



CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

Minutes of the Regular Meeting – December 19, 2019 **USDA Forest Service Building** **51 Mill Pond Rd, Hamden, CT**

Call to order: 10:07 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members Denise Savageau (SWCD), Jeff Folger (NCCD), Phil Trowbridge (CT DEEP), and Cynthia Rabinowitz (NWCD). Ex-officio members: Abigail Maynard (CT Ag. Exp. Station), Tom Morgart (NRCS). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Cheryl Cappialli (SWCD Board), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Jeanne Davies (CTRCD)- phone.

Public: Michael Aurelia

I. WELCOME

Savageau opened the meeting with introductions.

II. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Minutes

Minutes of 09/19/19 were reviewed and corrected: RCCD to CRCCD; CTRC&D to CTRCD; NRCS “Ridgefield office” to “Litchfield office” and clarification that CTRCD is not seeking to become a voting member. Motion to approve with correction by P. Trowbridge, J. Folger, second. Approved as corrected.

B. Treasurer’s Report

Folger reported on Council’s positive account balance and new banking with People’s United Bank. SAM account has been updated with the new banking information. Citizens account has yet to be closed when complete transition with NRCS payments has been achieved.

Folger consulted with a tax attorney on the tax status of the Council. Per state statute, the Council is under DEEP for administrative purposes only and was supposed to be incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) as a quasi-government agency but there is no record of this filing.

Council will seek to meet with the appropriate state departments (e.g. Secretary of State or the state Comptroller) for assistance. Tax attorney will refer us to an accountant. Treasurer’s report for the 12/19/2019 meeting and projected budget were reviewed. Motion to accept the financial report as presented and place on file by Rabinowitz, 2nd by Cappialli. Unanimously approved.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. DEEP 20by20 Initiative

Trowbridge reported on the 20by20 initiative by Comm Katie Dykes. One of the goals is to expedite DEEP reporting. Savageau attended the meeting. Focus on the regulatory process. DEEP is expecting a 30-40% decrease in staffing over the next 2 years and will need help as they will be losing much of its brain trust. The District contract with DEEP on stormwater permitting was used as an example. She indicated that CDs can handle the stormwater program (like in NJ) for erosion and sediment control and

that this has been proposed in the past. Additionally, the Inland Wetlands Program training for Commissioners could be handled by Council and CDs as it had been in the past. Trowbridge reported that he has put in a proposal to the LISS for funding to update the E&S and Stormwater manuals, which has been accepted as pre-proposal for 150K and will be working with the Council as this moves forward. Savageau will keep all informed as to the dialogue with DEEP on the support they will need from the Council and Districts in the future.

B. Long Island Sound Study

Savageau reported. There is a need to determine where the Council and the CDs can have a presence and on what committee to serve- such as the Watersheds and Embayments workgroup. Increasing amount of funds may now be used for watershed health. Tom Morgart reported the LISS will be looking at projects to spend more funds inland, as stormwater pollution is the main source of nutrients on the sound. She will follow up on this with the district staff.

C. Governor's Council on Climate (GC3)

Savageau reported on attending the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) kickoff meeting along with L. Ruiz and other stakeholders on the Natural and Working Lands group, which includes soils. The Council presented comments on E.O.3 recommending the formation of a Soil Conservation Subcommittee/Workgroup under the Working and Natural Lands Committee and that the Science and Tech Committee include a representative with extensive knowledge of soils as a natural resource (soil scientist).

Lilian Ruiz reported on attending the US Climate Alliance Northeast Region Learning Lab as part of the CT DEEP Delegation. Soil Health added as #1 strategy for CT in achieving GHG emissions reduction within the goals of the WNL Committee. Agriculture is not ranked high as a problem, but soil health in agriculture, forestry and urban settings will now be included as an important part of the solution. GC3 work will drive a lot of what's going to happen in soil health (including the legislation) in the state going forward.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement

a. Farm River

The Council contracted with the SWCD to develop a watershed management plan for the Farm River Watershed. Chris Sullivan reported on the stakeholder meeting, where the Water Regulatory Authority gave a presentation and CS presented a calendar and a drop box for project documents. The next stakeholders meeting for the Farm River will take place in January.

b. GIS Inventory and Ranking of parcels in SWP areas

Lilian Ruiz reported on the kickoff meeting for the GIS work on December 13- It was decided that they would contact CLEAR as potential contractors for GIS work.

B. Soil Health Committee

Savageau and Ruiz reported.

- Committee has met twice with the SH Stakeholders Group.
- Thanked Amanda and Cynthia for working on the committee.
- Draft Legislation finalized.
- Committee to continue working on SH strategic plan, coordinating with the GC3 initiatives.
- Kip Kolesinskas invited to join the committee.

C. Legislative Updates – Savageau reported

a. 2020 Legislative Session

- 2020 is a short session.
 - P2P funds to CDs and Council flowing on time.
 - Judy Blei has retired, Mary Grace cannot do the work for the Council anymore. Savageau does not think it is urgent to find a replacement but will look for someone just to do monitoring on our behalf.
- b. Soil Health Legislation
- Legislation presented in three different pieces: 1) language on Council's lead on soil health, 2) including SH language on Farmland Restoration Program legislation and 3) creating a SH Fund.
 - Dropped all language related to Food Policy Council.
 - Presented to Environmental Committee leadership (Sen Cohen and Rep Demicco). Any legislation this session needs to come out of environment committee, and we are expecting that #1 will go forward this year. Item 3 has budget implications and definitely will not move forward this year. Additionally, it is likely that GC3 will be able to champion a soil health fund. Support for Item 2 will be determined by support of agriculture including the Commissioner. Savageau and Ruiz will be meeting with Commissioner Hulburt in the near future.

Jean Davies (call in) asked about the continuation of the work with the Stakeholders group and if anything was moving forward. Savageau reiterated that the update of the soil conservation legislation would move forward this session and that we will be following the GC3 to advance a soil health funding proposal next year. The farmland restoration piece will not move forward without support of DoAg.

D. WPCAG: training/workshop/conference for growers on BMPs on water conservation

Savageau and Ruiz reported. Kick off call to determine best way to promote BMPs. The focus will be on producers. The plan is to survey the needs of the producers (greenhouses, nurseries, vegetable growers), and determine ways to adapt to NRCS programs. Next call for the end of January.

E. LISW-RCPP Progress Update

Ruiz reported. Council Contract extensions under way. Partners submitted status reports, which will inform the need for extensions. Land Protection: we expect one closing in VT and one in CT to happen soon. Producers abandoned the RCPP application for various reasons and change of ownership in one property has delayed the process.

V. EXECUTIVE REPORT

Ruiz participated in the NASCA Annual Meeting, with a \$1,000 scholarship. Also participated in the NE Regional Learning Lab (becoming part of the CT delegation for the USCA). Attended the "Climate Change Adaptation in New England Forested Watershed Management" workshop in MA. Lilian will manage the Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement, in addition to the LISW-RCPP.

VI. AGENCY REPORTS

- DEEP: Phil Trowbridge reported.
 - 319 applications due at the end of February.
 - Council should set up a call late January with DEEP to see if anyone has comments, after the State Tech Meeting on Jan 22nd.

- CAES: Attachment A.
- CACD:
 - Denise Savageau will attend the NACD Meeting in February.
 - New England Leadership Meeting happening in Portsmouth, NH on March 30-31st.
 - NACD Summer Meeting in Bismarck, ND on July 18-21st.
 - NE Region NACD Meeting is Aug 30-Sep 2nd in Portsmouth, NH.
 - Next NASCA Meeting should be attended by Exec Director.
 - Legislative Fly-In: March 25th.
 - CACD will convene a meeting with the CDs to discuss dues, now that the CDs have a steady stream of income- necessary to cover travel costs for meetings.
 - Discuss succession plan for CACD.
- NRCS: Tom Morgart reported.
 - Draft interim rule is out for CSP and EQIP
 - Historically underserved producers have additional 15%.
 - Additional practices included.
 - CNMP- farmers are now allowed to implement practices progressively.
 - Anyone can comment, except federal employees while at work. Deadline is 60days from Monday December 16.
 - Environmental assessment (which costs 10-20k) is required to be procured by the farmer for farm expansion, before the expansion can be funded by the NRCS.
 - EQIP has a section on incentives- in addition to the 450k payment limitation, another 200k can be added as incentives (ecosystem markets, carbon credits, etc.). Not clear what the incentivized practices and services are.
 - RCPP rules on easements are expected to be much more flexible.
 - NACD and NRCS have negotiated draft MOAs on how the districts and the NRCS will work together. A Contribution Agreement will be signed between CDs and NRCS offices that are co-located.
 - Source water inspections: water utility inspectors (working under DPH statutes) found multiple properties in violation of state law for manure management. Letters are sent out directing landowners to the CDs, NRCS, Uconn and DEEP. Need for discussion on how to train inspectors on what is actually an issue to be addressed (as the 1977 law is outdated).
- NWCD: Cynthia R. reported. Partnering with the NRCS and CTRCD on an agro-forestry demonstration project at Friedman Farm. To be followed up with a workshop next year. Applying for an urban ag grant through NACD. Received renewal for the Raingarden Grant to do more rain gardens in 2020. Farm Energy Program in January.
- CTRC&D (on the phone): Jean Davies. reported.
 - Amanda Johnson has sent an email to various partners/stakeholders for interest in sponsorship of this event. Please note that Sponsorship for the Compost Conference on March 23, 2020 here is a link, if folks donate thru this link their donation is automatically matched by Sustainable CT.
<https://ioby.org/project/connecticut-compost-conference>
 - Hemp Conference Flyer – February 26th is attached. For attendees/exhibitors/sponsors....
Registration at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/connecticut-hemp-conference-trade-show-tickets-85512591463>.
 - Attached is our annual report, which we will be sending out to folks and provides a run down from the year.

- Lastly, CT RC&D just received a grant from National RC&D to support a paid internship(s) for youth (age 16 – 24) to develop a leadership project in soil health and education of youth. If anyone knows of someone who might be interested in this opportunity, have them contact me jdavies@ctrcd.org.
- NCCD: Jeff Folger reported. Working on Wetlands Officer Consultation Business to provide staff services to towns (wetland agents) in Somers, Tolland, Bolton, Coventry, Bolton. Hired a full time wetland agent for Coventry.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

VII. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.

Attachment A

Report to Council on Soil and Water Conservation from Abigail Maynard , CAES September 19, 2019

Plant Science Day 2019 was a successful event. Attendance was tallied at 973 people, up from 937 in 2018

A search has begun for an Assistant Scientist II with expertise in Urban Tree Ecophysiology in the Department of Forestry and Horticulture. Dr. Ward has sent out announcements to professional forestry societies, universities, and interested parties.

Two pending retirements were announced. Dr. Frank Ferrandino and Ms. Rose Hiskes will both retire on December 1, 2019. Efforts will be put forth to replace Ms. Hiskes. Dr. Ferrandino's role on the Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council will be assumed by Dr. da Silva. The weather stations will be upgraded and maintained by Dr. DeWei Li at the Valley Laboratory.

Thinking about staff replacements. The area of urban agriculture is a likely area to fill with a scientist. Currently, the Station has four unfilled scientist positions, which will be five after Dr. Ferrandino retires, along with seven unfilled technician positions.

An update on building and infrastructure projects:

1. The design for the renovations and addition to the Valley Laboratory has been completed by TLB Architecture, but cost estimates by DAS Construction Services exceeded the original allocation of \$11.5 million by approximately \$6 million.
2. The current design for renovation of the Jenkins-Waggoner greenhouses has gone out to bid.

CAES Seminar Series. Wednesdays at noon (2 or 3 a month). Schedule on website. Pizza is provided. First one is October 2nd with Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner of Agriculture