



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – September 22, 2022
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: 10:06 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Simon Levesque (DOA), Cynthia Rabinowitz (NWCD), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), and Emily Cole (FSA). Ex-officio members: Thomas Morgart (NRCS), Leigh Whittinghill (CAES). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz, (CT Council).

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting and confirmed quorum.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Minutes - Minutes of 06/22/22 were reviewed. Motion to approve - by C. Rabinowitz, J. Shapiro second. Approved unanimously.
- B. Treasurer's Report
Savageau and Ruiz reported. The Financial report for September 20, 2022 was reviewed. Motion to approve and put it on file by J. Shapiro, C. Sullivan second. Approved unanimously.
- C. Chairman's Report
Savageau proposed to skip the report and to offer updates when the different topics were discussed.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. NACD Regional Meeting Update

Savageau reported that the NACD Regional meeting was a great success. A consultant came in to work on the northeast capacity building and we had a really good session. The meeting also offered great field trips. Next meeting will be in Portland, Maine. Ruiz added that the districts should make an effort to go to the next meeting, and Tom Morgart highlighted a one of the sessions on carbon trading and the need to pay for improvements that the producer already made when starting to calculate credits.

- B. One Water Meeting Update

Savageau reported. NACD's Coastal Committee had adopted One Water as an overarching theme for the committee. This led to NACD participating in the One Water Summit in Milwaukee. The US Water Alliance's One Water Summit brings together water utilities to try and break down silos within drinking water utilities, stormwater utilities, wastewater utilities, and think about natural solutions. Savageau

and Ruiz attended the summit as part of a delegation of soil and water conservation. Ruiz reported that Savageau presented a workshop on The Critical Role of Soil and Watersheds in Water Resource Management attended by over 100 people and it was extremely well received. Clare Lindahl, Executive Director for the Solar Water Conservation Society moderated the panel. NACD will be using One Water for the theme of its stewardship materials in 2023.

C. Grant Opportunities

a. Landscape Scale Restoration w/NACD

NACD are putting together a Landscape Scale Restoration Project (a US Forest Program) for the Northeast region with a focus on source water protection. It is focused on Source Water Protection and the role of forest in source water protection. Connecticut is being considered as a pilot state for the project because the work being done on Little River and Farm River. Savageau will reach out individually to all the districts again.

b. CIG Grant – NRCS

Morgart reported. The national grant has been advertised, and we have to wait to hear how much we have allocated to CT before we advertise the state funding. That is hopefully coming October 1, when we will put a solicitation out for state funding of a cig on grants.gov. The grant is open to conservation districts, Ag Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension, Department of Ag, and the Council. Ruiz suggested that portable soil health analysis equipment for the districts can be a good idea for a grant application.

5. OLD BUSINESS

D. Climate Smart Agriculture Funding and GC3 Update

Levesque reported. No new news on the GC3, although the work is moving fast. Will report on any changes. Savageau reported that Ruiz and she met with Kayleigh Royston, and Tom Morgart met with the Commissioner to discuss the new funding. The Council is considering applying for funding so the money would go to the districts and any of the partners who want to present a project for smart ag. Of the \$14 million awarded, we talked about the first 7 million in bonding. The Department of Ag will be looking at updating the farmland restoration program.

GC3: Last year, the success of the funding and the push of the Working Lands Alliance and the Council on getting dollars for soil health and climate smart agriculture contributed to the GC3 reconvening with a new Climate Smart and Forestry committee that held its first meeting. Ruiz is representing the Council on the GC3 Agriculture and Forestry working group, co-chaired by Chris Martin with the forestry division and Bryan Hurlburt. Rabinowitz reported on a grant for climate smart forestry, apparently, funding through NRCS, with massive efforts in New England, especially with the paper companies. Morgart informed that this effort is part of the Climate Smart Commodities announced by the USDA. He reported that the NRCS originally planned to ask for \$1.5 billion. And in the end, they're going to announce \$3.8 billion in funded projects. Cole mentioned that the second round of funding will be announced by the end of the calendar year, that is for smaller and targeted projects led by historically underserved represented groups.

E. Subaqueous Soil Survey Update

Savageau reported that the Council was able to secure money for NRCS soil cooperative soil survey on the LIS and that work is underway. Morgart reported on the status. The surveyors already pulled the cores on a good part of the coast, and starting in Fairfield County. Bottom of the sea mapping starts in spring. The team developed a dashboard that shows the progress of the survey. And then next year, they're going to concentrate on salt marshes and filling in all the voids on the Connecticut side.

The project will serve not only the aquaculture industry but also coastal resiliency.

F. Soil Health Committee

Savageau reported conversation with DOA. Soil Health Plan deadline to be extended as it does not have to be done prior to the Climate Smart Grant. Ruiz reported on conversation with districts and the NRCS, and the need for a prescriptive plan that will have a statewide impact.

G. ENVIROTHON

Savageau and Sullivan reported. Next year's topic is climate change related. Hoping to build back the school enrollment, because it's been down for the pandemic. Last year was our first in person in a couple of years, still lower attendance than pre pandemic. Looking at a couple coastal locations for the field day, possibly Rocky Neck or Hammonasset. Karen Nelson from Northwest has stepped in to be chairman of the steering committee. Massachusetts won the national ENVIROTHON and of the top 10 schools, the Northeast region of NACD had 7 of the top 10. CT was well represented but unfortunately, two of the five students that were supposed to compete, ended up testing positive for COVID.

H. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines

Savageau reported. They are almost complete. Working on the stormwater manual, and they must be released at the same time. Working to ensure that the two documents are consistent with each other. On soil health, the recently passed legislation specifically said that it needed to be incorporated into the erosion and sediment control guidelines, and we're working in carrying it out to the stormwater manual as well.

I. Grant Updates

a. America the Beautiful

Sullivan reported that nothing has been reported out. The SWCD and the Council put together a proposal with the town of East Haven as a partner to install and implement the farm River Greenway trail from top to bottom. They received way more requests for funds than are available. Announcement should come in the fall.

- b. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement – Ruiz reported that the project is moving ahead with extensions on timeline granted.
- c. NACD Technical Assistance Grant – Ruiz reported that all is going well with the grant.
- d. LISS Watershed Operations Grant – Council/DEEP – Savageau is waiting for final contract from DEEP
- e. LISFF Grant – Sullivan reported that now have contract and are beginning work.

6. AGENCY REPORTS

A. NRCS: Tom Morgart reported

- i. The USDA announced the availability of funding for Climate Smart Commodities. One billion dollars will be available. For more details, here is the link, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1898239>
- ii. NRCS is working towards obligating their initial allocation of EQIP, AMA, CSP, and ACEP. EQIP, AMA, and ACEP all have more applications that they can fund and they will be putting in a request for additional funding to cover some of the unfunded

- applications.
- iii. Funds from Inflation Reduction Act: EQIP will get 8.45 bn for climate smart practices over the next 3 years. 3.25 bn for CSP, \$1.4 for ACEP, \$4.95 for RCPP and \$1.3 bn for CTA.
 - iv. Deb Surabian is in National HQ. Jacob Isleib has started as the new soil scientist.
 - v. New Engineer being recruited to replace Kristen Walker, who also went to HQ.
- B. FSA: Emily Cole reported
- i. Declaration of drought for New London and Windham received emergency loans that are available to producers who incurred losses.
 - ii. LPF opened for producers who graze their animals and incurred losses due to poor hay yield.
 - iii. Recently declared drought in new heaven and Litchfield will also bring in funds to those areas.
 - iv. FSA is focusing on reaching out to farmers that are not in the system, “finding” those who may need help.
 - v. FSA wants to coordinate with the districts to develop this outreach effort.
- C. CAES: Leigh Whittinghill reported- attached.
- D. DoAg: Simon Levesque reported.
- i. CT Dept of Ag Farmland Preservation has submitted 12 farms on 809 total acres of farmland for 2022 ACEP-ALE funding from NRCS.
 - ii. Farmland Restoration Grant is now open to applicants on the CT DOAG grants website: please visit www.ctgrown.gov/grants for more information, including who can apply, how to apply, how projects are chosen and other frequently asked questions
- E. SWCD: Chris Sullivan reported. Hired Jamie Vines, a watershed coordinator for the Norwalk River watershed, in conjunction with the NRW Initiative. About to hire a Natural Resource Specialist, down to 15 candidates from 40. Awarded 319 funds to implement the second project resulting from the Farm River Watershed Plan, a stormwater BMP implementation in East Heaven. Spotted Lanternfly is increasing in the area, looking to do training workshops to prepare for control next year.
- F. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported on 2 new Staff. Ginny Patsun has experience working with soil health in Zambia with Peace Corps and is a native plant aficionado. She will be doing CTA work with NRCS and taking over plant sales planning. Cameron Covill will be working on wetlands, taking over from Barb Kelly, who’s retiring. He will also do CTA training. Tumultuous start with the Broad Brook implementation project (\$500k in 319 funds), but project will finally start in the spring. Moving along with the Park River LISFF grant- working on subcontractor agreements.
- G. NWCD: Cynthia Rabinowitz reported. Lost staff last spring but has hired 2 new staff. Annette Lott is full time and will work as an ag tech. A part time staff, former town planner, will work 2 days a week. Received a grant to continue the cover crop challenge, reaching 21 farms- working with RC&D and NRCS as a local soil health initiative. The \$90k 319 project that was almost lost due to contractual deadlines is finally being implemented in Bethel to install BMP structures.

H. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported. Water Planning Council looking to hire staff to help with the increasing workload- will be looking for legislative support for that. LISS has a large influx of dollars and they were looking to see where resources would be better applied. Jean Pillo and Savageau serve on the LISS Citizens Advisory Committee bringing the perspective of the Districts.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

8. ADJOURN –The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 PM.

CAES Report to the Council on 09/22/2022:

GRANTS AWARDED

1. DR. SUSANNA KERIÖ was awarded a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant to study Reduction and diagnosis of transplant shock in landscape trees in Connecticut nurseries and urban sites. \$96,313.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) will partner with Connecticut city tree planting programs and nurseries to test mycorrhizal inoculation in order to reduce transplant shock in landscape trees and develop diagnostic tools to detect and predict transplant shock. Transplant shock affects landscape trees both in nurseries and in field planting sites, which increases tree mortality and causes economic losses to nurseries and the stakeholders planting the trees. According to CAES urban tree inventory in New Haven, the mortality of young urban maples has increased by 26% in 2010-2020. This highlights the importance of management that improves tree survival. Mycorrhizal inoculation can reduce sapling mortality, but quantitative data on the benefits of mycorrhizal inoculation for landscape trees is limited. Additionally, diagnostic tools that quantify tree recovery and predict tree outcomes are limited. The project has two goals: 1) quantify benefits of mycorrhizal inoculation on transplant shock of 300 landscape trees in urban tree planting sites and partnering nurseries, and 2) use non-structural carbohydrates as a diagnostic tool for quantifying the benefit of mycorrhizal inoculation for tree health, and for predicting tree survival.

2. DR. LEIGH WHITTINGHILL was awarded a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant to study The Effects of Management Practices on the Nutritional Quality of Cut-and-Come-Again Greens from Urban Farms in Connecticut. \$58,494.69

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) will analyze the mineral nutrient content of successive harvests of greens grown using cut-and-come-again harvesting practices in a controlled experiment and on urban farms to identify the effect of different management practices on crop quality and develop cut-and-come-again production guidance. Greens are a high-value crop with high nutrient content and relatively quick growing times. This makes them a valuable crop in urban agriculture where space is limited, and food security is a motivational factor. Information gained from the analysis of leaf samples from farms using cut-and-come-again harvesting will enable us to identify management practices that promote high quality greens, especially from later harvests, and start to develop management guidance

3. PI: **DR. SCOTT C. WILLIAMS** (CAES), Co-PIs: **DR. MEGAN A. LINSKE**, **DR. GOUDARZ MOLAEI**, and **DR. DOUG E. BRACKNEY** (CAES), Dr. Robert Smith, Dr. Susan Elias, and Mr. Charles Lubelczyk (Maine Medical Center Research Institute), and Dr. Maria Diuk-Wasser (Columbia University). “Suppression of Host-Seeking *Ixodes scapularis* Abundances and Interruption of Pathogen Transmission Through Orally Delivered Systemic Acaricide Treatment of White-tailed Deer and *Peromyscus* spp.” \$5,000,000 award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2027.

The proposed research will orally deliver existing commercially available acaricide formulations to systemically treat the major *Ixodes scapularis* reproductive host (white-tailed deer) and major pathogen reservoir (small rodents with a focus on *Peromyscus* spp.) both singly and in combination. We will use Cydectin® (moxidectin), which has a 0-day withdrawal period for human consumption, to coat whole corn to dose deer and will use Kaput® (0.005% fipronil) to dose small rodents at three different locations with varying known diversities of alternative

terrestrial mammalian hosts. Specific aims include: 1) Evaluation of the efficacy and reproducibility of this strategy in the suppression of *Borrelia burgdorferi*-infected host-seeking *I. scapularis* nymphs in multiple high-risk settings. 2) Optimization and standardization of the implementation of systemic acaricide treatment of white-tailed deer and *Peromyscus* spp. to reduce the abundance of host-seeking *I. scapularis* nymphs infected with human pathogens. 3) Development of standard operating procedures for systemic acaricidal host treatment to be used by homeowners or vector control professionals within communities at risk for exposure to Lyme disease spirochetes and other *I. scapularis*-borne pathogens.

4. MS. TRACY ZARRILLO received \$3,000 from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for the "Connecticut Wild Bee Checklist."

Plant Science Day- Went very well. I don't have all of the numbers but the turn out was good, especially considering the heat.

Plant Health Fellows Program- finished up just after Plant Science Day. The interns all seemed to enjoy the experience and the small projects they worked on were all very interesting. The Group project was displayed at Plant Science Day and all of the fellows interacted with the public answering questions about the project.