



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – March 16, 2023
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: 10:03 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Eric Thomas (DEEP), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD), Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), Dan Mullins (ECCD), and Emily Cole (FSA). Ex-officio members: Robert Hathorne (NRCS), Leigh Whittinghill (CAES). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz (CT Council), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), and Melissa Mostowy (DEEP).

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting and confirmed the quorum. She introduced R. Hawthorn, acting for T. Morgart as he's on detail at NHQ.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Minutes - Minutes of 12/16/22 were reviewed. Motion to approve with correction of typo by E. Thomas, C. Cappiali second. Approved unanimously.
- B. Treasurer's Report
Savageau and Ruiz reported. The Financial report for March 07, 2023, was reviewed. Motion to approve and put it on file by D. Mullins, C. Cappiali second. Approved unanimously.
- C. Chairman's Report
Chairman reported during agenda items.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Plan of Work and Budget
Draft was distributed to members to comment by April 14th. It will be voted on at the June meeting. Conservation Districts were reminded to send their plans to the Council for review before the deadline of July 31st.
- B. Membership
We need to fill vacant positions, particularly the representative of a nongovernmental organization appointed by the Governor. We asked everyone to suggest names that could bring diversity to our board. Also, a representative for Municipalities familiar with E&S control and stormwater management, Districts were asked to suggest names. The new Director of the UConn extension was contacted to take her position on the board.
- C. Grant Opportunities
Chris Sullivan communicated an opportunity with the National Coastal Resiliency Fund- due in April

and shared a list of opportunities from the NWF.

R. Hawthorne reported CIG is still open and closes on April 14- looking for 3 awards, max 300k and min 20k. He also mentioned the Inflation Reduction Act substantial funding. The NRCS will use partner agreements for staffing, planning and clerical assistance to deliver financial assistance. The announcement should be out soon.

D. Local Work Groups

Savageau reported that we had a discussion with the NCPP and NASCA about the establishment of the LWGs in CT and that we will do training on how and why to establish LWGs as subcommittees of the State Technical Committee. Ruiz pointed out that as they get established, these meetings will make the work of the Districts more efficient.

E. Legislative Updates

Savageau reported that Passport to Parks was not being challenged, which represents continuity for the Council and districts' funding. Bills of note are HB5616 Updating the Wetlands Act, and the Zero Carbon Emissions Bill HB06397, noting that it doesn't mention the work we do on mitigation or resiliency. Same occurred with other bills, such as HB06725 AN ACT REVISING CERTAIN FARMING AND AQUACULTURE PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE and SB 1145 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SECTOR SPECIFIC SUBTARGETS FOR GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS AND REGULATING EMISSIONS OF SMALL-OFF ROAD ENGINES. The Council submitted testimony for these bills. Savageau testified in person for the funding of nature-based solutions and the continuation of the funding for climate smart agriculture and forestry. Ruiz made comments on HB 1147 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Subaqueous Soil Survey Update

Savageau met with Sen. Murphy's Office looking at putting together a program highlighting the subaqueous soil survey materials. The work is ahead of schedule. Hawthorn reported confirming that they will be putting out a tool soon. Sullivan reported on a presentation to the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative about the survey. Potential partnerships with municipalities to facilitate the work.

B. Soil Health Committee

Ruiz reported. No new developments, expecting to meet after the climate smart ag grant awards are announced. Planning to have a graduate student retained to do the write up.

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. The final competition will be on May 18th, at the Kellogg Center in Derby. Working with Sue Quincy on developing the topics. He invited people to volunteer.

D. Update of the E&S Control Guidelines and Stormwater Manual.

Savageau reported. The workgroup kicked off the comments section of the work. Looking for the final comments, and once they've been incorporated, the material will be launched. The council will work with the DEEP on delivering training on the new materials. We may hold a statewide conference on stormwater management and E&S control.

E. Grant Updates

a. Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Grant

Ruiz reported. Submitted on January 18th and waiting for the results. Very competitive, with over 70 applications in the amount of 55MM. This stresses the need for more funding, especially larger amounts for ag waste projects.

b. Landscape Scale Restoration with NACD

Savageau reported. We applied for forest restoration and riparian buffer work, working with NACD on a region wide application with US Forestry Service for 900k total. Our application is for \$175k for CT to put together a pilot project on riparian restoration in public drinking water supply watersheds, which ties into the work being done with the Farm River and Little River watersheds. We applied for the match through the Climate Smart Ag and Forestry grant.

c. Source Water Protection Cooperative Agreement

Savageau reported. Starting to wind down on this project and preparing to present the final tool. Finishing up the planning for the Little River. The tool is developed by UConn, a GIS tool to identify critical parcels for restoration and protection in public drinking water supply watersheds.

d. NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Ruiz reported. 2020 Grant was closed and approved. 2021 has just received the fourth and final payment from NACD. For the 2022 grant, we have received the first installment. Districts can hire and train staff that are working on conservation planning. Districts are well into the 2021 grant funds, and Districts reported that the grant is working very well.

e. LISS Watershed Operations Grant – Council/DEEP

Savageau reported. The contract was just signed by the Council and the DEEP. We will get ready to develop a watershed operations plan for the LIS for restoration of tidal areas for shellfish beds and the quality of the stormwater that goes into these beds. The work will be done together with the Audubon Society (Rob LaFrance).

f. LISFF Grant – Districts

Shapiro reported. Districts are working with an equity coach for training for staff and boards. Cappiali reported that districts will hold workshops and sessions, which might be held at the Ag Station. Mullins reported that all districts also have funding to do a small watershed project in an environmental justice community. ECCD is working on an elementary school in New London on a project on school grounds that is being discussed.

AGENCY REPORTS

A. DEEP: Eric Thomas reported.

- The Connecticut Water Planning Council (WPC) Report 2022 is now published and available online- <https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Water-Planning-Council/State-Water-Plan>
 - The WPC has also published a one page illustrated fact sheet, available online - [WPC Annual Report Factsheet 2022.pdf](#)
- The Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual project completed the public session held end of January with final comments in by March 1st. The project is now entering the final stages of reporting. The draft stormwater quality manual, as well as the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines, has been available online at [Stormwater Manual \(ct.gov\)](#) .
- Quick update on DEEP agency staffing – In recent years and months, the agency has lost unprecedented numbers. Last year the Water Bureau alone filled around 70 positions. This

reflected a huge effort on recruitment! The downside has been the loss of many years of institutional knowledge; however, the tradeoff is new ideas and outstanding new hires.

- DEEP full time and seasonal position recruitment is ongoing. Please pass interested folks to the CT DAS website - including upcoming May college graduates! State of Connecticut Executive Branch Jobs website at [Job Openings - Department of Administrative Services \(jobapsccloud.com\)](https://www.jobopenings.ct.gov/).
- With respect to the LISS Watershed Operations Plan, DEEP update is the grant contract was executed in January with the Council. The first task is to develop an advisory team and host a kick-off. Denise Savageau is coordinating a kick-off with an advisory team, yet to be scheduled.
- The FY 2023 Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management grant round received 12 applications from across the state. Applications are currently under the advisory round of reviews. Grant awards should be announced this summer and contracting can begin after October 1st with the start of the new federal fiscal year.

B. NRCS: Robert Hathorne reported.

- Conservation Innovation Grant funding opportunity is open on Grants.gov through April 14, 2023. The opportunity features a maximum of three awards. The total funding is \$340,000. The award ceiling is \$300,000 and the floor is \$20,000 <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=USDA-NRCS-CT-CIG-23-NOFO0001267>
- I anticipate a new notice of funding opportunity in the next 6-8 weeks to advertise three potential awards for conservation planning and support services. These opportunities would be designed to support NRCS in delivering significant increases in financial assistance funds associated with the Infrastructure Reduction Act.
- NRCS has received \$19.5 billion in additional funds for existing conservation programs through the Infrastructure Reduction Act. These funds are specifically for climate change mitigation. NRCS Connecticut will nearly double its staff between now and 2026 through a combination of federal employees, contract employees, and agreement staff (such as through the upcoming opportunities listed above). Financial assistance funds will increase each year through 2026 culminating at triple the financial assistance funds currently available.
- NRCS CT is seeking comment from partners on a proposed revision to classification of Farmlands of Statewide Importance. Partners are encouraged to submit comments to Jacob.isleib@usda.gov through April 10. The proposed change would align our classification criteria with those of NRCS Massachusetts and increase Connecticut's Farmlands of Statewide Importance by roughly 340,000 acres. If implemented, the proposed change would take effect on October 1, 2023. The letter soliciting comments is attached.

C. CAES: Leigh Whittinghill report is attached.

D. SWCD: Cheryl Cappiali reported.

- LISFF grant for Racial Equity coaching is underway (reported above).

E. ECCD: Dan Mullins reported.

- LISFF grant: green infrastructure on a condominium in Stonington installing rain gardens, riparian buffers and downspout planters, as well as creating a BMP Guide for condominium associations that can be used for other condominiums.
- Urban Waters in Underserved Populations grant under way with funding for all districts, is being managed by C. Sullivan.
- LISFF grant for raingardens and riparia buffers to improve water quality on LIS- many being installed in Eastern CT for the second consecutive season.

- Cooperative agreement with the Last Green Valley to do water quality monitoring manages by Jean Pillo, expanding to a salt watch program, monitoring for salt in the summer as well.
- Project Oceanology and NOAA grant to install outdoor classrooms and green schoolyards at 6 schools in Eastern CT.
- Hoping to finalize the watershed plan for the Little River soon.
- There is a shortage of the funding to build a fishway. DEEP might be able to close the gap with additional mitigation funding.
- Coming up a \$820k LISFF grant to install a free stall barn with manure management in Lebanon, should start on May 1st.

F. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported.

- Plant Sale is underway.
- LISFF grant: started the work for updating the north branch Park River watershed base plan, doing green infrastructure design and floodplain restoration work. Putting a committee together to oversee the work.
- 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.
- Sub Grant with the Institute for Community Research: Districts started to do training for climate smart ag practices for urban ag (for schools, Grow Hartford, Grow Windham, etc.). Youth leaders of these groups will receive training on climate smart ag practices. Cynthia Rabinowitz kick started the training with a great talk on soil health last month. Next workshop on pest management and the next on pollinator habitat enhancement.

G. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.

- CACD submitted an oral testimony to the Appropriations Committee, which can be seen on their website.
- Savageau and Cappiali attended the NACD Annual meeting in New Orleans. represents districts on the Water Planning Council. Members were invited to join one of the new NACD committees.
- Savageau serves on the WPC advisory group and on the State Plan implementation workgroup.
- This years' outreach and education theme, led by Kelsey Sudol, is on Climate Change and the first workshop is on April 14 with the topic of drought preparedness. A second workshop will be held in May looking at climate change and nature-based solutions.
- Savageau's testimony mentioned the two reports that came out, which support the need for a Water Chief to coordinate the work of the four agencies: OPM, DEEP, DPH and PURA, and the need for updating the State Water Plan.
- 3 Districts involved in the annual Plant Sales.
- Council will celebrate Pollinator Week with a Governor Proclamation.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

7. ADJOURN –The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 AM.