



Minutes of the Regular Meeting –December 19, 2024  
ZOOM MEETING <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9557521162>  
Meeting ID: 955 752 1162 +1 929 205 6099

1. Call to order: 10:00 a.m. by Denise Savageau, Chair.  
Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD), Melissa Mostowy (DEEP), Simon Levesque (DOAG), Amy Harder (UConn Extension), Leigh Whittinghill (CAES), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), Jane Brawerman (CRCCD). Ex-officio members: Tom Morgart (NRCS), Jocelyn Lahey (CTRC&D). Staff: Lilian Ruiz (CSWC), Azmiri Jalil (CSWC Intern), Chris Sullivan (SWCD), Kate Preston (CRCCD).
2. INTRODUCTION  
Denise Savageau opened the meeting, did a round of introductions and confirmed the quorum.
  - A. Minutes – Minutes of 09/19/24 were approved as presented as per Robert’s Rule and placed on file.
  - B. Treasurer’s Report  
Savageau and Ruiz reported. The Financial report for December 9, 2024, was reviewed. Motion to approve by A. Harder; J. Shapiro seconded. Unanimously approved and placed on file.
  - C. Chairman’s Report.  
Savageau noted that there were no significant updates for the Chairman’s Report, as most topics were already covered in the meeting.
3. NEW BUSINESS
  - A. Meeting Schedule for 2025  
Due to scheduling conflicts, the proposed dates for the following year are September 18, December 18, March 19, and June 18.
  - B. Siting Council Review  
The Council and conservation districts submitted recommendations emphasizing the need to consider water resource protection, agricultural land preservation, and updated siting guidelines. Key concerns included insufficient attention to public drinking water supply watersheds and the balance between consumer impact and environmental integrity. Lilian Ruiz noted that the Conservation Law Foundation’s comments focused on increasing stakeholder involvement and addressing environmental justice concerns. Additional recommendations included updating outdated guidelines, expanding watershed assessments, and considering long-term economic impacts in siting decisions.
  - C. DEEP Cost Share Program  
Savageau shared that DEEP Forestry received a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Forest Service to support forest landowners, including those not involved in the EQIP program. The Council will help distribute approximately \$3 million of these funds. DEEP is working to determine the best method for passing the

funds directly to landowners. Savageau also highlighted the efforts of Andrea Urbano and Todd Bobowick in securing the grant.

#### D. Grant Opportunities

Savageau shared information about the DEEP Urban and Riparian Corridor Restoration Grant Program, which is available for 501(c)(3) nonprofits. Chris Sullivan confirmed that the funding is from DEEP, not pass-through funds. Melissa Mostowy also updated the group on other grant opportunities, including the Non-Source Program and Urban Community Forest Grants. The RFP for both grants is open until February 13, 2025, and January 31, 2025, respectively.

### 4. OLD BUSINESS

#### A. Legislative Updates.

Savageau highlighted key legislative concerns, including funding for the Passports to the Parks program, which may be addressed in the upcoming session. She stressed the need to monitor legislation and coordinate efforts among funded entities, suggesting a fact sheet by January to showcase leveraged funding. She also noted the inability to pass the climate change bill in the last session, impacting nature-based solutions, but expects new environmental legislation, including potential bills on riparian zones and inland wetland commission training. Affordable housing remains a major topic, particularly its intersection with land use regulations. Efforts to weaken wetland protections under the guise of promoting affordable housing were defeated last year but may resurface. She emphasized the need for collaboration between environmental and housing advocates to ensure sustainable development. Additionally, she raised concerns over DEEP's reliance on federal grants and ongoing underfunding, making it difficult to secure resources for critical programs. Efforts are underway to address DEEP's funding challenges, including discussions with legislators and strategies to match federal grants. Legislative priorities and updates will be shared as they become available.

#### B. Training for Conservation and Inland Wetland Commissions and Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines

Savageau discussed the need for enhanced training programs for the Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commission, and erosion sediment control guidelines. This topic has gained attention from a legislative perspective and was a major focus at the CACIWC meeting.

#### C. LISS Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Update.

Savageau shared that the Long Island Sound Study is updating its Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP), and a major achievement is the inclusion of watershed health as a key objective. Savageau is serving on this workgroup, and she was tasked with organizing a subgroup on nature-based solutions to bring together experts in watershed management and nonpoint source pollution.

#### D. Soil Health Committee

Ruiz provided an update on the Soil Health Committee's efforts. A clean draft will be sent to the original authors for revisions in early January. Some outdated information still needs updating, and the committee is seeking additional authors, particularly for the recreational spaces section. They also need more resources, especially graphic support, to enhance the document's presentation. The idea is to apply for a grant to assist with the graphic design. Additionally, they plan to seek feedback from the DEEP on the plan. Savageau proposed seeking funding to finalize the soil health plan as part of the broader watershed health strategy. She suggested collaborating with UConn on this initiative, which could help raise awareness of the connection between soil health and watershed health. The goal is to develop a soil health strategy that could support grant applications and guide future efforts.

## E. ENVIROTHON

C. Sullivan reported increased school participation in workshops. The next workshop, focused on aquatics, will take place on January 18 at the Connecticut River Academy. Additionally, a grant was received to create education kits on aquatics, soils, forestry, and wildlife for schools to borrow. The state competition is scheduled for May 22 at Indian Rock Preserve in Bristol. Chris also announced that Connecticut will host the international Envirothon competition in 2028, bringing around 600 participants to the state. Volunteers may be needed for this event.

## F. Grant Updates

### a) DoAG Grant: Conservation Planning for PDR Easement Holders

Ruiz requested PDR easement data from Jamie to support conservation planning efforts with DOAG. Before providing technical assistance, background work is needed, including mapping easements and assessing planning requirements. Savageau highlighted the need for a workload assessment, as the number of farmers in the PDR program lacking NRCS funding is unclear. DOAG may fund this assessment. S. Levesque from DOAG provided updates on stewardship efforts, noting staffing challenges in managing over 50,000 PDR acres. While progress has been made on NRCS deadlines, more conservation planning is needed. DOAG is adopting new stewardship software alongside hiring new staff.

### b) NACD Grants

- US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration

Savageau reported that the project spans several years, with a tentative end date around 2028, allowing time for execution. The funding supports restoration work that ties into the broader Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan, addressing key environmental issues such as climate change, flood control, water quality, and habitat restoration. Savageau also highlighted the success of the NACD's annual meeting in November, which brought together stakeholders from the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic Forest and Water Partnership to discuss the interconnectedness of forests and water management, further advancing the grant's goals.

- NACD Technical Assistant Grants

Ruiz shared that the NACD awarded the TA 2024 grant for technical assistance, ensuring funding for conservation districts through 2025. Although some funds were rearranged, the grant secures technical assistance for now. Additionally, a grant from NRCS to hire project assistants for district offices has resulted in two assistants already hired, with more pending as districts review candidates. Recruitment has been completed, and interviews will be arranged based on district preferences. So far, everything is progressing smoothly with the grants.

### c) LISS Watershed Operations Grant- Council/DEEP

Savageau provided an update on the LISS Watershed Operations Grant (Council/DEEP), mentioning that the final report has been submitted to DEEP, and there is still a small amount of funding, \$25,000, that is in the process of being contracted with DEEP. This funding will be used to refine the plan and work closely with DEEP staff focused on Long Island Sound to identify areas for restoration. She also pointed out that the Council is now required to have liability insurance, which had not been previously necessary, and they are working on obtaining quotes for insurance and addressing other contracting requirements. The plan will be further adjusted based on this collaboration.

## AGENCY REPORTS

### A. DEEP: Melissa Mostowy reported.

- a. [DEEP Programs Grants and Financial Assistance](#) Web Page is a good place to check for funding opportunities. A few that may be of interest are highlighted:
- b. [Nonpoint Source Program](#) is accepting proposals for Grants under Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act. Grants are awarded for projects that address Nonpoint Source impacts in surface waters including creation and implementation of approved Watershed Based Plans. Typical maximum awards are under \$500,000 from a total available of approximately \$1.2 million. Proposals may be submitted by any interested public or private organization. RFP Closes February 13, 2025.
- c. [Urban Community Forest Grants](#)
- d. The Urban and Community Forestry Planning Grant Program is available to support projects that will help local governmental entities and non-profit organizations collect baseline data that can be used to inform future forest management decisions. RFP Closes January 31, 2025.
- e. [Urban Forested Natural Area and Riparian Corridor Restoration Grant Program](#)
- f. The Urban Forested Natural Area and Riparian Corridor Restoration Grant Program is available to help support local land managers in their efforts to address forest health issues by providing funding that can support management interventions to promote the health and resilience of urban natural forested areas and riparian corridors. RFP Closes January 31, 2025.

**B. DOAG : Simon Levesque reported**

Simon Levesque shared that the Department of Agriculture is closing the deadline for the Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) program, with 5-7 projects expected to receive federal funding. Stewardship work is currently on hold while finishing these projects. Simon is waiting to hear about upcoming grant deadlines for January or February and noted that Eileen, who is currently absent, will return to work on the Climate Smart Grant. In the meantime, Holly Lalime can be contacted for questions about the Climate Smart Grant.

**C. NRCS: Tom Morgart reported.**

Thomas Morgart shared that they are working hard to obligate funds faster than last year, with \$2.5 million obligated so far compared to \$84,000 at this point last year. They have about \$21 million in total financial assistance funding for EQIP, including \$13.5 million in regular EQIP and \$7.6 million in EQIP IRA. Currently, they are processing 292 applications. For CSP, they have \$3 million in total funding and 56 applications. Thomas emphasized that there is still opportunity for people to get contracts in both EQIP and CSP, with the possibility of additional rounds to ensure all funds are utilized in Connecticut. He also highlighted the significance of CSP for small farms, where a \$4,000 contract could double the income for many farmers. Additionally, Thomas mentioned the opportunity for funding through ASAP with \$3.4 million in regular easement programs and \$1.5 million in IRA. Lastly, he noted the potential for working with Land Trusts and forestry applications, especially in areas where conservation work is less common.

He also shared that NRCS would be hiring a new agronomist, who would start in January. They are also transitioning from a paper-based to a digital system and are looking for recommendations on companies that specialize in document scanning, as they need to convert a large amount of paper records into digital format.

**D. UConn Extension: Amy Harder Reported**

The annual report on outcomes and impact for 2024 will be collected from extension faculty in January 2025. While details won't be available immediately, relevant indicators will align with this group's focus. Sharing insights at an upcoming meeting—either in March or June—would be useful for collaboration and expanding partnerships based on the data.

**E. CAES: Leigh Whittinghill reported.**

Events:

2 nd Annual Postdoctoral Symposium, hosted by our Postdoc Association. It includes posters and presentations and judged so that there is a winner in both categories.

More info from station news on the winners: "Jessica Brown, Ph.D. (Dept. of Environmental Science & Forestry) won the oral presentation competition with her talk "Understanding host-tick interactions in three small mammal species" followed by Jing Yu-an, Ph.D. (Dept. of Environmental Science & Forestry) with her talk "Nanopore Sequencing for Corn Rhizosphere Soil Microbiome Affected by Phosphorous Nanoparticle Fertilizers". Poster presentation winner was Stephen Taerum, Ph.D. (Dept. of Plant Pathology & Ecology) presenting "Protists help shape plant microbiomes" and followed by Godfrey Indinda Nattoh, Ph.D. (Dept. of Entomology) presenting "The scavenger receptor protein class B type 1 (SR-B1) mediates dengue virus infection of Aedes aegypti mosquito" and Ravikumar Patel, Ph.D. (Dept. of Plant Pathology & Ecology) presenting "Soil protists harbor diverse novel bacteria that modulate growth via auxin signaling"."

#### Grants:

New grants have been won by station staff on:

- Tick ecology and control
- Salt marsh resilience and sediment additions
- PFAs uptake and accumulation by plants and animals
- Nanoplastics
- Aquatic invasive species (2 grants)
- Fire blight
- Soil micro predators for pathogen control
- Spotted wing drosophila
- Urban Agriculture- MultiState Hatch grant for the northeast region.

Some of these are smaller grants, others are larger grants for which CAES will gain a portion of the awarded funds for research.

#### Publications:

This years publications total about 150. This quarters topics include:

- Nanotech and fertilizers, plant stress reduction, and nanopesticides
- Ticks and Tick bourn illness
- Mosquito bourn illness
- Monarch butterfly movement ecology
- Hemlock Wooley adelgid
- Plant pathology, including fire blight
- Food safety
- Fertilizers and biochar
- Invasive species
- Forestry
- Fungi
- Nanoplastics

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

Lahey shared updates on several ongoing projects, including finishing a report for the town of Seymour after site visits with conservation district partners and Connecticut DEEP. They also have a request from the town of Hebron for a preliminary meeting and are tailoring Environmental Review Team (ERT) services for land trusts. Jocelyn discussed collaboration with NRCS programs and the hiring of four conservation soil technicians. Their soil health work continues, including the Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Grant, with completed sub-grants entering a monitoring period. All climate-smart agriculture equipment-sharing hubs are active, with five positions available. The Veteran Grown Connecticut initiative's documentary premiered, and a new veteran-to-veteran mentoring program has

launched. The team is working towards meeting the REAP deadline and technical assistance grant, as well as establishing the Airline State Park Trail Alliance, which now has its first board of directors and is in the process of reviewing bylaws.

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

Shapiro reported on key project updates. The Park River North Branch Watershed-Based Plan update, revising the 2010 plan, is in its final stages and set for completion by year-end. Fuss & O'Neill is leading the plan and green infrastructure designs, while Trust for Public Land and Mary Rickle Pelletier are handling stakeholder outreach. Three community meetings were held, with the most recent one conducted virtually, allowing for broader participation and recording for future sharing. Sarah Huang from CT DEEP contributed an environmental justice focus, bringing in new community voices. Given strong community interest, ongoing engagement with neighborhood organizations will be essential for project implementation. The plan, funded by the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, will be submitted for approval by CT DEEP and EPA. Additionally, an agricultural waste project under the same fund faced delays, with a building permit finally secured in October. Due to weather uncertainties, construction is postponed until spring, with funding deadlines creating urgency, particularly with 319 funds expiring in August. Lastly, planning is underway for an edible riparian buffer or food forest at the Tolland County Agricultural Center to support outreach and education, with opportunities for participation in its design and planting.

**H. Eastern Connecticut Conservation District: Daniel Mullins reported**

Mullins reported on ongoing projects and recent grant awards. They completed a fishway in Shoeville Brook, restoring migratory fish passage to Amos Lake and Avi Pond, with a successful trial run conducted. Ongoing projects include a freestall barn with manure management facilities funded by an \$820,000 Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant and another freestall barn and manure storage facility in North Stonington, supported by \$1.3 million from the Future Fund. Recent grant awards include \$1.2 million from CT DEEP to modify a dam and reconnect river habitat in Willimantic, \$1.5 million from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund for a 4.5-acre concrete silage pad and manure storage in Baltic, and \$545,000 from CT DEEP's 319 Grant Program for BMP installations in the Wequetequock Cove Watershed, with the Town of Stonington providing a \$105,000 cash match and additional in-kind contributions. Mullins also acknowledged NRCS, particularly Jim Gavin and Chris Dodge, for their support and collaboration.

**I. Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District: Jane Brawerman reported**

Brawerman reported on recent activities, including the publication of the annual report and the November annual meeting, which highlighted the Middletown Cultivating Justice Program and the Miller Bridge Community Farm Project. Preparations are underway for the annual plant sale in May. Monitoring continues for five solar projects, with Kate and ECCD's engineer overseeing them. Kelly is working with agricultural producers under the NACD grant and has taken on additional projects after an NRCS conservation planner's departure. Plans are also in place to update and reprint the invasive plant guide due to high demand.

She raised concerns about severe stream erosion affecting landowners, emphasizing the growing need for funding to address this issue. Many landowners lack resources to stabilize stream banks, and the problem is escalating. Savageau acknowledged the concern, referencing programs like EWP and PL 566, which lack state matching funds. While some cases qualify for emergency funding, not all do, despite the increasing urgency of stream erosion.

Joanna Shapiro mentioned past discussions about securing a state match for EWP funding and inquired about hiring a lobbyist or legislative liaison for the "Passport to Parks" initiative. Savageau provided an



update, noting that the initiative is progressing well and that she will consult Senator Cathy Osten, who is leading the effort. Mullins confirmed Austin's continued support, emphasizing the significant funding the initiative has leveraged in recent years.

**J. SWCD: Chris Sullivan reported**

Chris Sullivan (SWCD) reported on key projects and funding updates. They received funding from UConn Sea Grant to update and enhance the Norwalk Watershed-Based Plan, with Tighe and Bond as a subcontractor. A kickoff meeting was held with stakeholders in the Norwalk River Watershed. Another kickoff meeting took place with CT DEEP, Boston O'Neill, and the Town of East Haven for a green infrastructure project funded by the 319 Grant, focusing on BMPs and buffer restoration along the Farm River. In partnership with UConn's stormwater core team, five Lower Fairfield County communities—New Canaan, Wilton, Fairfield, Westport, and Norwalk—are selecting green stormwater infrastructure projects for installation, with grant funding supporting implementation. Two towns have made their selections, and subcontractors will be hired. Additionally, they wrapped up its water monitoring season, with UConn interns compiling data and preparing reports and presentations for municipal staff, covering sampling conducted along the Quinnipiac and Mill Rivers.

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

Savageau highlighted the focus on federal appropriations and the Farm Bill. She mentioned the potential integration of IRA funding into the appropriations bill for the several areas where this type of funding provides TA and other services (forestry, watersheds, etc). Cappiali and Savageau will attend the NACD Annual meeting in SLC in February. She also mentioned an upcoming New England leadership meeting scheduled for March 20th and 21st, which will address topics like equipment hubs, an update on the Northeast Mid Atlantic Forest and Water Partnership, and federal funding updates. Additionally, she shared updates from the Connecticut Water Planning Council and the Long Island Sound Advisory Council, including progress on a source water protection white paper and changes to the Long Island Sound Study's name. Finally, she emphasized the importance of effectively communicating the Council's work by creating clear, two-sided fact sheets that show ;leveraged funds and partnerships created.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – no comments

6. ADJOURN –The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 PM.