

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

September 22, 2026

Present: Lynn Graves – Chairman, Robert Bradford, Robert Runkle, Bob Williamson, Anthony Jewett, Mike Biniek, and David Massie

- 1) The District Manager reported on the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's (JLARC) review of Virginia's Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program. JLARC recognizes VACS as an important and successful program that has been effective in improving water quality in Virginia. However, JLARC also identified opportunities for improvement. The District Manager noted that discussion of the report's specific recommendations will continue in the coming months. JLARC will present additional details on the report at the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' Annual Meeting and provide an overview of its recommendations to help districts remain informed and responsive.
- 2) The District Manager reported on the recent Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board Subcommittee and Regular Meetings held September 14 and 15. DCR staff presented findings from a survey distributed to Districts regarding the cover crop program following the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Employees Annual Meeting in late August. The primary discussion related to the VACS program focused on cover crop verifications, with standardized methods being adopted for District staff to verify 60% cover on fields. Thirteen Districts attended the meeting and voiced concerns regarding the additional workload for staff.
- 3) The District Manager reported on existing TMDL grant projects, opportunities for increased funding for existing grants, and the submission of an application for the Lower Rapidan TMDL project. The District expects to receive additional funding for all five existing grants in early October.
- 4) The Committee discussed the Strategic Plan, which expires at the end of the year. The Committee will initiate the strategic planning process for 2026-2030 and seek input from a cross-section of stakeholders throughout the region to help identify District priorities for the next five years. Input will be sought from agricultural producers, forestland owners, residents, local and state government agency staff, private planners, professional educators, and interested members of the public.

Lynn Graves, Chairman

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Graves".

Date Approved: October 6, 2026

Education/Public Relations Committee Meeting Minutes

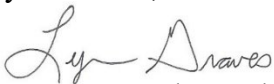
September 22, 2026

Directors: Mike Biniek, Robert Bradford, Lynn Graves, Anthony Jewett, Robert Runkle, Bob Williamson

Staff: Stephanie DeNicola, Richard Jacobs, David Massie

- A. **Piedmont Native Plant Guides:** We purchased another case of books. The Committee recommended raising the price to \$25 each. We are the top seller of the guide.
- B. **School Programs:** Programs are detailed in Item N.
- C. **Media and Publications:** The Fall issue is open for article ideas. The Participant Corner will focus on education programs and will be written by the Eastern View High School Envirothon Coach Rachel Stuart and the returning team members. We would like to send it to the printer by mid-October.
- D. **Annual Report:** Stephanie is working on the Annual Report.
- E. **Awards Banquet 2026:** The Awards Banquet will be held on Thursday, November 19 at Pepper's Grill. The Committee reviewed nominations for Educator of the Year and Forestry Habitat. The Committee chose Virginia Department of Forestry for Educator and Rounton Farm for Forestry.
- F. **Envirothon:** The Eastern View High School team held their first meeting on August 14. There is a new team at Orange County High School, but no one attended the interest meeting. The Area II training is scheduled at Graves for Saturday, November 21.
- G. **Grants:** Stephanie is applying to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund to make to cover some supplies and additional sets of the Critter cubes for the 4th grade MWEE program.
- H. **Rain Barrels:** We are working with the Thomas Jefferson Planning Commission to hold another rain barrel workshop in Greene on October 29 at the Greene Extension office. Janet Davis at Hill House Nursery is interested in holding a workshop at their site in Woodville. Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection is willing to partner.
- I. **Lawn Soil Testing Program:** Sample requests have increased in the last few weeks (26 tests in the last three weeks).
- J. **CSWCD Swag:** No update
- K. **Tree Sale:** The Committee discussed tree species options as well as a new meadow mix.
- L. **Info Sessions:** October: Water supply plans (Justin Chen, DEQ); December: Virginia Working Landscapes (Justin Proctor)
- M. **Info Session Ideas:** VASWCD (Stephanie contacted)
- N. **Outreach:** VACDE Employees' Training (8/18-20); Yowell ES 4th Grade (8/21-9/2); AG Richardson ES 4th Grade (8/21-8/27); Area II Envirothon meeting (8/24); Farmington ES 4th (8/25-8/27); Farmington ES 4th map (8/31, 9/2 & 9/3); New Landowner workshop (9/4); MWEE Assistant training (9/8 & 9/9); Sycamore Park ES 4th Grade (9/8 & 9/9); Pearl Sample 4th (9/14, 9/17 & 9/18); William Monroe MS MWEE (9/20-9/28); Homeschool History club (9/22); Emerald Hill ES 4th (9/28); AG Richardson ES STEM night (9/30); Gordon Barbour ES 4th (10/1); Emerald Hill ES Kindergarten (10/5); Emerald Hill ES 1st and 2nd (10/8); William Wetsel MS MWEE (10/19-10/23); Greene Rain Barrel workshop (10/29); 4th Grade teachers MWEE to Port Isobel (11/6-9); William Monroe HS Environmental Science classes (11/12 & 11/13); Awards banquet (11/19); Area II Envirothon training (11/21); Sycamore Park ES field (3/11/27); Rappahannock ES 4th Grade Field (3/12/27); Rappahannock ES 6th Grade MWEE (3/15- 3/18/27); AG Richardson 4th field (3/19/27); Emerald Hill 4th field (3/25/27); Farmington ES field (3/26/27); Waverly Yowell ES field (4/2/27); Yowell ES 4th field (Culpeper) (4/7/27); Pearl Sample ES 4th field (4/13/27); VA Black Bear Festival (6/5); NCF Envirothon in MD (7/25-7/31)

Lynn Graves, Board Chairman



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