

# VAPSS NEWSLETTER

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VAPSS was founded in 1978

January 2013

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VAPSS OFFERS PROFESSIONAL SOIL SCIENTISTS:

1. Recognition & optional listing in the Directory of Professional Soil Scientists.
2. An organization dedicated to the professionalism of its membership.
3. Support for technical & scientific procedure, practices and recommendations.
4. A means for developing and disseminating technical information.
5. A means of communication with fellow soil scientists.
6. An informed and professional voice in shaping policy.

**2013 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

PRESIDENT: Ryan Reed  
(703) 737-8426

PRES. ELECT: Jeff Walker  
(540) 239-9131

PAST PRES.: Kevin Seaford  
(804) 934-1786

TREASURER: Matt Tolley  
(703) 771-5248

SECRETARY: Nan Gray  
(540) 544-7791

Member: Alex Blackburn  
(540) 539-1307

Member: Bob Melby  
(703) 505-1437

New Member: David Hall  
(540) 381-0309

New Member: Shannon Hill  
(804) 264-2228

NRCS Liaison: Rachael Stull  
VPISU Liaison: Lee Daniels

EXEC. SEC.: Sue Brown  
(540) 231-5741

A big Thank you to Kevin Seaford, 2012 President, Joe Felton (2012 Secretary), Lexi Jones (2011 Pres.) and the rotating Board of Director & Members for all of your contributions to VAPSS.

**Get ready for Licensure:** Professional Soil Scientists in Virginia will be required to work under License after June 30, 2013. CPSS of good standing will become Licensed Professional Soil Scientists. Currently the Regulations are in "Stage 2", under review by the Governor. <http://townhall.virginia.gov/um/chartstandardstate.pdf>

**Membership:** 2012 Business meeting was well attended, lively discussions ensued. Including whether to reduce fees, in light of ongoing legislative and programming concerns dues remain unchanged: Regular Membership \$100. Student dues \$15. Locate application form, and use PayPal option at: <http://www.vapss.org/> Paper form is available from Sue Brown, PH: (540) 231-5741

**Congratulations to New Board Members:** Ryan Reed, President (2013), Jeff T. Walker, President Elect (2014), Nan Gray, Matt Tolley, David Hall & Shannon Hill, Board Members and officers.

**Retirement:** Sue Brown, Executive secretary through Lee Daniel's office at VT will begin a well earned retirement this February. We have been privileged to have her working with us over 20 years, wishing we had a public farewell while in Wakefield VA; we extend now our thanks for her support and experience.

**Meetings:** DPOR WWWOSSP Board for OSE; January 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 at 9:00AM [http://townhall.virginia.gov/l/GetFile.cfm?File=C:\TownHall\docroot\meeting\17\18874\Agenda\\_DPOR\\_18874\\_v1.pdf](http://townhall.virginia.gov/l/GetFile.cfm?File=C:\TownHall\docroot\meeting\17\18874\Agenda_DPOR_18874_v1.pdf)

Consideration of Onsite Sewage System Professionals Workgroup.

Issues raised at public comment and by specific complaint are relevant to the use of the license in certifying a design which meets the requirement for the construction of improvements to real property. The complaints and discussions at the Board are driven by the revelation that licensed employees of the Virginia Department of Health have not been required to certify designs (including pump specifications) which resulted from site investigations for "bare applications."

See the minutes from the October 12<sup>th</sup> meeting for more information: [http://townhall.virginia.gov/L/GetFile.cfm?File=C:\TownHall\docroot\Meeting\17\16846\Minutes\\_DPOR\\_16846\\_v2.pdf](http://townhall.virginia.gov/L/GetFile.cfm?File=C:\TownHall\docroot\Meeting\17\16846\Minutes_DPOR_16846_v2.pdf)

**A Vision we can Share:** By Jeff T. Walker, President Elect

Our goal is to see the License Boards - OSE & PSS, supported by all Regulants. VAPSS will continue to have an active role informing our membership and integrating our experience across the Commonwealth into a broader pallet of information and perspective. We believe it's vital that we generate greater interest amongst our colleagues and offer the weight of our professional concerns to both the Boards and amongst our professional communities. We believe that it is the public's interest for license holders to maintain a similar standard and for professionals to serve and sustain a growing role in environmental assessment. The interpretation of soil properties and design of improvements to real property which rely on soil properties ought to be under professional license. Our PSS licensure is in Stage II of review & awaiting the Governor's signature, next is an additional public comment period; the legislature needs to be aware of the importance of this licensure to ensure delivery of professional services to the public. I believe we must use caution, but remain active in monitoring the implementation of these Regulations; we are a weak association of stakeholders; however there should be little debate that our profession meets all the requirements for licensure:

**RISK:** High potential, attributable to the nature of the practice.

**SKILL & TRAINING:** Highly specialized education required.

**AUTONOMY:** Practices independently with a high degree of autonomy.

**SCOPE OF PRACTICE:** Definable in enforceable legal terms.

This should not be a divisive issue; however we are confronted by many concerns in our field, in part due to a stagnation of the regulatory agencies; and a co-incident lapse into para-professionalism by licensees who have not advanced beyond the minimal qualifications in the science of soil interpretation. It should be our chief concern to offer technical programs which serve to bring all professionals into a higher level of qualification. Current census of populations within our ranks includes the following statistics:

CPSS- 134 / Wetland Delineators - 107 / On-Site Soil Evaluators (OSE) - 377 / Interim OSE - 59 /  
VAPSS membership (2012) - 81 (By comparison: Land Surveyors- 1,347 / Engineers - 26,736)

We enter the New Year on the tail of economic stagnation resulting in a continued depression of the market for new houses and lots, coupled with increased pressures on older residences to serve increased populations. An increase in repairs and additions to existing homes continues. While we monitor developments VAPSS's opportunities to influence policy have been limited, foremost concern is the cancellation of two Sewage Handling & Advisory Disposal Committee (SHADAC) meetings during a period when there should be preparations for the General Assembly. VAPSS is a stakeholder, and has technical information which should be integrated into strategic decisions, and improving the delivery of services. SHADAC's minutes reflect an understanding of the need to revise policy, and amend the Regulations; there have been recommendations (e.g. Orrock, or E.L. Hamm Reports) that the Department should move to recuse from direct services. We recognize that there are differing work standards and delivery systems across the state. While some of the 35 Health Districts have ceased delivering direct services, others compete with the private sector in all services including construction permits, certification letters and pump designs. Clearly the economic slowdown is not the only force discouraging landowners from hiring private sector design services, there is a competitive force under General Fund subsidy which also has the power to withhold review of paperwork and delay delivery of permits with virtually no recourse to the public clientele. We support and encourage the employment of OSE and PSS by VDH, VDOT, DCR, DEQ & USCoE; it is important those employees work within the requirements of our Licenses and the Regulations when designing improvements to real property.

I look forward to discussing these issues in my capacity as your colleague, and president elect of VAPSS. I urge you to renew your membership and encourage others to participate in our Association.

The Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team always sends a contingent to the Regional (October) and National (April) Collegiate Competitions. These students and coaches devote time & effort practicing and preparing for competitions. Your financial contributions are needed to help defer expenditures for the travel and lodging. Contributions can be sent to: Dr. John Galbraith, 239 Smyth Hall (0404), Blacksburg, Virginia 24061. Let's help our future Soil Scientists in gaining knowledge, skills, experience and aptitude, and support the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in supporting research and insight which are vital to our field.

**VAPSS Annual Fall meeting:** Hydric Soil Indicators: Their History, Use and Applications at Wakefield, over 50 participants gathered for classroom sessions with experts including: Lenore Vasilas, USDA NRCS; W. Lee Daniels, John Galbraith & Erik Severson, VT; Rich Whittecar, ODU; Doug DeBerry, W&M. Our experts led walking field excursions at the Airfield 4-H Conference Center to review and discuss exceptional examples of Coastal Plain soil profile development at sites selected by the panelists, and hand-dug by the VT students.



Photo credit J.T.Walker

*Pending Legislative Activity:*

[http://www.townhall.virginia.gov/L/GetFile.cfm?File=C:\TownHall\docroot\58\3431\6062\AgencyStatement\\_VDH\\_6062\\_v2.pdf](http://www.townhall.virginia.gov/L/GetFile.cfm?File=C:\TownHall\docroot\58\3431\6062\AgencyStatement_VDH_6062_v2.pdf)

Editorial comment: Finance bill offers an opportunity to increase the price margin between bare applications and private OSE there-by improving the usage of private sector services over those subsidized from the General Fund.

<http://www.townhall.virginia.gov/L/ViewXML.cfm?textid=7195>

Editorial comment: Bill does not address changes in licensure nor time evolved since the 2009 AOSE transition. Interpretation of the phrase "authorized VDH employee" is necessary, as there are only 2 areas of expertise which have authority to inspect or approve alternative sewage systems (PE or AOSE). Reference to "three (3) years after June 30, 2009" and "authorized onsite soil evaluator" predates the "past three years." Bill fails to amend the Code rescinding Regulations which applied to the phased-out VDH AOSE, or reference the DPOR Board's AOSE.

<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?131+sum+HB1448>

HB 1448 Financing for repairs to failed septic systems. Editorial comment: The Bill allows localities to enact ordinances establishing allocation and provision of funds for repair of onsite failures via local PDC. Does not require assessment or reporting of reason for failure nor does it establish guidelines for bidding nor oversight of repairs by licensed professionals.

<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?131+sum+HB1441>

HB 1441 Certified nutrient management planners. Editorial comment: The language does not address qualifications of PSS for exemption from certification, but does exempt surveyors PE & architects.

**Virginia Association of  
Professional Soil Scientists**

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Remember to call Miss Utilities (811 or 800-552-7001) before you dig and get a ticket number to protect you and everyone on the project. Safety first.

*Postmaster: Address Service Requested*

**2013 ADVERTISING AND ARTICLE DEADLINES**

SPRING 2013 (March) due February 15      FALL 2013 (September) due August 15  
SUMMER 2013 (June) due May 15              WINTER 2013 (December) due November 15

**UPCOMING MEETINGS:**

Board for Waterworks and Wastewater Works Operators and Onsite Sewage System Professionals - On-Site Soil Evaluator Board meeting at January 10<sup>th</sup> 2013, 9:00 AM

VAPSS will be conducting our Strategic Planning Meeting this month in eager anticipation of Licensure. This will be an OPEN meeting January 24<sup>th</sup>, at the Div. of Geology and Mineral Resources/Div. of Forestry Offices in 900 Natural Resources Drive; Charlottesville. The meeting will be in the LIBRARY from 10 AM to 4 PM. Please notify by phone or e-mail [soilwork@pemtel.net](mailto:soilwork@pemtel.net) Nan Gray, Secretary if you plan to attend.

Board for Professional Soil Scientists, Wetland Professionals, and Geologists- February 14<sup>th</sup> 2013 10:00 AM

VAPSS Spring Technical Meeting: early May 2013, details coming soon. The two day event will be conducted by Jan Briede, Soil Scientist and DCR Erosion, Sediment and Stormwater Control Trainer. Regulations and other standards you should know to practice will be presented. This course doesn't replace the full ES&SC Training, the focus shall be on soil factors. We offer this seminar with open enrollment for all professionals.

The 2013 Annual Technical Forum will be a joint effort between the Appalachian States Coalition for Geohazards Impacting Transportation and the Interstate Technical Group on Abandoned Underground Mines (ITGAUM). The Forum will be hosted by James Madison University located in Harrisonburg, VA and sponsored by the Marshall University Center for Environmental, Geotechnical and Applied Sciences (CEGAS). This year's Forum will include a pre-conference field trip and workshop on July 30 to August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. Contact Brian Bruckno, PhD., P.G., Engineering Geologist, M-F 8:00 am - 4:30 pm, (540) 480-5896 office/cell

***Forum?*** Go to our VAPSS website, send Lexi Jones an email and she'll set up your access to the forum. VAPSS (spell it all out) also has a Facebook page, with photos, announcements and friendly banter. Some of us have joined Linked-in, VAPSS has not yet created a group, but could if there is interest. We want to learn about you, and these social media are great tools to interact amongst the field of professionals

Congratulations to Dr. John Galbraith, 2012 VAPSS Soil Texturing Contest Champion. It's a tough determination; samples underwent particle size analysis via VT Soils Lab. Good job, John Galbraith, winnings include: Soil Taxonomy book, soils bumper sticker, post cards of Virginia Soils and Virginia Geology and loads of respect, and awe, from the other folks texturing. The VAPSS Soil Texturing Contest happens at our annual FALL meeting. First we calibrate, then we compete.