



## FINANCIAL TIMES

WA ST CONSERVATION  
COMMISSION

01/15/2015

Happy January! We hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. ☺ SCC is excited to announce to you that we have hired a new team member into the financial section. Sarah Groth joined our team and we are glad to be operating with a full house again! Here is a bit about Sarah:

On January 5, 2015, the SCC welcomed Sarah Groth as a Fiscal Analyst. Sarah comes from the Department of Enterprise Services-Small Agency Financial Services division. Sarah brings a wealth of state accounting knowledge, travel rules and regulations, training coordination expertise, and provided liaison services between small agencies and the State Auditor's office. In addition to her public sector experience, she has provided accounting services for non-profit and private sector employers. She is excited to return to a small agency environment and broaden her involvement in agency budgeting and developing training opportunities.

We hope that you will join us in welcoming Sarah into our office and she looks forward to working with all of you.

For your convenience here is Sarah's contact information:

Email: [SGroth@scc.wa.gov](mailto:SGroth@scc.wa.gov)

Phone: 360-407-6205

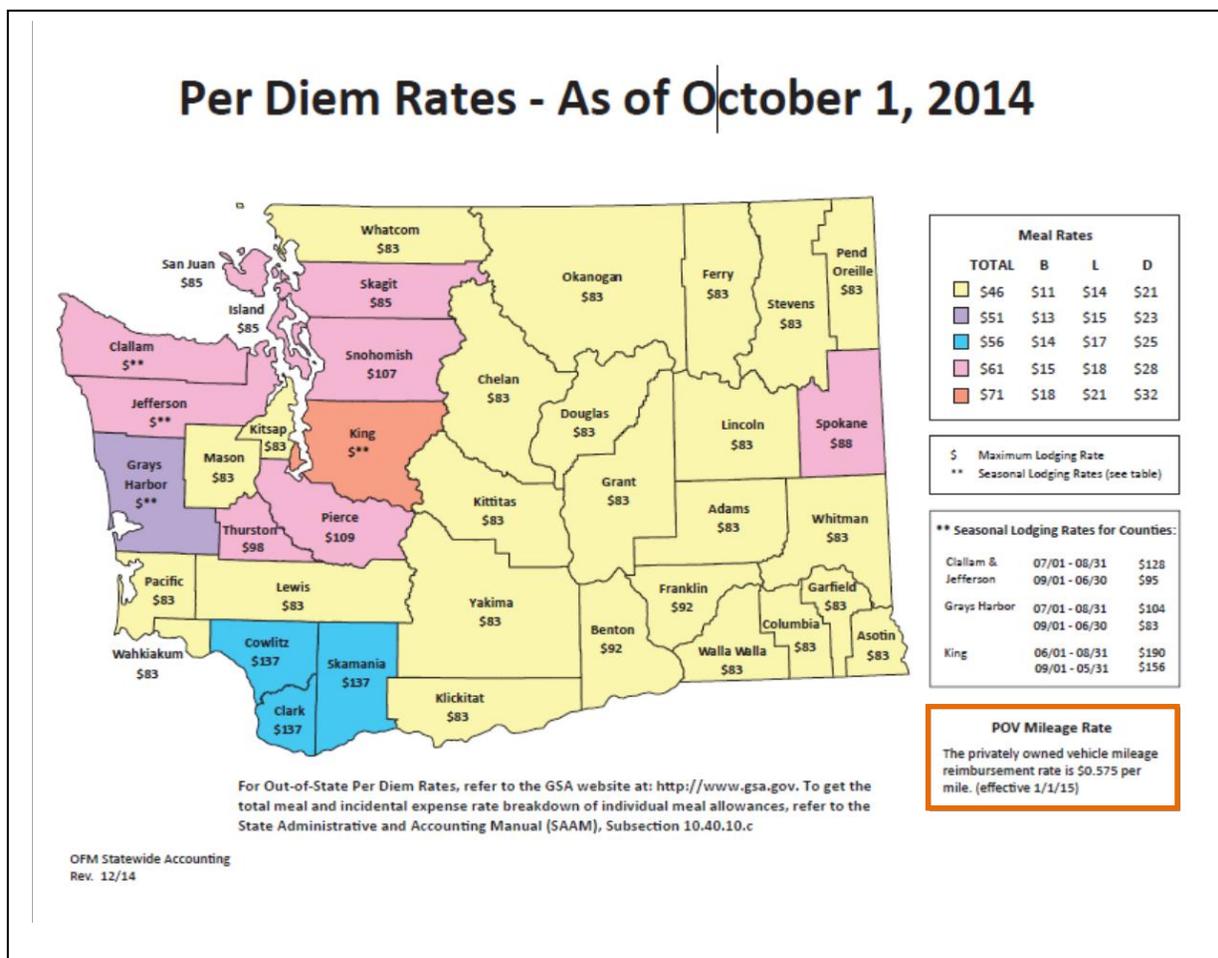
## Travel Tip:

**Since travel reimbursement is a complicated issue, we are now aiming to bring you a monthly travel tip with rotating subjects. We hope you find this informative and helpful!**

## New Mileage Reimbursement Rate

- ⦿ Effective January 1, 2015 the state increased the mileage reimbursement rate for privately owned vehicles from \$0.56 to \$0.575. This increase reflects the rate set by the United States Treasury Department which, pursuant to RCW 43.03.060, is the maximum rate the state can pay.
  - > <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/resources/travel/colormap1214.pdf>

## Updated Per Diem Map



## Fraud In The News

### Ex-Conservation District employee charged with stealing more than \$449K

BY PETER E. BORTNER

Published: January 8, 2015

ORWIGSBURG — A former employee of the Schuylkill Conservation District was charged Wednesday with stealing almost \$450,000 from the organization over seven years.

Virginia G. Kunigonis, 53, of 60 Fourth Ave., Pottsville, faces five counts of forgery and one each of theft, theft by deception and access device fraud.

Magisterial District Judge James R. Ferrier arraigned Kunigonis on the charges, scheduled her preliminary hearing for 9:30 a.m. Feb. 18 and allowed her to remain free on \$100,000 unsecured bail pending the hearing.

State police at Schuylkill Haven alleged Kunigonis, who was the district's conservation fiscal technician, took \$449,064 between September 2007 and May 2014.

Police said Kunigonis admitted taking the money, saying she used it to pay credit card bills and buy trips.

"The defendant admitted to using the money from the (district's) bank account," according to the Affidavit of Probable Cause attached to the complaint.

In the affidavit, police said Kunigonis, who was in charge of paying companies for conservation work in the county, started generating checks in her name, her husband's name or Card Member Services, which was a credit card held by her husband.

Kunigonis would sign the name of District Manager Elizabeth Hinkel or one of four other people associated with the district — Stanley Fidler, Paul Lohin, Glenn Luckenbill or Craig Morgan — to the checks, police said. Then, she would either cash the check or make a credit card payment, according to police.

"The checks would be written on the district bank account," the affidavit reads in part.

After that, Kunigonis would make a duplicate check paying the company for services, but the money would be deducted from the district's county account, police said. Once Kunigonis received a canceled check, she would paste the company's name over her own, according to police.

Police said that during an audit of the district, officials discovered two manila folders under Kunigonis' desk that contained credit card statements and other documents showing that she had taken the money.

Hinkel then contacted M&T Bank, received copies of checks from 2012, 2013 and 2014, and noticed numerous unauthorized checks written and signed by Kunigonis, police said.

In a June 4 interview, Kunigonis admitted writing checks to herself beginning in 2010, police said. However, a forensic audit conducted by Robert E. Ribic Jr. a certified public accountant with SF & Company, York, determined that she had started her activity in September 2007, according to police.

Ribic's report showed that Kunigonis wrote unauthorized checks totaling \$407,312.84 and used the district's credit card for \$41,751.23 in unauthorized personal expenditures, police said.

Hinkel said Wednesday that district staff members discovered the financial discrepancies this year and notified authorities immediately. She also said Kunigonis no longer works for the district, which has revamped its entire financial policy.

"We've been cooperating fully," she said.

pbortner@republicanherald.com

Defendant: Virginia G. Kunigonis

Age: 53

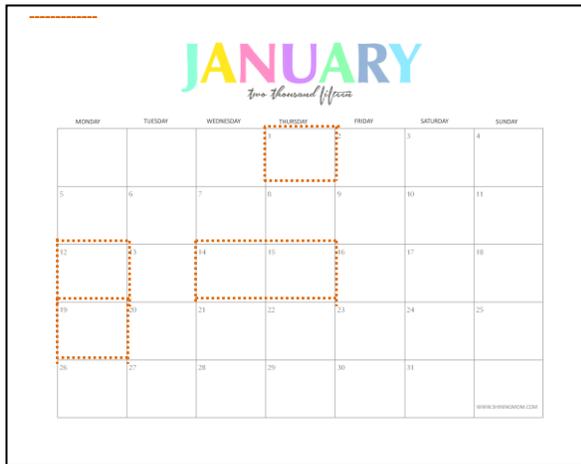
Residence: Pottsville

Charges: Five counts of forgery and one each of theft, theft by deception and access device fraud

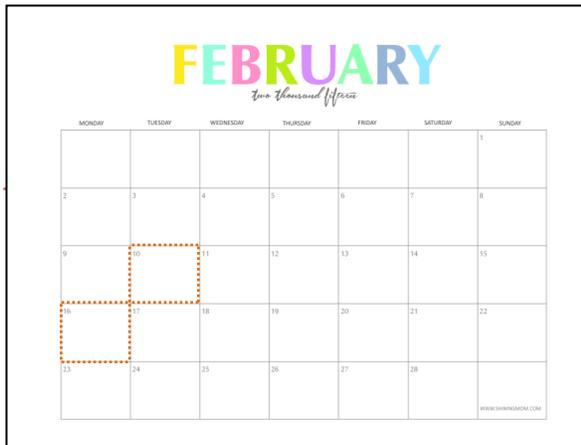
**Here is the link to access the publication:**

<http://standardspeaker.com/news/ex-conservation-district-employee-charged-with-stealing-more-than-449k-1.1813951>

## Upcoming Important Dates



- Jan 1<sup>st</sup>: New Years Day, SCC Closed
- Jan 12<sup>th</sup>: Monthly Vouchers Due with updated composite rates
- Jan 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>: SCC Commission Meeting, Clallam
- Jan 19<sup>th</sup>: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, SCC Closed



- Feb 10<sup>th</sup>: Monthly Vouchers Due with updated composite rates
- Feb 16<sup>th</sup>: President's Day, SCC Closed

Click for the link to our calendar on our website: <http://scc.wa.gov/grants-finance/forms/>

## Reminders

### Composite Rates

It's that time of year again! ☺ We have updated the composite rate form for 2015 and uploaded it to our website. We are also in the process of converting this form into an Adobe fillable form Stay tuned for this new form to be uploaded to the website. Until then, please continue to use the excel form on our website. Since you're composite rates will be changing to update for your 2015 rates, each employee that is vouchered for will require an updated rate to be sent in for costs on the January voucher. You can submit them anytime, you don't have to wait until you are vouchering for the voucher.

<http://scc.wa.gov/grants-finance/forms/>

## Did You Know

In addition to hiring a new fiscal analyst for our team, SCC also hired a new Eastern Regional Manager to replace Larry Brewer who retired at the end of the year. We are very excited to welcome Mike Baden to the Commission. Here is a bit about Mike.

On January 16, 2015, the SCC welcomed Mike Baden as the new Eastern Regional Manager. Mike comes from 16 years experience at the Pierce Conservation District, and a year working with the King Conservation District. Mike grew up farming in Eastern Washington and is a graduate from Washington State University. He is excited to come aboard and assist districts with the challenges they face in order to help them be successful and deliver the important programs and resources to cooperators in the voluntary, non-regulatory, and incentive based manner that only Conservation Districts can.

Please help us welcome Mike Baden!

## Question of the Month

Q ~ Where in the world is Karla?!

A~ As many of you know, Karla has been participating in the Ag Forestry Leadership program. She has just completed the second and final year of the program and is now on a two week trip to Vietnam and Cambodia. We cannot wait until she returns and shares her pictures from this once in a lifetime trip. ☺ Karla will be back in the office on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Here is a little more information on her trip.:

### Leadership Class 36: Trade, Culture, and Government Seminar to Vietnam and Cambodia

01/10/15 to 01/10/15

Seminar 12: Trade, Culture, and Government -- Because world politics, social issues, and food have become so critical, the International Seminar is an invaluable experience. As with the other seminars, the International Seminar emphasizes communication, ecology, government, economics, sociology, education, and the arts. The aim of the seminar is to develop articulate statespersons who understand what is going on around them, the sensitivity and differences between a highly developed and a developing nation, social and cultural systems, religion and customs, trade relations, and economic systems.

Please feel free to submit questions you would like answered for our next newsletter. Send all submissions to [cwoods@scc.wa.gov](mailto:cwoods@scc.wa.gov).

## Fun Fact about Washington

The first settlement in Washington was New Market (now known as Tumwater) in 1846. Black pioneer George Washington Bush and his Caucasian wife, Isabella James Bush, from Missouri and Tennessee, respectively, led four white families into the territory and founded New Market, now Tumwater, in 1846. They settled in Washington to avoid Oregon's discriminatory settlement laws. After them, many more settlers, migrating overland along the Oregon trail, wandered north to settle in the Puget Sound area. Our very own Mark Clark now owns and operates this farm!

## Picture of the Month



This gorgeous photo shows the beauty of the Eastern Washington in winter time!

<http://www.kevinmcnealphotography.com/Stock-Images/Winter-In-The-Pacific/i-tWMdGqT>

Please feel free to submit pictures for our next newsletter. We love to showcase your hard work! Send all submissions to [cwoods@scc.wa.gov](mailto:cwoods@scc.wa.gov)