**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**JUNE 12, 2023**

The June meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Chairman Douglas Fisher at 9:45 A.M. Mr. 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; mailed to The Star Ledger, the Courier Post and filed with the Office of Secretary of State.

The Flag Salute was recited.

Call of the Membership Roll indicated the following:

**Members Present** John Showler, SSCC, NJDA Douglas Fisher Tim Fekete, SSCC, NJDA

Joe Lomax Sara Mellor, SSCC, NJDA

Sylvia Kovacs Janet Rekesius, HEP SCD

Louise Davis Ines Zimmerman, Freehold SCD

Mike Haberland (rep. B. Schilling) Rick Dovey, C/A SCD

Dennis Contois (rep. S. LaTourette) K. Blew, Gloucester SCD

John Kocubinski A. Ortiz, NRCS

Maurice Sheets Christine Raabe, Ocean SCD

Dr. Stephanie Murphy Jim Hill, Hunterdon SCD Mike Rigolizzo Nori Sheppard, NJDOT

Katura Wright J. Baluski, Ocean SCD

Frank Minch, Division Director M. Patel, NJDOT

R. DeFlumeri, NJDA

T. Wang, Mercer SCD

R. Reitmeyer, Burlington SCD

Mike Kent C/A SCD

M. D’Alessandro, S/U SCD

D. O’Connell,Burl.SCD

P. Schiariti, Mercer SCD

T. Wang, Mercer SCD

**MINUTES OF MARCH 13, 2023 MEETING**

On motion by Mr. Rigolizzo, second by Ms. Davis, the minutes of the March 13, 2023 meeting were approved. Mr. Kocubinski abstained.

**CHAIRMAN’S COMMENTS**

Secretary Fisher indicated the excessively dry weather is negatively impacting the farm community.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT**

Mr. Minch reported on the following:

1. **Supervisor Appointments-**

Category 1- *Supervisor Re-nominations that meet Supervisor Performance Standards for 3-year term ending June 30, 2026.* On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Ms. Davis the following were approved, Bruce Rohsler (Bergen), Wayne Van Hise (Freehold),

W. Jay Kandle, John Grasso, Mike Visalli (Gloucester), Tobias Fox, Graham Russell (HEP), James Hill, Richard Stothoff (Hunterdon), Michael Gross (Ocean), Robert Amberg (Somerset-Union) were re-appointed.

On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Ms. Kovacs, Fran Chismar, Robert Carter (Camden) were re-appointed. Mr. Rigolizzo recused.

On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Rigolizzo, Robert Fenton, Joe Lomax (Cape-Atlantic), Sylvia Kovacs, Natalie Burger (Upper Delaware) were re-appointed. Ms. Kovacs and Mr. Lomax recused.

On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Mr. Rigolizzo, Henry DuBois (Cumberland-Salem) and Louise Davis (Morris) were re-appointed. Ms. Davis and Mr. Sheets recused.

On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Ms. Davis, Gary Mount (Mercer) was re-appointed.

Category 2- *Supervisor Re-nominations that did not met Supervisor Performance Standards*. On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Ms. Kovacs the following individuals were re-appointed to a one-year probationary term, Dan O’Connell (Burlington), Ronald Thomas (Cumberland-Salem), Robert Dryer (Freehold) and Lucia Hubner (Mercer).

Mr. Sheets recused. Mr. Everett (Gloucester) was not re-appointed because he was already on probation. The Gloucester SCD will be required to advertise for a new supervisor.

Category 3- *New Supervisor Appointments for 2-year term ending June 30, 2025*.

On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Ms. Kovacs, Dan Pace was appointed to the Mercer SCD Board to replace retiring Supervisor, Ed DiPolvere.

On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Lomax, Frank Arch and Wayne Najduch were appointed to fill two vacancies on the Upper Delaware SCD Board.

On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Lomax, a resolution was approved honoring Ed DiPolvere’s lengthy and dedicated service to the Mercer SCD and the SSCC Board.

1. **Conservation Programs- next steps-** A lengthy discussion was held regarding capitalizing on resources, regionalization to assist Districts in achieving goals. It was emphasized to concentrate on “shovel ready” projects and to work on them. There is a great deal of grant money available, Federal and otherwise, to assist with projects.

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**SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT**

1. **Daniel’s Law/District Websites-** A memo was sent to Districts regarding the Daniel’s Law procedure. When signing up as a redactor there’s the option to sign up as County or State.

Signing up for the totality of the State is more work but this will avoid potential issues and possible liability.

Also, it’s crucial to keep District websites up to date. The Website Transparency Law requires the last 3 years of minutes and financial data be posted on the website.

1. **Fee Schedule updates- Somerset-Union**-

Essentially the proposed Fee Schedule is more representative of the allocation of resources. The fee for review and certification is being lowered and the inspection fee is being increased.

On motion by Ms**.** Kovacs, second by Mr. Rigolizzo, the proposed Somerset-Union SCD Fee Schedule was approved.

1. **Engineering Report-** Mr. Showler provided a brief overview regarding some of his recent activities including assistance provided to the Districts and his ongoing research and work regarding writing a Standard for Solar Arrays.

The Quarterly Report was distributed and reviewed. The report covered January to March 2023. There were 1,521 applications, 1676 certifications, $2,336,900 in fees collected, 1,325 reports of compliance, 14,492 inspections covering 27,495 staff hours.

The Exempt Municipality report was distributed and reviewed. The total number of municipalities was 15. 12 municipalities received satisfactory ratings. 2 municipalities received a conditional rating, Chester Township (Morris County) and Long Beach Township (Ocean County). 1 municipality, Newark City, received an unsatisfactory rating.

1. NJDOT Standards- DOT’s goal is to have the updated standards posted in the August edition of the NJ Register.

**NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)**

Ms. Wright reported on the following:

1. Staffing Updates- Jessica Henry has been hired to fill the State Cost Share Planner position. Rick Brown has been hired to fill the Management and Strategy position.
2. Applications for the Community Gardens Farm Project are open until June 23th.
3. NRCS State Technical Meeting will be held June 27th.
4. Urban Agriculture Committee is seeking members. Nominations are open until July 15th.
5. CSP sign up date has been extended.
6. Ms. Katura will be acting NJ State Conservationist through approximately mid-July.

**NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NJACD)**

**-** Mr. Buscaglia reported on the following:

1. The 2023 NJ Envirothon was held in person for the first time since 2019. 17 teams participated in a torrential downpour. A great deal of partnership effort made this a successful endeavor. The MATES team placed first and will be representing the state in the national competition in July.
2. A scholarship winner was chosen recently.
3. Poster Contest was completed yesterday. Winners will be announced shortly.

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**NJ SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Kent reported that Tim Thomas is the Acting President of the organization. A committee is assessing needs and is hoping to revitalize the organization.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Mr. Contois reported that the Flood Hazard Regulations will be posted in the NJ Register next month.

**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Mr. Haberland reported searches are underway to fill four (4) County Agent Positions.

**SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

Dr. Murphy reported on the following:

1. Rutgers Day/Ag. Field Day was held on April 29th
2. University Commencement was held on May 14th.
3. Food-Waste composter in operation on G.H. Cook Campus Farm. Waste from dining halls will be transported to G.H. Cook Campus Farm to co-compost with animal stall waste using aerobic, in-vessel system with automated turning/mixing.
4. Agri-voltaics combines agriculture with solar power generation, keeping agriculture as the main focus for land use. Any yield losses are offset by income from electricity generation to contribute to the viability and resiliency of farming and contributes to renewable energy goals.
5. Solar canopies are being installed over Rutgers parking lots.
6. Planning for the December 2023 Vegetable Growers meeting is underway.
7. Dr. Murphy is working with a group of stakeholders on revisions to DOT’s Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Standards.

**SECRETARY FISHER**

This is Secretary Fisher’s last SSCC meeting before retiring. He indicated it was an honor working w the SSCC and, over the years, he’s learned a great deal about soil and the importance of healthy soil. He also reflected on several things and reminded the SSCC to always keep its mission in the forefront and how crucial it is to maximize resources and align with other organizations to assist in carrying out our mission.

In addition, it behooves the SSCC to work with other organizations to mitigate and lessen the damages of climate change. And, lastly, not to forget we are public servants.

**PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS**

Mr. Buscaglia indicated that the Somerset-Union SCD has consented to host the 2024 NJ Envirothon.

Mr. Rigolizzo, on behalf of the SSCC, thanked Secretary Fisher for his untiring advocacy for agriculture and especially soil conservation in the Garden State.

Mr. Minch presented Secretary Fisher with paw paw seedlings & seedlings from the Salem Oak.

It will be up to the Secretary to decide where the seedlings will be planted in his honor.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 AM. All actions were by unanimous vote unless otherwise noted.

The next SSCC meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch, Division Director

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