



State Conservation Committee

PO Box 2042 • Concord NH 03302-2042

nh.gov/SCC

February 17, 2022 – 9:00am to 12:00pm

Hosted by Department of Natural & Cultural Resources
Concord, NH

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

Anton Bekkerman, University of NH
Agricultural Experiment Station
Ian Hanley, SCC Executive Director
Donna Hepp, Belknap and Carroll CCDs
Shawn Jasper, NH Department of Agriculture,
Markets & Food
Audra Klumb, Hillsborough and Merrimack
CCDs
Betsey McNaughten, NH Fish and Game
Department
Barbara Richter, NH Association of
Conservation Commissions
Sabrina Stanwood, Department of Natural and
Cultural Resources
Amanda Stone, UNH Cooperative Extension

Minutes Recorders:

Steve Cook, Merrimack CCD
Stacy Luke, Merrimack CCD
Jessica Newnan, Merrimack CCD

Members/Designees/Advisors attending via Zoom

Scott Deblois, Coös and Grafton CCDs
Richard Lutz, Rockingham and Strafford CCDs/
NH Association of Conservation Districts
Becky Ross, USDA NRCS State Conservationist
Pete Throop, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs

Attendees:

Dea Brickner-Wood, Moose Plate Grant
Coordinator
Catherine Dufault, Carroll CD
Pam Gilbert, Grafton CCD
Nels Liljedahl, USDA NRCS Outreach
Coordinator
Amanda Littleton, CDEA-NH
Marilyn Milne, Farm Service Agency
Lisa Morin, Belknap CCD

Members/Designees/Advisors absent:

Lori Sommer, NH Department of Environmental
Services

Hepp opened the meeting at 9:08am and welcomed the group.

Hepp noted that Brickner-Wood had requested time to give an update and the agenda was adjusted accordingly.

Minutes of the December 2, 2021 Quarterly Meeting

Brickner-Wood noted a correction on the Moose Plate grant awards. Stanwood requested page numbers be added to the meeting minutes. McNaughten requested a footer be added to the meeting minutes with the date of the meeting.

Klumb motioned to approve the minutes, as amended, from December 2, 2021. Jasper seconded the motion.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye
Deblois-Aye
Hepp-Aye
Klumb-Aye
Jasper-Aye
Lutz-Aye
McNaughten-Aye
Richter-Aye
Stanwood-Abstained
Stone-Aye
Throop-Aye

The motion carries.

Supervisor Appointments and Re-appointments

Jasper motioned to approve the appointment of Richard Sugatt with the term set to expire 8/1/2023. Klumb seconded the motion.

- Richard Sugatt, Rockingham CCD, new term expires 8/1/2023

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye
Deblois-Aye
Hepp-Aye
Klumb-Aye
Jasper-Aye
Lutz-Aye
McNaughten-Aye
Richter-Aye
Stanwood-Aye
Stone-Aye
Throop-Aye

The motion carried.

SCC Strategic Planning Update

Hanley presented the updates that resulted from working with the small work group that included Klumb, Stanwood, Richter, Littleton, Gilbert, Lutz, and Hepp. The group addressed the section which covered the relationship between SCC and the conservation districts in the short-term goals portion of the strategic plan. Hanley expressed that the strategic plan was in a place to be finished up, approved, and brought to a wider audience for review in the next quarter.

Hanley asked for feedback about both the plan moving forward and the Strategic Plan document. Hepp brought up a concern that Jasper had voiced previously about the use of the term “social justice” in the values statement. Jasper expressed concern over the “redistribution of wealth” aspect of the social justice definition, and indicated that he felt it was inappropriate. After discussion, the committee revised the statement to “Inclusiveness and Diversity-Enabling equitable access and opportunity in our actions and partnerships.”

Jasper made a motion to accept the revised values statement, Lutz seconded the motion.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye
Deblois-Aye
Hepp-Aye
Klumb-Aye
Jasper-Aye
Lutz-Aye
McNaughten-Aye
Richter-Aye
Stanwood-Abstained
Stone-Aye
Throop-Aye

The motion carried.

Hepp invited Hanley to provide an overview of ideas on how to get the Strategic Plan out to partners for review. Hanley discussed public open comment sessions with district staff and supervisors as well as other partners throughout the state. Hepp suggested a kickoff event via zoom and a list of key partners to which members of SCC could reach out. The committee discussed ways to connect with indigenous and minority groups in order to solicit feedback.

Brickner-Woods pointed out that under the medium-term goals section Action 3 Number 3, the text did not reflect the six project categories.

Stanwood made a motion to revise Action 3 Number 3 to reflect the titles of the project categories, Jasper seconded.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye
Deblois-Aye
Hepp-Aye
Klumb-Aye
Jasper-Aye
Lutz-Aye
McNaughten-Aye
Richter-Aye
Stanwood-Abstained
Stone-Aye
Throop-Aye

The motion carried.

Hepp asked if there was any more feedback on the outreach plan. Bekkerman asked for clarification of what type of feedback Hanley is looking for. Hanley explained that he is looking to know if partners feel like the document is comprehensive of the SCC's role in the conservation community and if anything is missing. Hepp suggested having guiding questions for feedback sessions and Klumb suggested an introductory letter.

Supervisors Handbook Update

Hanley reviewed the intent to split the Supervisors Handbook into a short-form document as well as a long-form document. He indicated that the short-form document covers what a supervisor would need to know going into their first meeting and that it is nearly finished. Hanley requested feedback on where the document currently stands. Jasper suggested that if there is a specific statute for requirements the reference be included. Klumb suggested a reference list at the end of the document. Stanwood suggested adding page numbers. Richter suggested a training and mentorship opportunities section be added. Throop suggested adding the names of which district the pictures come from at the bottom of each page.

Development and Opportunity Spotlight

Hepp introduced Nels Liljedahl as the new NRCS Outreach Coordinator. Liljedahl presented an overview of NRCS programs and the priorities of his work. He indicated that urban agriculture is a priority coming directly from Washington, DC and will be a large part of his job. He provided an overview of NRCS programs, types of management plans that NRCS is able to create for landowners, and the types of conservation easements that NRCS works with. The committee discussed possible ways to connect the land trusts and NRCS over the topic of conservation easements.

Hepp brought up the possibility of hosting workshops to overview upcoming grant opportunities several times throughout the year. Throop suggested a grant calendar be released early in the year with due dates. Brickner-Wood suggested contacting Paula Bellemore from LCHIP since she put together a spreadsheet that was circulated last year. Brickner-Wood will reach out to Paula and then Hanley will follow-up.

Executive Director's Update

Hanley reviewed that he had been working on strategic planning, revising the supervisor's handbook, and has started posting a legislative update on the SCC website and sending out an executive director's update via email. He reported that the SCC is still awaiting the appointments for Hepp, Throop, and Larocque, which Jasper offered to follow up on. Hanley discussed looking at a new website and potentially hosting a booth at the 2023 Farm, Forest, and Garden Expo. In the future, he talked about re-evaluating the financial reporting of the districts to make it mutually beneficial and creating a model program to help conservation districts recruit supervisors.

Conservation "Moose Plate" Grant Coordinator's Update

Brickner-Wood reported on the Conservation Grant Program. Highlights included:

- The 15 grant contracts from 2021 awards have been sent to grantees.
- Several grants will be finishing up in April, some of which will need extensions due to covid.
- The grant committee will be meeting March 29th to review the application and policy questions to revise as necessary. The 2022 application will be ready for review at the May meeting so that it can be posted by June 30th.
- Moose Plate sales are doing well both through renewals and new purchases.

District/ Organization/ Agency Updates

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

- McNaughten reported that the Department of Fish and Game had several positions to fill including the Chief of the Wildlife Division, which was filled by Dan Bergeron, and a Legal Coordinator position, which has also been filled. She reported that the Wildlife Habitat Program is creating an ArcStoryMap focusing on what the \$2.50 conservation fee from hunting licenses accomplishes. Fish and Game is still working on Graymist Farm which will have parts of the 700-acre parcel in conservation and a donated parcel on Success Pond for fisheries management.
- Stanwood reported that the Natural Heritage Bureau is presenting two trainings, one on Friday for environmental review for DES and one on Tuesday and Wednesday which will be the DOT training with the Bureau of Environment on environmental review and data sharing.
- Klumb reported that Hillsborough CCD finished up gleaning for 2021, hired a new gleaning coordinator, received word that their Moose Plate Grant was funded, are preparing for a legislative tour, are continuing to work with Grow Nashua on their curbside compost program, coordinating their spring plant sale, working with districts statewide to develop a climate change grant program for farmers, prepared a display for the NH Farm, Forest, and Garden Expo, and presented at the NHACD January Zoom-In Conservation Series. Merrimack CCD is conducting a feasibility study on growing cover crop seeds for local farmers and providing technical assistance to community and school gardens, and has completed the 2021 gleaning season and is preparing for the 2022 season with the Merrimack County Farm as a new partner to create a gleaning garden. They are also working on the 2022 Local Food Guide, their tree and shrub fundraiser,

scheduling workshops for natural resource scientists, collaborating with NHTI for sustainable agriculture workshops, and working with the county of Merrimack for 2022 funding.

- Richter reported that the NH Association of Conservation Commissions has been active with several legislative bills coming up including allowing remote meetings, cyanobacteria study, expanding the definition of wetlands, and the program to establish invasive species control. The website is currently being updated.
- Stone reported that UNH Cooperative Extension has a new plant pathology specialist, as well as several other positions that are being filled. They are searching for the Coos County Forester position. The annual Saving Special Places Land Conservation Conference will be held virtually on April 1st and 2nd.
- Jasper expressed that the meetings between himself, Hanley, and Hepp every other week have been helpful and that Hanley is doing good work. He put out a request to each district to put together a short statement on the importance of having an executive director before the next meeting so that he can use it in support of requesting the executive director position be made full-time in the next budget. He reported that he just returned from the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture winter policy meeting and that it was a good conference. He reported that they raised a concern about protection for water resources. Jasper informed the SCC that he is being sued by a farm who has solar panels on land under agricultural easement without agriculture being performed underneath them. He reported that the organic program is being audited and that they may lose the ability to certify maple producers if USDA moves maple under the processing guidelines. He also reported that the invasive species committee that is being proposed has made it through the senate.
- Hepp reminded the group that Lisa Morin is the SCC representative to the DES Lakes Management Advisory Group. She reported that Jamie Irving, an associate supervisor for Belknap CCD, was a part of the National Association of Conservation Districts young leader program and suggested that he be invited to share his experience at a future meeting. Belknap CCD and Carrol CCD are working together on a grant for stream restoration. Belknap CCD will be working in Meredith to identify candidates for stream restoration through a Moose Plate Grant and other funding. They are also working on the strategic plan, funding with the county, the 2022 plant sale, and have hired a volunteer coordinator. Belknap CCD is working on a grant to hire a farm to school coordinator and have been working to do some gleanings over the winter.
- Dufault reported that Carrol CCD is hosting 3 workshops in the next 6 weeks including 2 on apple tree grafting and 1 on winter tree identification in partnership with Tuftonboro Conservation Commission. She explained that they are also working with a local growers association to apply for the marketing grant the Department of Agriculture provides.
- Bekkerman offered to visit districts this summer to provide an overview of the NH Ag Experiment Station as well as including researchers in the area. He reported that there have been several new hires in the last few years who are starting research regarding wildlife tracking, wildlife populations, and interactions with humans. They are currently hiring for a postdoctoral scientist looking at similar topics related to birds. They recently hired a social scientist looking at how humans interact with water who specializes in working with rural and indigenous communities.

- Throop reported that Cheshire CCD is working on coordinating three grant programs including the Conservation Opportunity Grant, the Monadnock Food Co-op Farm Fund Grant, and the NH Farm Futures Grant. They are also currently offering a farm grant scholarship for youth. He reported that they are working with the Hannah Grimes Center and the National Center for Appropriate Technology to offer business planning courses for 6 farms. They are doing a crowdfunding campaign for a community supported solar project, working on new workshops, preparing for the 2022 market season, partnering with Cheshire Medical Center to implement a Prescribe for Health program, offering spring bulbs and seeds for sale, and updating the strategic plan.
- Hanley reported that Sullivan CCD was not able to meet this month due to the NH Farm, Forest, and Garden Expo, but that they have been doing a lot of work to prepare for the 2022 season.
- Lutz reported that Strafford CCD has been getting ready for the spring plant sale and to get BCS equipment out for the spring. He reported that Rockingham CCD has had Vicky Nelson, the part-time manager, move to 8 hours per week and is hiring for an operations manager who will be trained and moved to the district manager position. NHACD is considering hiring a fourth planner, has a legislative zoom-in on the last Tuesday of March, legislative tours planned for the summer, and is working on the planning for the NH Fisher Cats Game for which tickets will go on sale April 1st. Lutz reported that the NHACD is working on their 5-year plan, developing the next 5-year agreement with NRCS, and hosting Zoom in on Conservation meetings which are open to conservation districts.
- Deblois reported that Coos CCD is spearheading an effort to establish a land trust or conservation group in the area, has launched the new website, and is working on their spring plant sale.
- Gilbert reported that Grafton CCD is working on their plant sale, preparing for Ag in the Classroom events, discussing the NH grant program addressing climate change and extreme weather events, working with Trout Unlimited to work on the second construction site on the Beebe River project, and offering the NH Soil Health Partnership cover crop seed mixes.
- Ross reported that USDA just announced a funding opportunity for partnerships for climate-smart commodities to leverage funds to create additional revenue sources for climate-smart commodity markets. This program will work alongside NRCS Farm Bill programs and there is no match requirement and no labeling involved. She reported that her employees are constantly out working with landowners and have had over 450 apply for assistance. The rest of the report is in the agenda.

Adjournment

Hepp closed the meeting at 11:59am.