



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – December 16, 2021
ZOOM MEETING <https://zoom.us/j/955 752 1162>
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 (DOA), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD Board), Larry Rousseau (NWCD Board Chairman), Mike O'Neill (UCONN). Ex-officio members: Robert Hathorne (NRCS), James Hyde (NRCS) and Leigh Whittinghill (CAES). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Jane Brawerman (CRCCD) and Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), Cynthia Rabinowitz (NWCD), Bonnie Burr (UCONN).

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Minutes - Minutes of 09/30/21 were reviewed. Motion to approve with the following correction: Lee Wynhill corrected to Leigh Whittinghill - by L. Rousseau, J. Shapiro second. Approved unanimously as corrected.

B. Treasurer's Report

Savageau and Ruiz reported. 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 12/16/2021 meeting was reviewed. Motion to approve and put it on file by L. Rousseau, J. Shapiro second. Unanimously approved.

C. Chairman's Report

Savageau recommended the membership to watch a video she shared on food security that included comments from Commissioner of Agriculture.. Commented on the need for tying food security and urban ag into our climate change conversations. Commented on the technical assistance funds that will be made available by NACD as legislation (Build Back Better) is approved and potential influx of EQIP funding. These funds will be coming through state agencies/districts and will extend over time.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Board Membership

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The Chair thanked the membership for attending, acknowledged the new representative from the CAES and remarked that the Council was expanding its role and doing good work, which required participation from all members. She communicated that the Governor's Appointee seat was vacant since Jen Kaufman resigned. The Council is hoping to fill the vacancy with someone in Urban Ag, Food Security. Another vacancy as a non-voting member for a representative of Municipalities is available. Invited members to suggest names.

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. If it doesn't pass, the Council will explore the possibility of funding through the LISS.

B. 2022 Legislative Session

Expect more proposed legislation on climate change and on allocation Recovery Act funds. Council is meeting with Working Lands Alliance and NRCS to design an EQIP-like program for the state. This year the legislative session is starting on a surplus budget, which is conducive to establishing a new program. We will be monitoring the Passport to Parks legislation for any changes.

C. Solar Siting on Working and Natural Lands

Ruiz reported. No updates on the STEPS process.

D. Soil Health Committee

Ruiz reported. Soil Health survey for service providers is still open, some results already in. MA is about to approve a SH Action Plan, which can help guide the work in CT. Rabinowitz reported on the plans to use data from the survey to guide the work on fact sheets for all landscapes. Denise remarked that Amanda Johnson developed the survey and is collecting the data, which will hopefully form a basis for the plan.

E. ENVIROTHON

Sullivan reported that for next year and there are 15 schools already registered and many are registering a second team. Numbers are way above previous year reaching 30 teams. The competition will still be virtual trainings, and teams can meet at their own schedule. Steering Committee met to plan an planning for a hopefully in person event in May.

F. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines

Savageau reported. Work is continuing on updating section by section, project moving along as planned under the coordination of Kathleen Knight.

G. Grant Updates

a. LISW-RCPP Progress Update

Savageau reported. Council is working on closing the agreement.

b. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement

Savageau reported. Farm River plan is finalized. UCONN CLEAR is doing a great job on the mapping and we have been working on the 13 metrics for ranking. Lilian reported on the

collaboration between CELQAR and NRCS (Deb Surabian) to define the best metrics for soils. Dan Mullins reported on the ECCD portion of the grant. Jeanne Pillo and Maura Robie working on surveying and documenting land use in the watershed, volunteers crated some mapping in the area. Planning on meeting the deadline of September 2022. The main purpose of the project is to achieve the status of National Water Quality Initiative watershed, which will be accomplished by updating a 2009 plan for the Little River watershed to meet the new NWQI guidelines. Series of workshops on soil health was really well attending. Chris Sullivan reported on the Farm River project. DEEP and NRCS have the finalized plan and SWCD is moving on with implementation. They received funding for conceptual design of a greenway trail along the Farm River in New Heaven, and are submitting a 319 proposal for one of the projects that came up from the plan. Savageau gave an overview of the SWP Project.

c. NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Ruiz reported. Districts are happy with the performance of the staff they were able to hire thanks to this grant. 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. Council signed the contract with DEEP and we are waiting on the final sign off. Upcoming meeting to discuss how to move forward on this with the NRCS. Denise remarked that there will be more funding coming in for watershed operations for upstream and downstream projects.

e. LISFF Grant – district awarded

C. Sullivan reported. Districts received around \$90k in total on a two-year program to receive equity and diversity training for staff and board members, and also target water quality work on distressed or low-income housing municipalities (urban watersheds).

6. AGENCY REPORTS

A. NRCS: Robert Hathorne reported.

- i. Infrastructure Bill was passed (918MM) and allowed CT NRCS to bring in a Conservation Engineer, Adhir Agrawal, coming from Oklahoma.
- ii. He is the POC for projects involving new funding for watershed operations, dams' rehab or emergency watershed protection.
- iii. Build Back Better, if passed, will bring in funding for TA, and the amount can be a truly historic investment in conservation.
- iv. NRCS will likely increase staff to work on this new funding.
- v. NRCS operating on advisory allocation, which is a % of last years' budget.
- vi. Deadline for EQIP, AMA, and RCPP is January 14, 2021. Ag easements and wetland reserve easements is Jan 28. CSP is Feb 18th.
- vii. Noted that CT easement workload is much larger than other states such as Oregon and Oklahoma.

- viii. CT is going to have an Urban Agriculture Initiative- the payments will be calculated by square foot, and will be rolled out soon.
 - ix. The National UA Initiative awarded 3 grants to municipalities in CT, but they're being managed at the national office.
 - x. NRCS Chief's prioritizing A, so support should continue for the next 5 years.
- B. CAES: Leigh Whittinghill reported.
- i. Leigh started in October 2021 in Urban Ag and Food Security.
 - ii. Expertise in vegetable production and non-conventional systems- green roofs, raised beds and container systems.
 - iii. Working on a project using small wading pools as containers.
 - iv. Worked on runoff water quality and how nutrient management systems affect that.
 - v.
 - vi. Lee Wynhill will be starting in Urban Ag on Oct 8.
 - vii. Hiring an Ag Sciences/Engineer addressing impacts of agriculture in the environment. All three final candidates are soil scientists.
 - viii. Working with the NRCS on dynamic soil properties for forestry management.
- C. DoAg: Simon Levesque reported.
- i. FLP contracts with 26 farms for 20k reimbursement grant- now with a soil health component evaluated by a soil scientist.
 - ii. Legislation package not approved yet- questions welcome.
 - iii. No information yet on FLP grant cycle. For 2022 the tentative plan is to move the application process online, so to avoid hurdles with contacting farmers. Deadline not defined yet for 2022 cycle.
- D. UCONN: Mike O'Neill and Bonnie Burr reported.
- i. College is still implementing a strategic vision- an important piece is that the strategic priorities will be included in the university budget.
 - ii. UCONN building a team to lead the curriculum on Soil Health and Water Quality. One position is filled, another position to be hired this year and another position in extension to work on soil health.
 - iii. New faculty positions for Climate Change curriculum.
 - iv. Large turnover in faculty I(retirements), hired 15 new faculty this fall, will be hiring 20 more next fall for new positions.
 - v. Continuity of programs and services may suffer as a result of those gaps.
 - vi. Burr reported that urban ag staff will be starting in January. Focus initially in SW sector of the state and expanding.
 - vii. Filling a position for water quality focused in NPS in addition to the CLEAR team in Haddam, to be working in addition to CLEAR team.
 - viii. SH and entomology positions to be announced soon.
- E. SWCD: Chris Sullivan reported.
- i. Participation on effort to make some revisions to the Quinnipiac River watershed base plan.
 - ii. NACD grant: Melissa is working on conservation planning with Diane at the NRCS.
 - iii. Participating in trainings and workshops that the NRCS has been offering.
 - iv. Working with Lyman Hall Agriscience school in Wallingford on invasive plants through a grant to work on the Quinnipiac River.
 - v. This work has been extended to a second school and there is a plan to do an

alternative spring break for students to work on removal if invasives for the municipalities, in April

F. ECCD: Dan Reported

- i. Judy Rondeau left in October.
- ii. Hired part time staff to work on the fill some of the gap.
- iii. Hired retired engineer who's helping with erosion control inspections in solar sites.
- iv. Hired two other staff that are helping in various projects.
- v. Will hire Dr. Jamie Vaudrey to run the Niantic River Watershed committee.
- vi. Solar inspections are going well, DEEP pleased with the reports produced- companies are more in line thanks to the districts' regular supervision.
- vii. 319 Project to build a free stall barn with manure waste storage and management facility in Woodstock. To be finalized after Christmas.
- viii. 319 Project on Niantic River Watershed 4 town project to implement BNPs: tree filters, storm drain filters, raingardens, rain barrels, etc.
- ix. Designing fishway for Shewville Brook in Ledyard, which drains into the Thames River and once design is complete, they will be using LISFF funds to build it.
- x. Participating with RC&D on airline trail plan
- xi. Participation in Environmental Review teams in Eastern CT.

G. CRCCD: Jane Brawerman reported.

- i. Deerfield Farm in Durham- completed design work.
- ii. DEEP finally approved implementation plan and signed the contract, so work on stormwater management improvement is under way at this small dairy.
- iii. LISFF Program: interested in expanding work on urban ag, working I conjunction with the other districts.
- iv. Connecting with the town of New Britain and supporting the project "New Britain Roots"
- v. Supporting Salmon River Watershed projects- this is a large watershed, very understaffed.
- vi. Participating in ERT for airline trail state park masterplan.

H. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported.

- i. Delay in design phase for a NWQI Broad Brook 319 project. Just signed the contract, waiting for DEEP approval to get started. Implementation contract was awarded as well and will follow the design plan, which will hugely increase the water quality of the Broad Brook.
- ii. Awarded 300k to further the North Branch Park River watershed base plan from 2010. Try to make it more dynamic and accessible.

I. NWCD: Cynthia Rabinowitz reported.

- i. Plant sales and the Envirothon continue to be a focus and keep the staff busy year-round.
- ii. Participated in NOFA meeting, organized by J. Brawerman, where districts could learn about their ecotype projects.
- iii. Installed raingarden at an elementary school in Roxbury, funded by the CT Community foundation
- iv. 14 farms are participation in a cover crop challenge through the winter, funded by Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, in partnership with the NRCS (Jim Hyde) and CT RC&D (Amanda Johnson).

- v. These farms are also being surveyed to identify gaps and needs, with the goal of providing equipment through an equipment hub, to facilitate adoption of no till, cover crops, etc.
- vi. Partnerships in various watersheds. Kelsey Sudol has done stream walks with HVA staff in small watershed.
- vii. Hired an agricultural technician under the NACD grant, Leeane Marvin. She has a degree in Natural Resources with a concentration in forestry, and she is doing the Ag Learn NRCS training.
- viii. Envirothon continues to be important year-round, with Karen as the secretary and Kelsey as the aquatics director.
- ix. Advancing with the installation of 319 projects in the Bethel.
- x. Wetlands Commissions are reaching out to CD's in need of training. Cynthia suggests that the districts become more formally involved in state wide training.

J. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.

- i. The Water Planning Council has identified inland wetlands and watercourses as the theme for their program this year. 2022 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act, passed in CT in 1972. The WPC outreach and education committee will hold a series of events on the subject on World Wetlands Day. The February 2nd program (World Wetlands' Day) will be a kickoff to a series of webinars. Savageau invited members to celebrate with projects around this theme, and remarked that May is Wetlands' Month and June is Rivers' Month. In the topic of wetlands training raised by Cynthia, Denise remarked that the Council approached DEEP last year. At that point they were trying to launch an online training platform, which is somewhat working now. However, that is only one approach and the Districts could still discuss training with the DEEP to propose a more interactive training for the wetlands officials that are not as familiar with the topic.
- ii. Savageau represents the districts in the LISS Citizen's Advisory Committee, and is pleased about the grants that the districts received. There is a lot of funding that can be used for water quality in connection with the conservation of the LIS- in addition to an increase in appropriations for the LISS to 31 MM, there are major funds coming in from the infrastructure bill (106MM over the next 5 years). Together there are 50-60MM/year for the LISS.
- iii. Need to have a discussion about the match for this federal funding.
- iv. MS4- Save the Sound has sued 4 municipalities for non-compliance with the stormwater permit- indicating the still existing challenges with stormwater management, so we might need to look into updating the stormwater part of the guidelines.
- v. UCONN CIRCA hosting workshop supporting creation of Stormwater Authority.
- vi. Working on the Farm Bill, invited members to brainstorm on changes needed for CT.
- vii. Planning to attend the NACD meeting in Orlando FL in February.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

8. ADJOURN –Motion to adjourn by C. Rabinowitz, J. Shapiro Second. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.