



### **State Conservation Committee**

PO Box 2042 • Concord NH 03302-2042

Agenda for August 20, 2020 - 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Hosted by Zoom Conference

#### **Members/designees/advisors present:**

Dea Brickner-Wood, Moose Plate Grant  
Coordinator

Scott Deblois, Coos and Grafton CCDs

Jennifer Gornnert, NH Department of  
Agriculture, Markets & Food

Donna Hepp, Belknap and Carroll CCDs

Ted Howard, University of NH Agricultural  
Experiment Station

Dick Lutz, Rockingham and Strafford CCDs  
(by phone)

Audra Klumb, Hillsborough and Merrimack  
CCDs

Amanda Littleton, CDEA-NH

Betsey McNaughten, NH Fish and Game  
Department

Richard Mellor, NH Association of  
Conservation Districts

Barbara Richter, NH Association of  
Conservation Commissions

Becky Ross, USDA Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Lori Sommer, NH Department of  
Environmental Services

Sabrina Stanwood, Department of Natural  
and Cultural Resources

Peter Throop, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs

#### **Member/designees/advisors absent:**

Jeffrey Holmes, Farm Service Agency

Betsey McNaughten, NH Fish and Game  
Department

Amanda Stone, UNH Cooperative Extension

#### **Guests:**

Matt Coughlan, Carroll County CCD

Pam Gilbert, Grafton CCD

Whitney Lewis, Coos CCD

#### **Minutes Recorder:**

Laura Angers, Merrimack CCD

Stacy Luke, Merrimack CCD

Hepp opened the meeting at 9:01 am. She welcomed Becky Ross, NRCS New Hampshire's new State Conservationist, and Ross introduced herself.

### **Consent Agenda**

Throop motioned to approve the minutes from May 21, 2020. Deblois seconded the motion. All approved and the motion carried.

Throop then motioned to approve the minutes from the special meeting on July 16, 2020. Howard seconded the motion. Klumb abstained. All approved and the motion carried.

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

- Hepp reported the Belknap CCD has been doing field work for a stream assessment in Alton and Sanbornton. An intern has been involved with planning for series of conservation planning free webinars in October; NHACD Conservation Planner and others will deliver a product that should be available for folks across the state. The intern is also working on planning an environmental education day at Prescott Farm next year. BCCD received grants to help fully fund the gleaning position and also to expand some of its food programs (building accessible, high raised planting bed at senior facility). They were also successful in getting funding for Volunteer Coordinator starting in October, which will focus on food and conservation programs and will help partners with volunteer recruitment. Hepp also reported the Carroll CCD will now have a full board. The new District Coordinator, Matt Coughlan, is doing a great job with outreach, and created a new logo and website. CCCD is working with Tin Mountain Conservation Center and they have completed field work for a stream restoration in Conway, with implementation starting this month.
- Throop reported the Cheshire CCD is doing trainings with their new BCS tractor and implements. There are a number of grant programs they are working with, including a conservation opportunity grant. NH Farm Future Fund farm viability program – \$90k was provided to five applicants. 50% goes to conservation project and other 50% goes to technical assistance. Throop did not have a report from Sullivan County.
- Gilbert reported Grafton CCD is continuing to work on webinars. Additional highlights were in the report sent prior to the meeting:
- Klumb reported the Hillsborough CCD added a no-till water wheel to their equipment rental program. HCCD is also working on easement monitoring for NRCS program. Klumb also reported the Merrimack CCD is working on a project to help farms improve energy efficiency, lighting, and cold storage. Merrimack CCD also published a local food guide, which includes all farmers and what they have to offer. Klumb sought feedback regarding an ARM Fund grant project. Sommer offered to advise outside of this meeting, and Littleton also offered to connect offline.
- Deblois reported the Coös CCD District Manager retired in June and the new District Manager is Whitney Lewis. Lewis reported that since she started, she has been working on the fall bulb sale, did a Zoom workshop on the Coös CCD tool rental program, worked with North Country Gleaners to advertise for volunteers and has helped coordinate with local food pantries, and is working with UNH Extension to help start a 4-H Club in a local town.
- Lutz reported Strafford CCD's BCS tractor arrived and was added to their extensive array of equipment to rent, shared with Rockingham CCD. Lutz reported the Rockingham CCD moved from their radio show to a Zoom conservation meeting, covering topics like pollinators, early successional habitats, and how to protect buffer zones around wetlands. The Rockingham CCD is working on an analysis of their 103 conservation easements, finding their history and financing behind them.
- Stanwood reported that at the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources State Forester Brad Simpkins had vacated his position and Patrick Hackley from The Nature Conservancy was nominated as their new director. G&C will review his nomination and hopefully confirm next Wednesday; if confirmed, he would start towards the end of September. Stanwood reported the Data Manager position at the Natural Heritage Bureau is vacant and the position could not be filled, which presents an issue for them. They are working with the business office on when to change the funding structure for that position and are drafting a letter to the G&C to use Conservation Plate funds to fill the position. Stanwood also reported that Amy Lamb,

Environmental Reviewer, has been working with NRCS to identify endangered plant species and a plant identification workshop was put on in July.

- Littleton reported that CDEA-NH meets quarterly, and the next meeting is the first week in September. They are planning for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Conservation Districts. Littleton also reported that they are in regular communication with the District Managers to help improve projects happening within and between districts.
- Gornnert reported that the Administrative Assistant position at the NH DAMF has been filled, and Michelle will be working with the SCC. Gornnert also reported that a lot of people nationwide were receiving unsolicited seeds in the mail from China; the majority are flowers and not invasive. They received direction from the USDA not to plant the seeds and to mail them directly to the USDA office in Vermont. More information can be found on the DAMF website. Nothing else to report.
- Sommer reported that DES has been completely remote since March. The Commissioner is taking it very seriously and says employees will not be returning until there is a vaccine. Sommer reported a few retirements: Clark Freise (Assistant Commissioner) and John Duclos is now acting commissioner; Gretchen Hamel, and Pam Monroe has taken the position; Sara Pillsbury (Drinking Water program). For the Land Resources Management (Alteration of Terrain), a public input session is scheduled. For the Aquatic Resource Mitigation program, they have \$3 million and have received 23 proposals, which they will be looking at by the end of August. Additionally, they are keeping busy with the interns who are working on culvert assessments.
- Richter reported NHACC has been doing a lot of planning for the summer and a couple education and training things are coming up this fall. Their annual meeting and conference on November 7 is moving online. They will have 12 different sessions this year – two different breakout sessions with six workshops each. NHACC is also doing a “Lunch and Learn” program this fall and will include a mix of programming. Richter reported on the “Taking Action for Wildlife” Team; they worked with UNH Extension and Fish & Game to create an advanced training program. They are working with six towns from September to November. There will be three classes on Friday mornings then they will break off into teams with Taking Action for Wildlife members working with 1-2 communities. This program will be a lot more intensive and will cover everything from natural resources protection to a larger overview. They are using this program as a pilot and may be able to offer individual sessions in the future.
- Howard reported the Dept of Natural Resources at UNH hired a new wildlife management person, Remington Moll. Dean John Wraith will be stepping down effective September 1 and the new Dean, Anthony Davis, will be coming in. Dr. Davis may step into SCC meetings in the future in place of Ted. The 15,000+ students are coming back soon; everyone is required to have a negative test before coming back; all students will be tested twice a week, faculty and staff will be tested once a week. The testing system was designed by COLSA faculty and has capacity to test everyone. They are also issuing PPE to everyone.
- Mellor reported NHACD’s Board was meeting today. He commended Dick Lutz for the Zoom In On Conservation series, an opportunity for supervisors to see what is going on around the state; they have done three so far, highlighting one district per month. NHACD will be doing a website upgrade. The annual meeting will be virtual, sometime in November. Mellor also reported that two conservationists were developing state plans. Bill Fosher has been very busy. Jessica’s work has been delayed because her credential process was affected by COVID, but in the meantime she is working on backlog in the Conway office. Mellor reported the Wetlands Council has been meeting virtually. They will have an experimental hearing in September, in which lawyers will present the case in a room while wetlands councilors are remote.

## **Conservation “Moose Plate” Grant Coordinator’s Update**

- Brickner-Wood reported findings from the Moose Plate Marketing Committee: a smaller increase in sales than expected, rolling out an interactive map to help show the value of the Moose Plate program, “Name the Moose” contest next spring.
- Brickner-Wood reported the application for the upcoming grant round is online; invoicing and recording will be online as well. With the new system, the grant committee will receive links instead of paper applications. For this grant round, \$424,770 is available, which is up \$85,000 from last year. They are expecting the same number of grant applications.
- This year’s grantees (2019-20), are not able to get out into the field and are expecting grant extensions. Brickner-Wood mentioned drafting a letter to G&C to extend all the grants for one year.

## **Strategic Plan Sub-Committee Report & Recommendations**

- Hepp started by thanking all folks involved in this process and named Sub-Committee members. After 3 Zoom conferences, they arrived at the mission, vision, and values. Hepp opened it up to comments and suggestions.
- Mission
  - Throop suggested including agricultural viability. Klumb seconded and suggested adding statewide “agriculture” and natural resource conservation.
- Vision
  - Klumb suggested adding the word “agriculture” after NH.
  - Throop emphasize that the vision statement should be forward thinking.
  - Lutz wanted to make clear that the State Conservation Committee is not regulatory. Throop suggested if part of the missions is “encouraging landowners...” then the vision would be that “landowners are empowered to voluntarily manage their resources in a way that’s sustainable and productive.”
- Hepp requested feedback within the next week.
- Values
  - Lutz suggested including a social justice piece. Throop and Klumb agreed. Hepp said all programs that affect water, soil, etc. go far and wide to help all people (i.e. food access programs). Klumb reiterated the importance of having that language to help show that the SCC is open and inclusive. Throop emphasized the need to make it a tangible action.
  - Sommer stated that water quality was not mentioned in the mission, vision or values. Stanwood thought it could be included under “stewardship.” Throop questioned how specific the values should be.
- Hepp asked for feedback on how to structure these. Members should send feedback to the Subcommittee by the end of the following week.
- Throop asked Luke to make the recording of this call available.
- Throop asked for the Moose Plate criteria to use while brainstorming. Brickner-Wood stated there are six conservation priorities.

## **State Owned Land, Surplus Land Review**

- Both dates had passed. Luke asked the Committee how to handle this in the future and what the process should be. Luke offered to add people to the email list.
- Throop asked for the documents to be sent in advance for the Supervisors on Conservation District board to review them and provide comments; Supervisors should send comments to Hepp and request to convene a special meeting.

- Klumb suggested sending them to the relevant county. Lutz seconded. It was agreed upon that these should be sent to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee as well.

## **Supervisor Appointments, Re-appointments, Resignations**

Hepp presented the reappointments for Belknap County. Hepp made a motion to reappoint Dean Anson and Jamie Irving to the Board of Supervisors for Belknap County. Klumb seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Richard Walling was nominated for reappointment for Grafton County. Throop made a motion to reappoint Walling to the Board of Supervisors for Grafton County. Sommer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Stanwood motioned to approve Haven Neal and Scott Deblois for reappointment to the Board of Supervisors for Coös County. Sommer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Klumb presented the reappointments for Hillsborough County and recommended both. Klumb made a motion to reappoint Tom Jones and Eric Radlof to the Board of Supervisors for Hillsborough County. Deblois seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Klumb motioned to reappoint Peter Blakeman, Board Chair, to the Board of Supervisors for Merrimack County. Hepp seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Hepp motioned to appoint Chris Blackstone to the Board of Supervisors for Rockingham County. Deblois seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

It was pointed out that the fifth Carroll County appointment to the Board of Supervisors was approved in the previous meeting. The Committee did not have a documented resignation from Jonathan Marshall, which has since been received.

Stanwood motioned to reappoint Cynthia Smith to the Board of Supervisors for Rockingham County. Throop seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

## **Other Business**

Luke referred to the email response received from Attorney Chris Aslin regarding Workers' Compensation Coverage for Conservation District Supervisors. Gilbert thanked the SCC for asking the Attorney General's office for clarification.

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.