



Minutes of the Regular Meeting – October 3rd, 2025
ZOOM MEETING <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9557521162>
Meeting ID: 955 752 1162 +1 929 205 6099

I. Call to order and introductions

Attendance: Members: Denise Savageau (CRCCD Board), Cheryl Cappiali (SWCD), Simon Levesque (DoAg), Amy Harder (UConn Extension), Leigh Whittinghill (CAES), Dan Mullins (ECCD), Joanna Shapiro (NCCD), Annette Lott (NWCD). Ex-officio members: Christian Swanson (CTRC&D). Staff: Lilian Ruiz (CSWC), Chris Sullivan (SWCD).

The meeting was called to order on Zoom at 10:05 AM. A quorum was confirmed and the agenda for October 3, 2025 was followed as posted.

II. Approve minutes

Minutes of the prior meeting were approved as corrected (Marvelwood School). Motion by Mullins; second by Harder; carried unanimously.

III. Treasurer's report

The Treasurer's Report and Financial Report were reviewed and accepted. Motion by Shapiro; second by Harder; carried unanimously.

IV. Chairman's report

The Chair highlighted momentum on nature-based solutions across partner agencies, previewed items later on the agenda (legislative updates; Long Island Sound Partnership CCMP), and noted multiple active and upcoming grant opportunities relevant to districts and partners.

V. New Business

A. Nominations/Elections

The Chair noted the annual nominations/elections cycle; asked for nominations, particularly for vice-chair to be voted in December. The chair and secretary treasurer agreed to continue to serve. In their respective roles Motion to elect Denise Savageau and Cheryl Cappiali by Shapiro, second by Harder; carried unanimously. **The Chair will circulate a role description for the Vice-Chair position.**

B. Council website

Members were invited to review the new page on the council website. Council is hiring a web designer to refresh the council website. **Estimates should be in by October 31st**, so a contractor can be engaged in November.

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C. Grant opportunities

The Council circulated current opportunities, including NACD offerings (district-eligible) and a consolidated list from CIRCA/DEEP/LISS; members were asked to share additional leads.

Follow-up: continue sharing notices; districts to pursue some grant sources directly.

VI. Old Business

A. Legislative updates

a. Training for Conservation and Inland Wetland Commissions: the training mandate passed; DEEP has not yet convened the working group—outreach to DEEP leadership is underway.

b. Nature-based Solutions: H.B. 5004 enacted a framework now being organized by DEEP (Eric Hammerling) with interagency coordination and stakeholder input.

c. Riparian Buffers: a short-timeline legislative workgroup (Rep. Mary Mushinsky to lead/co-chair) will develop policy recommendations; **districts were asked to supply example project sites (successes and needs).**

B. Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan update

The “Long Island Sound Study” has been renamed the Long Island Sound Partnership and adopted a new CCMP emphasizing healthy watersheds and work in upper basins; the Chair will chair the related healthy watersheds/nature-based solutions workgroup.

C. Soil Health Committee

The Soil Health Plan remains a Council priority; members noted the need to keep soils visible beyond agriculture and to secure final edits/graphics and stakeholder recommendations to bring the plan to completion. Kim Stoner has joined the committee as an editor. The plan will serve as the soils content for the Nature Based Solutions Plan DEEP is writing. **Follow up: set dates for the completion of the plan.**

D. Envirothon

Connecticut Envirothon launched its school-year program; advisor workshop held in September; forestry and aquatics workshop set for November 8 (Chatfield Hollow); state competition planned for May 21 (location TBD). **Volunteers are welcome.** The topic for 2026 in NPS Pollution, host might help pay for room and board. Connecticut continues planning to host the International Envirothon in July 2028, including site and fundraising outreach. Sullivan called members to join the committee.

E. Grant updates

- NACD – USFS Landscape Scale Restoration: grant remains intact; **riparian restoration implementation planning to be scheduled with Districts.**

- NACD Technical Assistance Grants: 2022 round will be fully expended in final reporting; 2023 spending window extended; 2024 MOU executed with reduced award aligned to billing pace. Funds unlikely to be spent before the deadline. Outreach plan to be executed by contractor. Lack of local and regional training is the holdup to certification of conservation planners.

- NRCS Conservation Planning Support Grant: one planner continues in ECCD; broader hiring and outreach components depend on resolving IRA-funding constraints; NRCS exploring swaps

to enable additional hiring. Outreach funding available to do Local Work Group meetings using contractor.

- LISS Watershed Operations Grant (Council/DEEP): Completed at the end of August 25. Phase 2 (\$25k) is underway to refine the draft with DEEP's Restoration and Water Quality units. Will hold working sessions with DEEP.
- DEEP Forestry – TSP and Cost-Share: Council collaborating with DEEP/NRCS to expand TSP capacity and provide cost-share to close practice gaps for private woodlandowners; programs are moving forward with DEEP Forestry leads.
- DoAg Grant (Conservation Planning for PDR Easement Holders): discussions continue with DoAg to scope conservation planning and support for easement holders; follow-up pending. Meeting with Districts to discuss.
- Other Grants – Districts: District project highlights included watershed plan completion/implementation steps, Long Island Sound Futures Fund construction milestones, and 319-funded green infrastructure and monitoring efforts.

VII. Agency Reports

- DoAg:
 - Agency management is engaged in the State's Conservation and Development Plan; additional details can be provided on request.
 - Connecticut FarmLink has been revived as a landowner–farmer matchmaking program; Serena Thibodeau is leading updates and outreach, with increased field engagement helping connect participants.
 - Representation change: Levesque will step back from the Council; Alice Coleman (stewardship professional, geologist, organic farmer) will be the proposed new agency representative. She will be introduced at the next quarterly meeting; formal appointment documentation can be provided if needed.
- UConn Cooperative Extension:
 - Former dean Indrajeet accepted the Provost role at the University of Arkansas and departed this summer. Dean search is underway: listening sessions held last week; a formal job description will be posted soon. Referrals welcomed—please share qualified candidates with the published search committee or via Amy Harder, who can connect you with the chair.
 - Renata Bertote is departing; she led CLEAR's Land Use Academy, a critical role for the program. Rehiring is a priority, though UConn's current budget constraints add extra steps to replacement hiring.
 - Statewide survey (open to all CT residents) gathers perceptions on priority issues for UConn Extension; takes <10 minutes to complete. Results guide programming and resource allocation toward high-priority areas identified by residents. Survey also tracks broader community well-being topics (e.g., substance abuse) to understand context affecting Extension's work, even if not core program areas. Link will be shared; members are encouraged to complete and disseminate.
- CAES:
 - Plant Health Fellows program (in conjunction with Southern Connecticut State University)- summer activities went well, the mentors that I spoke with felt that we had a good cohort of students this year.

- Grant funding has ended for that program, while there is interest among scientists and SCSU partners to continue, we are waiting for a call for proposals that has not yet come
 - 150th anniversary- dinner was held on September 24th. It was well attended by CAES staff, as well as guests from local and state government, who spoke about their ongoing support for CAES and its activities.
 - We do have some federal grants that may be affected by the shutdown, but CAES leadership is working to ensure that public facing services are not disrupted and that all staff funded by federal grants can continue to work during the shutdown.
- RC&D: Annual meeting held at Massaro Community Farm (Climate-Smart Agriculture project); awards presented; biennial impact report published.
- CACD:
- Signed onto Rivers Alliance letter urging DEEP to apply science in the wakesurfing permit appeal; coordinated with NWCD leadership before signing.
 - Ongoing representation on the Long Island Sound Partnership Citizens Advisory Committee and the State Water Planning Council; focus on nature-based solutions and source-water protection.
 - Source Water Protection white paper completed; exploring next steps and district applications.
 - National engagement: attended NACD Summer Board and Northeast Regional meetings; monitoring federal developments affecting districts.
 - Communications: NACD Monday email distribution to districts resumed after a brief delivery glitch.
 - CACIWIC conference (Nov 15): CACD plans to sponsor/host a joint table with the Council and districts; districts asked to advise if attending or presenting.
- ECCD
- Federal shutdown has paused a major agricultural project in Lebanon because NRCS staff must be on-site to observe concrete pours; without NRCS, concrete work cannot proceed. If concrete isn't poured by the end of October, the pour will be delayed until spring, creating a significant schedule hold. Non-NRCS components can continue, but overall progress is constrained; outlook uncertain pending federal reopening.
- SWCD
- Running a series of skill share sessions with urban growers in Greater New Haven. Topics have been IPM, aquaponics, bee keeping amongst others. Working on a financial series that will include grant writing and creating a business plan. Partnering with Gather New Haven, but also looking for additional grant funding to continue work and pay for intern to stay with SWCD.
 - We ran our water quality lab all summer with two interns collecting data weekly. Going to submit data to CT DEEP and EPA for inclusion in reporting and impaired waters list
 - LISFF racial equity grant is moving towards completion. SWCD is administering the grant and each District is working on implementation projects. These range from kayak tours of a pond, pond cleanup event, rain barrel projects, a pollinator/rain garden installation and a boat ramp installation at a municipal park.
 - SWCD is also moving forward with a green stormwater infrastructure project at the municipal hockey rink in East Haven. This project is 319 funded and came out of the development of the Farm River Watershed Based plan. Moving to the municipal permitting process at this time.
- NCCD:

- 319 / LISFF Broad Brook Agricultural Waste Construction - Project is nearly complete after 9 years of planning and obtaining funding and procuring contractors. The structures are built, the 319 portion is complete, some final aspects being funded by LISFF and EQIP will be completed by the end of the year.
- LISFF 5-district Environmental Justice grant - since funding is still in place, and grant was extended until the end of the year, we have made great progress at NCCD in forming a new relationship with the Boys and Girls Club of Hartford, which includes 5 different locations. We are working on water-quality based educational programs, as well as enhancing plantings at some of their sites to filter stormwater runoff.
- North Branch Park River Watershed - now that the LISFF-funded watershed plan update is complete, we have pivoted to forming a task force and trying to move toward implementation of projects. Implementation is challenging given the size of the projects proposed and the largely agency and corporate ownership of properties.
- NWCD:
 - Staff/board attended NCF-Envirothon in Calgary to build experience for CT's 2028 hosting commitment.
 - Municipal assistance requests spiked this quarter; continuing strong ties with town funders.
 - Bantam Watershed Coalition: partnered on a resident "pledge" campaign launched with BLPA's 100-year anniversary.
 - Hosted regional knotweed best-management-practices conference for town/public works crews.
 - Supported a wake surfing ban for Lake Waramaug via board letter to the three abutting towns; matter now with DEEP amid appeals.
 - Annual meeting held; summer "gardening club" programs (youth–adult) completed successfully.
 - Manure-storage project: contract signed for a new NW CT farm; aiming to break ground spring 2026. First required practice (likely silt-fence install) depends on earthwork design and engineering; NRCS engineering capacity constraints are causing delays.
- CRCCD:(not presented during the meeting)
 - Staffing: Kate Preston departed for CFPA; hopes to stay involved with Envirothon. Backfill on hold while overall staffing is evaluated, with the director planning to retire in June 2026.
 - Invasive Plant Guide: 5th edition completed with CIPWG support; printed July. New additions: shrub honeysuckles, Callery/Bradford pear, Japanese honeysuckle, and Chinese/Japanese wisteria. ~6,000 of 12,500 hard copies already distributed.
 - Conservation Technical Assistance: Ongoing collaboration with NRCS for producer/forestland planning is paused due to the federal shutdown. Kelly remains lead planner; workload has increased amid NRCS staffing reductions.
 - LISFF Urban Waters Grant (New Britain): Partnership with New Britain ROOTS, Batterson Park Conservancy, CT River Conservancy, and CT DEEP Fisheries (Urban Fishing) to connect youth/residents with local waters, raise awareness of water-quality impacts, and build stewardship.
 - Environmental Film Series (2025–2026): All-water theme. First screening—"A Reflection of Life," Monday, October 13, 2025, 7:00 pm at Wesleyan—centers on Pacific Northwest water issues and Indigenous voices.
 - Youth Education: Delivered multiple activities in Middletown; recent "Freddie the Fish" nonpoint-source lesson at STEAM Train's Adventures in Learning (pre-K–6).

- Water Quality Monitoring: Completed 12th season of Coginchaug River bacteria monitoring with CT River Watch Program volunteers.
- Solar Projects: Continuing stormwater inspections for large solar developments with ECCD engineering support; three sites achieved final stabilization this summer; four active sites now in Colchester, Marlborough, Durham, and Madison.

VIII. Public participation

No public comments were offered.

IX. Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:56 AM.