**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**TELE-CONFERENCE**

**DECEMBER 13, 2021**

The December meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Acting Chairman Joe Lomax at 9:35 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

Joe Lomax Tim Fekete, SSCC, NJDA

Matt Ward N. Saumweber, USDA-NRCS

Julie Hawkins, NRCS I. Zimmerman, Freehold SCD

Dr. Stephanie Murphy (rep L. Lawson) Christine Raabe, Ocean SCD

Ray Cywinski M. Kent, Cape-Atlantic SCD

Mike Rigolizzo Louise Davis, Morris SCD

Mike Haberland Lily Mehl, NJACD

Sylvia Kovacs

John Kocubinski

Vince Mazzei

Dennis Dougherty

Frank Minch, Executive Secretary

**MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 MEETING**

On motion by Mr. Rigolizzo?, second by Mr. Dougherty, the minutes of the September 14, 2021 meeting were approved. Mr. Rigolizzo pointed out his first name was incorrect in the minutes. Ms. Kovacs abstained.

**CHAIRMAN’S COMMENTS**

None

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT**

1. **2022 Meeting Schedule-** On motion by Mr. Cywinski, second by Mr. Rigolizzo, the 2022 SSCC meeting schedule was approved. Meetings are scheduled for January 10th, March 14th, April 11th, June 13th, September 12th and December 12th.
2. **2:90 Rules Update-** Mr. Minch reported that one of his goals in 2022 is to review andupdate all 2:90 rules. Committees will be formed to assist in this endeavor.

**SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT**

1. **Engineering Report-** Mr. Showler provided a brief overview regarding some of his recent activities including plan reviews, district assistance and district field visits. This included assisting the Upper Delaware SCD with a review of a large warehouse facility situated adjacent to the Muskenetcong River and assisting the Freehold SCD with reviewing a mixed-use development project.

In addition, Mr. Showler presented the Committee with the first (July to September) FY 2022 Quarterly Report. During that timeframe 1,427 applications were received, 1,508 projects certified, $2,439,798 in fees collected, 1,934 reports of compliance, 15,894 inspections were conducted and 25,486 staff hours logged. Since the inception of the program, over 185,000 applications have been received, involving over 1 million acres and 2.6 million inspections have been conducted.

Mr. Showler proposed revising and updating several of the Standards. A lengthy discussion ensued.

**NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE**

1. Regarding the pending NRCS MOU, Mr. Saumweber indicated he would like to resolve any concerns between the Districts and the SSCC regarding data sharing and data privacy. Mr. Minch and Mr. Saumweber will continue this conversation. In addition, Mr. Minch will be discussing this issue with the DAG tomorrow.
2. Ms. Hawkins reported that NRCS is actively working through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program applications. To date, NJ-NRCS has received approximately 35 applications.
3. USDA is under a continuing resolution through February 18, 2022.
4. The 12-member Urban Agriculture Board was recently approved by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. A meeting will be scheduled shortly.
5. The Local Workgroup will be sending out a questionnaire to gauge the priorities in the various regions of New Jersey. At the present time, “in person” meetings are not allowed. It’s hoped that by the June 30th deadline, “in person” meetings will resume.

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**NJ ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Mr. Cywinski and Ms. Davis reported on the activities of the NJACD and NACD including the following:

1. NJACD Officers are as follows: President- Louise Davis, 2nd Vice President- Matt Ward, Treasurer- Dennis Dougherty, Secretary- Jim Hill, NACD Rep.- Ray Cywinski, Alternate NACD Rep.- Dennis Dougherty.
2. Louise Davis will serve as the NJACD northern representative to the SSCC. Joe Lomax will serve as the southern representative to the SSCC. Both will serve 3-year terms. In addition, Dennis Dougherty will serve the 2-year unexpired term of Tony DiLodovico who moved out of state.
3. NACD issued a letter of support for the Build Back Better Bill which includes $28 billion for conservation programs and conservation technical assistance.
4. NACD provided comments for the Climate Action Task Force and Endangered Species Act.
5. UAC grant applications are due at the end of January 2022.
6. There are numerous upcoming webinars. Individuals may register on the NACD website.
7. The annual NACD meeting is scheduled for February in Orlando, Florida.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Mr. Mazzei reported on the following:

1. DEP is looking forward to co-ordinating w the SSCC and SCDs on Stormwater Management Rules.
2. NJ- PACT and other regulations are being updated to reference and address climate change.
3. A re-organization is underway at DEP. Mr. Mazzei is the Commissioner of Watershed and Land Management. Due to retirement, he will be inheriting the follows programs: Dam Safety, Floodplain Management, and Coastal Engineering.

**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Mr. Haberland reported on the following:

1. The search for a County Agent in Cape May County is nearing an end. There are 2 well qualified candidates that will be interviewed by senior management shortly.
2. The Morris and Somerset County agent vacancies have been approved to fill. The jobs will be posted in early 2022.
3. 2 County Agents will be retiring in 2022, Wes Kline (Cumberland County) and Dean Polk (Cream Ridge Agricultural Experiment Station).

**SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

Dr. Murphy reported on the following:

1. Today is the last day of classes. Exams begin on Thursday.
2. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) National Weather Service has selected Rutgers University as a recipient of its 2021 Honored Institution Awards for 125 years of service and providing outstanding weather service to the nation. Rutgers has maintained a weather station on campus since Jan. 1, 1896, with the current location at Rutgers Gardens on the Rutgers- New Brunswick campus since 1978.
3. Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) was awarded $500,000 in Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) funding by the U.S. Department of Education to support students pursuing a doctoral degree in Environmental Sciences. The fellowship provides a yearly stipend of up to $34,000 for a total of 3 years.

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1. Max Haggblom, Professor and chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology is the principal investigator studying polar and alpine soils. Researchers are seeking to identify the mechanisms that lead to diverse soil microbial communities which are hallmarks of stable and sustainable soils.
2. Report: Ecosystem Service Valuation Approaches and Carbon Mitigation Considerations for Garden State Agriculture. The lead author of this report is Marjorie Kaplan. The report details the ability of natural and working lands to sequester, or store carbon. This is an opportunity for mitigating climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing carbon in vegetation and soil.
3. NJAES has started a Soil Health effort this fall. Faculty and staff are developing funding proposals for Soil Health projects. Dr. Murphy proposed developing soil health training and demonstration for RCE county staff and SCD staff.

**PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS**

1. Mr. Lomax recognized and thanked Mr. Ward for his many years of service to the State Committee, the NJACD and urban conservation.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 AM. All actions were by unanimous vote unless otherwise noted.

The next SSCC meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch, Executive Secretary

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