



Soil and Water Conservation Society

Virginia Chapter

Minutes of September 15, 2004

Attendees:

Dawn Shank
Jackie Byars
Gene Yagow
Kilby Majette
Theo Dillaha

Stu Wilson
Don Wells
John Myers
Mary Leigh Wolfe
Adrian Harpold

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 by Dawn Shank president.

Minutes

Only one correction was needed to the previous minutes. Kathryn Durkee actually attends Longwood University instead of UVA. This correction was made to the previous minutes. Minutes stand as approved.

Treasurer's Report

Larry Wilkinson was unable to attend the meeting. He reported to Jackie that few changes had occurred with the Societies account. He had received the final bill from John Myers for the summer meeting and he would be paying that soon.

Committee Reports

Awards

Kilby reported that he had received 3 award nominations for the chapter's awards. One Merit Award has been received for the VA Resource Education Council. A Conservationist of the Year nomination was received for the Student SWCS Chapter for their work on Apple Ridge Farm and an educational brochure. Finally a nomination for the June Sekoll Award had been filed for the Eastern Shore SWCD. Kilby and Theo had agreed to extend the nomination date until October 9th since the annual meeting was being held later in the year.

So far no nominations have been received for the Pinelands Nursery awards. Dawn said she had emailed several RC&D in hopes that it would generate a nominee. Dawn and Stephanie Martin also sent the information out on the VASWCD list serve. Stu also reported he had routed the awards information materials to several people in DCR.

Theo asked if any changes should have been made to the nomination forms that were on the website from last year. Kilby said that some minor changes had been made to the award forms. Mainly the addition of the nominators email address was the biggest change.

Dawn asked if there were enough plaques for the award winners. Kilby reported that a box of plaques was bought in last 2 years and they were stored either in the NRCS state office or his office. He said he also had 2-3 trivets and several SWCS mugs left as gifts for speakers.

Membership

Stu had not received a membership report from Ankeny since June, so he is uncertain of any new members or the amount of cancelled memberships. Dawn and he will be working on a letter to send to DCR, NRCS, Extension and others agency and departments requesting their state leaders encourage membership into the Society. Theo reported that John McGhee, a professor at VA Tech, was going to be joining soon.

Legislative

The VASWCD Association is currently in their legislative process for the next legislative season. Once the board meets next week and approves their legislative agenda Don will have more to report.

Don did want to report on a meeting Stephanie Martin and he attended with leadership from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF). CBF has proposed a state wide initiative that would impose a usage tax for residential and commercial businesses that are connected to a municipal sewage facility. The tax would be \$1.00/week for homes and \$100.00/month for businesses. This fee would be placed in the Water Quality Improvement Fund and would serve as a dedicated source of funding. The proposal is that 70% of the funding until 2010 would be used to treat point source pollution with the remaining 30% going to Non-Point Source use. The focus would be on nitrogen and water quality through the BMP program. After 2010 the funding would be split 50/50 between both. Opposition for the proposal was being voiced by the VA Association of Counties, VA Municipal League, and the Sewage Treatment companies.

Gene asked if other state had adopted such a tax. Stu said that Maryland had approved such a measure last year and they termed it the "Flush Tax" and that it was working rather well. Don said that CBF had done polling in the Commonwealth of 600 people and determined there was strong support for such a tax. Pollsters also reported they would not change their vote for elected offices if a legislature voted for such a tax. This has helped encourage legislators to support the tax in their political agendas. The contacts for CBF on this project are Roy Hoagland and Ann Jennings.

Dawn mentioned the current standing with the Manaponi and Newport News water reservoir. VMRC has granted the city of Newport News a permit to drain waters from the Manaponi River. The next step of hurdles for this project will be the Army Corp. of Engineers and wetland determinations for the project.

Budget

Mary Leigh plans on working with Larry during the next month to get hard numbers on expenditures for last year. This information will be used to update the budget for next year. She plans to have the budget completed by the Annual meeting so that it can be voted on at that time.

Student Chapter

Shelia Ranganath is this years president for the student chapter. She was unable to attend this videoconference so Adrian Harpold provided the student chapter report. They have held one meeting so far this school year and feel that membership in the student chapter will increase.

He also reported that him and Shelia had attended the International meeting in July and had found it very educational and was glad they were given the opportunity to attend. However, they would like to request some additional funding from the council to cover other expenses that were incurred on the trip. Total expenses for the trip were \$1,560.00 and the council had only approved \$1,000.00 for their expenses. The council decided to wait until Larry could report on current balances before approving the extra allowance.

The student chapter also won \$175.00 for their second place finish with their poster presentation. Congratulations!

Newsletter

The newsletter was sent out this week via email and the last of the postal mail is going out today. Stu praise Theo for all his hard work and dedication to the chapter for putting together the newsletter and its distribution. The council was in agreement with this statement

Theo requested that the membership chairperson also be set up to have privileges to add new members to the list serve. This would help him in keeping information current and reduce the returns of emails.

Theo has also gotten a new position at Virginia Tech and may not be able to continue with some of his work he has been performing for the chapter (namely the newsletter). Dawn said she may be interested in taking on this responsibility after she has completed her term as chapter president.

Old Business

International Meeting

The following members attend the International meeting in Minneapolis, MN: Stu Wilson, Theo Dillaha, Gene Yagow, Brain Benham, Shelia Ranganath, and Adrian Harpold. Stu served as the official chapter delegate. Theo, Gene, and Brain attended to make a presentation for the TMDL's. Stu reported that the conference was attended by 700-800 people and that the chapter development workshops were well attended. The common consensus among many chapters was the decrease in membership over the past several years. In our region only 3 state chapters are considered to be very active (GA, SC, and VA). Stu met the president elect from North Carolina and they would like to continue with partner on technical workshops and conferences. Stu also said that it was interesting to see what steps Minnesota had taken on the issue of Nutrient Management in Urban Areas in their state.

Theo reported that he will be chairing the committee for next years Chapter Development Workshop for the International meeting. He said his first step was to change the name from Chapter Development to Leadership Development. This would hopefully encourage more participation by other agencies.

Educational Foundation

The Foundation will be holding its meeting next Thursday and Dawn will be attended on behalf of SWCS. She went over comments submitted to her by Jackie and many in the group felt these were viable issues to be raised.

Theo requested that Dawn find out what the bottom line amount is in the Foundation accounts and what is left of SWCS originally donation. He felt that until there is a real understanding of what the situation is, the council could not make a recommendation either way. And that we should know what are options are in the event we decide to remove our money from the Foundation.

Don said that at the quarterly meetings there is a balance sheet submitted to the Board of Directors that list what the varying accounts are and their balances. He also mentioned that the accounts for Environthon, scholarships and others were accounted for separately but were invested as a lump sum.

Dawn also asked Don about the pledges that were not completed by some of the districts in the state. Don reported that all districts had completed their original pledges. The pledges that were not met were some made by the some district to be part of the 21st Century Club. These pledges were to be used by the Foundation as matching monies for the other pledges that were received. Don also reported that one of the main issues remaining with the Foundation was their lack of commitment to solicit funds for the financial match.

Theo requested that Dawn try to get enough of a handle on this issue so that the council would be able to have a motion to vote on at the next council meeting concerning the future of our scholarships.

Summer Workshop

The summer workshop had approximately 35 attendees. The speakers were top-notch on the workshop theme and those that were unable to attend missed out on a worthwhile event.

Annual Meeting

Registration for the Annual Meeting and Workshop was sent out on this list serve and to several other organizations and groups by Theo and Gene. Stephanie Martin also forwarded the information on to district employees and Kilby would make sure a second email was sent to NRCS employees. Theo is planning to send out a second announcement concerning the meeting and it will contain the names of the presenters.

Don requested that the planning committee also set a price for those members that would only like to attend the Awards Luncheon and Annual Business meeting as opposed to attend the whole conference. Theo and Mary Leigh said they would determine what the fee would be and that Theo would send an email out on the list serve to allow members to have that opportunity.

The Canaan Valley Institute has donated \$1,000.00 to Virginia SWCS to help co-sponsor this event. The projected profit for the workshop by the planning committee is \$2,500. Another plan for the workshop was to sell display space for \$100.00.

Nominating Committee

The nominating committee consists of Gary Boring (chair), Jim Cox, Alecia Ketchum, and Dennis Jones. Gary plans to contact these individuals next week to put together a slate of officers for the upcoming elections. Brain Benham is interested in running for an officer's slot on the council. Theo plans to set the voting process up via email. He would email the list serve and the member would have to click onto the website link and make their choices for officer elections. The website would tally the votes and the results would be ready for the Annual Meeting.

VASWCD Reception

The council plans to follow through with sponsoring a Social during the VASWCD meeting in Roanoke. The meeting is scheduled for December 5-7. Dawn will check with Denise Doetzer to see if SWCS can hold the Social in the NRCS hospitality room. Dawn, Gene, Kilby, and Jackie will coordinate the event.

New Business

All items listed on the agenda as new business items were discussed in Committee Reports.

Announcements & Follow-Ups

SWCS received a "Thank You" note from Dana Roberts for our contributions to the state Environthon contest. The Augusta County Home School Team placed 2nd in the national contest.

Dawn will check with Larry to see if membership applications were completed to last years scholarship winners.

Directors for the National SWCS council are being sought. If you would like more information, please contact Theo or Dawn.

Theo also reported that this year the International meeting in MN actually made money. A total of \$90,000 was generated by this years meeting. The plan is to use this money for future international meeting and to hire a position in Ankeny to help state chapters pull together the International meeting.

Gene also requested that Stu set up some dates for next years teleconference schedule. This will allow him to get the dates for the videoconference that we need. The first meeting is usually held in January.

Meeting adjourned at 11:21

Respectively submitted:

Jackie S. Byars
Chapter Secretary