

VCTU Council Meeting Notes – September 16, 2023

Date: September 16, 2023

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Location: Graves Mountain Lodge, 205 Graves Mountain Lane, Old Blue Ridge Turnpike, Syria, VA 22743

Meeting in-person and via ZOOM

Attendees:

In-Person: Jim Wilson (Chair/Northern Virginia), Burr Tupper (Vice Chair/Winchester), Bill Pierce (Treasurer/Massanutten), Scott Allen (Secretary/Northern Virginia), Eric Tichay (NLC Rep/Smith River), Deidra Stultz (Comm-Diversity)/Roanoke Valley), Mike Makufka (TIC/Winchester), Amy Orr (At-Large/Rapidan), Chuck Hoysa (Rapidan), Mike Taggart (Rapidan), Paul Kearney (Rapidan), Tony Hill (Northern Virginia), Brenda Willis (Roanoke Valley), John Loope (Roanoke Valley), Catherine Tucker (VA Capital), Stan Ikonen (Winchester), Tom Benzing (Conservation/Shenandoah), Jason Collins (Smith River), Jeff Deering (Smith River), Dave Swenson (Smith River), Al Kittredge (Smith River), Richard Foust (Massanutten)

Zoom: Rob Thomas (VA Capital), David Juth (Winchester), Seth Coffman (TU),

Meeting Called to Order at 9:05 A.M.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:30 P.M.

1. Opening remarks and agenda review (Jim Wilson)
2. Meeting Minutes from 5.13.2023
 - Reviewed and Approved
3. Featured Speaker: Evan Childress
 - Presentation on Brook Trout Trends in Shenandoah National Park
 - [[Attachment 1](#)]
4. Council Operating Plan (Scott Allen)
 - [[Attachment 2](#)]
 - Status updated in attachment
 - Priority Waters Page on Council website
 - Need Chapters to send material to Deidre to share on Instagram
 - [Action: Activities List to website (Scott)]
 - [Action: Generate talking points for the legislators for VA Capital Chapter to put some action plans behind them (Open)]
5. VA TU Activities Review (Seth Coffman)
 - Current TU projects happening over the next 2 months.
 - TU is partnering with the US Forest Service to replace an undersized culvert on Rail Road Hollow a tributary to Skidmore Fork in the Dry River watershed. The culvert is located on Forest Road 227 Skidmore Fork Rd off Rt 33 West. The road will be closed for 2-4 weeks to allow for removal of the existing culvert and installation of a bottomless arch. The new structure will provide for fish passage and improve sediment transport and flood resiliency.

- TU will also be completing a stream habitat enhancement project in Rockingham Co on a tributary to Smith Creek as part of an NRCS project. This project will improve habitat and streambank stability.
- At a broader level TU is in the initial stages of our NRCS RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program). This partnership provides dedicated NRCS financial assistance to eligible farmers and producers in RCPP designated counties of Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, Augusta, Rockingham, Page, and Shenandoah. The project funds will be prioritized for projects that implement riparian corridor restoration practices in priority watersheds and TU Priority Waters. This is a multi-year grant, and TU will be providing technical assistance to participating landowners helping to assess, design and implement projects. Our initial signup period is happening now, and projects will be submitted for consideration by Oct 13. We anticipate at least 1-2 more signup periods.
- Last year TU signed a national agreement with the US Forest Service. In that agreement, TU will partner with the USFS to address habitat restoration needs on national forest lands. In Virginia, the initial focus will be on aquatic organism passage projects. Specifically addressing assessment and design capacity issues over the next year, and then implementation of projects in future years.

6. Tri-State Youth Camp (Paul Kearney)

- The camp is in the process of dissolving and is working on disposition of materials and funds
- There has been no response from the Mid-Atlantic council
- Goal of camp is youth activities
- Money will be given to the VA Council to be targeted for youth activities
- Call for chapters to request supplies
- 5 rivers clubs as options for material
- [Action: Storage unit payment due date and lease status (Bill Pierce)]

7. Awards Presentations (Jim Wilson)

- Plaques and certificates were presented to recipients or Chapter representatives
- Recipients and write-up in attachment.
- [\[Attachment 3\]](#)

8. Climate Coordinator Report –Federal Legislation (Jim Wilson)

- Anecdotal story about visit to beach and clean wind energy projects in conflict
- Virginia legislation - current administration trying to get out of regional gas emissions organization
- Three handouts from Citizen Climate Lobby in attachments
- [\[Attachment 4\]](#)
- [\[Attachment 5\]](#)
- [\[Attachment 6\]](#)

9. Community Committee (Burr Tupper)

- Presentation and discussion about use of AI for website and newsletter
- [\[Attachment 7\]](#)

10. Trout in the Classroom (Mike Makufka)

- Website:
 - Added a TIC Primer for Teachers to website. The template for that was written by Chuck Hoysa for the Rapidan Chapter
 - Adding a link on the website from PA Trout in the Classroom with videos on tank set-up and troubleshooting
- End of Year Survey:

- I have tabulated the results of the questionnaire sent out to Chapter Coordinators. For the most part, schools had a very successful year. A few teachers had water quality problems and lost fish. But overall, it was a very positive year and almost all teachers are continuing with the program.
- What I felt is necessary in the future is to have a way for the teachers to communicate with each other. National TU has a TIC/SIC forum which is good, but I thought a more state oriented site is necessary. There is a Facebook page for Virginia TIC that Jason McGarvey started. I am taking over the administration of the page and will invite all teachers in the program to join. This will be a secure site that can only be accessed by a request to me.
- Dan's River Association, who manages the program for the Martinsville area, said that there was a lot of participation from the Smith River Chapter of TU supplied volunteers this year which had been lacking in the past. That is a really good thing to hear.

- Upcoming Year:

- There were four Coordinators that stepped down this year and I am happy to say that three of those four chapters have new people in place and I am working with them to help as needed. The fourth person was handling 4 schools in the Leesburg area that are not affiliated with any Chapter. We are looking for a way to get a new person on board.
- There are 203 schools participating this upcoming year not counting the Leesburg situation and Mountain Empire Chapter. Last year Mountain Empire did not participate in the TIC program but stated they are doing it again this year.

- VAIS Conference

- I have been invited to attend the Virginia Association Independent Schools conference on November 3 in Richmond. I will have a booth at the conference and will be talking about the program to teachers from independent schools who may be interested in the TIC program. Roughly 200 schools will be participating. We will see what interest this creates in TIC. Virginia TU Chapters may be reaching the saturation point for new programs, but it is an interesting problem to have.

- [Action: Need to connect Leesburg schools with NVATU chapter (Mike)]

- Suggested teacher social

- (Brenda) Noted issue with releases probably due to new staff

- (Rob) Asked if there was a TIC-lite version

- Funding and process questions

- Funding requests can be sent to Mike

- Each chapter is responsible for funding for supported equipment along with schools

- Each chapter is responsible for release coordination

- (John) Noted issues with older chillers and suggests having spares on hand

- (Chuck) Eggs are expected to be ready for schools the first week in October

11. Treasurer's Report (Bill Pierce)

- [Attachment 8](#)

- [Action: Notify national of official decharter of Skyline chapter so NLC can vote (Bill)]

- (Rob) VA Capital chapter to use funds from Bill Wills to establish a new web presence

- (Rob) Asked about rebate funds

- Annually distributed and funds are split 50/50 with the Council

12. NLC report (Eric Tichay)

- [[Attachment 9](#)]

13. Elections

- Annual elections held
- Motion to approve the following slate of officers and advisors
 - Chair – Jim Wilson
 - Treasurer – Bill Pierce
 - Secretary – Scott Allen
 - NLC Representative – Eric Tichay
 - At-Large – Amy Orr
- Motion- Approved
- Motion to remove Heather Davidson as At-Large Advisor (Ref: Bylaw Section 2Cii)
- Motion- Approved
- Nominations from the floor
 - Motion to approve the following At-Large Advisors
 - Stan Ikonen (Winchester)
 - Paul Kearney (Rapidan)
 - Jeff Deering (Smith River)
- Motion - Approved

14. Closing Remarks (Jim)

- Next Priority Waters Committee Zoom call is on October 10th
- Next Executive Committee Zoom call is October 23rd

-end