PMNRCD Board Meeting Minutes September 2026
Date: September 9, 2026 – **3:30 PM**
PMNRCD Zoom Number (https://zoom.us/j/9041299305)

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 3:37pm.
Present: Katy Crumley, Dan Brooks, Darryl Kuehne, Hilary Solomon, Sadie Brown, Whitney Hier, Vicki Pattison-Willits
Meeting began at 3:33pm.

Approve April meeting minutes and review May and June meeting notes: Note- Unable to approve previous meeting minutes due to a lack of quorum. No notes from the August meeting as it was very informal and short.

Katy motioned for the approval of previous meeting minutes; this was seconded by Darryl and approved unanimously.

Financial Summary: Hilary provided the PMNRCD monthly financial report update. This financial year has proven more complex due to the upcoming audit. We continue to work with Structural Integrity (SI) to get audit ready. In the last month in particular, staff have been working towards improving on tracking and recording grant spending and task/deliverables.

PMNRCD will be switching payroll providers to Quick Books Online (QBO) this month and Hilary has been busy, working together with Dave (SI) to get ready for this move including ensuring everyone's time sheets and tax reporting are up to date. The move will mean there will be one short pay period and then the pay period will default to the standard two-week pay period. There will be a slight shift with pay periods ending on Fridays rather than Wednesdays moving forward, which hopefully will make reporting easier. Staff will have to ensure QBO reporting is complete for the pay period by the following Monday at the very latest to ensure there is time for review before pay goes through. Staff will continue to also record billing on the normal spreadsheets as well – this will be important to track mileage and expenses.

We currently have 2 accounts and associated credit cards – main District and Agriculture. Hilary is going to sign up for a service which will allow each person to have their own card app. It is hoped that there will be a transition to this new service as well later this month.

Hilary is very excited to announce that we now have a live Simple Program that will go through Fidelity that staff can sign up to – this is the equivalent of a 401k for small businesses.

All accounts have been reconciled for the end of the fiscal year with just a couple of very small exceptions, which are waiting on a receipt or two (all were eventually accounted for).

FY26 was the largest budget in PMNRCD history (over $1 million). This, combined with the upcoming audit does mean it is going to take Hilary a little longer to get the P&L prepared and finalized as there are a lot of extra steps (especially with ensuring reporting is complete for the audit) but the steps Hilary has been implementing with Dave Dore from SI will make this process easier for reporting next FY.

The District is very excited to be welcoming our newest member of the team later this month – Leah LaTour who will be taking on the newly created Finance and Admin managerial role. Having Leah onboard to manage the District finances is going to really help.

Katy asked whether Chris Rottler would allow us to charge some of Leah's role to DEC/RPC as we prepare for the audit as this is being directly mandated by them. Hilary responded that she is not sure if there is any money available. She did advise that we are billing some CWSP aligned work and they have paid for some of the SI invoices as these are related to audit preparation. Chris did promise some funding for this work. The audit is at the request of DEC and has required implementation of several new systems, which represented a steep learning curve and a period of significant adjustment.

Partner Reports:

Katie Stiles, Rutland NRCD Update: Hilary advised Katie is currently immersed in the dam removal project at her property. She sends her apologies for not being able to make the meeting this month.

Rutland RPC Update: Hilary provided a brief update on developments at RRPC. Emily has officially started in her new role and is getting up to speed with the CWSP's work. Hilary has been providing additional support to RRPC and helping cover CWSP responsibilities since Barbara's retirement last November. Hilary and Emily have met several times, and the transition is progressing well.

Otter Creek NRCD: Hilary advised that Erica Harris has been appointed as the new District Manager and officially started today. Hilary met with her and is excited there is someone in the role and we can build our partnership work. There have been lots of Lake Wise requests for the area OCNRCD serves. Hilary and Erica are meeting with DEC on Monday to discuss capacity building and get her trained on conducting assessments.

Olivia Carlson: Not present.

Olivia Butterman (FSA): Hilary announced that Olivia is leaving to move to Washington State. The assembled board members and staff agreed Olivia had been a fantastic asset to FSA and would be very much missed. All wished her well for her future move. Crop reporting is now due. Also, any farm operator changes need to be reported to FSA.

Angie Allen (DEC): Not present.

Brief Staff Reports – Brief Updates – most of these were tabled for the next meeting due to staff being absent.

Hilary: See above notes.

Sadie: The nursery team has been busy wrapping up the season, with the largest seasonal crew to date. Activity is expected to slow until fall planting can begin once plants are dormant. A significant planting project is planned for the dam on Katie Stile's property. Sadie will assess site stability and is proceeding

with an order for fascines, although quantities remain difficult to estimate. A couple of seasonal staff will be retained through the end of October to assist with planting.

In November, Sadie and the team will review staffing levels, seasonal workloads, and how best to manage quieter periods. While project funding (mostly) supports the staffing levels, project timing continues to create cash flow challenges. Sadie will also conduct exit interviews with seasonal staff to inform planning for next year. Preparations are underway for the Nursery Open House this coming Saturday.

Vicki: Provided an update on outreach activities, with a focus on planning a sustainable road salt workshop for southern Vermont in collaboration with Kris Stepenuck of UVM Sea Grant. Vicki recently attended a related workshop aboard the UVM research vessel and is working with Kris to confirm a date and location for the southern Vermont event. Hilary and Vicki will also connect with RRPC staff who work directly with road crews to support outreach and participation.

The workshop aims to provide practical guidance on sustainable road salt practices, with a potential demonstration of equipment calibration and other road maintenance equipment by a participating road crew. Kris will present on the project and may also share a video, depending on the arrangements. Vicki and Kris are very excited to be bringing the workshop to southern Vermont.

Jennifer: On leave

Old Business:

CWSP Update: Hilary provided an update on Emily's progress in getting up to speed with CWSP work. Three projects are ready for applications, which have been submitted to DEC for regulatory review. It is hoped these will be finalized by the end of September, after which the applications can be submitted to the CWSP. A date for a meeting to discuss the projects has not yet been confirmed. Hilary is meeting with Devon on Friday to review the CWSP budget.

NRCD Legislative Update: Hilary provided an update on state funding for Conservation Districts, which has increased from $6,000 historically to $50,000 more recently, with $56,000 agreed for this year. The increased funding reflects growing recognition of the role Districts play in supporting conservation work.

A legislative advocacy meeting is planned for the coming weeks, which Hilary intends to attend with Andie and Katie from RNRCD. Board members were also invited to attend.

The discussion also covered the importance of maintaining the nonpartisan and non-regulatory role of Conservation Districts. In light of a Bennington NRCD staff member's decision to run for legislative office, Hilary outlined considerations around maintaining a clear separation between District responsibilities and legislative activities. The matter is being discussed at the state level, with the aim of ensuring that Districts can continue to work impartially with landowners, farms, and other partners across the region.

NRCC/VACD meeting updates: Darryl attended the last NRCC meeting. There were a lot of policy updates. Hilary offered that maybe Dan could attend the next meeting as our newest board member. It would be good to have designated board members to attend specific meetings. Hilary is happy to create reminders.

Hilary will reshare links to TimeSheets for Board Members to ensure they can get reimbursed for attending meetings.

New Staff position: Leah is due to start on 22 September. The office has been reorganized to provide her with a dedicated desk and workspace. Hilary will arrange a laptop and locking file cabinet for her arrival. Staff have been developing an onboarding plan to ensure Leah has a clear set of initial tasks and feel welcomed and supported by the team. Onboarding materials and protocols have also been strengthened, and the office now has new desks.

Potential New Board Members: Any new ideas? Mara (Smoky House) was put forward as a potential person to reach out to.

New Business:

No-till Drill Update: Hilary provided an update towards the end of the meeting regarding the no-till drill, which broke at Tami's farm in Tinmouth broke last week, with the frame damaged, the unit twisted and a number of other issues identified. The damage came to light on Friday of the long weekend, with two other farms still scheduled to use the drill.

Whitney handled the situation really well and was incredibly generous with her time, rearranging plans and moving the newer drill to the other farms over the weekend. Hilary will contact the Agency of Agriculture to see whether funding might be available for a replacement. Salem Tractor and Farm Supply has been contacted and will assess the damage next week to determine the likely repair costs. Dan also suggested that local mobile welders might be able to help. Thankfully, the District has the newer drill, but this leaves us with only one working unit.

FY27 District Budget Update: Hilary will review the FY27 budget to determine the funding available for staff and projects. A key consideration is ensuring funds are available when needed, given the cash flow challenges experienced over the summer. The District also needs to recruit an audit firm.

Jen is expected to return part-time following surgery, initially focusing on remote work, although her doctor has advised her not to return just yet.

NRCS Update: Deadlines for the local fund pool and EQIP are approaching, and sign-ups need to be completed. Andie and Whitney are acting as liaisons with farms. NRCS is currently relying heavily on the Districts for support. The recent confirmation of funding will help support Whitney's work, which is great news.

Hilary thanked everyone for attending, and it was great to have a quorum.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 p.m.