



State Conservation Committee

PO Box 2042 • Concord NH 03302-2042
nh.gov/SCC

February 15th, 2024 – 9:00am to 12:00pm
Hosted by Department of Natural & Cultural Resources
Concord, NH

APPROVED MINUTES

Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff present at Department of Natural & Cultural Resources

Amy Gaudreau, UNH Cooperative
Extension
Ian Hanley, SCC Executive Director
Donna Hepp, Belknap and Carroll
CCDs
Shawn Jasper, NH Department of
Agriculture, Markets & Food
Rob Larocque, Merrimack and
Hillsborough CCDs
Emily Nichols, NH Department of
Environmental Services
Barbara Richter, NH Association of
Conservation Commissions
Becky Ross, USDA-NRCS State
Conservationist
Sabrina Stanwood, NH Department of
Natural and Cultural Resources

Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff Attending via Microsoft Teams

Anton Bekkerman, NH Agricultural
Experiment Station
Scott DeBlois, Coös and Grafton
CCDs

Richard (Dick) Lutz, Rockingham and
Strafford CCDs

Members/Designees/Advisors/Staff Not Present:

Dea Brickner-Wood, Moose Plate
Grant Administrator
Jeff Holmes, USDA-Farm Service
Agency State Executive Director
Betsey McNaughten, NH Department
of Fish and Game
Pete Throop, Cheshire and Sullivan
CCDs

Guests Present at Department of Natural & Cultural Resources:

Nicole Cardwell, Program Manager,
NH Food Alliance
Steve Scapicchio, NHACD President

Guests via Microsoft Teams:

Whitney Lewis, Coös CCD
Lisa Morin, Belknap CCD

Minutes Recorder:

Ian Hanley

Director Hanley opened the meeting at 9:16 am and welcomed the group. In-person and virtual attendees introduced themselves. In accordance with NH RSA 91A:2 IV, virtual attendees reported why their in-person attendance was not reasonably practicable.

Bekkerman- Scheduling/travel conflicts

DuBlois- Farm responsibilities/travel conflicts (reported after meeting)

Lutz- Transportation issues

Minutes of the November 16th, 2023 Quarterly Meeting

Stanwood moved to approve the minutes from the November 16th, 2023 meeting.

Hepp seconded the motion.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Abstain

Gaudreau -Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Richter-Aye

Stanwood-Aye

The motion carried.

Approval of Remote Participation for May 2024 Meeting

Jasper motioned to authorize Committee members whose physical attendance at the May 2024 State Conservation Committee meeting is not reasonably

practicable, but can attend remotely, to count toward quorum requirements in accordance with NH RSA 91A:2 IV. Stanwood seconded the motion.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye

Gaudreau -Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Richter-Aye

Stanwood-Aye

The motion carried.

Supervisor Appointments and Re-appointments

Jasper motioned to approve the below listed supervisor nominations received in the past quarter.

- Henry Ahern, Grafton CCD (new appointment ending 7/31/2025)
- Dena Hoffman, Hillsborough CCD (new appointment ending 7/31/2024)
- Lauren Judd, Hillsborough CCD (new appointment ending 7/31/2026)
- Eric Radlof, Hillsborough CCD (re-appointment ending 7/31/2026)

Stanwood seconded the motion.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye

Gaudreau -Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Richter-Aye

The motion carried.

SCC Conservation Priorities

Jasper motioned to adopt the SCC Conservation Priorities document as drafted by Hanley as part of the SCC Strategic Plan. Hepp seconded the motion.

Discussion focused on how the Committee would identify gaps in conservation work.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye

Gaudreau -Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Richter-Aye

Stanwood-Aye

The motion carried.

SCC Conservation Moose Plate Grant Program Report

Stanwood presented a report prepared by Grant Administrator Dea Brickner-Wood. Moose Plate sales continue to increase. There will be outreach and publication highlighting the 25th anniversary of the Moose Plate program. (Brickner-Wood's full quarterly report can be found as an appendix to these minutes)

SCC Representative Responsibilities

Jasper motioned to adopt the SCC Representative Responsibilities document as drafted by Hanley to the SCC's Policies & Procedures. Stanwood seconded the motion.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye

Gaudreau -Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Richter-Aye

Stanwood-Aye

The motion carried.

Updated Supervisor Nomination Form

Jasper motioned to adopt the updated Supervisor Nomination Form as drafted by Hanley. Hepp seconded the motion.

Hanley commented that the revised form has the same information as the previous form, plus a question about who the nominated person is replacing, and that the designed form should make it easier to find needed information.

Role Call Vote

Bekkerman-Aye

DeBlois-Aye

Gaudreau -Aye

Hepp-Aye

Jasper-Aye

Larocque-Aye

Lutz-Aye

Richter-Aye

Stanwood-Aye

The motion carried.

Hanley called for a brief break in the meeting.

Partnerships in Conservation Spotlight: Nicole Cardwell, Program Director, NH Food Alliance

Hanley introduced Cardwell and previewed the discussion by highlighting the alignment between the SCC's Strategic Plan and the NH Food Alliance's work on

the NH Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan. The meeting attendees introduced themselves.

Cardwell described the background behind starting the NH Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan, stating other New England states are also working on their own plans. NH-DAMF has committed \$50,000 to the plan. The last 5 months have included designing a strategy for Plan development. Cardwell described the plan using a handout (attached as an appendix to this document). Cardwell described the Plan's steering committee and action team, and stated listening sessions are being conducted around the state by partners. The Plan aims to use subject matter experts to create briefs addressing issues, markets, and products through the lens of equity and farm viability. Cardwell described the end products being a print and online resource for producers and agricultural service providers focusing on who has the ability to enact the recommendations from each brief. Cardwell stated that the NH Charitable Foundation has recently committed \$65,000 for the project. The NH Food Alliance is looking for more funding to meet the budgeted expenses.

Open discussion and questions followed, and the Committee and guests were allowed to ask questions. Ritcher asked about the analysis of water in plan development. Bekkerman suggested the importance of natural resource conservation from a non-production perspective and identifying who needed to act on needs identified in the plan, such as producers, state agencies, legislators, technical assistance providers and educators, etc. Cardwell suggested there may be a need for a "food system primer" which describes the major stakeholders within the system. Lewis discussed the importance of farm labor, support services (such as butchering and bringing goods to market), and associated recruitment. Morin suggested the need to specify what the intended uses of the briefs and end-products

are so that they aren't used in context they weren't developed for. Lutz discussed the need for locally specific recommendations based on the market demands on local context. Hepp stressed the importance of making the recommendations actionable to people throughout the state. DeBlois asked how northern counties are being represented in this process, and Cardwell described current partnerships with north country organizations to assist with the Plan. Richter suggested the outcomes and recommendations are broken down by organization type, such as non-profits, conservation districts, conservation committees, etc.

Hanley thanks Cardwell for attending and discussing the NH Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan with the Committee, then called for a brief break in the meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Hanley discussed his initial work involved with organizing the New England Leadership Meeting. He stated this is a combined effort with NHACD and district staff. An initial meeting was held in January and decided to focus on organizing a 2025 meeting that targeted late March. Since that meeting, he created a key contacts list for each state and sent out an email looking for participants for a steering committee. Currently, a volunteer from 5 states have been identified. He stated he is primarily working on programmatic aspects of meeting planning such as the agenda, finding speakers, and setting a theme. NHACD is handling logistics and registrations for the meeting.

Hanley went on to describe his continued work with several districts around upcoming local working groups, and helping to develop a facilitated discussion model for the meeting. He will be facilitation 2 upcoming meetings.

Public Comment & Other Business

Hanley opened the floor for any additional business and public comment. No other business or comment was made.

District/ Organization/ Agency Updates

Districts, agencies, and organizations discussed their particular program highlights.

- Jasper reported that the *NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food* will be moving to the Granite Place offices in the middle of April, and offered to host the May Committee meeting. He reported that Gov. Sununu has reallocated \$8 million for relief efforts from 2023 crop losses due to weather conditions for farmers with >30% loss to yield. Jasper stated UNH Cooperative Extension estimated \$15-16 million loss statewide. Relief funds will be sent to farmers as two checks. Invasive species coordinator position has been filled. The Ag Census has been released this week, and Jasper noted the loss of 100 farms, the state still has over 3,900 farms, and average acres/farm has increased due to consolidation of some farms. Jasper stated he'll be discussing the results of the Census in his upcoming Market Bulletin column. Agricultural Land Preservation Committee has been fully appointed but is yet to have a meeting. The are organics program bills in the state legislature. Jasper said that the Department expects to receive information from USDA stating that certifiers need 2,000 hours of training. Currently the Department has 2 people with the required training, and one will be one leave later this year. He expressed concern that the program will not be able to continue beyond the 2024 growing season. The Commissioner expects to be able to post the Assistant Commissioner position in March.

- Stanwood reported that *NH Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources* environmental reviewer is back from leave. National Heritage Bureau is working with NRCS to update soils mapping database.
- Nicols reported that the *NH Dept. of Environment Services* Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program is preparing for the 2024 grant round with \$5.5 million available with emphasis on Merrimack River watershed (\$4.5 million). This year's focus is on preservation with important habitat, and restoration work is still be accepted.
- Scapicchio reported that the *New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts* hired two new conservation planners. They will be working on getting them up to speed quickly. Hepp reported that the NHACD got a grant from the NH Charitable Foundation to do diversity and equity training, and they plan on making that training available this year.
- Hepp reported that *Belknap CCD* is working to secure funding through the county delegation, and received the same budget allocation as last year.
- Scapicchio reported that *Carroll CCD's* budget was cut by 10%.
- Ross reported that the *Natural Resource Conservation Service* has hired 20 new employees across the state. They'll be releasing a Conservation Innovation Grant NFO focusing on soil health and climate resilience practice. State Technical Committee meeting will be next week. Regional Conservation Partnership Program NFO is expected soon as well.
- Gaudreau reported that *UNH Cooperative Extension* is revising "Good Forestry in the Granite State." Extension is preparing for a busy year of public workshops, including Women in the Woods, NH Coverts, and Saving Special Places (April 6th). Gaudreau reported that Emma Tutein (Community

Conservation State Specialist) will be replacing her as Extension's representation on the Committee.

- Larocque reported that ***Merrimack CCD*** hired a full time program assistant through the NRCS partnership agreement. The District has been working with NH DES and NHTI on a soils program, purchasing a soil steamer for the rental program, continuing to work with partners on the gleaning program, planning a field day, an erosion control workshop, and the spring plant sale.
- Ritcher reported that the ***New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions*** has begun operating a listserv to better help its members. They continue to work with the Talking Action for Wildlife and are hosting a series of upcoming programs. The Lunch and Learn program is ongoing and recently featured NRCS personnel. Upcoming Lunch and Learn topics include NH turtles (Feb 28), the DES-ARM fund (March 27), and Piscataqua Regional Estuaries Partnership. The annual meeting will be November 2nd.
- Bekkerman reported that the ***NH Agricultural Experiment Station*** and College of Life Science and Agriculture have been dealing with budget uncertainty. Sec. Vilsack was hosted at UNH in January. They are still waiting to hear from USDA about a large sustainable agriculture system grant in agro-forestry.
- Morin reported that there is a ***Lakes Management Advisory Committee*** on March 7th (1:00pm at NH Fish and Game) that she is unable to represent the SCC, and said someone can go as a non-voting representative. Morin said she has been working on a combined LMAC-Rivers Management Advisory Committee work project, and that LMAC legislative tracking information is available.

- Lewis reported that *Coös CCD* recently reviewed their Climate Resilience Grant applications. They are working with other districts and Extension to host a carbon credit workshop. Spring plant sale is currently taking orders. The local working group meeting is scheduled. They will be doing a land conservation workshop with Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust. They are working with Extension on hosting a forest careers day.

Adjournment

Hanley noted the next meeting is Thursday, May 16th, 2024. The location will be at the new DAMF office, but with the DNCR office as a back-up.

Larocque motioned to close the meeting at 11:59 am, Hepp seconded. Meeting was adjourned.