



**CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION**

Minutes of the Regular Meeting – September 24, 2020
ZOOM MEETING [https://zoom.us/j/955 752 1162](https://zoom.us/j/9557521162)
Meeting ID: ID: 955 752 1162 +1 929 205 6099

Call to order: 10:03 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Jeff Folger (NCCD), Eric Bedan (CT DEEP), Jennifer Kaufman (Appointee of Governor), Michael O’Neill (UConn), and Cheryl Cappialli (SWCD Board). Ex-officio members: Tom Morgart (NRCS) and Abigail Maynard (CAES). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council), Jim Hayes (NRCS), Mike Dietz (UConn IWR), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Amanda Johnson (CTRCD), Jane Brawerman (CRCCD), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), and Joanna Shapiro (NCCD).

I. WELCOME

Savageau opened the meeting with confirming quorum.

II. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Minutes

Minutes of 06/17/20 were reviewed. Abigail Maynard added to meeting attendance. Motion to approve by J. Folger, M. O’Neill second. Unanimously approved as amended with no objection.

b. Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer’s report for the 09/24/2020 meeting and new breakdown of the budget were reviewed. Expenses are below budget. Motion to accept the financial report as presented and place on file by D. Mullins, J. Kaufman second. Unanimously approved.

c. Chairman’s Report

The Chairman informed that Jeff Folger will step down as Council’s Secretary-Treasurer on September 30, 2020. Savageau presented Jeff with an award in recognition of his leadership, dedication, and years of service to the Council and the Conservation Partnership. Savageau reported that she is working with conservation partners to look at using the PL-566 watershed operations program for Long Island Sound similar to the Cape Cod program.

III. NEW BUSINESS

a. RCPP- New application available

Savageau reminded the Council about the new application available for RCPP, with a deadline of November 4. Dan Mullins reported on ongoing RCPP grants on soil health and water quality at the ECCD.

b. Secretary Treasurer position

The Council will be reaching out to stakeholders in our network to search for candidates to the Secretary Treasurer position. Council members were encouraged to come forward and contact Savageau or Lilian if interested in the position.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

a. Operation Plan

The Operations Plan amended as per the June meeting discussion was shared before the September meeting and posted on the website. No one had any comments and the plan stands as is.

b. Envirothon

Around 12-15 teachers and schools are interested in continuing the program. C. Sullivan became the National Envirothon Liaison for CT. It is estimated that the Envirothon benefitted around six thousand students since its inception in 1992.

c. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines

E. Bedan reported on the grant to update the E&S Control Guidelines. A workgroup, which includes Council and Conservation District members, has been formed and held a kickoff meeting. Second meeting will be held October 1st. DEEP has been surveying contractors that may be on retainer with the department, so that a full RFP won't be necessary in order to hire a contractor.

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

Savageau reported that the GC3 work is moving fast and the Council is well represented in the various subgroups of the Working and Natural Lands group. A series of public meetings are being held for input on the recommendations being developed by the different groups. There is a large overlap between mitigation and adaptation measures- so future work could be to merge the two existing reports in these areas.

i. GC3 Working and Natural Lands: Wetlands Subgroup

Savageau serves on this committee. She reported that the draft recommendations have been completed and will be presented at the next public meeting. Everyone is encouraged to attend. One of the recommendations is to complete the survey on subaqueous soils, given the importance of these soils for carbon storage and sequestration.

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

Ruiz is serving on the committee along with Tom Morgart, Abby Maynard, and Amanda Johnson. She reported that the draft recommendations have been completed and will be presented at the next public meeting. The soil health portion of the report is satisfactory. Amanda went over the timeline of the project: Final approval is in January, until then the groups will continue to work together and for the first time bringing the adaptation

plan and mitigation plan together.

iii. **GC3 Working and Natural Lands: Rivers Subgroup**

Mike Dietz serves on this subgroup and reported that the work is advancing well, also preparing for public meetings.

A discussion ensued on **solar siting**. Concern over the fact that the Working and Natural Lands work is not being considered by the Siting Council. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) reports that prime agricultural land is being lost to solar energy installations. Savageau stated that that the Environmental Section of the Siting Council Guidelines for Declaratory Ruling on solar is pretty weak. Savageau invited the Council to work together with the CEQ to strengthen the regulations from the environmental point of view. T. Morgart, C. Cappialli and J. Brawerman demonstrated interest in being involved in developing better guidelines for the environmental section. Morgart pointed out that the problem is about prime soil's development at a fast pace in the Connecticut River Valley, not only for solar sitings. Discussion ensued about how best to work with the GC3, Dept. of Agriculture, and other partners to best protect prime farmland in the valley. It was suggested that a program that looked at the entire valley, not just in CT might be a path forward. Savageau asked the Soil Health Committee to add this to their work and also continue to support through the GC3 process.

e. **Inland Wetlands Training**

Council is exploring ways to do more widespread training, including training for the Commissioners and an update to the DEEP publication of the Inland Wetlands Commissioner's Guide. Savageau proposed that the Districts discuss taking on updating the guide and offering the training. M. Dietz informed that the UCONN Land Use Academy training, led by Bruce Hyde, is available online and can offer the necessary information and materials for training. Savageau will follow up with Hyde at UConn to discuss the use of this material.

f. **Grants Update**

i. **LISW-RCPP**

Ruiz reported. Moving to close on the first land easement for the Eaton North and Eaton South properties.

ii. **Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement**

Ruiz reported. GIS mapping has seen a lot of progress, with enough data for the parcel level layer collected from different sources and a basic framework for the ranking system in place. Workshop/training session on Source Water Protection scheduled for October 16th, presented by Kira Jacobs, Scott Berry, Eric McPhee and Denise Savageau. Agency staff will hear about the concept of "one water", source water, and the importance of source water protection for drinking water integrity. C. Sullivan reported on the Farm River portion of the grant. Stakeholder meetings being held periodically. Fuss & O'Neill to develop the watershed plan. Sullivan and F&O made a presentation for about 30 people who attended a public participation meeting intended as an opportunity for community input. GIS mapping created by F&O with input from CLEAR. Several partners and organizations expressed interest in the maps. Virtual Stream Walk training in partnership with Save the Sound. Attendees assess different portions of the river and report back on the conditions they encounter. Subcommittee meeting for outreach and awareness to brainstorm ways to increase community engagement and awareness of this

- project/
iii. **NACD Technical Assistance Grant**
Ruiz reported. First quarterly payment was received and will be distributed to the CDs.

V. **EXECUTIVE REPORT** - Covered in other sections.

VI. **AGENCY REPORTS**

a. **CAES: Abigail Maynard reported.**

- Our first virtual Plant Science Day was a success. People logged in from as far away as China. It is still available on our website.
- As for Covid – we are still at 50% staff occupancy with the buildings closed to the public
- Valley Lab renovation and addition – no progress in obtaining additional funding. Currently, 11.5 million has been authorized with construction estimates of 17.8 million.
- Jenkins-Waggoner greenhouses – architects continue to work on bid documents
- Farmhouse renovations - slowed by covid, coming in within approved budget, will be used by postdocs and visiting scientists.
- Spotted Lanternfly – invasive sap-feeding planthopper first discovered in PA in 2013, native of China, India, and Vietnam. Multiple live adults have been found in Greenwich. Could severely impact apples, grapes, and hops as well as tree species like maple. Adults congregate on tree-of-heaven (Ailanthus) and willows and other trees
- Mosquito program – more than 25 scientists and support staff, 92 sites, 23 towns with West Nile activity, 2 towns with EEE activity.
- Asian longhorned tick – native to Korea and Japan, females reproduce without males laying up to 2000 eggs at a time. Less attracted to humans, but parasitizes cattle, horses, sheep, dogs, and cats as well as wildlife.
- Lone star tick – aggressive human biter. Associated with many diseases including red meat allergy. Rapid expansion of range due to warmer winters from SE US up to CT (Fairfield and New Haven counties), RI, and MA (Cape Cod).
- Experiment Station received a 3.2 million dollar FDA grant to research food defense in 2020-2025. About \$645,000/year to fund technical and post doc staff. It will support chemical analysis of over 1,000 samples/year using ISO/IEC accredited methods.

b. **DEEP: Eric Bedan reported.**

LISS: Funding for updating of the manuals is in place. Kickoff meeting for the work on the Erosion and Sediment Control and Stormwater Manual.

Doing some modeling along the coast to get nutrient planning for some of the coastal embayments.

LISFF awards to be announced in Oct/Nov.

319 NPS Grant Program: several grant-years and projects ongoing at the same time. Trying to get some contracts finalized and dormant projects being either restarted or terminated. Trying to get ore consistent timing for the RFP's for FY 2021 proposal.

Little River Watershed: funded \$280 to get innovative ag equipment for soil heath and water protection. New design coming soon for farm and waste management facility. Next a replacement for barn and manure management facility will be funded. ECCD supporting all projects.

c. **UConn: Mike Dietz reported.**

UConn focusing on the RCPP project with ECCD, with great effort from the district. Funding from Institute of Water Resources was interrupted last year. Dietz directed \$25k

funding to a well water testing program, which was maxed out in two days, showing the need for these types of service in the state.

d. **CTRC&D: Amanda Johnson reported.**

Report attached.

e. **NRCS: Tom Morgart reported.**

Only office open with limited function is the State office with 50% of the staff, and still not open to the public. Field offices don't meet requirements for reopening.

Nearing to the end of the fiscal year, committed all EQUIP funds (5.5MM), as opposed to previous years there was a backlog of projects (2MM in projects unable to be funded).

Interesting to see that in down years farmers are more interested in doing conservation.

ACEP obligated 100% (120k) of the original amount and actually obligated close to 300k.

Joyce did an amazing job allocating everything.

RCPP sign upcoming up Nov 4, up to 360MM. A lot of interest in the state.

District MOAs being worked on (non-financial, so worked on last).

Source Water: Farm Bill determined that 10% of the funding should go to source water priority areas (18% of the state), in addition to 15% (historically underserved rate). In 2021 headquarters instructed the state to use 12-digit hydrologic unit codes for looking at source water, which increases the area of priority to 68% of the state, but their limit is 20%. NRCS working with DPH to select these areas, with every county having a representation. Areas excluded do not include ag.

NWQI: make sure that the areas under this project (Farm River and Little River) are included in the above maps, so they get the extra 15% funding.

City of New Haven won a fierce competition for funding urban agriculture. They received \$900 for planning urban ag (and less than \$100 for composting). One of 9 that got funded out of over 300 applicants.

Working in association with UConn to do soil testing on urban lots for urban farming in New Haven. NRCS can now give assistance to ag projects.

f. **SWCS: Chris Sullivan reported.**

Besides the Farm River and the Envirothon already reported, the SWCD is hiring through the NACD TA grant and there were over 100 applicants to the position of Natural Resource Technician.

g. **ECCD: Dan Mullins reported.**

Working on the sub agreement for the SWPP with the Council.

Working on the NACD TA grant.

Purchasing manure injection and precision planting equipment for the Little River watershed project with DEEP /319 funding.

Jean Pillo working on DEEP/319 funded program for the Natchaug River Healthy Watershed plan- first of such funded in CT.

Final stages of designing a fish way in Ledger.

Continue to work on a 319 project to do a watershed plan for the coastal watershed in Stonington.

h. **CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.**

CACD:

Participated on a 3day social marketing workshop on behalf of the LISS Citizens Advisory Committee. Take away: A lot of education doesn't necessarily change behavior. Peer-to-peer is more effective for adoption of new behaviors. More technical assistance is needed to that

effect, as the RCPPs can provide.

WPCAG: implementation of state water plan moving forward and outreach being rolled out on what the state water plan is and who can help it to be implemented.

On the 14 or 21st of November Denise will present to the CACIWC Workshop on the State Water Plan.

NACD:

Celebrating their diamond anniversary, but most likely it will be a virtual annual meeting.

Any districts who want to be part of the celebration should get in touch with Denise.

Denise serving on the newly formed New Coastal Resource policy group.

Wildfires in the west causing great devastation. Kudos to the CT firefighters who are helping on the west coast.

VII. VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

VIII. VII. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:08 PM.