



## State Conservation Committee

PO Box 2042 • Concord NH 03302-2042  
nh.gov/SCC

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – 9:00am to 12:00pm  
Hosted by Department of Natural & Cultural Resources  
Concord, NH

### APPROVED MINUTES

#### **Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff present at Department of Natural & Cultural Resources**

Dea Brickner-Wood, Moose Plate Grant  
Administrator  
Darrel Covell, UNH Cooperative Extension  
Ian Hanley, SCC Executive Director  
Shawn Jasper, NH Department of  
Agriculture, Markets & Food  
Rob Larocque, Merrimack and Hillsborough  
CCDs  
Richard (Dick) Lutz, Rockingham and  
Strafford CCDs  
Betsey McNaughten, NH Department of  
Fish and Game  
Barbara Richter, NH Association of  
Conservation Commissions  
Sabrina Stanwood, NH Department of  
Natural and Cultural Resources  
Pete Throop, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs

#### **Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff Attending via Microsoft Teams**

Donna Hepp, Belknap and Carroll CCDs &  
NH Association of Conservation Districts  
Scott DeBlois, Coös and Grafton CCDs

Jeff Holmes, USDA-Farm Service Agency  
State Executive Director

#### **Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff Not Present:**

Anton Bekkerman, NH Agricultural  
Experiment Station  
Rebekah Lauster, USDA-NRCS Acting  
State Conservationist  
Emily Nichols, NH Department of  
Environmental Services

#### **Guests Present at Department of Natural & Cultural Resources:**

Marques Munis, USDA-NRCS Assistant  
State Conservationist for Programs

#### **Guests via Zoom:**

Pam Gilbert, Grafton CCD  
Whitney Lewis, Coös CCD  
Lisa Morin, Belknap CCD

#### **Minutes Recorder:**

Ian Hanley

Chair Throop opened the meeting at 9:09 am and welcomed the group. In-person and virtual attendees introduced themselves.

### **Minutes of the August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Quarterly Meeting**

*Stanwood moved to approve the minutes from August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Jasper seconded the motion.*

#### **Role Call Vote**

Covell -Aye  
Hepp-Aye  
Jasper-Aye  
Larocque-Aye  
Lutz-Aye  
McNaughten- Aye  
Richter-Aye  
Stanwood-Aye  
Throop- Aye

The motion carries.

### **Supervisor Appointments and Re-appointments**

*Jasper motioned to approve the below listed supervisor nominations received in the past quarter.*

- Scott DeBlois, Coös CCD (re-appointment ending 7/31/2026)
- Haven Neal, Coös CCD (re-appointment ending 7/31/2026)
- Keith Robinson, Coös CCD (new appointment ending 7/31/2025)
- Audra Klumb, Merrimack CCD (re-appointment ending 7/31/2026)
- Si Robertson, Merrimack CCD (re-appointment ending 7/31/2026)

McNaughten seconded the motion. Larocque described the contributions of Klumb and Robertson to Merrimack CCD. Lewis described the contributions of DeBlois, Neal, and Robinson to Coös CCD.

#### **Role Call Vote**

Covell -Aye  
Hepp-Aye  
Jasper-Aye  
Larocque-Aye  
Lutz-Aye  
McNaughten- Aye  
Richter-Aye  
Stanwood-Aye  
Throop- Aye

The motion carries.

## **Review of Updated In-person versus Remote Attendance Requirements**

Hanley discussed updates to NH RSA 91A:2 that went into effect in October. These changes being that the body may choose to allow members attending remotely to count towards quorum, as long as at least 1/3 of the body (4 SCC members) are physically present. He stated that the SCC's Attorney General's Office counsel has said this will need to be voted on for the next meeting at each meeting, if the Committee chooses to utilize the RSA. He went on to say the RSA requires remote attendees to state why they cannot attend in-person, and that the body can choose what reasons are acceptable for remote attendance. Only state-level bodies can utilize this legislation, and so it doesn't apply to conservation districts.

Committee members asked various questions about how the legislation would be applied in practice to the SCC. Committee members achieved consensus about not limiting the acceptable reasons for remote participation. Jasper noted that he hopes people don't use the legislation as a reason not to attend in-person, and that there is a lot of value in meeting in-person. Jasper suggested considering moving the SCC meeting location.

*Jasper moved to authorize Committee members whose physical attendance at the February 2024 SCC meeting is not reasonably practicable, but can attend remotely, to count towards quorum requirements in accordance with NH RSA 91A:2 IV. Covell seconded the motion.*

### **Role Call Vote**

Covell -Aye

DeBlois- Remote connection issue, did not vote.

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

McNaughten- Aye

Richter-Aye

Stanwood-Aye

Throop- Aye

The motion carries.

## **SCC Conservation Moose Plate Grant Program Report and Approval of FY2024 Applications**

Brickner-Wood reported that the SCC received 24 applications from a variety of sources. The Grant Committee met on November 8<sup>th</sup> to provide review applications and provide recommendations. Brickner-Wood took a moment to recognize the work of the Grant Committee members Throop, Stanwood, McNaughten, Richter, Nichols, and Brook Stubbs (NRCS). The recommendation is to fund all 24 applications, with two applications being modified. Brickner-Wood commented on the high quality of the applications, and that this year's total funding awards would be the largest single year on record.

*Jasper made a motion to adopt the recommendation of the Grant Committee: "The Grant Committee recommends to the NH State Conservation Committee to obligate a total of \$670,656*

in NH State Conservation Committee Conservation License Plate Grant funds to the twenty-four (24) applications listed below” (Memo to NH State Conservation Committee from Dea Bricker-Wood, titled “FY2024 Grant Award Recommendations from the SCC Grant Committee,” dated 11/14/23).

**Applications recommended for funding, FY2024:**

1. **Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust**, *Haverhill-Moulton*, \$30,000, Town of Haverhill, Grafton County (Land Conservation project category).
2. **Audubon Society of New Hampshire**, *Bowman Divide Wildlife Crossing Project*, \$30,000. Town of Randolph, Town of Randolph, Coös County (Conservation Planning).
3. **Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust**, *Byron Barton Forest*, \$30,000, Town of Grantham, Sullivan County (Land Conservation).
4. **Bear-Paw Regional Greenways**, *Harkness Conservation Easement*, \$30,000, Town of Epsom, Merrimack County (Land Conservation).
5. **Bear-Paw Regional Greenways**, *Horan Conservation Easement*, \$30,000, Town of Barnstead, Belknap County (Land Conservation).
6. **Belknap County Conservation District**, **\$15,000**. *Belknap Town Forest Plans*, Towns of Belmont, Gilmanston, Meredith, Belknap County (Conservation Planning).
7. **Cheshire County Conservation District**, *No-Till Farming Initiative of Cheshire County*, \$30,000. Town of Walpole, Cheshire County (Best Management Practices).
8. **Chocorua Lake Conservancy**, *Chocorua Lake Eastern Shoreline Stabilization & Restoration*, \$29,175, Town of Tamworth, Carroll County (Soil Conservation and Flooding).
9. **Francestown Land Trust**, *Comley Tract*, \$30,000, Town of Francestown, Hillsborough County (Land Conservation).
10. **Hanover Conservancy**, *Protecting Moose Mountain Forest*, \$30,000, Town of Hanover, Grafton County (Land Conservation).
11. **Lakes Region Conservation Trust**, *Swain Farm Conservation Project*, \$25,000, Town of Sanbornton, Belknap County (Land Conservation).
12. **Town of Lancaster Conservation Commission**, *Lancaster Elementary School Floodplain Restoration*, \$30,000. Town of Lancaster, Coös County (Wildlife Habitat).
13. **Town of Meredith Conservation Commission**, *Meredith Ycas Addition to Page Pond Town Forest*, \$30,000, Town of Meredith, Belknap County (Land Conservation).
14. **Monadnock Conservancy**, *5 Sigma Farm Conservation Easement*, \$30,000, Town of Sullivan, Cheshire County (Land Conservation).
15. **Moose Mountains Regional Greenways**, *MMRG Kimball Conservation Easement Project*, \$20,000 (Land Conservation).
16. **Moose Mountains Regional Greenways**, *MMRG Simpson Conservation Easement Project*, \$25,000, Town of Ossipee and Tuftonboro, Carroll County (Land Conservation).
17. **Northeast Wilderness Trust**, *Children's Woods and Carey Park*, \$18,099, Town of Jaffrey, Cheshire County (Land Conservation).
18. **Rockingham County Conservation District**, *Enhancing Coastal Resiliency at Odiorne Point, Little Harbor Shoreline*, \$28,382. Town of Rye, Rockingham County (Best Management Practices).

19. **Society for the Protection of NH Forests**, *Sugar Bush Farm*, \$30,000, Town of Goffstown, Hillsborough County (Land Conservation).
20. **Society for the Protection of NH Forests**, *Underhill Acres Conservation Easement*, \$30,000, Towns of Bethlehem, Grafton County (Land Conservation).
21. **Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire**, *Mallego Brook Headwater Project*, \$30,000, Town of Barrington, Strafford County (Land Conservation).
22. **The Nature Conservancy, NH Chapter**, *Durham Point Addition – Gsottschneider*, \$30,000, Town of Durham, Strafford County (Land Conservation).
23. **Upper Valley Land Trust**, *Barrett - On The River Farm*, \$30,000, Town of Lyme, Grafton County (Land Conservation).
24. **Upper Valley Land Trust**, *Putnam Farms - Lower Plain*, \$30,000, Town of Charlestown, Sullivan County (Land Conservation).

Lutz seconded the motion.

**Role Call Vote**

Covell -Aye  
 DeBlois-Aye  
 Hepp-Aye  
 Jasper-Aye  
 Larocque-Aye  
 Lutz-Aye  
 McNaughten- Aye  
 Richter-Aye  
 Stanwood-Aye  
 Throop- Aye

The motion carries.

**Update on Agricultural Land Preservation Program**

Jasper reported that HB 221 (2023) was signed into law by Governor Sununu. It will allow the Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food to hold an executory interest in easements and allow the Department right of enforcement. They are currently waiting on the NH Land Trust Coalition to select a nominee for the ALP Program Board to send to the Governor’s Office for approval. Jasper fielded questions about the program stating: funding (~\$750,000) is from the general fund; applications will go to the Program Board as they are received (no annual deadline); and that Jasper is currently the contact person within DAMF, though this will most likely be given to the Assistance Commissioner when they are hired.

**SCC Soil Conservation Budget Review**

Hanley stated that he will be paying more attention to the Soil Conservation budget moving forward as both Moose Plate grant money and Executive Director’s salary and expenses are being drawn from the fund. Hanley, Throop, and Brickner-Wood met with Michelle Thibeault (DAMF) to discuss the status of the Soil Conservation fund in October. The main takeaways from the meeting were that the fund has an adequate balance for both types of expenses, and it is unknown what funds are associated with Moose Plate awards prior to 2019. Throop stated

interest in the fund is also related to potential increases in award size, which is currently \$30,000 per application. Jasper stated he is still working to fund the Executive Director's position through general funds in the next budget cycle. Hanley stated he is looking into grant funds to fund statewide programs which would also help cover some of his administrative costs.

### **Partnerships in Conservation Spotlight: Marques Munis, NRCS**

Marques Munis, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs introduced himself. Munis briefly reviewed NRCS's main programs: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); Agricultural Land Easement Program (ALE); and Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE). Munis answered a variety of questions about these programs. Munis discussed the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) stating there are two upcoming deadlines, one in December and another in May or June. There is national interest in promoting these programs with \$4 billion becoming available. NRCS has updated the grant administration processes in recognition that it has been historically difficult to administer, and this has deterred potential applicants. Requests are capped at \$25 million. RCPP applications can be submitted by municipalities and state agencies. Capacity to manage the RCPP is often a limiting factor for smaller organization/municipalities applicants. RCPP's previous 1:1 match requirement has been removed and replaced with a leverage-based system. Throop suggested that NRCS host public workshops to get people familiar with how RCPP grants operate. Hanley suggested the New Hampshire Land and Water Conservation Coalition could be a potential project that would be a good candidate for RCPP funding, and could be led by the SCC. There was discussion about RCPP grants to support easement work throughout the state.

Munis reported that Acting State Conservationist Rebekah Lauster will be returning to NRCS National Headquarters, and Joe Buford will be the Acting State Conservationist until Becky Ross returns from detail in March.

Throop thanked Munis for speaking to the Committee and called for a brief break.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Hanley discussed a recent conversation with NRCS staff to apply to the Conservation Partners in New Hampshire program. He described preliminary ideas for an application that would fund various programmatic opportunities utilizing his hours as funding leverage. He noted the potential for standardizing Local Work Group (LWG) meetings across the state, noting that it was discussed at the National Association of State Conservation Agencies Annual Meeting that some states receive funding from NRCS for managing the LWG process. He has been thinking about how the process can be standardized, such as having him moderate the LWGs for each district, and then provide analysis from the data that would meet NRCS needs and provide districts with important planning information. This work would build on ongoing work done by some around the state including Dorn Cox, who organized a facilitated LWG meeting in July for Strafford CCD. Other application topics include potential emergency and climate mitigation planning work. He stated he will be developing the application through the next quarter and anticipates having more details to report at the February 2024 meeting.

Hanley stated that he would like to have a subcommittee of SCC members meet to discuss creation of a statement of conservation priorities. This is covered in the long-term strategies and



goals of the current strategic plan. SCC members at the August 2023 meeting indicated the November-February quarter would be better for their schedules. Lutz asked about the age of the strategic plan. Hanley stated that it spans 2000-2025 but was only adopted about a year or so ago. It was suggested that the Committee could adjust the timeframe associated with the plan to align with the date of adoption. Hanley suggested and the Committee reached consensus around discussing it at the May 2024 meeting.

Hanley described a Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration grant application he has been working on with Coös CCD and Trout Unlimited. This grant would fund a staff time for a Project Specialist at Coös CCD as match for county funding being used for the current position. The Project Specialist would lead stream crossing assessment work following the NH Stream Crossing Initiative standards. It would also fund strategic wood additions to at-risk lower-order waterways and preliminary plans for culvert replacements by Trout Unlimited. The application is designed to show alignment with the State's Forest Action Plan. This application is due November 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Conservation District Climate Resilience Grant has opened the application window for FY2024. Applications are due February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Hanley has been involved in various outreach related to the grant program.

### **Discussion of SCC Representatives' Responsibilities**

Lutz discussed the differences in how conservation district representatives on the SCC approach the position and suggested a standardized guideline or job description for conservation district representatives. Hanley asked the guidance for the way they would like to approach this. Throop suggested Hanley discuss with the districts, and develop an initial list of responsibilities, and then convene a subcommittee to discuss prior to the February meeting.

### **Public Comment & Other Business**

Throop opened the floor for any additional business and public comment. None was made.

### **District/ Organization/ Agency Updates**

Districts, agencies, and organizations discussed their particular program highlights.

- McNaughten showed a promotional video that *NH Fish & Game* has produced about the creation of the Glover Farm Wildlife Management Area in Dummer. The video can be found at this link: <https://youtu.be/ThMvvAWSc9E?si=ryvwC3G9x4hAWJez>.
- Stanwood reported that the *NH Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources* Environmental Reviewer is out on maternity leave. She reported that ecologist Chris Kane passed away unexpectedly at the end of September. They will also be submitting an EPA program development grant.
- Lutz said the *Rockingham CCD* has identified a need to address soil and water health issues in the upland watersheds that lead to Great Bay and the ocean.
- Jasper reported that *NH Dept. of Agriculture, Market, and Food* continue to work with NOFA-NH to transition administration of organic certification to NOFA-NH. He reported that the Department will be moving to 1 Granite Place. Date of the move is still unclear, targeting sometime between February-April. The Invasive Species Coordinator has been transitioned to full time, but the part-time position has not been backfilled yet.

- Richter reported about the recent *NH Association of Conservation Commission* Annual conference focusing on wetlands, with David Carroll as the keynote speaker. “Lunch & Learn” program recently finished for the year. Anyone with ideas for spring programs should contact Richter. Richter is working with Fish & Game and UNH Extension on the Community Conservation Cohort program, and this year it will online and open to the public.
- Covell reported that *UNH Cooperative Extension* has hired Emma Tutein to fill the Community Conservation State Specialist position vacancy left by Amanda Stone’s retirement, and has hired Lindsay Watkins to be the Strafford & Belknap County Forester. Covell thanked the Committee for their welcome as Amy Gaudreau will return from leave in December and resume her work as Extension’s designee on the Committee.
- Hepp reported that *Belknap CCD*’s new chair is Jamie Irving. They had a joint annual meeting with the Belknap County Farm Bureau at Prescott Farm in Laconia. Hepp reported that the spreader for the rental program arrived. They continue to work on town forest action plans and stream assessment projects.
- Hepp reported that *Carroll CCD* is looking at doing easement monitoring work for NRCS.
- Hepp reported that the *NH Association of Conservation Districts* had their annual meeting in early November, with a theme of “Conservation Partners.” They will have a special business meeting in December to conduct business. The 2024 officers are: Steve Scapicchio (Carroll)-President; Dorn Cox (Strafford)-1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Jamie Irving (Belknap)-2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; and Dick Lutz (Rockingham)-Treasurer. The NHACD is working with NRCS on finalizing demonstration project funding.
- Lewis reported that *Coös CCD* has funded 6 recipients through the Climate Resilience Grant program over the past two years. The District worked with the Milan Village School on delivering the annual Woods Day program. The District attended the UNH North Country Fruit and Veggie Seminar and Tradeshow. The District has been working with local Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs. They will be taking part in a “Mountain Voices” program by the Museum of the White Mountains. The District will continue to be offering scholarships to the Barry Conservation Camp.
- Throop reported that the *Cheshire CCD* Annual Meeting was a success. He reported that the lease on the NRCS Service Center in Walpole is not being renewed, and is unsure where the long-term home for the district office will be. The District is working on developing supervisor recruitment efforts. The annual “Radically Rural” conference was a success. The Conservation Commission Potluck had 15 people from 6 towns with a presentation from Anne McBride. The partnered with Sullivan CCD on the local work group meeting in August. The fall legislative tour was well attended. The NH Farm Futures Fund has continued to be successful, and District Manager Amanda Littleton has been working with the farms awarded in 2023. 74 volunteers attended the annual river clean-up removing 700 lbs. of trash. 15 people attended the October “Birding on the Farm” event. The outdoor recreation gear library at the Keene Library has been successful this year. Almost \$20,000 was redeemed by producers at 4 farmers markets with Veterans’ Appreciation Month, with 312 veterans taking part.
- Hanley directed the Committee to review a report for *Merrimack CCD* which was included in the consent agenda, submitted by District Manager Stacy Luke: “In the last quarter, Merrimack County Conservation District has accomplished the following:



collaborated with NHTI and NH Department of Environmental Services to create and implement a Beginning Soil Pit Interpretation and Testing Field Course. The goal of this course is to give aspiring Septic Designers and other natural resources professionals the soils expertise and field experience necessary to pass the Septic Designer test. The inaugural class included eight individuals and we are eager to do another in the spring. Thanks to Rob Larocque for providing his farm for two of the four classes; Merrimack CCD along with Belknap and Hillsborough CCD collaborated on the Fall Bulb Fundraiser and a Farm Bill Outreach Meeting, which occurred on November 1, 2023; Merrimack CCD held their annual soil field day and Amoozemeter training in October; District manager Stacy Luke presented on stormwater management for the Upper Valley Regional Planning Commission's event in Wilmot in October; Merrimack CCD in collaboration with Hillsborough CCD held an erosion control field day in Loudon on September 20<sup>th</sup>; Merrimack CCD is actively involved in gleanings from Merrimack County farms; Merrimack CCD has been busy as the regional lead for the Granite State Market Match bringing this to farmers' markets in Concord, Contoocook, Franklin, Henniker, Canterbury, and Wilmot this summer; Merrimack CCD is actively working on grants including surveying farms on their interest in incorporating the Farmers' Market WIC program at their farmers' market and/ or stand in cooperation with NH DHHS and NH DAMF's Specialty Crop Block Grant, completing the final paperwork on three of the climate resiliency grant projects, and implementing our No-Till Seeder project through the Mooseplate program; and Merrimack CCD in collaboration with Belknap and Hillsborough CCD was awarded a Partners Grant with USDA NRCS to assist them with administrative tasks.”

- Hanley read a report submitted by Nichols on behalf of *NH Dept. of Environmental Services*: “The ARM Site Selection Committee and Interagency Review Team met on 11/1/2023 to score the two applications submitted for 2023 ARM grant funding. Both applications (Gonic Dams Removal and Lancaster School Floodplain Restoration) were recommended for full funding requested. Recommendations will be presented to the Wetlands Council on 12/12/23 and award letters provided to applicants following authorization of funding the Wetlands Council and Federal Interagency Review Team. Governor & Council approval is required prior to release of grant funds. ARM did not receive any full applications in the Merrimack and Pemigewasset-Winnepesaukee Rivers service areas (advertised in the 2023 round). All funds will carry over and be advertised in 2024. The reduced number of applications in 2023 is likely result of the program’s shift towards a restoration focus to meet the federal requirement of no net loss of wetland functions. Additional outreach efforts will continue to solicit high quality, sustainable aquatic resource mitigation restoration, enhancement, and preservation (in certain circumstances) projects in the future. We anticipate announcing the 2024 Grant Round in late February 2024 and will be reaching out to partners to coordinate on funding and outreach opportunities.”

## **Adjournment**

Throop noted the next meeting is Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Jasper motioned to close the meeting at 12:02pm, Covell seconded. Meeting was adjourned.