



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – December 15, 2022
ZOOM MEETING https://zoom.us/j/955_752_1162
Meeting ID: ID: 955 752 1162 +1 929 205 6099

1. Call to order: 10:0 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Eric Thomas (DEEP), Simon Levesque (DOA), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD), Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), and Emily Cole (FSA), Jane Brawerman (CRCCD), Mike O’Neill (UConn). Ex-officio members: Thomas Morgart (NRCS), Leigh Whittinghill (CAES), Amanda Johnson (CTRC&D). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz (CT Council), and Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Melissa Mostowy (DEEP).

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting and confirmed the quorum. Michael O’Neill was acknowledged for his retirement.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Minutes - Minutes of 09/22/22 were reviewed. Motion to approve as presented - by S. Levesque, C. Sullivan second. Approved unanimously.
- B. Treasurer’s Report
Savageau and Ruiz reported. The Financial report for December 15, 2022, was reviewed. Motion to approve and put it on file by E. Thomas; S. Levesque second. Approved unanimously.
- C. Chairman’s Report
Savageau reported that the Council has been busy with grants, the GC3 work and the Water Planning Council.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Grant Opportunities
 - a. Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Grant
Ruiz reported that the Council is working on application. S. Levesque recommended that people attend the info session. A. Johnson described the application submitted by the CTC&D. Michael O’Neill reported that UConn is applying on multiple fronts. L. Whittinghill reported that CAES will apply on the topic of irrigation efficiency.
 - b. Landscape Scale Restoration w/NACD
Ruiz reported that the match for this grant is being asked from the DoAg with the Climate Smart grant. Savageau described the grant.
 - c. CIG Grant – NRCS

Morgart Reported. Hasn't been announced yet- will be out in February.

B. CLF- Conservation Law Foundation

Ruiz reported. CLF is a non-profit in New England, just opened the CT chapter. Ruiz is on the state board. CLF is mostly advocating but also litigating in environmental law, climate change, environmental justice. There are a lot of topics of interest for the Council, and it is a forum for our concerns, particularly with regards to legislation.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Subaqueous Soil Survey Update

Morgart reported that much progress has been made with great support of NHQ and project is ahead of schedule. Scientists pulled more than 400 cores and have been processed. Some new soils will be named. Next years' goal is to accomplish the embayments of the marshes and by the end of the summer we will have the underwater LIDAR done.

B. Soil Health Committee

Ruiz reported. Soil Health Action Plan work was halted as most of us are involved in applying for the DoAg Climate Smart Ag and Forestry grant. We intend to hire someone to consolidate the materials that were already written.

C. ENVIROTHON

Sullivan reported. Thirty teams registered and a lot of the schools are registering 2 teams. Mix of in person and online events. Climate Change is the topic this year. Final competition will be on May 18th, location TBD.

D. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines.

Savageau reported. Work is moving along and they're preparing a large meeting to collect input.

E. Grant Updates

a. America the Beautiful

Sullivan and Ruiz reported. We did not receive the award. Our 3MM proposal was not accepted and we will seek feedback to help us be successful next year.

b. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement

Savageau reported. The Farm River is completed and Little River watershed plan is being finalized. The mapping portion of the grant that contains a ranking of public drinking water supply, surface water supply and aquifer protection areas, is almost finalized and should be released early next year. We will be working on outreach and locally led groups with the Districts. In October, we hosted a workshop on Imagine a Day Without Water to get people to understand source water protection. Sullivan and Jean Pillo presented.

Sullivan reported that they received 319 funds to implement some of the projects derived from the plan.

c. NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Ruiz reported. Districts are able to hire and train staff that is working on conservation planning. We are starting to use the 2021 grant, and Districts reported that the grant is working very well.

d. LISS Watershed Operations Grant – Council/DEEP

Savageau reported that this grant has been on hold for a while to clarify how funds needed to be spent. The contract was now signed by the Council and just waiting for DEEP to complete.

e. LISFF Grant – Districts

Sullivan reported. Districts are working together with a grant focused on underserved communities, working on GIS mapping that connects impaired watersheds with distressed

municipalities. Long term goal, is to do outreach to those areas, and also to try and diversify the districts boards with representatives of these communities. J. Shapiro reported that NCCD has a LISFF grant to update the plan for the North Branch part of their watershed. Savageau mentioned that Trowe Environmental is doing outreach for the LISFF, mostly upstream and will hold an event at the end of January.

6. AGENCY REPORTS

A. DEEP: Eric Thomas reported.

- The Water Planning Council (WPC) is establishing a new sub-workgroup to focus on the evaluation of US Geological Survey Data Collection Program. This workgroup is the result of discussions from both the State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup and from conversations on State Water Plan (SWP) priorities of the Water Planning Council. This workgroup will be led by DEEP Water Assistant Director Chris Bellucci and DEEP will provide administrative support. The workgroup is open to all who have an interest in the subject matter and wish to contribute to the subject matter. The objective is to support the topically relevant recommendations of the SWP. The SWP is posted on the WPC webpage at State Water Plan (ct.gov).
- US EPA has formally approved the 2022 Connecticut Integrated Water Quality Assessment report. The final version is now posted on the DEEP webpage at Water Quality 305b Report to Congress (ct.gov). The webpage also provides access to a new web mapping application that can be useful for Council members and affiliates.
- The Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual is being revised. This document provides guidance on the measures necessary to protect the waters of Connecticut from the adverse impacts of stormwater runoff. Public notice is expected in early January 2023 to allow for additional public input.
- The FY2023 Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source grant RFP is posted on the DEEP webpage at DEEP Section 319 Request for Proposals for Nonpoint Source Pollution. There are a few new and enhanced priorities and/or requirements for this grant round, including Environmental Justice and Equity, the federal Build America, Buy America (BABA), data entry for the EPA's Water Quality Exchange/WQX web portal, and expanded encouragement for project stakeholders. Applicants are encouraged to contact Watersheds program staff in advance of a submission. Applications must be submitted by February 9, 2023.
- DEEP has posted a notice of issuance for the CAFO General Permit. The notice is posted at General Permit for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations ("CAFO GP") (ct.gov). The effective date is January 1, 2023. The general permit was developed to control point source discharges of agricultural wastewater and stormwater from area of animal confinement, feeding and maintenance at the CAFOs. An updated fact sheet is available, along with the General Permit document, at CAFOs.pdf (ct.gov).

B. NRCS: Thomas Morgart reported.

- The inflation reduction act (IRA) was passed by Congress, and it is bringing significant funding to NRCS:
EQUIP 8.45 billion

CSP 3.25 billion
RCPP 4.95 billion
ACEP 1.4 billion

- NRCS has 4 years to obligate the funding in contracts and until Sept 30, 2031 to pay out the funds to producers.
- NRCS Allocation thus far for FY 2023
 - ACEP ALE \$2.755 million
 - ACEP WRE \$334,000
 - CSP \$1.5 million
 - EQIP \$6.78 million
 - AMA \$115,000
- We have many applications for EQIP and AMA, CSP sign up period will be extended to cover the IRA funds that will come to the state.
- Staff: NRCS has lost many great staff to retirement and promotions with in NRCS. In a normal year we hire one or two staff a year and this year we will hopefully be hiring 13 new staff this year and early next year. We will also be likely hiring additional staff to support the IRA funding and entering into agreements with partners to bring staff that way as well.

C. FSA: Emily Cole reported.

- FSA got funds for distressed borrower program to help a couple of dozen farms that have been delinquent or in foreclosure for more than 60 days. There are funds channeled from a pool of 3BN from the IRA to bring those account current. A portion of these funds were pulled back and are now potentially being aimed at payments to victims of discrimination by the USDA.
- State Committee was formed, now with 5 members: Mary Concklin- Chair (UConn), Amy Chesmer (equine farmer), Will O'Meara (New and Beginning Farmers), Shawn Joseph (urban farmer). These bring together a wealth of expertise to the committee, which met a couple of times already. Previously the only member, Susan Pronovost from Greenhouse Growers stepped down as she moved out of state.
- Farmers.gov has a new loan assistance tool that is much more user friendly.
- Two additional pandemic support programs are coming. ERP Phase II supports farmers that fell through the gaps and did not received assistance to their losses for lack of proper insurance. Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program will be overall revenue base and not based on crop disaster. Those will be announced in January.
- FSA lost a program specialist and is searching for a replacement.
- They are increasing outreach strategies and looking for ideas.

D. CAES: Leigh Whittinghill reported.

- Publications
Nanoparticles- 7, Ticks- 1, Mosquito introductions to new regions- 2, Bee pollen

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collection – 1, Biological soil crusts- 1, Field detection of beach leaf disease- 1, Teaching field plot experiments to undergrads- 2, Plant diseases- 3.

- Grants (descriptions from station news):

New:

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.

MS. TRACY ZARRILLO received USDA NRCS Cooperative Agreement funding of \$247,597 in collaboration with the University of Rhode Island for 3 years (2023-2025).

The purpose will be to monitor wild native bees (both bumblebees and solitary bees) in Farm Bill conservation plantings in RI and CT; evaluate the efficacy of existing Farm Bill practices; and suggest practices to improve the program.

Previously mentioned by now officially announced, to start in early 2023:

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.

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.

- New staff-

Faisal Qaseem- postdoctoral scientist- work on a project to evaluate the impact of drought stress, urban heat island effects, and soil conditions on the distribution of nonstructural carbohydrates in urban trees. His work at CAES is funded by the Louis A. Magnarelli Postdoctoral Program.

- Scientists:

Entomology-2: one scientist who has worked on bees and butterflies and one who works with fruit flies,

Plant pathology- one scientist who has done a lot of work on nematodes

I will report names at the next meeting as they have not started yet (are not yet listed on website with e-mails etc).

- Hiring:

Aquatic invasive species- 1 scientist and 2 technicians (not sure where in the process this is)

forestry (forest ecology and climate change)- in person interviewing is going on now.

Soil and water treatment will be doing in person interviewing early in the new year.

E. DoAg: Simon Levesque reported.

- Explained the Smart Ag and Forestry Grant and directed people to the website and/or

to Jamie Smith.

- Farmland Restoration Grant deadline was last week. A panel will be put together to score the application, and DoAg will reach out to Council members.

F. CT RC&D: Amanda Johnson reported.

- CT RC&D hosted in partnership with CT DOAG a media event in November announcing the new chapter of CT Farmer Veteran Coalition and the new CT Grown Homegrown by Heroes logo.
- CT RC&D's CT Farm Energy Program co-hosted a sneak peek tour in November at Hytone Farm in Coventry, to see their new anaerobic digester that will be online soon.
- CT RC&D just closed on two positions and has three other job openings right now through our partnership with NRCS four our Job Jump Start program, working with NRCS staff at NRCS field offices. Separately RC&D is also hiring an Environmental Programs Manager/ED.
- Save the dates are out for the Air Line State Park Trail 12 town Zoom workshop series 5:30-6:30pm starting January 10th - January 19th.
- CT Farm Energy is hosting a new pilot program CTREAA - providing technical assistance for producers to understand renewable energy options for their farms.
- CT Farm Energy Program is preparing for our annual winter workshops for producers to attend and learn about energy incentives and grants available early in 2023, more info will be available shortly. In anticipation of additional funding through IRA to Rural Development's REAP grants, CFEP will have a busy March 31, 2023 deadline assisting producers apply for EE and RE projects.

G. SWCD: Chris Sullivan reported.

- New Natural Resource Specialist Courtney Gilligan from MA DEEP, doing programmatic work helping with a grant funded project for the Quinnipiac watershed base plan focus on the sub-region. She's working on GIS and outreach.
- DEEP awarded second year funding for an Urban Water project for the Mill River watershed in partnership with Save the Sound and other stakeholders. The SWCD is partnering with the Sound School and working on the bacteria water monitoring lab set up in Hamden. Some of those students are doing a science fair project based on the data that they're collecting in the harbor and processing at the lab.
- Heal by Growing: closing out viability grant with the urban farmer in East Haven to set up a holistic training center for farmers with disabilities and especially with a traumatic brain injury as a focus in setting a place where they can heal by growing and learning how to grow crops.
- Fencing project under way with LGBTQ farmer in Guilford. Getting a lot of requests from municipal partners for assistance with her land-use commissions in and sending in recommendation packets and technical guidance for projects that are coming in.

H. CRCCD: Jane Brawerman reported.

- About to launch a search for a new natural resource specialist to supplement what the current staff is doing and be focused on developing municipal assistance program, as well as learning the ropes to do the ag work, since will be hopefully expanding those efforts with it with a new ag/forestry grant.
- Plant sale planning as well underway. Plants have been ordered in and we're working on developing our web store.
- Held our annual meeting in early November in person, with a program on the shoreline

that generated a lot of interest and was led by Juliana Barrett. Many well-deserved Conservation awards were presented.

- The Deerfield farm project is advancing, and the construction began in September, using 319 funds that were going to be expiring.
- Kelly's working on an open space habitat management plan for the town of West Brook under contract.
- The district is supporting the efforts of our regional Ag Science High School program to develop a school farm and land lab in Middletown.

I. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported.

- Ginny Patsun has taken over a lot of conservation work and is trying to revamp fundraising.
- Asked partners if we know of any organizations that could help fund districts' projects- Held many workshops these last couple months.
- Ruth Miller, the designer behind our plant sale is retiring.
- District is starting to inspect the largest solar installation in New England in Wellington.
- Recently there has been an uptick in requests from our towns to review development plans.
- Working hard to get funding for a really large Ag Waste Management project in the Broad Brook watershed, looking to fill a large funding gap.

J. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.

- CACD represents districts on the Water Planning Council. Denise serves on the WPC advisory group and on the State Plan implementation workgroup.
- The WPC is asking for a Water Chief to coordinate the work of the four agencies: OPM, DEEP, DPH and PURA.
- Updating the State Water Plan- will deal with the new challenges of water quantity. This years' outreach and education had a theme of Inland Wetlands Protection- Kelsey Sudol serves on the outreach and education component of the workgroup and helps to lead that effort.
- Denise and Cheryl will be attending the NACD Annual Meeting in New Orleans in February. Denise will be doing a workshop on the One Water topic, related to what was presented at the One Water Summit. One important topic at the meeting will be the discussions on the Farm Bill- Denise asked for comments to be brought up to the discussion.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

8. ADJOURN –The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 AM.