



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – March 18, 2021
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: 10:02 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

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

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Minutes - Minutes of 12/17/20 were reviewed. Motion to approve as presented by L. Rousseau, M. Dietz second. Unanimously approved.
- 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 03/18/2021 meeting was reviewed. Motion to approve by J. Kaufman, L. Rousseau second. Unanimously approved.
- C. Chairman's Report
Included in other sections.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- a. FY 2022 Plan of Work
Savageau and Ruiz indicated they would be updating Operations Plan for adoption at the June meeting. The FY21 was presented for review. All members were asked to review and submit any recommendations to them.
- b. DOT Project 0056-0316
DOT clear cutting areas along I-95, CT-15 and railroads from Greenwich to Bridgeport. Greenwich legislators and the Greenwich Tree Conservancy put a bill in to address the issue, but it has not come out of the Environment Committee.
C. Rabinowitz proposed that the Council issue a statement of support and reach out to

forestry people at UConn and DEEP Wildlife division. L. Rousseau suggested the Council contact Chris Martin's office with the Forest Practices Advisory Board. Ruiz will follow-up on this.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Administration

a. Secretary Treasurer Position

The Council is inviting members to fill the Secretary-Treasurer position that is vacant since Jeff Folger's 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. Council Logo

New logo was developed by Patty Secchi with Crossroads Farm Design and options had been reviewed by a select group of members. Final choices were presented to members- a round logo and a larger version for graphic materials.

c. Council/District Reporting

Savageau stated that a meeting will be set up with the Districts to talk about reporting requirements. Council and Districts to come up with a joint report to present to Passport to Parks, on the use of funding. Savageau will contact Jeff Folger to define Council's fiscal situation.

B. Legislation

a. Passport to Parks

Savageau reported that Appropriations to P2P are not likely to change. Districts and Council received payment 2 of 2 for 2021 in February 2021.

b. Soil Health

HB 6496 An Act Concerning Certain Soil Initiatives was JF'd out of the Environment Committee. Savageau and Ruiz are in contact with DEEP to discuss language and support. DEEP is reluctant to support bill, anticipating an increase in the department's burden on resources.

c. Climate Change – HB 6441

Governor's Bill 6441 AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION had a hearing on the Environment Committee on March 8, and Savageau testified on behalf of the Council. Testimony was shared with members before this meeting. This bill provides funding to municipalities for creating Stormwater Authorities, conveyance fee to protect open space and other climate resiliency work.

d. Solar Siting – HB 6498

HB 6498 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SITING OF CERTAIN SOLAR FACILITIES ON FARMLANDS AND CORE FORESTS had a hearing on the Environment Committee on March 19, the Council sent in written testimony in support of the bill, which is being championed by the Working Lands Alliance. The bill provides better regulation for installation of solar arrays in working and natural lands.

Savageau asked if any members had any bills they would like to comment on. M. Dietz talked about their support on a bill requiring municipal workers and private contractors to receive training on the green snow pro program that was developed by UConn. Savageau reported that on the Planning and Conservation Committee there are a lot of bills on affordable housing, and some proposals call for a relaxation of environmental regulations for the benefit of social justice, so we need to be aware about housing being allowed on floodplain areas. Savageau and J. Davies will be watching that proposed legislation. Davies offered an overview of the bill to the Council, and informed that the RC&D is leading a forum to discuss development of affordable housing.

C. Solar Siting on Working and Natural Lands

Savageau informed that the DEEP has put out an Integrated Resources Report and is calling for a stakeholders group. The Council had a meeting with American Farmland Trust on dual use of solar. C. Sullivan reported on the presentation offered by the SWCD with Blue Wave Solar and AFT on the topic of solar sitings and commented on dual use for solar arrangements on farms. The presentation showed the potential for real use of solar and agricultural production in the same area- and putting agriculture first on the planning. The Council would participate of a stakeholders group with AFT, Save the Sound, and other to participate in the discussion and planning.

D. Governor's Council on Climate Change

This section was covered under the discussion on HB 6441.

E. Soil Health Committee

Savageau mentioned that the work of the committee will continue, as we have been solely dedicated to legislation and the work of the GC3 in 2020. Ruiz again invited all members to serve on the committee and will convene a meeting to start working on the actions recommended on the GC3 report.

F. CT River Valley – Farmland Protection Project

Savageau indicated that the meeting with AFT was also focused on farmland protection. As AFT does not have any projects that are specific to the CT River Valley, Savageau indicated that the Council would work to outline of an initiative that brings together the four states that have land in the valley. Council will be reaching out to people who showed interest in joining this group and anyone interested should contact the Council.

G. ENVIROTHON

Sullivan reported that schools are doing virtual monthly workshops with subject matter experts: soils, aquatics, wildlife, forestry with student participation. Done via Google Classrooms. May 17 is the first day of exams. Winner will be announced after Memorial Day and will represent CT in the National to be held in NE.

H. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines

Savageau reported that the work is moving forward with DEEP and contractor doing the work. She indicated that soil health should be an important part of the update.

I. Grant Updates

a. LISW-RCPP Progress Update

Ruiz reported. Closing on May 13. Finalizing contracts with the different partners, which are

presenting their final invoices and reports at this point. For the HFRP we might be able to close on two or three properties.

- b. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement
Ruiz reported. Met with the GIS part of the program to discuss metrics on soils and soil health to be part of the ranking. Deb Surabian (NRCS) is supporting the work. Sullivan reported on the Farm River portion of the grant. Development of the watershed base plan going forward. Meeting with producers to collect feedback. Working on a project that is already a result of site evaluations: setting up a 1.5-mile greenway trail on a section of streambank property, a sewer line easement belonging to the town of East Haven.
- c. NACD Technical Assistance Grant
Ruiz reported. Applied to the 2021 round to continue to fund staff and training. Savageau informed that the grant funds district staff training to work with farmers on conservation planning and work along with the NRCS. Hoping to make it a more permanent part of the districts funding. Sullivan spoke favorably about the work that the grant is making possible at the SWCD.
- d. LISS Watershed Operations Grant – Council/DEEP submitted
Savageau reported. DEEP submitted to the LISS on behalf of the Grant to develop a Watershed Operations PL-566 to protect shellfish beds in the LIS, by looking into the water quality coming into the sound to understand how stormwater affects them. Done in cooperation with DEEP and supported by the DoAg. This is a small budget (100k) but can leverage federal PL 566 funds.
- e. LISSF Grant – district submitted
J. Brawerman reported no feedback on the application by the districts. Grant to fund districts' work on urban watersheds.

6. AGENCY REPORTS

- A. CAES: Abigail Maynard reported.
 - i. Governor's CAES budget - status quo but a few notable positive exceptions
 - one new position added, associated with \$150,000 increase to the mosquito surveillance program to increase trapping in eastern CT where EEE continues to cause concern. It is an assistant scientist position in the Department of Environmental Sciences
 - \$6.3 million for Valley Lab renovation and addition is provided in CAES capital budget so funds have been committed.
 - none of the 10% budget reduction options were included in the governor's recommended spending plans.
 - another request for funding for a vacant position was not allocated.
 - ii. Greenhouse renovations in New Haven possibly starting this spring.
 - iii. Valley Lab will celebrate centennial in 2021. Event in fall is planned.
 - iv. Emerald Ash borer is no longer regulated. Quarantine regulations have been removed with more focus on methods for management. CAES has been working with USDA since 2013 on rearing and releasing tiny wingless wasps which are a biological control agent. Federal regulations regarding Asian long-horned beetles remain in effect so permits are still required to firewood into CT.

- B. CTRC&D: Jeanne Davies reported.
- i. ERT Hydrilla Project: Issued an executive summary and a video, which can be found here: <https://ctrcd.org/?s=Hydrilla> - Hydrilla - CT River ERT Video and Report Link.
 - ii. Soil Health: Regenerative Agriculture workshop and the Seed Buy coming up this summer as part of the NRCS deliverables. Hannah Horowitz working in outreach to better communicate the work of the various workers of CTRC&D to a wider audience.
 - iii. Hemp Conference: <https://ctrcd.org/agriculture/soil-health-initiative/> -
 - iii. 11th year anniversary of the Renewable Energy Assistance Program. Over this period Amanda Johnson and her team sourced over 4MM in grants and executed over 23MM in project value.
 - iv. RC&D Mid-Atlantic group is working on financial capacity planning for Non-Profits, so that districts can capture overhead rate over the 5 or 10% allowed in the grants, while the audited rate can be 35-40%.
 - v. Airline Trail Project: Trail Education series for youth- If anyone wants to be a mentor please contact J. Davies.
- C. NRCS: Tom Morgart reported.
- i. District staff getting access to computers but security issues, headquarter will block access to staff that doesn't log in for more than 45 days.
 - ii. Farm income is up, resulting in high Interest in EQIP and AMA, way beyond funds available. Received Financial Assistance allocations for Financial Assistance Programs: 5.6 MM EQIP (record amount) with 10MM in requests; over 600k in AMA, with interest over 700k.
 - iii. Easement applications up: expect 15-17 applications, normal is 9. 4MM in ACEP funding.
 - iv. NCPP: working on a plan to revitalize conservation planning. Proposed training staff on Conservation Planning and Climate Change.
 - v. Hiring an entry-level archaeologist and entry-level engineer.
- D. DoAg: Simon Levesque reported.
- i. Busy year ahead. Since the beginning of the program 406 farms and 48k acres were protected. This year 58 farms and 4700 acres are eligible and active easement projects (about 26MM). For 2021, 7 farms eligible and active for ale 2021 funding-deadline is April 1st. Expected 17 or 18 will be presented this year.
- E. SWCD: Chris Sullivan reported.
- i. Actively working with Urban Waters Initiative for the Mill River Watershed. Buying materials and setting up a bacteria analysis lab so that samples don't have to be send=t away for analysis.
 - ii. SWCD has a facebook page as of this date.
- F. NWCD: Cynthia Rabinowitz reported.
- i. Plant sale will be pre-ordered online with timed picked up. Education outreach around plant sale: virtual education materials and a package to be distributed with the orders.
- G. CRCCD: Jane Brawerman reported.
- i. Overwhelming response to the plant sales event, after it had been cancelled last year. Pre-order only.

- ii. Educational materials: there is demand for printed materials- district printing hard copies of the invasive species guide.
 - iii.
 - H. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.
 - i. NACD planning summer meeting in person in Chicago in July.
 - ii. NH planning on hosting the Regional meeting in September in Portland.
 - I. NASCA: Lilian Ruiz will be representing NASCA at the NACD Coastal Committee.
- 7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments
- 8. ADJOURN – Motion to adjourn by L. Rousseau, J. Kaufman second. The meeting was adjourned at 12:14 PM.