**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**MINUTES**

**JUNE 13, 2022**

The June meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Chairwoman Sylvia Kovacs at 9:44 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 Sylvia Kovacs Tim Fekete, SSCC, NJDA

Joe Lomax Paul Schiariti, Mercer SCD

Nick Saumweber, NRCS (rep J. Hawkins) Glen Van Olden, HEP SCD

Louise Davis Christine Raabe, Ocean SCD

Mike Haberland (rep B. Schilling) Mike Kent, Cape Atlantic. SCD

Vince Mazzei Lily Mehl, NJACD

Dennis Dougherty Tim Thomas, Freehold SCD

Frank Minch, Division Director Sara Mellor, SSCC, NJDA

Sandy Blick, NJDOT

L. Tessieri, N. Jersey RC&D

Ashley Kerr, NJFB

**MINUTES OF MARCH 14, 2022 MEETING**

On motion by Mr. Dougherty second by Mr. Lomax, the minutes of the March 14, 2022 meeting were approved.

**CHAIRWOMAN’S COMMENTS**

Ms. Kovacs offered condolences to John Kocubinski (SSCC member) on the loss of his son & Natalie Burger (Upper Delaware Supervisor) on the loss of her daughter.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT**

1. **Hybrid Work Schedule-** NJDA starts on a hybrid work schedule (3 days in the office, 2 days working from home) next week. This is a pilot program that runs through June 2023.

**SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT**

1. **Exempt Municipality Report**- Mr Showler reported that 16 towns conduct and implement their own Soil Erosion and sediment Control Program. One municipality received an unsatisfactory rating, Newark city. Mr. Van Olden explained that that Newark is improving but they need to be monitored.
2. **Bill**-**S2639-** This is a newly introduced bill which, if it becomes law, would allow municipalities to opt in and out of Exempt Status concerning the Erosion Control Program at will. Mr. Minch is attempting to set up a meeting with State Senator Connors as this Bill would cause chaos with the Erosion Control Program.
3. **Supervisor Appointments/Reappointments**- Category 1.- *Supervisor Re-nominations that met* *Supervisor Performance Standards for 3-year term ending June 30, 2025.* On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Lomax, the following Supervisors were re-appointed, Carl Mecky (Bergen), Geraldine Byrne (Bergen), Gina Berg (Burlington), Audrey Winzinger (Burlington), Michael Rigolizzo (Camden), Valerie Brown (Camden), Allen Carter (Cape- Atlantic), Thomas Tedesco (Cumberland- Salem), Donald Patterson (Freehold), Roger Gravatt (Freehold), Matt Ward (HEP), Greg Manners (Hunterdon), Michael Mathews (Hunterdon), Theodora Wang (Mercer), R. Danowski (Morris), Marc Slaff (Morris), Mark Kirby (somerset-Union), James Laine (Somerset-Union).

Mr. Dougherty recused on the Camden District appointments. Ms. Davis recused on the Morris District appointments and Mr. Lomax recused on the Cape-Atlantic appointments.

Category 2.- *Supervisor Re-Nominations that did not meet Supervisor Performance Standards,*

on motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Ms. Davis the following Supervisors were re-appointed to one-year provisional terms ending June 30, 2023, Jess Everett (Gloucester) and Mike Visalli (Gloucester). Neither Supervisor attended the required 70% of the Districts’ meetings.

Category 3.- *New Supervisor Appointments for 3-year term ending June 30, 2025.* On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Ms. Davis the following individuals were appointed to fill vacancies left by Supervisors not standing for re-appointment in the Ocean District, Linda Brennen (replacing Charlene Costaris) and Gary Paxton (replacing Martha Maxwell-Doyle).

Category 4.- *New Supervisor Appointments for 2-year term ending June 30, 2024* **.** On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Dougherty, Raymond Bukowski was appointed to the vacant Supervisor position in the Ocean District.

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Mr. Lomax suggested that a letter be sent to Ms. Costaris and Ms. Maxwell-Doyle thanking them for their years of dedicated service to the Ocean SCD.

On motion by Mr. Dougherty, second by Ms. Davis, Ms. Maxwell-Doyle was appointed to the Ocean District in the position of Supervisor Emeritus.

1. **Engineering Report-** Mr. Showler provided a brief overview regarding some of his recent activities including plan reviews, district assistance, training and field visits. This included assisting the Freehold, Hunterdon, Ocean and Somerset-Union SCDs.

Mr. Showler has been researching information regarding stormwater management on large-scale solar arrays in preparation for developing a “solar array standard”.

**NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Mr. Saumweber reported on the following:

1. The NRCS move has been delayed by one month.
2. EQIP has received an extra $2.4 million. The full allocation, in addition to the extra $2.4 million, will fund almost all EQIP applications on hand.
3. NJ-NRCS has received $240,000 in Technical Assistance funds.
4. An outreach questionnaire regarding urban agriculture will be sent out this coming fall or winter.
5. NJ-NRCS is hiring an Urban Agricultural Conservationist and an Area Resource Conservationist. Also, there are 12 other positions to be filled including Engineer and engineer technician.
6. A civil rights compliance review is scheduled for next week.
7. The NRCS Regional Conservationist will be visiting New Jersey this week.

**NJ ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Ms. Davis reported on the activities of the NJACD including the following:

1. The NJACD meeting today has been cancelled.
2. The March 28th Partnership meeting was extremely successful.
3. The NJ Envirothon was held virtually this year. The National Envirothon will be held in person.
4. The deadline for poster contest voting is today.
5. Numerous scholarship applications have been submitted.
6. A soil health webinar was held.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Mr. Mazzei reported on the comprehensive rule package to address climate threats. (to date, the rule package is over 1,200 pages). An emergency rule recently considered which would raise flood elevations by 2 feet and require precipitation amounts to be elevated was put on hold for the time being. There will be outreach and engagement sessions before final rules are enacted.

**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Mr. Haberland reported on the following:

1. Dr. Brian Schilling returned from six weeks of medical leave.
2. The Somerset County Agent position has been posted. Various other associate and scouting positions have been posted.

**SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

Dr. Murphy was not in attendance but submitted a written report which was disseminated to SSCC members and attendees of today’s meeting.

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**PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS**

Mr. Minch introduced newly hired Sara Mellor (Agricultural Research Specialist) to the SSCC.

Mr. Thomas spoke regarding the Employees Association. Mr. Thomas indicated that an employee survey will be sent to all District employees. After several years of languishing, they hope to re-invigorate the association.

Mr. Dougherty reported that the annual NACD meeting will be held in Puerto Rico from July 15th to the 19th and the North-East regional meeting will be held in Cambridge, MD from August 28th to the 31st.

Mr. Lomax reported that the NACD National Employee Handbook update is almost completed. In addition, NACD bylaws are being revised. A task force is completely reworking the 140 page NACD Policy book.

Ms. Tessieri (North Jersey RC&D) briefly highlighted their accomplishments over the past year. Ms. Tessieri explained their work is accomplished through partnerships and all of their funding comes through grants. North Jersey RC&D is looking to submit a grant proposal through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Ms. Tessieri is looking for letters of support from conservation partners.

Mr. Minch reported that Mr. Van Olden will be retiring after over 37 years of dedicated service to the HEP Soil Conservation District.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 AM. All actions were by unanimous vote unless otherwise noted.

The next SSCC meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch, Division Director

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