

**Shenandoah Valley Soil & Water Conservation District**  
**Dam Maintenance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**May 16th, 2025**

**Meeting Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 11:55 A.M.

**Meeting Location:** Shenandoah Valley SWCD-Conference Room

**Committee Members Present:** Betty Reese, Jeff Heie, Charles Newton, Keith Thomas, Lisa Perry

**Guests:** None

**District Staff:** Megan Dalton & Shelby Foosness

**Committee Members Absent:** Kevin Craun, Dan Downey

Since six months had elapsed from the previous Dam Maintenance Committee Meeting held on March 11, 2024, the minutes from this meeting were sent to the Board for approval and were approved on October 3, 2024.

The meeting began at 10 A.M. with the discussion of the remote monitoring installation and other related items. Megan Dalton highlighted that all devices have been installed and are functioning as expected other than the Hone Quarry dam. She explained that the Hone Quarry install has been delayed due to a missing transducer; however, the site used existing conduit so the contractor installed the mounting pole and fiberglass housing so all he will have to do is install the transducer when he returns to complete other installs across the state. Megan also let the Committee know that staff have followed up multiple times with the vendor regarding the install and they have not received an update on a timeframe that the contractor will be returning to Virginia.

Shelby Foosness showed Committee members photos of multiple remote monitoring device installations while Megan highlighted issues that have been found post installation to include: the need to backfill and reseed the conduit trenches at 6 dams, concerns with the depth of the mounting pole (Shelby shared a photo of the Hone Quarry device that shows it tilting significantly from its original install), the mounting brackets on Dry River, Northwoods, Slate Lick and Dry Run Dams were not cut as they had been on other dams, and the broken corners on the fiberglass housing at the Dry River and Union Springs Dam. Staff informed the Committee that they have requested these fixes when the contractor returns to finish the Hone Quarry install.

Shelby and Megan also asked Committee members if they had received the notifications from the recent high water events and verified that notifications came to the correct phone numbers and/or emails. Shelby then highlighted a high water event spreadsheet that staff had created to track all notifications that they received over multiple dams between May 13<sup>th</sup> and May 16<sup>th</sup>. Megan let the Committee know the intention of the excel document was to be able to track trends at multiple dams at the same time or a single dam after a high water event.

Next, staff highlighted the 2025 annual dam inspections as well as looked at photos from each dam. Staff reported that overall, the dams looked good and highlighted other maintenance related activities that were observed during inspections later in the meeting.

Following the discussion about the annual inspections, Megan informed the Committee of staff's plans to purchase a battery operated chainsaw. Megan explained that due to only needing to use the chainsaw a few times a year, staff were running into issues with keeping fresh gas chainsaw. She also shared that Josh Walker had allowed Megan and Shelby to use his personal battery operated chainsaw, which they were able to use successfully during the inspections. They reported that a battery operated chainsaw would be sufficient for

what they anticipated needing it for during visits to the dams. The Committee was supportive, discussed and decided that a 12-14 inch chainsaw should be sufficient. There was also discussion regarding the brand of chainsaw to purchase. Lisa Perry mentioned that staff should attempt to find a chainsaw that would be compatible with batteries that the District already had on hand. Jeff Heie also shared that staff could consider purchasing a solar charging station that could charge batteries while out in the field. Megen and Shelby said they would explore their options and make a purchase based on the Committee's discussion and recommendation.

Next, Megen highlighted a tree removal project that would be taking place at the Hog Pen dam due to a high wind and ice storm that knocked down 30-40 large white pines across the access road to the dam. Staff has been in contact with the Forest Service and has been informed that it will be the District's responsibility to remove and properly dispose of the trees that are prohibiting access to the dam. Staff was also informed by the Forest Service that this type of work was not allowed until an updated Operation and Maintenance Plan was submitted, reviewed and approved, as the work would take place in an area (access road) that is not covered by the Special Use Permit. Staff did review the Forest Service Special Use Permit prior to the Committee meeting and reported that work is only authorized in the "footprint" of the dam and the reservoir as mapped in the Special Use Permit. Megen also shared a snippet from the Special Use Permit which states that "This permit does not provide for the furnishing or road or trail maintenance, water, fire protection, search and rescue, or any other such services by a government agency, utility, association, or individual". There was conversation that these trees prohibiting access to the dam would be a safety issue if there was a high water event and since hurricane season would soon be approaching, the tree removal should be considered a priority project for the District. The Committee suggested that staff continue to work with the Forest Service to get this project completed in a timely manner but advised that if they continued to have issues they should reach out to the Forest Ranger and or DCR Dam Engineer to discuss the situation, since it is a safety issue.

Next, the Committee reviewed and ranked a list of larger maintenance projects to determine the priority in which staff should tackle the projects. The most important projects are as follows: Briery Branch degraded gully on both sides of the road, backfill and reseed the trenches at all dams that had conduit installed for satellite remote monitoring devices, remove trees from the access road at the Hog Pen Dam.

Megen then highlighted that the contract with Crooked Road Fencing and Property Maintenance was renewed for 2025. Due to the high water at the dams, staff offered the contractor a mowing deadline extension. She noted that typically, staff send out emails to landowners before the contractors go out on site, so these email reminders will be sent once staff have confirmation on when the contractor plans to head out to mow. Megen also highlighted multiple task order items that staff would request the contractor complete in either the spring or fall of 2025. These include removal of downed trees at Dry Run and Slate Lick dams and removal of trees around the plunge pool at Slate Lick and Hone Quarry. Due to the recent high water event, there may be significantly more debris than what was observed during annual inspections, so, Megen highlighted what the contractor was required to submit in order for staff to verify debris levels prior to mowing.

Next, the Committee discussed burning at a couple dams. Megen highlighted that in order to burn at the dams, the Committee would need to make a decision regarding burning as soon as possible, so staff could prepare a solicitation for burning in late 2025 to early 2026 so that the burning could be completed in early 2027. Burning would also require that the normal spring and fall mowing in 2026 not be done at the selected dams to allow for adequate fuel (vegetation) for the burn. Megen suggested the Union Springs and Dry Run dams as potential good candidates for burning and the Committee was supportive of burning at these two dams. The plan would be to rotate which dams would be burned over multiple years. The Forest Service dams may require a permit so, the Committee suggested that staff look into this process now to avoid any hang-ups in the future.

After discussing burning, Megen informed the Committee that staff did not have the time needed to oversee the Watershed study and suggested that the District hire a consultant to oversee and administer this project. The Committee was supportive as they have been anticipating an update on this project.

**Betty Reese made motion to add \$25,000 to the budget and to prepare a Scope of work for having a contract manger to carry out the Watershed study. Jeff Heie seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

Next, Megen shared that through the Joint Engineering RFP that the Shenandoah Valley SWCD to the lead on, we are now in contract with Schnabel Engineering for engineering services for SWCD owned dams. She shared that Districts will work directly with Schnabel and they do not have to work with our District for individual projects. She also noted that Schnabel is on a renewable term contract that is renewable for three additional one-year terms. These renewals are the responsibility of the Shenandoah Valley SWCD and staff will process the renewal annually at the end of each calendar year. She also shared that the District would request feedback from participating Districts on Schnabel's performance. Staff highlighted several of our larger engineering projects that will likely utilize Schnabel's engineering services to include the Briery Branch gully repair, Union Springs road relocation, and Dry Run spillway uniformity issue.

Megen informed the Committee that there was still no update from the Forest Service regarding the Environmental Assessment. She let the Committee know that this needed to be completed in order for the District to apply herbicide to the dams for the purpose of maintenance.

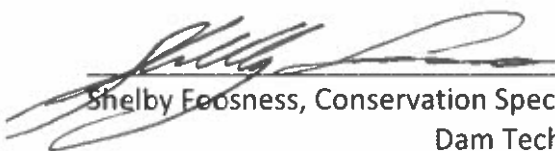
The next topic was the Emergency Action Plans (EAPs). Megen shared with the Committee that all 8 dams needed an updated EAP as well as a tabletop exercise/drill once the EAPs were finalized. She shared that this project was a huge priority and that staff had a goal of getting the EAPs updated by the end of the year. (12/31/2025).

The final topic of discussion was tree removal projects at several dams some of which resulted from the high wind and ice storm that occurred in February of 2025. Staff indicated that Hone Quarry and Briery Branch were in need of having trees removed from the cut edge of the spillway and up 25 feet. In addition, staff advised that Dry River had fallen trees along the spillway which needed to be removed and Hog Pen also had fallen tree removal in the access road. Megen shared that these projects could potentially be reimbursed through the Small Dam Repair program and noted that staff would need to submit a request for these funds. She also shared that these funds were not guaranteed and would be awarded after these projects had been completed. The Committee was still supportive of staff proceeding with these projects/tree removal since they are all critical tasks.

With no further discussion the meeting ended at 11:55 A.M.

**Submitted for Approval:**

**Approved:**

  
Shelby Fosness, Conservation Specialist &  
Dam Technician

  
Kevin Craun, Committee Chairman