MEETING MINUTES

Kentucky Agricultural Water Quality Authority

May 7, 2026 | 9:30 AM

UK Robinson Forest, Breathitt County, KY

Hybrid Meeting (In-Person and Zoom)

Authority Members

Name	Organization
Larry Thomas (Chair)	Kentucky Farm Bureau
Jay Nelson	Division of Conservation
Sarah Marshall	Division of Water
Beth Williams	Division of Forestry
Joseph Sisk	Farmer at Large
John Chism	Department of Agriculture
Chris Howard	Environmental Organizations
Megan Komar	Farmer at Large
Amanda Gumbert	University of Kentucky
Randy McCallon	Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts
Chuck Taylor	Kentucky Geological Survey

Other Attendees

Name	Organization
Johnna McHugh	Division of Conservation
Kimberly Barton	Division of Conservation
Megan Hill	Division of Conservation
Kristine Whybark	Division of Conservation
Steve Beam	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Pete Cinotto	United States Geological Survey
Paulette Akers	Division of Water
John Reinstetle	UK Robinson Forest
Clark Sturgeon	Farm Service Agency
Renee Carrico	Kentucky Farm Bureau
Crystal Renfro	Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts
Kirsten Delamarter	Energy and Environment Cabinet

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Larry Thomas called the meeting to order. Johnna McHugh reminded everyone that the meeting was being recorded. The meeting was held in a hybrid format at UK Robinson Forest in Breathitt County, with some members attending in person and others joining via Zoom.

A new member oath of office was administered. Johnna McHugh read the oath aloud, and the new member: Sarah Marshall, Division of Water, affirmed it. Larry Thomas was thanked for his ongoing service as Chair.

2. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes from the February 17, 2026 meeting were presented for approval. One correction was noted: the name of UK Extension's Michael Ammerman (spelling: AMMERMAN) in the Division of Forestry section required updating. A motion to approve the minutes as corrected was made by Amanda Gumbert and seconded by John Chism. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

3. NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT & ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Jay Nelson (Chair), Joseph Sisk, and Amanda Gumbert, met virtually on May 5. The committee brought forward the following nomination:

- Chair: Larry Thomas (re-nominated)

Joseph Sisk temporarily assumed the chair to conduct the election. No additional nominations were offered from the floor. A motion to accept the Nominating Committee's recommendation of Larry Thomas as Chair was made by Amanda Gumbert and seconded by Megan Komar. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously. Larry Thomas resumed the chair.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Kentucky Ag Science Monitoring Committee (KASMC)

Reported by Pete Cinotto, Chair.

- The committee held a meeting on March 12th. Presentations included: Glynn Beck on the Kentucky Groundwater Monitoring Network; Jerry Brotzge on the Mesonet; Grace Dines on a new method to present soil moisture data; and Tanja Williamson on in-channel sources and longevity of sediment phosphorus in agricultural basins.
- Presentations were distributed to the KASMC group. Questions or requests for materials can be directed to Pete Cinotto.
- Planning is underway for the next committee meeting.

Farmstead Committee

Kimberly Barton, Chair, announced her resignation from her position, effective May 22nd. The Authority expressed gratitude for her service. The chair position will need to be filled.

Pesticides and Fertilizer Committee
No report. Chair not present.

Livestock Committee
No report. Chair not present.

Crops Committee
No report. Chair not present.

Silviculture BMP Board (Forestry)
Reported by John Reinstetle, Chair.

- A detailed 2025 KDF Forestry Compliance Report was shared in the meeting. Key statistics: 3,023 inspections across 773 separate timber harvest sites; 106 enforcement cases (~13% of sites); 12 cases proceeded to administrative hearings (~1.5% of sites). This represents a significant improvement from 2024, which had a failure rate of 3.28%.
- Of the 12 administrative cases, 10 were for BMP violations, representing approximately 1% BMP failure. Overall, 99.604% compliance effectiveness per inspection for 2025.
- Kentucky remains the only state in the southern region with true law enforcement and mandatory BMP compliance for forestry operations. The trend toward a more professional harvesting base reflects progress since 1996.
- Top compliance issues in 2025: (1) BMP #1, minimum requirements; (2) BMP #3, streamside management zones, primarily brush/debris in ephemeral drains (not related to blue-line streams); (3) improper disposal of garbage and trash.
- Dr. Stringer (co-researcher with Dr. Chris Barton on the Robinson Forest SMZ study) will give a presentation on the SMZ study, which examined 600-acre harvests across 6 watersheds and tested the effectiveness of streamside management zones after the meeting concludes. This research directly influenced Kentucky State law.
- Next BMP Board meeting: July 15th at the KFIA building in Frankfort. Dr. Matt Crawford (Kentucky Geological Survey) will present on landslide susceptibility mapping and its relevance to BMP planning for loggers.

Streams & Other Waters Committee
Reported by Paulette Akers, Chair.

- No committee meeting has been held since the February meeting. An email was sent to committee members requesting agenda items; no items were submitted.
- The committee plans to convene during summer for a review of existing BMPs to ensure all are current.
- Members with agenda items or BMP review requests should contact Paulette Akers.

Education & Outreach Committee
Reported by Amanda Gumbert, Chair.

- No committee meeting since the February meeting. Members are encouraged to share agricultural water quality plan materials at any extension programs or farmer gatherings.

- Farmer Shop Talks: A new virtual series focused on laptop/technology topics will be held on August 6th, 13th, and 20th. Registration information will be distributed. Sharing with networks is encouraged.
- CAIP Programs: Field staff are presenting on agricultural water quality plans at CAIP meetings. CAIP is highlighted as one of the most effective programs for building ag water quality plans.
- Outreach materials (signs, rack cards, grazing sticks) are available upon request from Paulette Akers or Johnna McHugh. Materials were recently distributed to Grow Appalachia and to NRCS (200 grazing sticks to Adam Jones).

5. QUARTERLY VIOLATIONS REPORT – Q1 2026

Reported by Jay Nelson (referencing a violation map displayed during the meeting). The Division of Water cited 11 total violations statewide in Q1 2026, distributed as follows:

- Forestry operations (1)
- Beef operations (4)
- Dairy operations (6)

Of the 11 violations, 4 were referred to enforcement: 1 beef operation, 1 forestry operation, and 2 dairy operations. A spreadsheet with additional details is available upon request.

6. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was brought forward.

7. MEMBER / STAFF UPDATES

Division of Conservation – Jay Nelson

- The statewide plan has not yet been updated, pending finalization of livestock BMPs. Staff will reassess after upcoming meetings and update the plan in advance of the November state cost-share cut-off to avoid multiple revisions in quick succession.
- National Watershed Coalition Spring Workshop: Held April 7–9 in Bowling Green, KY. Over 100 attendees with strong multi-state participation (~30 from Kentucky, including 6–7 watershed conservancy district directors).
- State Cost-Share: 305 applications approved for $3.74 million in funding (of 728 applications requesting approximately $9.6 million). Funding is projected to decrease to approximately $1.75 million next fiscal year and decline further by an additional $100,000–$150,000 in the following year. Direct aid funding to conservation districts will also decrease from $1 million to approximately $750,000–$800,000 over the next two fiscal years.
- A new public-facing GIS viewer is being finalized and will be published to the Division of Conservation website. Features will include:
    - Agricultural district polygons
    - State cost-share contract locations (going back approximately 10 years), with both a public view (dot map by county) and an agency portal with full contract details

    - Watershed conservancy districts and watershed structures (with a long-term goal of adding easement information, pending digitization of historical records)
- The Kentucky Nutrient Management Planning Tool, an Excel spreadsheet originally derived from NRCS tools and adjusted for Kentucky use, has some issues that are being addressed. The tool is used primarily by Division of Conservation staff. Staff have been working to audit the tool's back-end calculations against standards, research reports, and other references. Purdue University's manure management tool (free download) is being evaluated as a potential alternative. A cross-agency meeting involving Division of Conservation, Division of Water, and UK is planned to chart a path forward.
- Envirothon: Two regional competitions were held; both were well attended. The state competition is scheduled for the following week at the FFA Camp in Breckenridge County. Ten teams qualified for state this year. The current issue topic is non-point source pollution. Notably, 5 of the 10 qualifying teams are from Warren County, including 3 from Gatton Academy.
- Fred Sipes is also stepping down from the Authority and will not seek reappointment. His seat will need to be filled.

Division of Water – Sarah Marshall

- Josiah Frey, who served as proxy representative for the Division of Water for an extended period, has transitioned to other duties. Paulette Akers will be the nutrient management point of contact.

Kentucky Farm Bureau – Renee Carrico

- Advisory Committees: The KFB Environmental Stewardship Committee will meet June 23rd (Larry Thomas chairs). The Natural Resources Committee will meet July 7th. Invitations are going out the following week.
- Legislative Session Highlights (2026):
    - Senate Bill 199 (Pesticide Labeling): A major legislative win. The bill establishes that if the EPA determines a product does not require a carcinogen warning, Kentucky producers cannot be sued for failing to include one. Kentucky is the first state in the region to pass such a bill; other states are now inquiring about Kentucky's approach.
    - Eminent Domain: A compromise bill passed that establishes basic procedural protections for landowners, including certified mail notification requirements. Ongoing work remains on compensation for agricultural infrastructure (drainage tile, fencing, water lines) that is often not adequately covered in current settlements.
    - Wildlife Depredation: New legislation improves the deer depredation permit process, including automatic renewals for farms with existing documented damage, faster permit issuance (within two days), and clarification on carcass removal from fields. An adult-only season was established at the end of the regular season to better manage population levels. The insurance industry was notably supportive.
    - Alternative Jet Fuel (Sustainable Aviation Fuel): Kentucky enacted a tax credit for airlines and fuel producers using Kentucky-sourced agricultural stocks. Kentucky is one of the first states to define agriculturally based alternative jet fuel and establish eligible feedstocks.
    - Areas for Continued Work: State cost-share funding levels and tax treatment of horticultural businesses (LLC classification, commercial vs. farm exemption thresholds).

Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts – Randy McCallon

- Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts (KACD): Annual Convention is July 26–28 at the Crowne Plaza in Louisville. All interested parties are encouraged to attend.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Thomas thanked all attendees, including UK Robinson Forest for hosting. Meeting adjourned. The next meeting date was not announced; members will be notified.