



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – December 17, 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

1. Call to order: 10:05 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Simon Levesque (DoAg), Jennifer Kaufman (Appointee of Governor), Michael O'Neill (UConn), and Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD Board). Ex-officio members: Tom Morgart (NRCS) and Abigail Maynard (CAES). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council), Joyce Purcell (NRCS), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Jeanne Davies (CTRCD), Jane Brawerman (CRCCD), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Cynthia Rabinowitz and Joanna Shapiro (NCCD).

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting welcoming Simon Levesque, new representative of the DoAg to the Council and offered an overview of the Council and the Conservation Partnership.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- a. **Minutes** - Minutes of 12/17/20 were reviewed. Corrected names for Cappiali and Bedan. Motion to approve by J. Kaufman, D. Mullins second. Unanimously approved as amended with no objection.

- b. **Treasurer's Report**

Jeff Folger has stepped down from his position and the Council is looking for a new Secretary-Treasurer. In the meantime, the executive director is doing the routine work. Treasurer's report for the 12/17/2020 meeting was reviewed. Motion to approve by C. Rabinowitz, J. Kaufman second. Motion to utilize travel budget to updating website and logo. Motion by J. Brawerman to move up to \$5,500 from mileage and travel to logo and website design; J. Kaufman second. Unanimously approved.

- c. **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman informed that Joyce Purcell will retire at the end of the year and would join the meeting to be honored by her work to the Council. Joyce joined the meeting and was warmly greeted by the Chair. Savageau thanked her for her many years of excellent service, and her tireless work during the transitions of two state conservationists. L. Ruiz thanked Joyce for her support and partnership in managing the LISW-RCPP and during challenging personal times. T. Morgart spoke of Joyce's more than 40 years of service in conservation with the NRCS. She joined the state office in 2009. J. Purcell thanked the Council for a great partnership and encouraged all members to continue the good work. Joyce will be missed by all.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. **Solar Siting on Working and Natural Lands**

Savageau and Ruiz presented the Rivers Alliance Moratorium on large scale solar for discussion. Rivers Alliance issued a letter to DEEP asking for a moratorium to allow the work of the GC3 to better inform siting of solar on working and natural lands. They also met with the Working Lands Alliance that is looking to update Public act 17-218 with language to better protect of prime and important farmland as related to solar installations.

Morgart comment that this was a problem and that NRCS had not been asked to look at any project related to dual use of solar for agriculture. He also expressed concern again about loss of prime farmland in the valley. The Soil Health Committee has been asked to look at the loss of prime farmland in the CT River valley and this task will be taken on now that the GC3 reports are final.

Savageau asked the floor for comments. C. Rabinowitz reported that the NWCD Board wrote a letter of support to the moratorium. J. Shapiro reported that the NCCD might co-sign a letter from the Council. C. Sullivan expressed concern of conflict of interest since districts are inspecting the sites, and offered to schedule a meeting on dual use of solar- a concept supported by AFT and practiced in MA.

Ruiz proposed the Council provide environmental information/concerns on the issue as this should not be looked at just as an energy project by the Siting Council. Morgart recommended that the sites be planned for the agricultural function, adapted to solar and not the other way around. J. Davies indicated that a moratorium would allow time for greater discussion on how best to protect farmland. Discussion ensued.

C. Rabinowitz shared the letter from the NWCD. Motion to support a moratorium by J. Kaufman, second by J. Brawerman, unanimously approved.

Savageau indicated that since work had not yet started in the Soils Committee on the CT River Valley – Farmland Preservation Project, that a separate committee would be best. T. Morgart, J. Brawerman, and S. Levesque volunteered to participate, and J. Davies appointed Amanda Johnson. Savageau indicated that she would reach out to Emily Cole at American Farmland Trust as a first step.

b. **2021 Legislation on Soil Health**

The Council shared the latest version of the proposed language updating Title 22 of the General Statutes to include Soil Health and the Chair asked for member's input. Savageau proposed including "the representative 'or the designee'" to the text to facilitate representation. T. Morgart suggested adding the term "Climate Change" to the language to be in step with the new USDA initiatives.

c. **LISSF Grant**

Five Conservation Districts have put together a proposal to be submitted in January. This proposal is focused on Urban Watersheds underserved by watershed planning and management programs within the state. This grant must be submitted by a non-profit organization. It will be submitted by one of the CDs and include capacity building.

d. **LISS Watersheds Operations**

The Council has put together a request to the Long Island Sound Study to develop a PL-566 Program for LIS modeled after the Cape Cod program, which works on water quality on urban sites that have an impact on shellfish beds. The request is for \$100,000. DEEP submitted the project and will help with the match. The DoAg (Aquaculture Division) is on board. This partnership, which includes Audubon CT (Robert LaFrance) and Graham Stevens at DEEP. A Watershed Operations Plan for LIS will open the door to NRCS funds to implement the project.

- e. **Council Logo** – Savageau indicated the need for a new logo. After discussion it was the consensus that the Council will have a \$200 budget for the logo and will quote Patty Secchi with Crossroads Farm Design.

5. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Secretary Treasurer Position**

The Council is inviting members to fill the Secretary-Treasurer position that is vacant since Jeff Folger' retirement at the end of September 2020. Council members were encouraged to come forward and contact Savageau or Lilian if interested in the position.

- b. **Envirothon**

C. Sullivan reported that Envirothon is moving forward as an online event. CT was one of the few states who held an online event in the last academic year via Google Classrooms, with 14 teams participating. This year we already have over 22 schools signed up, some with multiple teams. Training workshops are going on online. There will be Envirothon Weeks with presentations and online events on each topic. Sullivan asked if members are aware of schools that have any interest, as schools can still join. Envirothon is free this year. J. Davies suggested as a next step to teams that they connect with the CTC&D Youth Career Development in Conservation Program. Jillian, the Program's Youth Coordinator has been hired by National RC&D to develop a marketing program for youth engagement and can work on engaging students with environmental professionals and programs post-Envirothon.

- c. **Update of the E&S Control Guidelines and Stormwater Manual**

Savageau reported that the project is moving forward. Erik Bedan and Kathleen Knight looking into working with one of the consultants that have a standing contract with the DEEP instead of doing an independent RFP specific to this project. Expecting an update for the beginning of the year.

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

Savageau reported that the GC3 is wrapping up the reports ahead of the January 15 deadline. The work is putting together the Mitigation report and the Adaptation report with the recommendations of the Working and Natural Lands workgroup. Savageau and Ruiz expressed concerns about the general lack of understanding of full range of ecosystem services provided by working and natural lands. It is not clear, how the reports will be finalized or plans for continuing work in 2021.

- e. **Grants Update**

Ruiz reported that all grants are being managed and there are no important issues to report. Savageau reported that the Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement is moving forward with UConn CLEAR leading the GIS mapping efforts and C. Sullivan leading the Farm

River Project.

6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Covered in other sections.

7. AGENCY REPORTS

a. CAES: Abigail Maynard reported.

- i. Covid news - offices at 50% occupancy. Buildings still closed to the public. All services are available.
- ii. Valley (Windsor) lab - 6.3 million requested by building renovations and addition
- iii. Greenhouse renovations in New Haven - will be put out to bid
- iv. Lockwood Farmhouse renovations - completed with 4 bedrooms to be used by postdocs and visiting scientists.
- v. new Board of Control members - Dr. Frederick Cohan from Wesleyan and Michael O'Neill from UConn
- vi. Research findings - overall mosquito abundance has increased by 60% over the last 20 years due to changes in land use and climate.
- vii. Spotted lanternfly found in New Canaan, Stamford, Greenwich, and West Haven. Native to China, India, and Vietnam. Invasive sap-feeding planthopper. Could impact farm crops especially apples, grapes, and hops.
- viii. Covid - working with Yale, found virus levels in sewage can serve as a leading indicator of infection within the community which could help in making public health decisions.
- ix. Also looking at pharmaceuticals in the wastewater - hydroxychloroquine as well as other medications and anti-depressants.

b. DEEP: Denise Savageau reported.

- i. Phil Trowbridge leaving DEEP, going to NH DES. Erik Bedan is serving on the Council for the time being but will likely be replaced in the future.
- ii. 319 NPS Grant Program applications are open, due Jan 14, 2021. As mentioned, E. Bedan submitted a proposal on behalf of the Council and CT Audubon. The project title is "Development of an NRCS Watersheds Operation Plan to Leverage Funding for Implementation of PMP's in CT".

c. CTRC&D: Jeanne Davies reported.

- i. For program updates, refer to CTRC&D December newsletter.
- ii. Amanda Johnson working part time.
- iii. Hannah Horowitz working in outreach to better communicate the work of the various workers of CTRC&D to a wider audience.

d. NRCS: Tom Morgart reported.

- i. Received Financial Assistance allocations for Financial Assistance Programs: 5.6 MM EQIP (record amount); over 100k in AMA; 3.7MM in ACEP funding; around 800k in CSP.
- ii. Outreach to advertise CSP- not very popular in CT.
- iii. Great responses for EQIP and AMA signups: hoping to be able to have only one sign up to free up staff to be in the field for work implementation.
- iv. At the STAC, Morgart invited volunteers to sign up for committees on Source Water watershed selection and Urban Agriculture. Members should email Tom if they are interested in serving in one of these committees.

- v. Joyce Purcell and Michelle Hendriks have retired, Javier Cruz has relocated to Puerto Rico and Artie Rempton had taken a job as a national engineer at headquarters.
 - vi. Hiring for some positions, including for an Engineer.
- e. DoAg: Simon Levesque reported.
- i. Steve Anderson working on solar, and Simon will be getting involvement on that too.
- f. SWCS: Chris Sullivan reported.
- i. Finalized hiring process: Mellissa Mostowy started 12/16 and is getting up to speed.
- g. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported.
- i. Awarded 2020 319 funds, largest the district received. Working together with planners and engineers at NRCS to work on farm in Broadbrook River watershed. First meeting with DEEP, working on contracting.
- h. NWCD: Cynthia Rabinowitz reported.
- i. Sarah Ammirato hired as Ag technician, started in October 2020. Taking many of the trainings NRCS has made available and networking with farmers. Allows NWCD to work more with watersheds and liaise with NRCS.
- i. ECCD: Dan Mullins reported.
- i. Met with DEEP about Little River Watershed, project to get some innovative equipment: purchased manure injector to be used on about 2k acres in the LRW and Quinnipiac River Watershed as well.
 - ii. Contracting process not expected to be that efficient with the departure of P. Trowbridge.
- j. CRCCD: Jane Brawerman reported.
- i. Focus of Annual Meeting in November was Hydrilla in the CT River, which generated a lot of interest.
 - ii. Wrapping up one 319 grant contract and progressing on another one. Difficulties with contracting situation with Deerfield Farm.in Durham
 - iii. Updated invasive Plant Guide available on the website.
- k. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.
- i. NACD Annual meeting is virtual this year, at \$50 this year. Board meetings are free.
 - ii. A new round of urban agricultural grants, due Feb 15th.
8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments
9. ADJOURN - The meeting was adjourned at 12:08 PM.