



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – September 30, 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: 10:04 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Simon Levesque (DOA), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD Board), Erik Bedan (CT DEEP). Ex-officio members: Nancy Ferlow (NRCS) and Jeff Ward (CAES). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Jane Brawerman (CRCCD) and Joanna Shapiro (NCCD).

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves. Jeff Ward, Chief Scientist for Forestry and Horticulture with the CAES introduced himself as an interim member, replacing Abigail Maynard.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Minutes - Minutes of 06/17/21 were reviewed. Motion to approve with the following correction: i. Melissa Moskowitz corrected to Melissa Mostowy- by D. Mullins, C. Cappiali second. Approved as corrected with one abstention (J. Ward).
- 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. The Treasurer's report for the 09/30/2021 meeting was reviewed. Motion to approve and put it on file by J. Shapiro, C. Cappiali second. Unanimously approved.
- C. Chairman's Report
Denise commented on Council elections and the need for a Secretary/Treasurer. The Council will send information on Council membership- voting and non-voting members.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. FY 2022 Plan of Work
The plan of work was presented at the June 2021 meeting for review and planned adoption at this meeting. Savageau and Ruiz went over comments received and changes proposed on the plan of work- mostly grammatical changes. Savageau explained the difference between the CT River Valley and the CT Central Valley. The plan will continue to refer to the CT Valley. Motion to accept the Plan of Work as presented and place it on file by C. Cappiali, Jeff Ward second. Unanimously approved. Lilian Ruiz also presented the FY 2022 Budget

again for approval. No changes were made from the budget proposed in June. The Envirothon budget was increased back to the original contribution amount of 20k. An overview of the grants and administration fees was presented. Travel expenses were increased back to the pre-covid amounts. Joanna Shapiro moved to approve as presented, Dan Mullins second. Unanimously approved.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Subaqueous Soil Survey Funding Request

Council has requested \$10.5 MM over 5 years in direct funding for completion of the Coastal Zone Soil Survey in Long Island Sound. The Senate approved \$5MM and we expect that it will pass the House and become part of the appropriations budget.

B. Administration

a. Council/District Reporting

Districts were called to submit their plans, if they haven't already. The Council will coordinate reporting with the DEEP (Erik Bedan).

C. 2021 Legislative Session

a. 2021 Extended Session

Savageau reported on the passing of HB 6496, changing the statutes to include soil health during the 2021 Session. This was a heavy lift, and counted with great support of the DOA and DEEP. The extended session was planned for September 2021 but most likely be suspended, moving directly to the 2022 session. Discussion on utilizing ARPA funding for soil health in CT lead by Working Lands Alliance, Council participating in the Discussion.

b. 2022 Legislative Session

Council and stakeholders on Soil Health planning to propose a pilot soil health program and request funding on the 2022 session.

D. Solar Siting on Working and Natural Lands

Ruiz reported on the DEEP public hearings to gather comments on the scope of the project. Comments were due June 25th. No further developments to date.

E. Soil Health Committee

Lilian reported. The Committee is meeting regularly and working on an action plan for SH in CT based on the reports submitted to and resulting from the GC3 work. The latest developments include a survey, which is ready to be distributed to ag service providers to assess the current inventory of activities/programs related to soil health in the state. The results will help guide the design of a soil health plan for the state. Districts will be asked to disseminate the survey in their networks. The committee is reaching out to institutions and agencies that work on soil health as part of their main mandate (Long Island Sound Study, Sustainable CT). We will use their input to update soil health fact sheets to include more information on landscapes other than farms. The Committee will utilize these

channels to make presentations and disseminate outreach materials educating and promoting soil health. The Committee is gathering information on existing programs at other states, such as the soil health program in Massachusetts, to see what can be adapted to our state. ARPA funds to be requested for a standalone pilot program for soil health. During the 2022 session, the committee will work on changing the statutes to allow for the funding of a soil health program, and pursue funding in subsequent sessions-this was suggested by the DOA. Denise acknowledged Amanda's good work in designing the online soil health initiative survey. Jeff Ward added that the committee should probably get involved with the problem of jumping worms, which will likely affect landscapes dramatically in the short run. Denise suggested to add a question on current concerns to the survey.

F. CT River Valley – Farmland Protection Project

Denise reported. New initiative to protect farmland in the valley, working with NRCS and AFT. Overlaps with the SHC works. We reached out to AFT and is looking into getting a multi-state coalition to protect farmland from development and other business.

G. ENVIROTHON

Sullivan reported that National Event was held virtually in July, hosted by Nebraska, and the CT team ended in 35th. For next year and there are 15 schools already registered and 9 of them are registering a second team, so numbers are way above previous year. Going back to in person competition, Chris thanked the Council for returning the funding to \$20k. This year there will be team scavenger hunts.

H. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines

E. Bedan reported. They have been working on the changes requested by the technical review and the document should be finalized early next year. They've worked with a graphic design intern to do revisions on the graphics, Savageau noted that now E&S Control became part of soil health in the statutes, since we passed legislation on soil health.

I. Grant Updates

a. LISW-RCPP Progress Update

Ruiz reported. Contract was closed on May 13. Last request for payment was submitted and now working on final reporting. This was part of the initial round of RCPPs and it was a very complex project with little flexibility, difficult to manage and implement. Still, great conservation practices were implemented in the LIS watershed in this multi-state effort. Denise thanked Lilian for her work with the LISW-RCPP.

b. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement

Ruiz reported on GIS work. CLEAR has been working on the 13 metrics for ranking that were defined over the summer and as soon as we have a final draft, we will be calling a steering committee meeting to gather input. Chet Arnold is retiring and Emily Wilson has been busy with increasing responsibilities. Sullivan reported on the Farm River portion of the grant. The Farm River Watershed Plan was completed and a public presentation was held in August with about 20 people attending. Chris shared the link to the presentation. Denise remarked that this is the first watershed plan to be completed that meet both the NWQI guidelines from the NRCS and the 319 guidelines from EPA. Dan Mullins updated on the ECCD portion of the grant. Jeanne Pillo and Maura Robie working on surveying and documenting land use in the watershed. They're

preparing for a series of 4 workshops for small producers in the watershed. This work updates a 2009 plan to meet the new NWQI guidelines.

c. NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Ruiz reported. Council applied for the 2021 grant and was awarded the same amount for the same scope of work as the prior grant. Good track record in reporting helped us qualify for the grant. Districts are able to keep staff, which is helping with work on the ground and also administrative work. Chris S. reported on Melissa Mostowy's work and remarked that she's even filling in the gap for staff on maternity leave. J. Brawerman reported that Kelly Starr, their natural resource specialist has been working with land and forest owners on many conservation plans, currently working on a nutrient management plan for a horse farm. J. Shapiro reported that the John Dudula is working on outreach to the municipalities and partners to assess how NRCS's new programs can help with community gardens and urban agriculture. D. Mullins reported that the grant helps to fund Maura's work and her great knowledge of NRCS programs is put to use in conservation planning and outreach.

d. LISS Watershed Operations Grant – Council/DEEP submitted

Savageau reported. A Long Island Sound Study grant was awarded by EPA to create a PL566 watershed operations plan for LIS similar to the one operating in Cape Cod. We are being funded \$100k for DEEP, The Council and the Audubon CT to coordinate. It will develop a Watershed Operations PL-566 to protect shellfish beds in the LIS, by looking into the water quality of the stormwater coming into the sound to understand how stormwater affects them. Another action on the grant is to look into shellfish restoration relating to different habitats. These funds can be used with municipalities, as opposed to farm bill dollars, which cannot be used on public lands. Denise shared the link to the grant. This is one of the first PL-566 funds that is not just about flood control. The Council will administer the grant. Next steps are finishing the contract with DEEP/EPA, and starting to work on the plan with the NRCS. Audubon CT (Rob LaFrance) was instrumental in getting the grant and also set up work with some Yale interns to move the work forward. One of the uses for this grant is to be able to assess where PL-566 dollars can be used for water quality and other watershed operations.

e. LISFF Grant – district submitted

C. Sullivan reported. Districts applied for a LISFF grant similar to the grant submitted to the Stewardship Fund. LISFF suggested that the districts submit this grant for consideration. This will be used for the districts to receive some equity and diversity training for members of the board and staff, and also target water quality work on distressed or low-income housing municipalities (urban watersheds). Award is going to be announced in November.

6. AGENCY REPORTS

A. NRCS: Nancy Ferlow reported.

- i. Today is the end of FY 2021 so they have been busy with yearend closing.
- ii. NRCS has a new Archaeologist to help move projects along through the NEPA process

- iii. NRCS had a good year for programs with significant funds allocated to farmers and landowners across the state.
 - iv. Preparing for FY 2022 – trying for an early sign up to improve service to farmers
- B. DEEP: Erik Bedan Reported
 - i. Jen Perry has accepted a position as Bureau Chief for DEEP MMCA Bureau, it's assumed we'll refill her position as Director for DEEP WPLR Bureau
 - ii. Chris Bellucci has accepted a position as Assistant Director for DEEP WPLR Bureau, it's assumed we'll refill his position as Supervisor for DEEP Monitoring Program
 - iii. LISS FY22 budget is projecting a significant increase, between \$30M - \$60M, DEEP is cautious in terms of proper management of funds for such a dramatic increase
 - iv. 319 FY22 RFP will be released shortly for Fall 2021
 - v. IWQR is anticipated in Spring 2022, this includes water quality assessments, impaired waters and priority watersheds
 - vi. DEEP anticipates receiving EPA approval soon for a Statewide TMDL for lake nutrients which includes a TMDL appendix for Bantam Lake watershed and a Watershed Based Plan addendum for Bantam Lake watershed.
- C. CAES: Jeffrey Ward reported.
 - i. Lee Wynhill will be starting in Urban Ag on Oct 8.
 - ii. Hiring an Ag Sciences/Engineer addressing impacts of agriculture in the environment. All three final candidates are soil scientists.
 - iii. Working with the NRCS on dynamic soil properties for forestry management.
- D. DoAg: Simon Levesque reported.
 - i. Strong activity with the Farmland Protection Program, recently completed 4 farms and a few more should close by the end of the year.
 - ii. Farmland Restoration Program- up to 20 k with a 50% cost reimbursement for projects. Awarded 23 farms, currently writing contracts.
 - iii. Soil scientists on site to supervise and make recommendations on the projects.
 - iv. Working on about 60 FLR projects.
- E. SWCD: Chris Sullivan reported.
 - i. Moving forward with implementation of the FR Watershed Plan. Stream walks revealed 1.5MM of stream front property that belongs to the town of east Haven, and they obtained a grant to design a greenway trail along the track, and Fuss & O'Neill will have a completed project for construction of the trail and its boardwalks. Idea is to attract large funding for the construction.
 - ii. Sleeping Giant damaged by tornado. Partnering with the Mill River Watershed Association and Sleeping Giant Park Association to address restoration of the Mill River and the buffer zone and canopy along the river. Working with Save the Sound and others on a sign on letter to be sent to DEEP Fisheries to get involved in doing work on restoration planning.
- F. ECCD: Dan Reported
 - i. Implementing 319 grants with funding from CT DEEP:
 - a. Little River Ag Waste Management Project: challenging site and increasing costs due to covid-19. DEEP has allowed the use of other sources of funding

to complete the project.

- b. Niantic River Watershed 4 town project to implement BNPs gaining momentum

Doing the first E&S Control inspections at solar installation sites by Conservation Districts in the state. Irregularities already being found in North Stonington by CS Energy, which are being addressed.

- ii. Designing fishway at Saville Dam in Ledger, funded by LISFF and EB Mitigation Fund. Extension from the LISFF to finish the work by March 2022.
- iii. Jody Rondeau is resigning after 10 years and taking a position at Massachusetts DEEP with the 319 Program.

G. CRCCD: Jane Brawerman reported.

- i. Working on plant sales, focusing on sourcing plants grown without the use of neonicotinoids and systemic pesticides.
- ii. Making a transition to ecotypical plants
- iii. Organized a meeting with NOFA and all Districts to hear about their ecotype project
- iv. Talking to NRCS and some of their urban partners to collaborate on a soil lead screening project to benefit urban farmers.

H. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported.

- i. Waiting on approval of the Ag 319 Contract to be able to start it.
- ii. Holding on to staff that can work on the program.
- iii. Town work keeps them busy.

I. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.

- i. She is following the work on the federal appropriations with NACD and LIS Citizens Advisory Council and WPAG boards, where Denise sits representing the CACD.
 - a. If they have a continuing resolution on the budget, it will be 31MM for LIS, but in the presidents' budget it is 40MM.
 - b. As part of Infrastructure package, we could be getting an extra 20MM per year for 5 years. This could present an opportunity for the districts to assist DEEP with implementation of funds
 - c. The WPC is looking at the State Water Plan and how that integrates with the GC3 plan particularly from a drought resiliency perspective.
 - d. Looking at emergent contaminants, particularly Hydrilla and algae blooms.
- ii. Planning to attend NACD Regional meeting Oct 31-Nov 2nd in Portsmouth NH. Will talk about capacity building, working with the new Northeast Rep.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

8. ADJOURN –The meeting was adjourned at 12:28 PM.