



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – June 23, 2022
ZOOM MEETING [https://zoom.us/j/955 752 11](https://zoom.us/j/95575211)
Meeting ID: ID: 955 752 1162 +1 929 205 6099

1. Call to order: 10:05 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.
2. Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Bryan Hurlburt (DOA), Simon Levesque (DOA), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD Board), Larry Rousseau (NWCD Board Chairman), Michael O’Neill (UCONN). Ex-officio members: Thomas Morgart (NRCS), James Hyde (NRCS) and Leigh Whittinghill (CAES). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), and Emily Cole (FSA).

3. INTRODUCTIONS

Savageau opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves. She welcomed Emily Cole to the meeting as the new FSA Executive Director for CT.

4. REGULAR BUSINESS

- a. Minutes - Minutes of 03/17/22 were reviewed. Motion to approve - by L. Rousseau, S. Levesque second. Approved unanimously.

- b. Treasurer’s Report

Savageau and Ruiz reported. The Financial report for June 07, 2022 was reviewed. Motion to approve and put it on file by L. Rousseau, S. Levesque second. Approved unanimously.

- c. Chairman’s Report

Savageau proposed to skip the report and to offer updates when the different topics were discussed.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Climate Smart Agriculture Funding and GC3 Update- Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt

Commissioner Hurlburt explained the items that were in the approved and adopted state budget, and then talked about some next steps. The legislature approved \$14 million for climate smart farming, \$7M bonding and \$7M appropriations in the farmland restoration program. The DOA is seeking thoughts and opinions and direction on how to

deploy the funding. The first 7 million in general funds can be to do direct support to farms for climate smart adaptation. The Commissioner described potential scenarios for uses of the funding and that he expects details to roll out over the course of the summer and that they were looking for partners to help roll out programs. The GC3 Agriculture and Forestry Committee will help inform this decision.

b. New County Urban Committees-Emily Cole, FSA

Emily Cole reported as the new ED for the FSA in CT that FSA is focused on increasing climate smart programming and access of BIPOC and historically underserved producers. She explained that there would not be Urban County Committees CT, but it is a priority for the office to support urban ag and to have representation of urban ag on the state committee. ERP- Emergency Relief Program: farmers being contacted to have their losses from 2020/21 covered by this program. Also, education program funding for smart ag. FSA is conducting an ag census data for CT. Savageau suggested that FSA and Conservation Districts work together to expand diversity on the County Committees and District Boards.

c. Review and Approval of Operation Plan and Budget for FY2023

Savageau presented the changes in the Ops Plan, which members had a chance to review prior to the meeting, and highlighted the main goals and actions. A motion to approve the Operations Plan was presented by L. Rousseau and seconded by J. Shapiro. C. Sullivan proposed to include CT NOFA Meetings and Conferences to the Plan. Approved unanimously with addition of CT NOFA.

The budget for FY 2023 was presented by Savageau and Ruiz. A motion to approve the 2023 Budget was presented by C. Cappiali and seconded by L. Rousseau. Approved unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS

a. Grant Opportunities

- i. LISFF - Districts were asked keep the Council informed about any applications and current grants.
- ii. CIG - Tom Morgart reported that two projects were selected for CIG grants and will announce a new round in November.
- iii. Other
Chris Sullivan posted a link on the America the Beautiful grants and invited districts to check out the opportunities. Tom informed about grants through Bass Pro for wildlife habitat work.

b. Subaqueous Soil Survey Funding Request

The Congressional Directed Funding requested by the Council was awarded \$5MM. This will go directly to NRCS Soil Survey.

c. 2022 Legislative Session

In addition to the Climate Smart Ag funding discussed by Commissioner Hurlburt, Denise reported that the Passport to Parks legislation passed without any changes, and

that the Council and the Districts continue to be funded.

d. Soil Health Committee

Ruiz reported that the SHC is meeting consistently and working exclusively on the SH plan. The first draft is posted online, along with a sign-up sheet for stakeholders to sign up for sections of the plan. Next meeting scheduled for July 6th. Expected to have a second review in August.

e. CT Envirothon

Sullivan reported. CT Envirothon was held on May 19th, first in person in 3 years. Around 25 teams participated and Commissioner Dykes helped give out prizes and connected with the teams. The Housatonic Valley Agriscience was the winner and will compete on Oxford, Ohio in July. Looking for items that represent CT for the trade-in sessions such as Legos and etc.

f. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines

Savageau reported. The E&S guidelines was finalized and the Stormwater manual is being finalized. Both documents were reconciled for consistency.

g. Grant Updates

i. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement

Ruiz reported. The Farm River plan is finalized and in implementation phase, with a greenway trail design under way for the Farm River. The GIS modeling is being developed and will be more comprehensive and complex than anticipated. The Council is working on an educational webinar series that will explain the importance and meaning of source water protection and present the tool developed for the ranking of parcels in order of priority for SWP.

ii. NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Ruiz reported. The Council is applying for the 2022 grant. One district has not yet exhausted the 2020 grant due to staff turnover.

iii. LISS Watershed Operations Grant – Council/DEEP

Savageau reported. Council applied for with the DEEP to the LISS to prepare a plan of operations for the PL 566. The PL566 ended up getting funded in a different way, so we need to decide if we still need these funds. Proposed a conversation between the Council, the NRCS and DEEP.

iv. LISFF Grant – Districts

Sullivan reported that they received a notice of activation and will be able to start working on underserved communities with impaired waterways.

7. AGENCY REPORTS

a. UCONN: Mike O'Neill reported the following:

- i. Submitted 53MM project for NRCS for Climate Smart Agriculture
- ii. Hired a new Soil Scientist, Haying Tao, with great extension experience.
- iii. Will hire another staff on SH by this fall.
- iv. Hiring a water quality person to replace Chet Arnold.

- v. "Silver tsunami" had a dozen or more staff retire from extension this year, and some of these positions will not be filled soon.
 - vi. Mike O'Neill fully retiring on Jan 1st, semi-retiring on Sep 1st.
- b. NRCS: Tom Morgart reported
- i. Congressional Direct Spending funds for LIS not deployed yet. NRCS has three agreements to utilize some of this money for the work needed: one with the LISS, one with University of Rhode Island, and the agreement with the University of Connecticut.
 - ii. Little River: ECCD expects to have that plan completed in September or October, a little bit too late for programs to roll it in for next year's this July. But it will get it on the list. For the following year, they can get approved. And that will give us two National Water Quality Initiative areas that are working on Source Water Protection.
 - iii. NRCS is three months from the end of our fiscal year, and are trying to obligate all the financial assistance received. NRCS got to put out \$1.2 million in additional funding in EQIP, to be directed at beef livestock, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged and urban applications Additional \$200K for AMA, \$400K for ACEP-ALE.
 - iv. Utilizing all the tools in the Farm Bill, protected a property in the Connecticut River Valley, that is 98% Prime soils.
 - v. Lost an engineer and a technician in the same office, but both applicants selected for the job accepted the job.
- c. CAES: Leigh Whittinghill reported.
- i. No new information about the Aquatic Nuisance Species Program.
 - ii. There is a revised jumping worm facts sheet and one for emerald ash borer.
 - iii. The entomology program has their ongoing various insect monitoring tick and mosquito and insect borne disease programs. They are hiring for the tick program.
 - iv. The PFAS program is expanding, doing a partnership with the USGS trying to address concerns that the tribal nations of Maine have about the safety of fiddleheads in particular.
 - v. Two congressional appropriation committee proposals that are up for consideration. One looking at ticks and tick-borne pathogens and the other looking at food security and how nutrient amendments can impact disease resistance moving forward.
 - vi. And our plant health fellow REU program is currently underway. Ten bright young students from across the country come are working in labs on independent projects and then working together on the first year of my experiment looking at cucumbers grown in small plastic wading pools.
 - vii. Spotted lantern fly work is also ongoing there been a few talks and other work on that
 - viii. Leigh Wittinghill and Itamar Shabtai are collaborating on the writing of the Soil Health Plan with the Council.
- d. CACD: Denise Savageau reported.
- i. The water planning council has been doing a lot of work with the 50th anniversary of the Inland Wetlands Watercourses Act.
 - ii. Denise has been actively involved in that. They just finished up a series of

workshops where who became holding another series of workshops in the fall on the Plan. The council was also looking at doing a white paper on Source Water Protection in Connecticut to look at that disconnect between the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

- iii. Looking at how water is handled under the GC3, as there are water components in many of the committees, although there is no committee on water specifically.
 - iv. Long Island Sound: discussion on how much of those dollars are coming in to Connecticut versus New York, and now going other places. And because of the challenges that DEEP has with staffing, they are not actively seeking a lot of these dollars for Long Island Sound. Denise suggested to the DEEP that the funds could come through the council, which is a state agency, and be transferred to the conservation districts and to any of our other partners for the Long Island Sound work that needs to be done.
 - v. Denise will attend the National Association of Conservation Districts meeting in San Juan and the Northeast Regional meeting in Maryland this year on the Eastern Shore in the last week in August.
 - vi. There is a new executive director for NASCA, the National Association of State Conservation Agencies- Mike Beacom. He was previously with the NACD Forestry Program. Re replaces Mike Brown.
- e. SWCD: Chris Sullivan reported.
- i. Small grant to do work in the Quinnipiac Watershed to do some updates to that watershed plan. It's a small amount of money- mostly doing some mapping and priority project updates. DEEP is aware of the project and they're supportive.
 - ii. Some of the funding was used to hire an intern who's a recent grad from the Yale School of the Environment to work with SWCD on that.
 - iii. Working to get a watershed coordinator and staff person for the Norwalk River watershed.
- f. NWCD: Larry Rousseau reported. Still looking for the Ag technician position for the NACD Technical Assistant grant.
- g. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported.
- i. Trying to get projects started and dealing with bureaucratic hurdles
 - ii. Staff transition period.
 - iii. Effort to keep the large project for the Broadbrook implementation project happening, despite the issues of huge cost increases, supply chain issues and materials, shortages, and the cost of diesel.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

9. ADJOURN –The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM