



CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

Minutes of the Regular Meeting – March 19, 2020 ZOOM MEETING

<https://zoom.us/j/802902256>

Meeting ID: 802 902 256

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Call to order: 10:04 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members Denise Savageau (SWCD), Phil Trowbridge (CT DEEP), Jennifer Kaufman (Appointee of Governor), and Cynthia Rabinowitz (NWCD). Ex-officio members: Abigail Maynard (CT Ag. Exp. Station), Tom Morgart (NRCS). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council), Mike Dietz (UConn IWR), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Cheryl Cappialli (SWCD Board), Javier Cruz (NRCS), Jeanne Davies (CTRCD), Jane Brawerman (RCCD), Jillian Shea (CTRCD), Kurt McAuliffe (CTRCD Intern), Kyle McAuliffe (CTRCD Intern), Ana Candelli (CTRCD Intern), Danielle Whittco (CTRCD Intern).

I. WELCOME

Savageau opened the meeting with confirming quorum and requesting a change in the order of the agenda to accommodate members who had to leave early. Change in agenda approved by consensus.

II. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Minutes

Minutes of 12/19/19 were reviewed. Motion to approve by J. Kaufman, P. Trowbridge second. Unanimously approved with no objection.

B. Treasurer's Report

Ruiz reported on Council's quarterly expenses. Treasurer's report for the 03/19/2020 meeting and projected budget were reviewed. Motion to accept the financial report as presented and place on file by P. Trowbridge, J. Kaufman second. Unanimously approved.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. CTRC&D's new Youth Education Program:

Jillian introduced herself and a team of four interns working on the CTRCD Youth Education Program, funded by NRCS grant. Ranging from 16 to 24 years of age, the interns intend to pursue a career in soil science. Adapting to an online program due to current restrictions, the program focuses on creating career opportunities and information on existing opportunities in conservation (soil science, agronomy, etc.). The internship runs from March 1-August 31. C. Rabinowitz offered to speak with the interns about her experience as a soil scientist in wetlands.

B. Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)

a. GC3 Working and Natural Lands: Wetlands Subgroup

Savageau is serving on the GC3 Wetlands subgroup of the Natural and Working Lands Group, where Leslie Kane is the chair. Strategies focus on mitigation and adaptation and include Denise presented the structure of the Natural and Working Lands Group group. Includes coastal and inland wetlands, near coastal, and subaqueous soils.

b. GC3 Working and Natural Lands: Ag/Soils Subgroup

Ruiz is serving on the committee along with Tom Morgart, Abbi Maynard, and Amanda Johnson-Council is well represented in the committee. Ruiz explained the structure of the GC3 in regard to the US Climate Alliance. Committee met Feb 13, meeting was chaired by Bryan Hurlburt. The charge of the group is to work on implementable solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation to be achieved through a transfer of resources to farmers. Solutions have to be practical and measurable, utilize public-private partnerships and have no impact on budget. Committee work is due at the end of August. The next step is for the Council to look at existing plans in other New England states. The Council Soil Health Committee chair will convene a meeting to start the review. Savageau will promote that the WNL Group addresses soil health as a whole.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement

a. Farm River

Savageau reported. The SWCD is contracting with Fuss & Oneil to write a management plan for the watershed. Chris Sullivan adapting to manage the project remotely.

b. Source Water Protection Project

Savageau reported that the Council will be contracting with UConn CLEAR program to do the GIS mapping for the program. We met with CLEAR on January 17 at UConn Extension. Eric McPhee (DPH) offered perspective on the ranking of parcels for source water protection. CLEAR wil work on a contract based on a template we provided, and also present a plan of work.

B. Soil Health Committee

Ruiz commented that the committee is about done with the work on legislation, and will now focus on other work, such as a statewide strategy on soil health, connecting with the work being done at the GC3 level.

C. Legislative Updates

a. 2020 Legislative Session

Savageau reported that on year 2 of a biennial budget the Council and Districts are in the budget and unless changes to Passports to the Park happen, our funding is stable. But this is not the only legislation we need to be looking at- but also appropriations reviews on non-budget years. In this unique scenario with the Corona crisis we need to pay more attention than ever when the legislators come back in session.

b. Soil Health Legislation

Savageau reported that the Council was hoping to pass at least the piece on the Council legislation on Soil Health, but that all Soil Health Legislation is stalled because legislators want to hear from the GC3 before passing any legislation. The Council is advocating that soil health is a broader topic that should be included not only in agriculture but also in forestry and urban strategies as well. This is reflected on the scope of work of the Soil Health Committee.

D. DEEP 20by20 Initiative

a. Stormwater Permit

Savageau reported that Stormwater Permit was out in January with comments submitted by CACD. Suggested language to where CD's are able to help with stormwater permitting in the field.

b. Inland Wetland Training

J. Kaufman reported that training will be online, but it's not up yet. Discussion on need for training and the role of conservation districts. Savageau will follow-up with DEEP and districts.

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

Ruiz reported that the initial stakeholders call did not bring much interest in holding a training session. Savageau will follow up with WPAG and give them feedback on what we heard from stakeholders.

F. LISW-RCPP Progress Update

Ruiz reported. One partner completed their contract (NHACD). Extension requests were submitted by the partners, who are catching up on deliverables. Ruiz held a technical steering committee meeting in which partners discussed a new RFP to select new parcels to receive available funds for the HFRP part of the grant. Two properties are still going through the process for easements. Marshpaug, the large property in Litchfield has decided to opt out of the program.

V. EXECUTIVE REPORT

Covered in other sections. The ED reported she is back in good health.

VI. AGENCY REPORTS

- DEEP: Phil Trowbridge reported.
 - Proposal with the LISS to update the Stormwater Manuals (managed by DEEP) and Erosion and Sedimentation Control Guidance (managed by the Council) is in the budget at \$300K with NY getting \$100K and CT getting \$200K. The goal is to update the hydrology and harmonize these two materials. Decision on the grant in the next weeks- management to be determined, either Council or DEEP or likely both.
 - 319 and NRCS funded project in the Little River Watershed (\$0.5MM). Deployed farm improvements and purchased precision planning equipment. Project deals with contamination around Rosen Lake.
 - Healthy Watershed Initiative expanding into a new project in the Eight Mile Watershed
 - For next years' 319 grants (\$1MM), DEEP received \$4MM in proposals. Even though the President's budget has zeroed out the 319, Congress has kept the funding. Conservation Districts must let legislators know that the 319 fund is important.

- CAES: Abigail Maynard reported.
 - Dr. Theodore G. Andreadis is retiring April 1st. New Director, Dr. Jason White, Head of Analytical Chemistry and vice-director under Ted.
 - Governor's new proposed budget allowed for a new mosquito position to do traps on the eastern part of the state where most of the EEE and other diseases are.
 - Not formalized- but indication that a vacant position for nursery inspector will be filled, so state mandated inspections can be conducted.
 - Greenhouse renovation will go out to bid. Expected to start construction in the fall.
 - Windsor renovation not finalized- short \$6MM, scope may have to be reduced.
 - Staff still at work but public no longer allowed in.
 - Early onset of tick season due to mild winter.

- CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.
 - Savageau serves on the NACD Leg Committee, who's monitoring Appropriations Committee activity in CTA (Cons. Tech Assistance), recommending increases to NRCS CTA budget. These are non-farm bill dollars that keep offices running and fund discretionary contracting with CD's.
 - Making sure the PL-566 Watershed program, the Private Forestry and the 319 funds are in place.
 - The NACD website has all the information on what will be asked for CT.
 - Fly-in has been cancelled- touch base remotely
 - Summer Meeting may be cancelled.
 - New England Leadership Meeting was cancelled.
 - Summer board meeting may be hosted at the end of the August meeting for the NE Regional NACD.

- NRCS: Tom Morgart reported.
 - New employees started on 3/14/2020 Cadie Pruss is the District Conservationist located in Torrington, and Eric Dunnack is our new Forester located in the Tolland State Office.
 - The 2018 Farm Bill gave us the ability to provide an additional 15% payment for up to 10 practices identified by the state and in source water areas, NRCS identified practices that address a water quality or water quantity resource concern. The practices identified for source water protection will also receive an additional 15% payment through EQIP.
 - Our offices are currently open for business, we have authorized liberal telework for at risk employees and employees with children home from school. Office visitors are being screened with 3 health questions to determine if access can be granted to the building.

- NWCD: Cynthia R. reported.
 - Working remotely, except Karen. Seasonal student worker hired to help with plant sales- which has been canceled.
 - Possibly delivering pre-orders.
 - Major fundraiser and information hub, the CD will look into dissemination information online, etc.
 - 4H: Build and create in-classroom gardens and aquaculture systems for educational purposes.
 - Attended the Soil Health Symposium at Tufts University.

- CRCCD: Jane Brawerman reported.
 - Staff working from home.
 - Projects ongoing as much as possible.
 - Contingency planning for plant sale.

- ECCD: Dan Mullins reported.
 - Minimizing use of co-located office space to accommodate restrictions (Corona)
 - Possibility of additional funding for the National Water Quality Initiative for the Little River watershed. Will coordinate proposal with CRC&D.

- CTRC&D: Jean Davies. reported.
 - All are working remotely, except Amanda Johnson who's working on 10 Renewable Energy Assistance grants.
 - MetroCog finished GIS Ag needs' assessment, and everything points out at UConn to house the data at the state level, making high quality data available to the public.
 - Jillian Shea and maybe all interns will present the work of the Youth Education Group at the Nations RC&D Conference in Bismark, ND at the end of July, to showcase what's being done..
 - Compost Conference postponed to Fall 2020. More than 250 attendees. Jeanne offered help in integrating the work of the Council into the Conference (particularly on soil health).
 - Airline Trail had a kickoff meeting with over 50 stakeholders attending.
 - Annual meeting planned for June 4th with a focus on aquaculture: focus on how soil protection translates into water quality and quantity.
 - Will send out forms for year end awards- deadline is April 30th.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

VII. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.

Attachment A