



State of Vermont
State Natural Resources Conservation Council
PO Box 231
Waitsfield, VT 05673
vacd.org/nrcc

NRCC Board Meeting

Thursday, May 29,

2025, 1:00 PM

Location: The Limestone Room, Davis 3 Building, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, 1 National Life Dr., Montpelier, VT 05620, USA

Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8798107090?pwd=c3luK1lzZm5MSTc4eWVTWFo2ZWYdZ09&omn=81321197028>

Meeting ID: 879 810 7090 Passcode: 524884 Dial in: 1-929-205-6099

NRCC Voting Members:

Rick Hopkins - Board Chair, Central Union Rep, Winooski NRCD

Linda Corse - Southeast Union Rep, Windham County NRCD

Richard Noel - Northwest Union Rep, Franklin County NRCD

Willie Nickerson – Northeast Union Rep, Caledonia County NRCD

Alan Shelvey, South Central Union Rep, Rutland NRCD

Brian Vargo – Southwest Union Rep, Bennington NRCD

Nina Gage - Vermont Agency of Agriculture Rep, Food and Markets Rep

Marli Rupe – Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Rep, Agricultural & Water Quality

Roy Beckford-University of Vermont Extension

NRCC Non-Voting Board Members:

Travis Thomason - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Rep

Michelle Monroe - Vermont Association of Conservation Districts Rep

Attendees:

Meeting held in person and remotely via Zoom:

Board members: Rick Hopkins, Central Union Rep & Board Chair; Richard Noel,





Northwest Rep; Nina Gage, VAAFM rep; Linda Corse, Southeast Rep; Bill Manner, Southeast Rep Alternate, Willie Nickerson, Northeast Union Rep, Kate Willard, Central Union Rep Alternate, White River NRCD, Travis Thompson, USDA NRCS Rep, Michelle Monroe, VACD Rep.

Other Attendees: Laura DiPietro, VAAFM, Cory Ross, DM Representative, Windham NRCD, Sarah Damsel, DM Representative, Orleans NRCD, Clare Ireland, NRCC Administrator, Jess Miller, NRCC/VACD Grants & Finance Manager; Alli Wells, VAWQP Coordinator, Julia King, Communications Manager, VACD/NRCC, Katy Langenhorst, Americorps, VACD, and Lina Smith, NRCC/VACD Grants & Finance Manager.

Agenda

1. Welcome – 5 minutes
2. Review and approve February meeting minutes (VOTE) – 5 minutes
3. Grant Proposals, Approvals, and Updates
 - o FY26 Core Services - Approve Granting Strategy (VOTE) – 5 minutes
4.
 - Admin Updates – 15 minutes
 - o Update on Office Space Request
 - o Website & Communications Update (VOTE to approve website URL)
 - o Approval of Finance Policy and Procurement Policy (VOTE)
5. FY24 Annual Report – 10 minutes
6. Impact of Executive Orders & Changes to Federal Funding – 5 minutes
7. Break – 10 minutes
8. Supervisory Union Rep Updates – 20 minutes
9. Partner Updates – 20 minutes
10. DM Rep Report – 10 minutes
11. Legislative Session Information Sharing – 15 minutes
12. Other business, as required

Welcome & Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 pm.

Linda made the motion, seconded by Marli to approve the meeting





**minutes of February 27, 2025. A correction was noted that the next meeting should have been listed as May 29th not May 28th
After a call for a vote, all were in favor.**

Grant Proposals, Approvals, and Updates:

- FY26 Core Services - Approve Granting Strategy

Clare noted the Core Services FY26 budget is to be executed by July 1st and board approval is needed to move forward. Out of the \$1M originally requested from the legislature, \$612,000 was received as well as \$250,000 in one-time funds. As in the past, the goal of funding one full time position for each district was communicated to the legislature. If this were divided equally, it would result in roughly \$52,500 per district.

After discussion, Richard made the motion, seconded by Willie to divide the \$250,000 one-time funds equally between each district to supplement the \$35,500 currently received. This will result in approximately \$17,000 extra for each district. Nina recused herself as grant manager. The motion was voted and passed.

Admin Updates

Update on Office Space Request

- Space in the National Life building: Marli noted it was initially approved by the deputy and commissioner but subsequently denied because many other requests were received. She has appealed that decision.
- Clare talked with the Agency of Ag and that is still a possibility.

Website & Communications Update

- Julia noted the new state logo for NRCC. She is working on a state website & email addresses.
- She requested the board approve the URL.

**The motion was made by Nina seconded by Marli to use the URL:
<http://conservation.vermont.gov> . The motion was voted and passed.**

Approval of Finance Policy and Procurement Policy

- Nina & Marli suggested this policy be brought to the AGO for review.
- Rick suggested going ahead with the policy and revisiting it as we go along.





Richard made the motion, seconded by Rick to approve the financial policy. After some further discussion, the motion was voted and passed. 4 in favor 2 opposed

Financial and Operating Procedures

- Clare noted some updates to the Payment Provisions and Authorization and to Advance Funds sections of the policy. NRCC can advance payments as long as it retains a cash reserve of \$200,000 which aligns with Bulletin 5.

Linda made the motion, seconded by Marli to approve the Financial Procedures Policy as updated and previously approved by the finance committee. Motion was voted and passed.

The FY24 Annual Report was presented by Julia and is located at <https://arcg.is/1SnfSD>

Impact of Executive Orders & Changes to Federal Funding

- Clare reported that Council is doing okay right now. All grants have been unfrozen by court injunctions.
- This may change as the Supreme Court considers ending nationwide injunctions.
- The Americorps program has been terminated. Katy will stay on through DEC.

Supervisory Union Rep Updates

- Linda noted great work is being done in both Windham and Ottauquechee districts. They are hiring staff and Kelly is coming up to speed.
- Richard reported that Franklin County NRCD are in their own office now and have projects they are working on such as Lake Carmi and the Enosburgh Dam Removal.
- Willie reported Caledonia has hired a 3rd employee
- Rick reported Winooski is hiring another Ag Conservation Specialist, Hands Mill Dam removal will be done this summer and they had a tree sale.
- Kate reported White River is negotiating a lease with the Vermont State University in Randolph to use space for a tree nursery. An anniversary celebration of the district is planned.

Partner Updates

Laura reported

- the Agency of Ag has two positions to hire: An engineering position and the Ag Water Quality specialist position which is closed and has received 88 applications
- She noted recent tension at farms, 4 farmers denied access to their properties.
- Two bills of note the legislature is working on:





- Right to Farm and
- Regulatory oversight bill for the Agency of Ag and ANR.

Nina shared links:

- [Vermont-Dairy-Delivers.pdf](#)
- [The State of Dairy - Vermont Dairy](#)

Marli

- DEC Technical assistant money has been unfrozen but FA money has not but are optimistic that it will.
- May rehire the RCPP Coordinator position
- Clean water budget process is available for FY27. <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/cwi/clean-water-board/clean-water-board-meetings>
- The Climate Action plan is in the final stages of revision by July
- Resilience implementation strategy being developed

Travis (report included in meeting files)

- NRCS offices are open and conducting business as usual but not obligating any new contracts under the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Due to a hiring freeze, there will be no hiring in the near future so he will be relying on partners
- There is a new Secretary of NRCS out of California.
- Locally led announcements will be made tomorrow.

DM Rep Report

- Sarah noted they have been focused on their own districts working on onboarding staff, staff meetings and supporting each other.
- She noted recent efforts to work more regionally.

Legislative Session Information Sharing

Clare noted

- NRCC is advocating to increase line items to account for inflation in the Clean Water Fund
- Potential changes to open meeting law.
- Potential study grant making procedures for smaller organizations.

Nina noted

the Agency of Ag will be offering Clean Water funding focused on clean water work with the RFP to be open in the fall. She encouraged





Supervisors and Districts to plan now and be actively discussing priorities in their district.

- Rick noted Council made a commitment to form a subcommittee to look at state statutes. That committee is not yet off the ground but this work does not seem urgent at this time.
- Linda asked if there was anything Districts and VACD might due to help with the Right to Farm. Laura encouraged communication with legislators. Michelle did not recommend VACD or districts take a position on this bill.

Linda made the motion, seconded by Richard to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:26 pm.

Next Meeting is scheduled for August 28, 2025.

