STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
June 15, 2026

The June meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Ed Wengryn at 9:33 A.M. Frank Minch stated that the Open Public Meetings Act requirements have been met. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. adequate notice of this meeting was provided by giving the time, date, and location and to the extent known the agenda of this meeting. At least 48 hours in advance this notice has been posted on the front door of the 200 Riverview Building in Trenton; by emailing media resources for nj.com and courierpostonline.com and filed with the Secretary of State.

The Flag Salute was recited.

Call of the Membership Roll indicated the following:

Members Present
Ed Wengryn, Chairman
Frank Minch, Executive Secretary
Joe Lomax
Julie Hawkins, NRCS
Dr. Stephanie Murphy* (rep. L. Lawson)
Sylvia Kovacs
Michael Haberland* (rep. B. Schilling)
Cormac Morrissey
Ray Cywinski*
Louise Davis
Dennis Contois, NJDEP

Members absent
Michael Rigolizzo
John Kocubinski

***Attended virtually**

Others Present
Robert Reitmeyer, Burlington SCD
Jennifer McCulloch, Morris SCD
Ramon Mejia, Ocean SCD
Sara Mellor, NJDA
Diana Diaz, NJDA
John Matos-Ramos, NJDA
Nicholas Lund, NJDA
Kelly Doyle, NJDA
Tim Thomas, Freehold SCD
Michael Kent, DelAtlantic SCD
Rick Dovey, NJACD, DelAtlantic SCD
Charles Roohr, SADC
Matthew D'Alessandro, Somerset Union SCD
Nathan Charron, Somerset Union SCD
Scott Ellis, Mercer SCD
Paul Califano, Freehold SCD*
Karol Blew, Cumberland Salem SCD*
Michael Bonham, Cumberland Salem SCD*
Ines Zimmerman, NJACD*
Andrea Farparan, Freehold SCD*
Janet Rekesius, HEP SCD*
Phil Roehrich, Morris SCD*
Christine Raabe, Ocean SCD*
Sandra Myers, Upper Delaware SCD*
William Pollock, Ocean SCD*
Fran Aguirre, HEP SCD*
Robert Fenton, DelAtlantic SCD*

MEETING MINUTES FROM April 13, 2026

A vote was called to accept the draft meeting minutes from the April 13, 2026, meeting. Joe Lomax made a motion to approve the minutes. Louise Davis seconded; Cormac Morrissey abstained, all other Committee members voted in the affirmative.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Ed Wengryn:

- Budget testimony activities completed jointly with NJDEP leadership.
- Continuing visits to county boards of agriculture
- Attended and caught up with folks at the Regional SCD Supervisor Meetings in April.
- June is the Month of the Horse – Horse Proclamations
- Visted the Westminster Farmers Market for the Dairy Proclamation- dairy goat milk purveyor, making fresh mozzarella
- Severe late-season frost impacts on NJ fruit crops, including cherries, peaches, apples, blueberries, and grapes, with losses of 50–70% depending on crop and region. Farm Service Agency (FSA) coordination underway. There may be low hay harvest as well. Good to record all crop losses with FSA.

Presentation – NJ Motion Picture & Television Commission

Guests John Crowley and Mayor Janice Kovach gave an extended presentation describing:

- Rapid growth of film production in New Jersey (from $592M in 2023 to an estimated similar rate of 41% growth in 2024–25).
- Challenges coordinating temporary site disturbance on farms, preserved farmland, and municipal lands.
- The need for streamlined consistent statewide processes for temporary film-related soil disturbances without lowering standards.
- Case examples include projects in Somerset County at Fiddler's Elbow where temporary earthwork required restoration to original or better condition.
- The statewide Film Ready program, efforts to standardize permitting, and opportunities for district partnership.

The Committee discussed the need for clear communication with districts and consistency with Chapter 251 requirements.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT

Frank Minch reported the following:

2:90 Rule Amendment Update

- Minch reported continued internal legal review, with several items requiring additional Executive Committee discussion before moving the rule package forward for SSCC for approval. Following that the next steps include Governor's Office review, Administrative Law review, and eventual publication. No action taken.

District Audits

- All audits except one are complete; the remaining audit is expected at the start of the next cycle.

Supervisor Appointments (action)

The Committee reviewed the full statewide supervisor appointment package.

1. **Supervisors Meeting Performance Standards (Reappointments)**
   The Committee voted to approve eligible supervisors meeting attendance and training criteria. Members with conflicts were excused from voting as needed. Motion made by Cormac and carried unanimously.
2. **Supervisors Not Meeting Performance Criteria**
   Three supervisors not meeting full requirements were recommended for reappointment due to district circumstances and ongoing succession planning. Motion by Louise Davis second by Joe Lomax, motion carried.
3. **New Appointment for a three year term– Replacement for Jay Kandle**
   The nominating documentation for Justin Crane was accepted, and appointment approved.
4. **Recognition of Retiring Supervisors**
   The Committee approved issuing recognition letter for long-serving supervisor stepping down, Jay Kandle.
5. **Supervisors Not Seeking Reappointment**
    1. **Gloucester- Jay Kandle and John Grasso**
    2. **Mercer- Gary Mount**
    3. **Upper Delaware- Natalie Burger**

Districts will convene their nominating committees to identify replacements.

Send letters of thanks for their service to the retiring supervisors.

<u>SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT</u>

John Matos-Ramos and Kelly Doyle, reported on the following:

A. Engineering Report

- June 3 statewide staff training co-hosted with the NJSCD Employees Association, covering OPRA, technical standards, plan review, culverts, off-site stability, exempt municipalities, and soil compaction. Approximately 60 staff attended.
- A notable project denial in DelAtlantic SCD involving a deficient engineering plan, multiple unresolved comments, and lack of required stormwater analysis. The engineer incorrectly assumed Pinelands Commission review superseded Chapter 251. District denial was upheld.
- Morris SCD office visit on May 4 covering inspection of three active sites and conservation planning. Additional district visits planned statewide.

Nicholas Lund and Frank Minch reported on the following:

B. Report of Compliance Bulletin (action)

- A statewide guidance bulletin clarifying conditional vs. final Reports of Compliance was reviewed. The Committee approved issuance of the bulletin to all districts. Motion by Louise Davis and seconded by Sylvia Kovacs, then carried by the Committee.

C. Exempt Municipality Review (action)

- All required submissions have been received. One municipality Andover in Sussex County requested revocation of exemption due to ordinance issues and preference to return authority to the district. The Committee approved revocation effective July 1, 2026. Any projects already approved Andover will handle per Sandy Myers UDCD District Manager. Motioned by Joe Lomax, seconded by Louise Davis, Sylvia Kovacs recused and the remainder of the Committee voted in the affirmative.

D. 251 Policies and Procedures Manual (action)

- A newly reorganized and modernized manual was presented, reflecting improvements in plan review, inspection, enforcement, and administrative procedures. The Committee approved adoption and statewide distribution. Motioned by Louise Davis, seconded by Sylvia Kovacs, and carried.

NJ ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NJACD)

Rick Dovey reported on the following

- Regional supervisor meetings positively completed.
- Envirothon was successfully hosted by Ocean SCD with other partner volunteers
- Scholarship selection process is underway with five submissions.
- Northeast regional meeting scheduled for August 24–27 in Wilmington, DE.
- The Annual NJACD Conservation Partnership Meeting is scheduled for 11/30 at the Conference Center at Mercer County Community College

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NACD)

Ray Cywinski reported on activities

- Registrations open for NACD Summer Meeting (July 17–22) and Northeast Regional Meeting.
- Encourages all to look at the proposed changes shared in the NACD update email
- Bills being passed for farmers and ranchers have smaller allocations than previously
- Updates on federal conservation policy activity and Farm Bill uncertainties.

DISTRICT EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

Matt D'Alessandro reported:

- Successful June 3 statewide training event.
- Exploration of future engineering-focused training events with NJDOT and municipalities.
- Progress on Certification for Professional Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC) testing access and local proctor certification. D'Alessandro learned how to be a proctor and then trained Ramon Mejia of Ocean SCD and Glenn Ward of DelAtlantic SCD which allows them to proctor in house keeping the cost at $200 instead of $600.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Dennis Contois reported

- The NJPACT-REAL regulations are planned for July 20, 2027, yet they're not final yet. A public hearing on July 7, 2026, will allow people to share concerns and suggest improvements to the permit process.
- Mentioned NJDEP Emergency Response Committee concerns related to major events like World Cup matches, Macy's fireworks, Air show, Sail 250 celebration and large gatherings.

RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION (RCE)

Mr. Haberland reported

- Rutgers has been supporting the assessment of the freeze damage primarily at fruit orchards, communicating with producers to monitor for pests.
- Hiring updates; Bergen County Agent interviews are underway as well as a statewide Vegetable IPM agent. Late May Dr. Tung joined Extension as a Senior Coordinator pesticide safety program which helps backfill the positions lost due to retirements.
- Research is being done to learn how emerging precision agriculture technologies will affect economics and benefits such as laser weeding demonstrations.

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES (SEBS)

Dr. Murphy reported on the following:

- There is soil testing laboratory backlog due to staffing shortages.
- Researched soil health for resiliency and recovery post freeze impacts experienced by growers. Fertility helps plants to be resilient, particularly potassium for winter hardiness, and you do not want too much nitrogen. Active decomposition in the soil would create heat. This will be a recovery and rebuilding year for the future.

- Army Corps of Engineers, NRCS, Rutgers, and Freehold SCD field visits at Fort Monmouth regarding acid-producing soils produced after dredging was done to create a marsh. Discussion was had and a plan made to get vegetation in place to resolve the acid-producing soil issue.
- Many Pitches hosting World Cup matches feature Rutgers-bred turfgrass cultivars. “Ten of the tournament’s 16 soccer stadiums in the United States, Canada, and Mexico hosting the World Cup will feature cultivated varieties (cultivars) of cool-season natural turfgrasses bred by the university’s team of experts
- Senegal Men's National Soccer Team selected Rutgers Athletics as its official Team Base Camp to train at for the FIFA World Cup 2026
- Field days- opportunities to further one’s knowledge by observing and learning about the latest developments. **Turf management July 28** on campus at Hort Farm 2 in New Brunswick, and Lawn, landscaping and sports field July 29 Adelphia Farm in Freehold
- Faculty, students, and campus leaders are exploring how Cook Campus might evolve into a Health and Wellness Arboretum—a living landscape that supports learning, research, environmental stewardship, and human well-being. It would create an opportunity to connect the strengths of SEBS—its expertise in environmental science, agriculture, ecology, design, and human well-being—into a unified vision for the future.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

Julie Hawkins reported the following:

- Update from new NRCS Chief Buckly new motto for the Agency and a revised mission and vision statement shared with priorities
- Last three mission areas that include FSA and NRCS reorganization will be announced by the end of June. Field offices will not be touched, uncertain about state offices.

Public & Agency Comments

Public Comment – Janet Rekesius announced for Matt Ward the HEP SCD will be working on a fee schedule update.

Next meeting 9/14/2026 in Trenton

A motion was made by Joe Lomax to adjourn and was seconded by Sylvia Kovacs. The meeting ended at 11:23 AM with a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch, Division Director