

State Conservation Committee

PO Box 2042 • Concord NH 03302-2042

February 20, 2020 • Meeting Summary

NH Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH

Members/designees/advisors present:

Dea Brickner-Wood, Moose Plate
Grant Coordinator
Scott Deblois, Coos and Grafton
CCDs
Rick Ellsmore, USDA Natural
Resources Conservation Service
Jennifer Gornert, NH Department of
Agriculture, Markets & Food
Donna Hepp, Belknap and Carroll
CCDs
Shawn Jasper, NH Department of
Agriculture, Markets & Food
Dick Lutz, Rockingham and
Strafford CCDs
Richard Mellor, NH Association of
Conservation Districts
Marilyn Milne, Farm Service Agency
Lisa Morin, SCC Lakes Management
Advisory Committee
Representative
Barbara Richter, NH Association of
Conservation Commissions
Audra Klumb, Hillsborough and

Merrimack CCDs

Sabrina Stanwood, NH Department of
Natural and Cultural Resources

Lori Sommer, NH Department of
Environmental Services

Peter Throop, Cheshire and Sullivan
CCDs

Member/designees/advisors absent:

Ted Howard, University of NH
Agricultural Experiment Station
Betsey McNaughten, NH Fish and Game
Department
Amanda Littleton, CDEA-NH
Amanda Stone, UNH Cooperative
Extension

Guests:

Cara Cargill, Facilitator
Pam Gilbert, Grafton CCD

Minutes Recorder:

Stacy Luke, Merrimack CCD

Peter Throop, Chair, opened the meeting at 9:10 am and welcomed everyone.

Consent Agenda

Stanwood motioned to adopt a consent agenda including the minutes. Klumb seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Districts, agencies, and organizations discussed the highlights of items on the Consent Agenda.

- Lutz passed out the Save the Date cards for the National Association of Conservation Districts Northeast Regional Meeting in Portsmouth this summer and the Strafford CCD Annual Report. Lutz reported that Rockingham CCD has two full time and three part time staff and contractors. They just changed their fiscal year to July 1 – June 30th to match the County of Rockingham's fiscal year. Lutz reported on the municipal technical assistance program, the Soil Health Partnership, and the Odiorne Point work. Lutz stated

that Bob Goodrich is retiring as a supervisor in August and there may be other changes to the Rockingham CCD Board upcoming. Lutz stated that they have figured out that it will take about \$1.5MM to maintain the Rockingham CCD easements and they have looked at ways to have land trusts look after them.

- Mellor reported that NHACD now has two statewide conservation planers on one-year contracts. They have applied for funds to continue the positions for additional years. Mellor also discussed the NACD Northeast Regional Meeting and the proposed soil health legislation.
- Deblois reported that Coos CCD is looking into taking on a conservation easement. The Coos CCD administrator will be retiring this year. Coos CCD will have a Conservation Day and a Soil Health Workshop in May. Lutz recommended that Coos CCD not get into easements given the difficulties Rockingham CCD has experienced. Gilbert also stated Grafton CCD wished they did not hold easements, either.
- Gilbert discussed Grafton CCD and the popular forestry workshops they are hosting.
- Klumb discussed the Hillsborough CCD highlights including no-till workshops, no-till equipment, the spring plant sale, and the Farm & Forest Expo. Klumb gave the Merrimack CCD highlights including the no-till equipment and upcoming sustainable agriculture workshop series.
- Milne reported that Jeff Holmes is in Washington, DC currently. Milne reported on the work of the Farm Service Agency and emphasized the Conservation Reserve Program. A discussion occurred regarding a possible workshop with the Conservation District Employees Association about the CRP program in the near future to try to increase enrollments in this program.
- Richter reported that they are working on their 50th Annual Meeting, which will be on November 7th. Florence Williams, the author of The Nature Fix, will be the keynote speaker. The meeting location is tentatively Plymouth State University. Richter also reported on Taking Action for Wildlife workshops as well as training on the new DES wetland rules.
- Ellsmore reported that his last day will be March 30th. Christine Hall from New Jersey will be the Acting State Conservationist for three-four months. NRCS is still under interim rules and comments are still being taken. There is a new resource concern: weather resiliency. Currently, NH NRCS has 57 personnel but three are retiring, the Carroll County District Conservationist is on detail in Palau, Steve Pytlik is leaving for the USFS, and one employee is relocating to Maine.
- Gornnert reported there are some bills that may affect the Agricultural Nutrient Management grants, but there will be a grant round this year.
- Sommer reported on wetland rules and open positions within DES. The upcoming Aquatic Resource Mitigation grant just finished a Merrimack River watershed round with \$1.4MM. This year, all watersheds have money available for a total of \$3.3MM. Pre-proposals are due on May 29th.
- Morin reported on the LMAC including comments on proposed legislations. The Rivers Management Advisory Committee and the LMAC have an upcoming joint meeting.
- Hepp reported that the Belknap and Carroll CCDs are very excited about the money for the stream restoration. They are working with NH Fish & Game on doing a video of the whole process of in-stream wood addition. They have money from the Pardoe Foundation for an intern position. Hepp reported that the Carroll CCD will be looking

for a part-time District Manager this year and she will be outreaching to the SCC for assistance in helping get the job announcement out to their contacts. Hepp also reported on the new Envirothon Coordinator, Dr. Nate Green, who has already re-done the NH Envirothon website. The Envirothon competition will be on May 19th.

- Throop reported that Sullivan CCD is working on their public cidery, cover crop demonstration project, a riparian buffer project planting 500 trees and shrubs, an orchard restoration project, and a Parks in Every Classroom two-day workshop. Cheshire CCD is working on their equipment rental program and the no-till retrofit program which completed 14 retrofits to date. There will be a no-till vegetable workshop with Steve Groff and a birding on the Farm workshop series.

Strategic Planning Session Preparation, Cara Cargill

Cara Cargill, facilitator, discussed the Strategic Planning Session scheduled for March 12, 2020, from 9am – 1pm at NH Fish & Game. The goals of the day are to address the following questions:

1. How do we best support the Districts?
2. What are some of the possibilities?
 - a. Statewide organization
 - b. Currently the SCC does not have a Mission or Vision Statement
3. What does conservation mean in this state?

Cargill showed the draft agenda at this point (below) and asked how the day should be structured to best accomplish our goals.

- 9:00 Welcome & who is the SCC- Background on SCC; Pete Throop
 - Share RSA (pre-work) to give background
- 9:10 Introductions
 - Pose a Question- Strengths?
- 9:30 What are the SCC Issues?
 - What's missing? (Possibly build this into the survey and refine question for session)
- 10:00 Break into groups- Guiding question
- 10:45 Report out and identify goals & actions from this discussion
- 11:30 What are the roles the SCC, conservation districts, and partners in this work?
- 12:00 What are the priority actions?
- 12:30 Closing and next steps
 - Report by the end of March

The SCC discussed a survey that will go out to the larger natural resource group that will include identifying the top natural resource issues for their respective organization, what is the role of the Executive Director, and other emerging issues.

Much discussion occurred as to how much of the Strategic Planning Session should be about creating a Mission and Vision. With limited time for this beginning piece, the SCC discussed having a subcommittee that will follow this initial Strategic Planning Session.

All agreed this would be an on-going process. Volunteers will be requested at the March 12th meeting to assist with the final report review and next steps.

SCC Executive Director Position Description

The SCC reviewed a draft Executive Director Position Description. Discussion involved the following points:

- The physical requirements need work but something about some lifting should be included.
- The amount available should be listed (\$30,000) versus the dollar amount range.
- “Grant Development” and “Grant Administration” should be added as the Executive Director could be a resource for applying for statewide initiatives such as RCPP and other grants.
- “Experience working with boards and commissions with great diversity of perspectives” should be added.
- Travel requirements: “Ability to visit county conservation districts.”
- Emphasize “Part-Time”
- Delete the word “position” and add that this is Contractual
- Add “Ability to share the SCC Goals in meetings and conferences”
- Keep some language broad, such as “assistance” and “outreach”
- Add “SCC Meetings Quarterly, Year-Round”; “Travel Time is Included”; “Total Funding Available is \$30,000 including compensation and direct expenses”

Discussion involved that the Executive Director’s position falls in these broad categories:

1. SCC Committee Administrative Support
2. Support to the county conservation districts
3. Conservation outreach
4. Partnership development
5. Strategic planning

The SCC discussed that their original timeline may be too short and that finding a person by the May meeting is too soon. The timeline may be extended to an August 1st or later start versus a July 1st start.

Conservation “Moose Plate” Grant Program Coordinator’s Update

Brickner-Wood gave her coordinator’s report including:

- Last quarter there were three amendments and eight closeouts;
- The marketing company is working on an interactive map of grants;
- Relationships are strengthening with town clerks;
- Sales are up 6.6% between December 2018 to December 2019.

Brickner-Wood also reported that there was a request from LCHIP to modify the Mooseplate funding allocation. Currently there are five receiving agencies: three receive a percentage and two receive flat rates. The State Conservation Committee receives a percentage. Changing the allocation would mean less for the State Conservation Committee’s allocation.

Sommer made a motion to send a letter in opposition of a change in the Mooseplate funding allocations, if a proposal is set forward. Hepp seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Supervisor appointments, re-appointments, and filling unexpired terms

Hepp presented the appointments for Carroll County.

A nomination for appointment was submitted for Steve Wingate, Carroll County Conservation District.

A nomination for appointment was submitted for Ian Whitmore, Carroll County Conservation District.

A nomination for re-appointment was submitted for Todd Marshall, Carroll County Conservation District.

Hepp motioned to approve the above nominations. Sommer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

HB 1562 Discussion

The State Conservation Committee discussed the proposed legislation adding soil health and climate change to the conservation district laws. Members of the SCC discussed their support or opposition to the bill as it is currently written. There was no consensus from the SCC regarding the bill.

Other Business

The SCC gave Rick Ellsmore a gift and thanked him for all of his years of service to the NH State Conservation Committee, which he has served on since 2009.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.

The next meeting will be held on May 21, 2020, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm in the conference room at NH Department of Environmental Services, 29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH.