



## State Conservation Committee

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

May 19, 2022 – 9:00am to 12:00pm  
Hosted by Department of Natural & Cultural Resources  
Concord, NH

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

Dea Brickner-Wood, Moose Plate Grant  
Coordinator  
Ian Hanley, SCC Executive Director  
Donna Hepp, Belknap and Carroll CCDs  
Jeff Holmes, USDA Farm Service Agency State  
Executive Director  
Shawn Jasper, NH Department of Agriculture,  
Markets & Food  
Rob Larocque, Merrimack and Hillsborough  
CCDs  
Barbara Richter, NH Association of  
Conservation Commissions  
Bill Nichols in place of Sabrina Stanwood, NH  
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
Amanda Stone, UNH Cooperative Extension  
Maryann Tilton in place of Lori Sommer, NH  
Department of Environmental Services

### **Minutes Recorders:**

Stacy Luke, Merrimack CCD  
Jessica Newnan, Merrimack CCD

### **Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff Attending via Zoom**

Anton Bekkerman, NH Agricultural Experiment  
Station  
Dick Lutz, Rockingham and Strafford CCDs/NH  
Association of Conservation Districts  
Becky Ross, USDA NRCS State Conservationist  
Pete Throop, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs

### **Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff absent:**

Scott Deblois, Coos and Grafton CCDs  
Amanda Littleton, CDEA-NH  
Betsey McNaughten, NH Department of Fish  
and Game

### **Guests via Zoom:**

Catherine Dufault, Carroll CCD  
Pam Gilbert, Grafton CCD  
Whitney Lewis, Coos CCD  
Lisa Morin, Belknap CCD

Hepp opened the meeting at 9:09am and welcomed the group.

### **Minutes of the February 17, 2022 Quarterly Meeting**

Hepp entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the February 17, 2022 meeting.  
Throop motioned to approve the minutes from February 17, 2022. Jasper seconded the motion.

### **Role Call Vote**

Bekkerman-Aye  
Hepp-Aye  
Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Abstained  
Lutz-Aye  
Nichols-Abstained  
Richter-Aye  
Stone-Aye  
Tilton-Abstained  
Throop-Aye

The motion carries.

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

Jasper motioned to approve the nomination of Lloyd Ziel with the term set to expire 8/1/2025.  
Stone seconded the motion.

- Lloyd Ziel, Rockingham CCD, new term expires 8/1/2025

### **Role Call Vote**

Bekkerman-Aye  
Hepp-Aye  
Jasper-Aye  
Larocque-Aye  
Lutz-Aye  
Nichols-Out of the room  
Richter-Aye  
Stone-Aye  
Throop-Aye  
Tilton-Aye

The motion carries.

### **SCC Election of Officers**

Hepp asked if anyone was interested in serving as chair or vice chair. She indicated that Throop was willing to serve as vice chair again and that she was willing to continue as chair, if there were no others interested.

Jasper made a motion to re-elect Hepp as chair and Throop as vice chair of the NH State Conservation Committee. Richter seconded the motion.

### **Role Call Vote**

Bekkerman-Aye  
Hepp-Aye  
Jasper-Aye  
Larocque-Aye  
Lutz-Aye  
Richter-Aye  
Nichols-Aye  
Stone-Aye  
Tilton-Aye  
Throop-Aye

The motion carries.

### **Legislative Update**

Jasper discussed a bill related to invasive species that has been passed by the NH House of Representatives and the NH Senate. This bill provides one-time funding of \$150,000 to assist in purchasing supplies to remove invasive species and authorizes the position of a full-time invasive species coordinator. The bill does not fund the position for this year, but will allow for it to be added to the budget for next year. The money will be available as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Jasper expressed that moving forward with making Hanley's position full-time was favorably received by the governor's office, but will still require significant support from the districts. Hepp asked what the timeframe for sending letters of support would be. Jasper indicated that over the summer would be best since final recommendations are generally made in September. He suggested that a letter which can be signed by all who want to show support may be better than a series of letters. Hepp suggested a deadline of August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Richter asked Jasper about the NH Agricultural Lands program. Jasper explained that the application process has not started, but will likely begin over the summer and approximately \$1.25 million will be available. Hepp asked what kinds of lands would be the main focus. Jasper indicated that endangered lands particularly in the southern tier and the seacoast would be a priority.

### **Supervisors Handbook Update**

Hanley reviewed the work that has been done on the Supervisors Handbook including revisions that have been made since the last meeting based on feedback received. He indicated that the short version of the Supervisors Handbook was in the final draft stage and ready for adoption, while the long version will be worked on later in the year. He added that there will be a print version as well as a digital copy which will include hyperlinks as appropriate.

Jasper made a motion to approve the Supervisor's Handbook. Larocque seconded the motion.

### **Role Call Vote**

Bekkerman-Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Nichols-Aye

Richter-Aye

Stone-Aye

Throop-Aye

Tilton-Aye

The motion carries.

### **Performance Criteria for Executive Director Evaluation**

Hepp explained that as a state position, there is some criteria that exists as a basis for the executive director's performance evaluation, but that there is an opportunity to add specific

criteria that fit the position. Hanley has created a list of suggested criteria based on similar evaluations in other states. Hepp suggested the list should be reviewed by some members of the committee before they are added to the performance evaluation. Richter and Lutz volunteered to assist with the review. Hanley added that feedback from districts had been discussed as a possible component of the evaluation.

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

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

- The closing date was April 30<sup>th</sup>, so there were a number of closings that happened.
- A few amendments to extend contract deadlines were added due to Covid delays.
- The last four contracts should be going to Governor and Council on June 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Moose Plate sales are up by another 6-7%, so funding for the grant program should be at least as much as in previous years.
- The 2023 grant round will have clarifications added to the application, though no structural changes will be made. These clarifications include:
  - Land conservation closing date-clarification of parameters;
  - Agricultural equipment rental programs-emphasizes importance of demonstrating need and how to do so, identifying conservation benefit, and describing invasive species control;
  - Letters of support-more direction provided about when it is required, namely when they are directly listed in the application, as well as clarification that letters are allowed to be a copy of an email;
  - Landowner consent form-required when working on a property, including for planning purposes;
  - Staff administrative costs-more consistent calculation for these costs.
- The 2023 grant round will continue to use the Box electronic file system. Brickner-Wood has set up an SCC Box system since the UNH system will be closing down in June. All files from the UNH system are being backed up and transferred over. All grantees should have received an email with instructions on how to proceed.
- The new application will be posted by July 1<sup>st</sup> and due September 9<sup>th</sup> and back to the SCC by November 17<sup>th</sup>.

Richter asked about ineligible projects related to natural resource inventories. Brickner-Wood clarified that natural resource inventories are only ineligible if they are limited to data collection and have no action steps included.

Brickner-Wood indicated that the Moose Plate website was going to have some updated data for the 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary coming up. Hepp offered assistance at the local level when they begin marketing the anniversary.

### **FSA State Executive Director’s Update**

Holmes expressed that he was pleased to be back. He explained that he is close to getting the state committee fully appointed and ready to begin on-the-ground work. He emphasized the collaboration between FSA and NRCS which is facilitated by sharing office spaces in most of the county offices. Holmes identified that a number of emergency conservation projects have resulted from flooding over in Cheshire County. FSA has dispersed a lot of money in Covid relief over the last two years as well as for the Dairy Margin Coverage Program. Holmes

indicated that the urban agriculture initiative from USDA may have an impact on FSA programs. He added that a couple of long-time county executive directors retired over the last few years.

Hepp asked what FSA anticipates will be their most highly demanded program this year. Holmes answered that everyone has been asking if there will be fuel assistance, but so far there is none. He added that the loan portfolio would likely be the emphasis along with programs for weather impacts. Hepp offered that the conservation districts have previously conducted trainings on federal programs and that there may be an opportunity to provide this training again.

### **Executive Director's Update**

Hanley reviewed that he has been continuing to refine the strategic plan and held several open comment sessions over the last quarter. Mainly the feedback indicated that the long-term goals needed to be framed more precisely. Hanley said that this would be his focus moving forward and that he was looking to convene a strategic plan subcommittee with the goal of having a final draft for the August meeting. Hepp, Richter, and Lutz volunteered to be a part of the subcommittee.

Hanley added that he has been working on creating a resource and development program for the conservation districts including example policies and procedures, creating a training program, and a self-evaluation system all of which can be built out over time. He is currently working on a right-to-know guide. Hanley described the grant opportunities that he has been working on including the Conservation District Climate Resiliency Program, which would provide funding to farmers and landowners, and an application to the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, which would provide funding for two planners to get 50-100 projects shovel ready. The first round of proposals for the Climate Resiliency Program will be this summer. The Long Island Sound Futures Fund proposal will be for planning activities over the next year, with an implementation application being submitted towards the end of the grant period in order to fund the 50-100 projects that will be ready to go.

Hanley asked for guidance on how to approach requests for letters of support considering the SCC only meets quarterly. Richter described NHACC's system of running the request through the executive committee and only bringing it to the board if there is no consensus. Lutz pointed out that the SCC is a government organization which is affected by the open meeting law which may remove the possibility of voting over email. Jasper expressed his hesitation to delegate authority, but suggested that a subcommittee could make a recommendation to the board. Hepp suggested that a subcommittee be formed to discuss the policy on this topic. Jasper and Hepp volunteered. Throop pointed out that the extent to which the executive director has authority to provide a letter of support should be part of the subcommittee's consideration.

Throop made a motion to indicate the SCC's support for the Climate Change Resiliency grant work and for the Long Island Sound planning grant. Richter seconded the motion.

### **Role Call Vote**

Bekkerman-Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Nichols-Aye  
Richter-Aye  
Stone-Aye  
Throop-Aye  
Tilton-Aye

The motion carries.

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

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

- Hepp reported that Belknap CCD is focused on stream restoration, particularly in Sanbornton where they were able to do sediment modeling to determine the primary sources. This work will continue in Meredith. After learning about the congressionally designated funding requests, they assisted two communities in putting together proposals for road redesign and culvert replacements. Belknap CCD is working on town forest plans in three towns with two lined up to be completed in 2022. They completed their plant sale, assisted with Envirothon, and are helping low-income facilities with raised bed gardens and working with community gardens through their gleaning program. Carroll CCD held their heirloom apple grafting workshop and tree identification class. They are planning for a leave-no-trace hot spot in early fall, revitalizing the summer harvest festival, and working on stream restoration.
- Larocque reported that Merrimack CCD assisted in the Envirothon, completed the plant sale, and is starting the gleaning program for the season. They are working on their sustainable agriculture program, including rental equipment which has become more popular and has expanded to include a plastic mulch and drip tape layer. Hillsborough CCD wanted to thank Cooperative Extension for helping with a workshop to coincide with the plant sale. They conducted their plant sale and have started their gleaning program for the season. They have worked on the climate change district grants, started their rental program, held a round table discussion with UNH, and participated in the Envirothon. They are planning on hosting the agricultural tour for NHACD on July 27<sup>th</sup> at Woodmont Orchard. Hillsborough CCD also wanted to thank UNH Cooperative Extension for their virtual presentation series for farmers that are one-hour long to accommodate busy schedules.
- Lutz reported that Strafford CCD is getting a small manure spreader to add to their rental program and that their ash spreader has been refurbished. They also just held their plant sale. Rockingham CCD has had two office changes in the last quarter. Vicky Stafford, District Manager, was originally going to limit her hours and was in the process of training someone to take over some of her responsibilities, but that person has left and Vicky will resume working at 32 hours per week in July. Lutz reported that many migratory birds landed at Odiorne Point and that a Chuck-will's-widow was sighted. Rockingham CCD would like to have a training session on the right-to-know law and identified a strong need for training around USDA's Section 1619. Lutz reported NHACD's updates including that the Envirothon was held this week with 90 students and a plethora of volunteers. They held their legislative walk-in with all four federal legislators and 17 supervisors. They learned about congressional directed funding opportunities, resulting in one district applying for \$800,000 and NHACD applying for

\$60,000. NHACD has had 30 supervisors involved in some capacity which represents 60%. They are still working on the Fisher Cats baseball game fundraiser to support Envirothon. Twelve organizations are setting up tables for the networking part of the evening. Hepp added that several districts are covering the cost of tickets for students who participated in Envirothon.

- Hepp reported that Coos CCD now has a website and has completed their plant sale. They have been meeting with a county land conservation group and have school programs going including a conservation field day. Sullivan CCD has been focusing on the Long Island Sound Grant and the Envirothon. She added that Belknap and Merrimack CCDs are recipients of Moose Plate Grants to buy no-till seeders and that they are looking to order them together so that they can be shipped together.
- Tilton reported that a number of new leaders have been established and a number of new hires have been made at DES. The ARM fund has \$3.7million with a due date of May 31<sup>st</sup>. A number of interns will be conducting stream crossing assessments. They received an EPA grant and have been working with UNH and Fish & Game to develop new protocols for turtles, particularly endangered species, and develop wildlife shelves. Last year, they finished their national wetland inventory maps statewide and those maps can be accessed through NH GRANIT and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Tilton added that Karen Dudley is retiring from NRCS in July and that she has been a great help to DES. Tilton reported that DES is responding to all of the emergencies that have been reported in the southwest by meeting with FEMA and Homeland Security to secure money for upgrading stream crossings to increase their capacity. They have issued over 100 emergencies.
- Stone reported that UNH Cooperative Extension is in the process of creating a wetland tool in NH GRANITView. They had the Saving Special Places Land Conservation Conference with about 290 people registered. Next year they are hoping to have the conference in person. Stone described a new project that is working on developing a coastal conservation plan and outreach program which will be ready for feedback in the fall.
- Nichols reported that the Natural Heritage Bureau has hired one new position and is hiring for a second internally.
- Jasper reported that Gail McWilliams Jellie is retiring and her replacement will be starting in June. He reported that he has been in discussion with DES about PFAS since all of the milk in the state was tested this past year and there was some concern regarding contamination of municipal well water. NHDAMF has also been working with DES on regarding water reporting since the system does not account for the amount of rain each month and months that do not require water usage. Lastly, they have been working on corn loss due to attack by birds which can be mitigated by the application of Avitrol, but a permit and the presence of Wildlife Services personnel are required. They have been working with Fish and Game to broaden access to this program for farmers.
- Bekkerman reported that the NH Ag Experiment Station have had three positions that have opened up in the last few months, have just hired for a communications position, and have hired two new faculty members including a Plant Breeder and a Microbiologist. He reported that the renovation and addition to the Spaulding Building is well underway. There appears to be an increase in the number of students attending UNH with COLSA leading the pack.



- Richter reported that NHACC is continuing to work on outreach materials including their website. They are hoping their conference on November 5<sup>th</sup> will be in person, but the final decision will be made in June. They will focus on youth engagement. NHACC is looking to partner with DES to provide wetlands training. They are working with the Coalition of Environmental Organizations in NH to create a legislative outreach program and possibly an event in January to welcome and create discourse with the new legislators. They are continuing to provide technical assistance and are looking into the beaver control policies that are being implemented in towns.
- Ross reported that Peter Whitcomb will be assuming a number of Karen Dudley's responsibilities once she retires but that they are looking to hire for her position. She added that there is a lot of Farm Bill money going to producers across the state, nearly \$12million by the end of the fiscal year. The NRCS State Technical Advisory meeting will be June 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **Adjournment**

Hepp closed the meeting at 11:49am.