a free raised bed: Wheeling Park High School, Noah's Ark, Loveland Community Garden, Oak Glen High School, Hancock County 4-H, Swaney Memorial Library, John Marshall High School, and Moundsville Middle School
Lucey Family picked up their raised bed and compost barrel kit (won at the 2025 Banquet)
One raised bed is to go in the NPCD Garden

Events:

Planning Summer/Fall Events (Pollinator Field Day, Forestry Field Day, etc.)
Pollinator Events on separate document

Upcoming Spring Events:

- Saturday, April 25th – Grazing Field Day (25 registered)
- Thursday, May 21th – New Manchester Vol. Fire Dept.
- Thursday, May 28th – USDA Service Center Open House

Grants:

Name	Amount	Progress
Northern Panhandle RC&D (Educational Material)	\$500	Awarded \$275 remaining – needs spent by June 2026
GLCI Pasture Walk (Grazing Field Day)	\$3,000	Reimbursement from WVCA for Grazing Field Day \$1,952.13 remaining for Grazing Field Day \$500 budgeted towards Virtual Learning Station
Helen J. Prince Foundation	\$20,000	Awarded
WV Beekeepers Association Grant	\$1,000	Awarded to Tri-State Beekeepers Assoc. Will be used towards maintenance of NPCD Apiary and Educational Events
Center for Behavior and Climate (CBC)	\$7,200	In Review
Try This WV 2026 February Minigrant	\$3,000	In Review Youth Gardening Program with Center McMechen Elementary students
RC&D Mini Grant (HOA Day)	\$3,000	Awarded Waiting on State RC&D to approve
DanPaul Foundation	\$15,000	Rolling deadline In review
Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation	Up to \$100,000	Rolling deadline Drafting
Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation Grant	Up to \$20,000	Due May 10th Drafting

- Soil Tester (NPCD)
 - Abby Clegg reviewed a written report.

April 9th, 2026
Board Meeting Report
NPCD Soil Tester/ Administrator

Soil Samples

- Eli Wengerd; Marshall County; 21 Acres
- Prepped samples and mailed to WVU

General Updates & Tasks

- Daily Office Tasks; phones, equipment, anything Victoria/Veronica need, etc.

Equipment Rentals/Sales

- Prepared Compost/Rain Barrels for pick up as purchased
- Cut and prepared fabric for pick-up as purchased
- Helped cooperators with their equipment rental needs

Education/Outreach

- Keeping Facebook up to date with current events and information
- Creating graphics and updating website with upcoming events for 2026 as scheduled
- Continuing to help Victoria plan/schedule remaining educational activities for 2026
- Sharing advertisements/posts for 2026 activities as they are confirmed
- Sending emails to promote upcoming events

Newsletter

- Helped prepare newsletter for printing
- Printed and prepared newsletter for mailing

High Tunnel/Garden

- Contacted Black's Nursery about soil and straw order/delivery
- Coordinated time for soil delivery to NPCD office
- Gathered supplies and helped prepare for upcoming plants

Raised Beds

- Distributed raised beds to organizations as they arrived to pick them up

Upcoming Events

- Scheduled and confirmed locations for BQA training
- Gathered refreshments for both BQA trainings
- Scheduled port-o-john rental for Grazing Field Day
- Helped log and track registration information for upcoming events

- Visitors - None
- Committee Reports
 - Equipment Committee
 - Victoria White provided an equipment rental report.
 - O&M Committee
 - Amy Wade attended the public meeting held in Cameron by the Marshall County EMS. Amy showed a video of a crack in the ground.

- High Tunnel Committee
 - Cleaning of the high tunnel and raised beds will be 4/30. Fourth grade students from Center McMechen Elementary School will plant vegetables at the office on 5/14.
 - Abby Clegg reviewed a written report.

High Tunnel and Garden Report

- Tomatoes will be planted next week
- Soil has been delivered from Black's Nursery
- New raised bed added to garden, will be filled with soil ASAP
- Grass seed and straw have been placed where irrigation repairs took place in the garden
- Work day to prep for Youth Planting: April 30th
- Need to schedule a date for Center McMechen 4th graders to come plant
 - Waiting to hear from back from Center McMechen
 - Tentative date: May 14th after board meeting
 - Pending the school's schedule availability
- Grassland Committee
 - Jim Anderson reported that the competition is cancelled. It will be rescheduled for 9/10 or 9/11 and will be held at an Elk Conservation District farm.

Old Business

- Upper Grave Creek #7, #8, & #9 – ACNR Mining
 - A meeting will be held on 4/10 with the NPCD attorney.
- Tygarts Valley CD Lawsuit
 - No updates.
- Repaint Parking Lines
 - Two bids were received to repaint the parking lines at the USDA Service Center. **Jim Anderson made a motion to accept the lower bid of \$320.00. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**

New Business

- USDA Service Center Mowing and Mower Repairs
 - Item tabled.
- 2026 Pollinator Events
 - Victoria White reviewed upcoming pollinator events. The board did not want to sponsor the mead making class.
 - **Robert Luchetti, Jr. made a motion to allow the Tri-State Bee Association to install a fence and a storage shed around the bees. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**
- Ohio River Splashtacular @ Wheeling Heritage Port – June 7
 - The OCSWA asked the NPCD to set up at the Ohio River Splashtacular. Victoria White said she is available for the event. **Jim Anderson made a motion for Victoria White to set up a table for the NPCD at the Ohio River Splashtacular. Seconded by Amy Wade. Motion passed.**
- Update Insured Truck Driver
 - **Amy Wade made a motion to remove Harry Aston as an insured driver and add Abby Clegg and Victoria White. Seconded by Robert Luchetti, Jr. Motion passed.** All supervisors will remain as insured drivers.

- Local Work Group Meeting
 - The Local Work Group meeting will be held on May 14 at 9:00 am at the USDA Service Center.
- WV Envirothon Team Sponsorship
 - **Jim Anderson made a motion to pay full registration fees of \$734.75 for registration for Oak Glenn High School upon receipt of payment and confirmation of attendance at the WV Envirothon. Seconded by Amy Wade. Motion passed.**
- Employee Salary Review
 - Agenda item was moved to the end of the agenda.
 - **Robert Luchetti Jr. made a motion to enter an executive session at 1:15 pm to discuss employee salaries. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.** Executive session ended at 1:22 pm.
 - **Amy Wade made a motion to increase Abby Clegg’s hourly rate by \$5.00 per hour effective 4/4/2026. Seconded by Steve Paull. Motion passed.**
- Letter of Request
 - \$3,550.00 – FY25 AUP Reimbursement
Jim Anderson made a motion to sign and submit the letter of request to the WVCA for reimbursement of the invoice paid for the FY25 AUP. Seconded by Amy Wade. Motion passed.
- Conservation Agreements
 - Melissa Elliott/Marshall County/72 acres
 - Okey Rine/Marshall County/87.75 acres
 - Jonathon Duggan/Ohio County/20 acres
Amy Wade made a motion to approve M. Elliott, O. Rine, and J. Duggan as new cooperators. Seconded by Jim Anderson. Motion passed.
- Ag Enhancement Program (AgEP)
 - Payment

Name	Practice	Cost Share
David Henderson	Nutrient Management	\$1,620.00

Amy Wade made a motion to approve the completed practice for D. Henderson as presented. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.

Correspondence - None

Supervisor Reports

- Jim Anderson – Jim asked for permission from the district to attend all three AGC meetings. He said it should cost about \$1,000.00 to attend all three. He said he will be selling their merchandise at each meeting. **Amy Wade made a motion for district approval for Jim Anderson to attend all three AGC meetings. Seconded by David McCardle. Motion passed.**
- Robert Luchetti, Jr. – Robert reported on the NACD Fly-In.
- Chuck Glenn – A date needs to be set to tour Chad Lamp’s farm in Hancock County to prepare him for the farm contest.

NEXT MEETING

The next board meeting will be held on **Thursday, May14, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.**, at the USDA Service Center, McMechen.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Mark Fitzsimmons, Chairman

Amy Wade, Secretary

Minutes submitted by Veronica Gibson