



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – June 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: 10:01 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.

Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Melissa Mostowy (DEEP), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD), Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Cynthia Rabinowitz (NWCD), and Simon Levesque (DOA). Ex-officio members: Machel Simmons (NRCS), Leigh Whittinghill (CAES) and Jocelyn Lahey (CT RC&D). Staff and guests: Lilian Ruiz (CT Council).

2. INTRODUCTION

Savageau opened the meeting and confirmed the quorum. M. Simmons, acting State Conservationist and J Lahey, the new Executive Director of CT RC&D introduced themselves.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Minutes - Minutes of 03/16/23 were reviewed. Motion to approve J. Shapiro, C. Cappiali second. Approved unanimously.
- B. Treasurer's Report  
Savageau and Ruiz reported. The Financial report for June 7, 2023, was reviewed. Motion to approve and put it on file by C. Rabinowitz, C. Cappiali second. Approved unanimously.
- C. Chairman's Report  
Chairman reported during agenda items.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Plan of Work and Budget

There were no further comments to the draft that was distributed to members to comment. Motion to approve the plan was made by C. Cappiali and seconded by J. Shapiro. The FY2024 Plan of Work was unanimously approved. Savageau and Ruiz discussed FY2024 and presented for a vote with an increase in expenses of \$2,900 over the draft budget. These funds would be used to pay a stipend to the summer intern to cover extra tuition expenses she incurred to be able to do her internship with the Council. The Council agreed with this expense. A motion to approve budget was made by J. Shapiro and seconded by M. Mostowy. The FY2024 Budget was unanimously approved and placed on file.

- B. Grant Opportunities

We submitted the NRCS Connecticut Conservation Planning and Support application, and we are waiting for the announcement.

## 5. OLD BUSINESS

### A. Legislative Updates

Savageau reported that the State Budget passed with changes to the Passport to Parks, so the funding for the Districts and the Council is secure. She called attention to legislation concerning housing growth zones that require changes in zoning regulations that eliminate inland wetlands regulations from the approval process. This undermines the inland wetland regulations and is a problem. CACIWC and others are looking to fix this in the next legislative session. Council members were encouraged to bring legislation of interest to the Council's attention over the course of the year. Ruiz asked DOA for an update on the Farmland Restoration Program legislation.

### B. Soil Health Committee

Ruiz reported. The Committee met in June and discussed several topics. Main discussion over the work on the Soil Health Action Plan. The new outline was designed by the intern, Shelley Rose, sent back to the writers to fill out the sections that they oversee. Cynthia R. is working on the Wetlands section. Lilian and Shelley are having weekly meetings. Other topics included a discussion led by Savageau and Kip Kolsinkas about preservation of prime and important lands in the CT River Valley. Denise pointed out that it is an action of the work plan to work on that important topic of CT Central Valley's preservation of farmland.

### C. ENVIROTHON

Shapiro reported. The event at the Kellogg Environmental Center in Derby went well and the weather was cooperative. There was a new winner, Nonnewaugh High School. They're getting ready to go to Canada for the Final competition and members were asked to contribute with swag. Both Jocelyn Lahey and Shelly Rose volunteered this year.

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

Savageau reported. DEEP has received all the comments and is working on addressing them. Expect completion of both documents by September. The Council will work with the DEEP on delivering training on the new materials. We may hold a statewide conference on stormwater management, and also regional trainings on the E&S Control Guidelines in cooperation with the conservation districts.

### E. Grant Updates

#### a. 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 Forest 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. With a 50% match, we will have \$350k to work on forest and riparian restoration statewide. The official award announcement was not made yet but the grant ranked was ranked high by USFS.

#### b. 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. The soft roll out will happen in the summer, with the first workshop to present the tool scheduled for Sep 16. Ruiz reported on Local Work Groups. The Council received funds from the NRCS to develop LWGs in CT. An informational workshop is scheduled for July 10 so that Districts can start to prepare to hold two work groups, one in eastern and one in western CT.

c. NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Savageau explained the grant to members. For the 2023 round, we are looking to complement the funds that we requested for technical assistance and outreach.

d.

e. LISS Watershed Operations Grant – Council/DEEP

Savageau reported. The contract was just signed by the Council and the DEEP, and we are in the process of putting together an advisory group 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

Mullins reported. ECCD submitted two large agriculture infrastructure proposals for 1.5MM each for free stall barn with manure management in north Stonington and another for a large silage pad in Bolten CT. Shapiro reported. NCCD submitted an agway storage project for just under \$1MM in Broad Brook to supplement 319 and EQIP funds around \$1MM also. Rabinowitz reported. NWCD submitted for a nutrients management project at Freund farm, this time under \$1MM that will supplement EQIP funds. Savageau mentioned that one of the things we are asking for on the Farm Bill is to increase the EQIP allocation per farm to build infrastructure for nutrient management, which is one of the main challenges of the dairy industry in CT. Savageau praised the work of the districts in supporting this very important need in our state. 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: Melissa Mostowy reported.**

- The DEEP is hiring three new analysts.

### **B. DOA: Simon Levesque reported.**

- The DOA hired Eileen Underwood, who's processing all climate smart grants. She may join us at our next meeting, and she may be the new DOA representative to the Council. Eileen has expertise in watershed management and would be a great addition to the Council.

### **C. NRCS: reported.**

- NRCS Regional Conservationist John Holbert visited CT responsible for the NE states. He toured Growers Direct and other farms, one wildlife farm and a dairy.
- New hires include interns and permanent employees. A new State Engineer was finally hired, and the NRCS is very excited to see that position filled.
- Conservation Planning and Support Agreements: applications are closed, 5 applications totaling 5 MM were received. Awards will be announced in mid-July.
- ACEP-ALE: DOA was certified to manage and enter into agreements in CT, increasing the reach of this program for the NRCS and the DOA's ability to close on easements.
- Headquarters is in the process of trying to streamline the review process by increasing the threshold for projects to be analyzed within the state from 1MM to 3MM. They're encouraging other entities to get certified.
- A new CT Soil Survey will be released in September with updated farmland classifications. Towns will be notified of the changes.

**D. CT RC&D: Jocelyn Lahey reported.**

- Sarah Leighton was hired as agricultural programs coordinator.
- Hired 6 Job Jumpstart employees.
- Annual Meeting will happen at Bishop's Orchards on June 27th.
- Preparing a sub-grant program for the Department of Agriculture Smart Ag Grant.
- Waiting on SBA funding to work with Veteran Farmers.
- She worked on her first site visit for an ERT report in Plainfield.

**E. NWCD: Cynthia Rabinowitz reported.**

- Karen Nelson is going to retire, and the districts is looking to recruit a replacement.
- Annette Lott, Ag Tech, is doing very well in the position. She works part time.
- Also losing another natural resource person (part time) so the district will have a part-time position open later this year.
- Kicking off the summer children's gardening programs at two libraries: Beardsley and Milford.

**F. ECCD: Dan Mullins reported.**

- Little River Watershed Plan Update: anticipate will have a first draft to make public in July for comment.
- Reported a shortage of funding to build a fishway at ".. Dam". DEEP was able to find another \$100,000 of the Mohawk Northeast Mitigation Fund.
- Still waiting on the contract from the LISFF for the free stall barn in Lebanon.

**G. NCCD: Joanna Shapiro reported.**

- Wrapping up work on the LISFF project for the update to the North Branch Park River Watershed Plan, making it more dynamic and accessible and at the same time acceptable to the EPA.
- Holding the first large advisory committee meeting, which will be more of a public meeting. Looking for large green infrastructure projects and different ideas of how they want to mitigate flooding issues.
- Kept extremely busy with town work at solar inspections which have really increased, now at 5 sites.

**H. CRCCD: Denise Savageau reported.**

- Applied to LISFF for an ag waste project.
- Funds have been allocated for looking at Hydrilla on the Connecticut River- there's going to be a stakeholder group meeting June 29.
- Hiring one staff to help with municipal outreach and some of the other work that needs to be done in the district.

**I. CACD/NACD: Denise Savageau reported.**

- Savageau followed the legislative session.
- Savageau seats on the Water Planning Council advisory group as well as at the Long Island sound futures and Long Island Sound Citizens advisory committee. They are updating the comprehensive management plan for Long Island sound, and one of the things that was brought

up in particular is to work with the watersheds, not only from the nutrient management perspective but watershed management overall.

- Savageau attended the first meeting of the newly formed Water Resources and Climate Change Committee.
- On the Water Planning Council advisory group, Kelsey Sudol was named to the State Water Plan Implementation team.
- Savageau will attend the NACD Annual Meeting in North Dakota.
- The NE Regional meeting is in Portland Maine September 17 through the 20th so please plan on attending.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

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