**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

 **DRAFT MINUTES**

**TELA-CONFERENCE**

**SEPTEMBER 14, 2020**

The September meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Chairman Douglas Fisher at 9:33 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 Health and Agriculture 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**

Secretary Douglas Fisher John Showler, SSCC, NJDA

Joe Lomax Tim Fekete, SSCC, NJDA

Matt Ward D. Dougherty, Camden SCD

Christine Hall, NRCS Matt D’Alessandro, HEP SCD

Dr. Stephanie Murphy (rep R. Goodman) Nick Saumweber, NRCS

Ray Cywinski

Sylvia Kovacs

Tony DiLodovico

Mike Rigolizzo

John Kocubinski

Mike Haberland (rep. B. Schilling)

Frank Minch, Executive Secretary

 **MINUTES OF JUNE 8, 2020 MEETING**

On motion by Mr. Ward, second by Mr. Cywinski, the minutes of the June 8, 2020 meeting were approved.

**CHAIRWOMAN’S COMMENTS**

Secretary Fisher thanked the District Personnel for their support and for carrying our their duties and assisting the public.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT**

Mr. Minch reported on the following:

1. **DEP Representative-** Vince Mazzei, Assistant Commissioner will be the new DEP representative to the SSCC.
2. **John Van Nuys-** A posthumous resolution honoring longtime Hunterdon SCD Chair, John Van Nuys, who served the Conservation Partnership over 50 years, was approved. The resolution was read into the record.
3. **NJDA Office Move-** Effective sometime in November, the NJDA will be relocating to 200 Riverview Plaza. The H&A Building will be closed and decommissioned in December. Eventually the H&A Building will be torn down.
4. **Supervisor Appointment-Burlington-** On motion by Mr. Cywinski, second by Mr. Kocubinski, Daniel O’ Connell, a Burlington County Commissioner, was appointed to the Burlington Soil Conservation District Board.
5. **District operations During COVID-19-**The Districts have done a remarkable job operating in these trying times. They have found a way to implement their programs and serve the public. Mr. Ward asked if there was a timeframe that State agencies would be returning to normal operations. Secretary Fisher echoed the Governor that the “data determines dates”.
6. **Upper Delaware Update-** The District is in the process of finalizing their banking. Wayne Jarvis and Marilyn Miller Heath have stepped down from the Upper Delaware District Board. Ms. Kovacs reported that the District held their first meeting and will be conducting outreach in an effort to complete their Board. The District’s new website is [www.upperdelawarescd-nj.com](http://www.upperdelawarescd-nj.com)

 **SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT**

1. **Permit Extension Act**- Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 103 declaring a state of emergency due to COVID-19. The NJ Legislature authorized the “Permit Extension Act of 2020”. This act automatically extends most government agency approvals which have expired or are scheduled to expire on or after March 9, 2020 and continuing for the duration of the COVID-19 extension period.
2. **Supervisor Performance Standards Work Group-** A conference call was held last week to recommend changes in meaningful metrics and analytics to measure supervisor performance. Another conference call will be scheduled in the near future. The members of the Supervisor Performance Standards Work Group include the following individuals, Matt Ward, Mark Kirby, Dennis Dougherty, Gina Berg, Christine Raabe and Frank Minch.

10:30 AM- Dr. Murphy left the conference call.

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1. **Engineering Report-** Mr. Showler provided a brief engineering report regarding some of his recent activities including district assistance to the Bergen, Freehold, Hunterdon, Ocean, Somerset Union and Upper Delaware SCDs. Mr. Showler presented the Quarterly Report (April to June 2020). 975 applications were received, 1,034 certifications, $1,771,453 fees collected, there were 10,761 inspections covering 22,537 staff hours.

**SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COST SHARE**

Mr. Fekete reported on how working from home has affected the procedure for approving and processing applications and payment requests for the various agricultural programs.

**NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Ms. Hall provided an update on NRCS programs and, also, reported on the following:

1. Source Water Protection- 10% of NJ-NRCS allocation is earmarked for source water protection. NRCS is prioritizing agricultural projects and areas (“High priority projects in high priority areas”). Additional funds will be offered in those geographic areas.

Mr. Saumweber reported on the following:

1. NRCS offices are closed to the public. A plan for opening for appointments is being discussed.
2. Thanks to the Burlington and Hunterdon SCDs for implementing safety protocols.
3. 78% of the $5 million EQIP allocation has been obligated.
4. A Memorandum of Agreement is not a legally binding document. It can be cancelled by any party with notification.

**NJ ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Mr. Dougherty reported on the activities of the NJACD including the following:

1. The annual Conservation Partnership Conference will take place virtually on November 16, 2020.
2. The address for the NJACD web site is [www.njacd.org](http://www.njacd.org) .
3. The 2021 NJ Envirothon may be held virtually.
4. Mr. Cywinski reported that NACD committee meetings are held virtually. The NACD Annual Conference will take place in New Orleans in February.
5. Mr. Lomax reported that Deb Bogar is retiring.

**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Mr. Haberland reported on the following:

 1. Rutgers Cooperative Extension is delivering their programs remotely through December 31st.

 2. Farm visits are being conducted on an as needed basis.

 3. All classes are being conducted remotely.

 4. Agricultural Extension Stations are navigating through budget issues.

 5. The Soil Testing Lab is only accepting samples through the mail.

**SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

No report.

**PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS**

1. Mr. Minch indicated he’s working with Rob Vivian regarding Ethics Training.

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The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 AM. All actions were by unanimous vote unless otherwise noted.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch

Executive Secretary, SSCC

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