

**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE  
NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES  
December 8, 2025**

The September meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Ed Wengryn at 9:30 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 the Courier Post, Trenton Times, and nj.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)  
Mike Rigolizzo\*  
Sylvia Kovacs\*  
Michael Haberland (rep. B. Schilling) \*  
Cormac Morrissey\*  
Ray Cywinski\*  
Dennis Contois, NJDEP  
Louise Davis  
John Kocubinski\*

**Others Present Online**

Freehold SCD\*  
Janet Rekesius, HEP SCD\*  
Jessica Wyatt, Gloucester SCD\*  
Karol Blew, Cumberland Salem SCD\*  
Marissa Appolonia, Gloucester SCD\*  
Matthew D'Alessandro, Somerset Union SCD\*  
Michael Bonham, Cumberland Salem SCD\*  
Paul Califano, Freehold SCD\*  
Valerie Brown, DelAtlantic SCD\*  
Ines Zimmerman, NJACD\*  
Nai NG, NJDOT\*

**Others Present**

Sara Mellor, NJDA  
Diana Diaz, NJDA  
Kelly Doyle, NJDA  
John Matos-Ramos, NJDA  
Nick Lund, NJDA  
Tim Thomas, Freehold SCD  
Michael Kent, DelAtlantic SCD  
Rick Dovey, NJACD, DelAtlantic SCD  
Jennifer McCulloch, Morris SCD  
Robert Reitmeyer, Burlington SCD

**\*Indicates attended via Microsoft Teams**

**MEETING MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 20, 2025**



Edits requested included proper spelling of DeAtlantic, adding Louise Davis to attendance and remove Ray Cywinski second mention of attendance under others. A vote was called to accept the draft meeting minutes from the October 20, 2025, meeting. Joe Lomax made a motion to approve the minutes. Louise Davis seconded; John Kocubinski abstained, all other Committee members voted in the affirmative.

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

Chairman Wengryn expressed holiday greetings to all.

Budget season – NJDA put in our capital budget requests, and we are also preparing for our fiscal budget. Anticipate that it will take longer due to new administration.

Discussed transition to new Governor-elect and implications are themed based:

- Focus areas: affordability, energy, infrastructure, quality of life. These areas include healthcare, housing, energy and cost of energy systems.
- Encouraged agricultural community participation in transition workgroups.
- Agrivoltaics project in Upper Deerfield- this is how agriculture's role fits into energy and infrastructure discussions (e.g., solar installations on farms)

## **EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Frank Minch reported the following:

- **Staffing:** Introduced **Kelly Doyle** Erosion Control Engineer whose time will be shared with by SADC, tasks will be on 251 regulatory activities and ag conservation. Nicholas Lund joined as an Erosion Control Specialist; he will be handling administrative work dealing with the NJ soil conservation districts.
- **Supervisor Appointment:**
  - Burlington District: Proposed David Frank (Springfield Township) to fill a vacancy. Stephanie Murphy made a motion, Joe Lomax seconded; all other Committee members voted in the affirmative.
- **2026 SSCC Meeting Schedule:**

Reviewed, June meeting moved to third Monday due to conflict. Approval of the proposed 2026 SSCC meeting schedule was motioned by Joe Lomax and seconded by Louise Davis, all other Committee members voted in the affirmative.

- **NJACD Annual Conservation Partnership meeting**

Good attendance, new venue at Mercer Conference Center worked out well.

## **SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT**



John Mato-Ramos and Kelly Doyle reported the following:

## **Engineering Report**

John Mato-Ramos introduced Kelly Doyle; background Bachelor's degree from Villanova in civil engineering, Master's of Science from MIT in environmental engineering and conservation, then went on to consulting in Madison, Wisconsin, where she earned her P.E. license and got design experience in stormwater management, H&H modeling, and erosion control management. Currently she is a licensed P.E. in NJ. In 2017 Kelly began at NJDA with the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) in the stewardship program. In her new role she will be part of the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control program, the Agricultural Assistance program, and the Farmland Preservation Program.

1. **Mazza Recycling (Tinton Falls, Freehold SCD)** Mazza Recycling sought to expand its mulch processing facility yet faced issues meeting offsite stability standards. A site visit by Ms. Doyle and Freehold SCD staff revealed existing erosion concerns. An alternative discharge location was identified, and the engineer agreed to revise plans for compliance. The joint site visit resolved the slope stability issue; waiver avoided through site redesign.
2. **Adventure Crossing Phases 3 & 4 (Jackson Township, Ocean SCD)** Mr. Matos- Ramos and Ms. Doyle met Ocean SCD staff for a joint site visit. The original plans were redesigned from a mixed-use development to residential townhouses and affordable housing. The district raised concerns about assumptions in the hydrologic analysis. After reviewing site photos, historical imagery, soil data, and plans, NJDA P.E.'s issued a letter with recommendations for correcting the modeling assumptions.
3. Continue to assist districts with plan reviews and problem-solving related to Standards and hydrologic modeling. Recently, support was provided to Freehold, Burlington, Somerset-Union, Ocean, and Cape-Atlantic districts, along with handling inquiries from consultants and the public.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)**

Julie Hawkins reported the following:

- **Program Updates:**
  - National application cutoff extended to January 15 due to shut down.
  - **New Initiative for program managers: Regenerative Agriculture** – focuses on soil health, water management, biodiversity; whole farm assessment of resources concerns planning required. Soil testing before and after. 15 Primary practices for participants to pick from.
- State Technical Committee meeting scheduled for December 10.
- Local work group meetings coming up, looking to include past concerns
  
- **Training Announcements:**
  - Prescribed Burning Awareness: Week of March 23 (Stockton University).
  - Soil Health & Sustainability: Mid-July (virtual + field day).



## **NJ ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NJACD)**

Rick Dovey reported on the following

- Successful Annual Conservation Partnership Meeting on Monday, November 24, 2025, at Mercer County Community College. Planning is getting underway to compile an agenda.
  - Awards were given to folks and projects
  - Budget was presented and adopted
  - Years of service recognition
  - NJACD Officers were elected for the new year
  - Appointees for the State Committee were selected for the coming year
- NJ Envirothon planning is underway for 2026. The host is Ocean SCD. Efforts to increase participation are underway.

## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NACD)**

Ray Cywinski reported on activities

- USDA funding stable; Farm Bill extended through September 30, 2026.
- Legislative priorities: full Farm Bill passage.
- Funding corrections made for CRP and EQUIP
- Casey Taylor Regional Conservation for NE has moved on to a new position and will be replaced by Astor Boozer
- “Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development” (SPEED Act), which is intended to make significant changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- NACD Annual Meeting: Feb 15–19, 2026 (San Antonio, TX).

## **DISTRICT EMPLOYEES’ ASSOCIATION**

Matt D’Alessandro reported on activities

- Elections were held, current officers were re-elected- Matt and Andrea and Courtney
- Good roundtable discussion at Annual Conservation Partnership Meeting
- Donation request sent to all districts – Association is volunteer based and incur annual expenses, business registration fees, national employee association dues

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Dennis Contois reported the following:

- Proposed flood hazard rule changes of Resilient Environments and Landscapes (REAL) include an increase of 4 feet to the 100-year flood elevation in the coastal area
- The rules will be adopted 1/5/2025 with implementation six months following. NJDEP has scheduled training for staff on the changes starting the week of 1/12/2026.

## **RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION (RCE)**



Mr. Haberland reported on the following:

- Two county agent retirements (Union & Middlesex Counties) no replacements are lined up.
- Dr. Katrina DeWitt fruit management, pest management program working from the Bridgeton Field Station, focusing on key insect and disease issues in tree fruit and grapes
- Ongoing searches for county agents and specialists.
- Atlantic County Agent interviews were completed in August focusing on commercial ag production, no word yet on a hire
- Entomology department is now accepting applications for senior program coordinator in the pesticide safety education program
- October began a search for a county agent in commercial ag production for Bergen County
- New search is underway for a county agent for a Vegetable IPM state program leader
- On January 1, 2026, new agronomy specialist and fruit pathologist will begin

### **SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES (SEBS)**

Dr. Murphy reported on the following:

- This is the last week of classes at Rutgers. Dr., Murphy is teaching Soils and Society- educated the students to conserve, maintain and improve soil health.
- **Workshop: Circular Bioeconomy and Regenerative Food Systems for New Jersey and Beyond**, 12/12/2026 Focusing on the concepts of circular bioeconomy and regenerative food systems, emphasizing their potential to drive economic growth, resource efficiency, and sustainability.
- **11/9-12/2026-Salt Lake City, Utah there International Annual Meeting of Agronomy Society of America, Crop Science Society of America, & Soil Science Society of America (CANVAS)** three graduate students in the Department of Plant Biology at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, won awards
- Rutgers University-New Brunswick has earned full accreditations for all nine of its undergraduate engineering programs from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET).
- Bingru Huang, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Plant Biology and affiliate of the Rutgers Climate and Energy Institute, led an international research team in reviewing how different types of stress (brief exposure to heat, drought, or cold) can prepare plants to survive extreme heat later. The research was published “How Plants Remember Stress: A Key to Surviving Heat Waves” in the journal *Environmental and Experimental Botany*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envexpbot.2025.106208>
- Pamela McElwee, professor in the Department of Human Ecology and affiliate of the Rutgers Climate and Energy Institute, co-chaired the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Nexus Assessment from 2021-2024 and co-authored published a report from its work in Global Change Biology. The study summarized ways to fight climate change across five major areas where changes are needed: land and ocean management, energy systems, cities and buildings, industrial practices, and social behaviors. <https://doi.org/10.1111/qcb.70444>

### **Public & Agency Comments**



- 12/19/2025 is when the registration closes for the annual National Association of Conservation Districts meeting in San Antonio, 2/15-19/2026.
- Joe Lomax reminded the committee about the D.C. Spring fly-in on 3/25/2026 and that it is helpful to have Mr. Minch to join the effort.
- Sylvia suggested moving annual meeting earlier to avoid holiday conflicts.

A motion was made by Joe Lomax to adjourn and was seconded by Louise Davis. The meeting ended at 10:25 AM unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch, Division Director

