



State Conservation Committee

PO Box 3907 • Concord NH 03302-3907

November 15, 2007 • Meeting Summary

NH Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH

Members/designees/advisors present

Carol Andrews, NH Association of Conservation Commissions
Charlie Bridges, NH Fish and Game Department
George Cleek, Natural Resources Conservation Service
David Grobe, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs
Kenneth Kettenring, Belknap and Carroll CCDs
Calvin Perkins, Coos and Grafton CCDs
Jim Raynes, Rockingham and Strafford CCDs
Dick Uncles, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
Ken Desmarais, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development

Tom Brady, University of NH Agricultural Experiment Station
Eric Williams, NH Department of Environmental Services

Members/designees/advisors absent

Allen Brooks, Attorney General's Office
Darrel Covell, UNH Cooperative Extension
Robb Thomson, Farm Service Agency Designee, New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts
SCC Representative, Hillsborough and Merrimack CCDs

Staff present

Michele L. Tremblay, Executive Director

Ken Kettenring opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Accept Consent Agenda

Eric asked that items C, H, and J be removed from the Consent to the Action Agenda. Tom moved to accept the modified Consent Agenda. Calvin moved to approve the meeting summary. The motion carried.

Eric asked about the current budget allocation. The amount reserved for the Moose Plate Grant Program is probably higher than the actual amount available. Michele is working with NHDAMF to confirm the last of the 2007 contracts that went through the Governor and Executive Council approval process. The NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food or his/her designee is the State Conservation Committee (SCC) Treasurer.

The SCC discussed the needs assessment process. Michele suggested that those SCC members who are representing Conservation Districts (CDs) should facilitate completion of needs assessment surveys and visits with those CDs who have not completed them. Jim suggested that the entire SCC meet with all of the Conservation Districts at one meeting. Ken suggested that the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts facilitate a general meeting of CDs with SCC members. Eric said that the SCC's annual meeting in May could be expanded to include a workshop or other session that includes the supervisors although the SCC representatives acknowledged that it will be challenging to get 50 supervisors to come to Concord.

Eric asked about the sign placement at the Lake Sunapee Protective Association. Michele delivered the sign to LSPA during the summer of 2006 but she has not yet been notified where it is posted.

Calvin moved to accept Consent Agenda items C, H, and J. Eric seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Executive Director's report

Michele reported on CD visits, CD needs assessments, and her other activities as documented in the November 15, 2007 meeting briefing document. Ken and Michele reminded the Conservation Districts

SCC representatives that they need to send to Ken and Michele (email or hard copy) CD agendas and meeting summaries.

Action: At the February 21, 2008 SCC meeting, the SCC will consider Michele's findings and recommendations based on the results of the needs assessments and visits and discuss next steps.

Supervisor appointments, re-appointments, and filling un-expired terms

Nominations for appointments for Jon Martin, Belknap CCD and Bruce Bickford and Kathy Thatcher, Cheshire CCD were submitted by their boards. Calvin moved to appoint all of the nominations. Eric seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele will draft and send the appointment and re-appointment letters.

SCC representatives: Hillsborough/Merrimack and Rockingham/Strafford

Ken reported that George Travers does not wish to continue on the SCC. He had agreed to fill Peter Blakeman's unexpired term. The Rockingham and Strafford Conservation Districts are working on submitting a nomination to the Governor's office. Ken welcomed Jim Raynes as the new SCC Representatives for Rockingham and Strafford. Michele is working with the Hillsborough and Merrimack Conservation Districts and the Governor's Office to fill the vacancy for those two CDs. Eric and Michele suggested that Amy Bagley and John Lyford, Hillsborough County CD, would be a good candidates.

Action: Ken will contact Amy Bagley and John Lyford about their willingness to serve as SCC representatives for Hillsborough/Merrimack County CDs.

Second extension request for 2005 grant contract for Lake Sunapee Protective Association

Eric reported that the Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA) contacted he and Michele to request an extension for their less than \$5,000 2005 Moose Plate Grant agreement. Michele had previous executed a six-month extension. Eric felt that this next six-month time extension and change in scope of services should be an SCC decision. Because the 2005 contracts were written on a reimbursement basis, nearly \$2,700 has been paid to date leaving a \$1,800 balance. Tom moved to that to implement the LSPA SCC grant the extension and scope change. Carol seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele will process the LSPA's six-month extension request through June 30, 2008.

Need for a Conservation Easement Subcommittee

Ken updated the SCC on the recent easement discussion between the Rockingham County CD, Society for the Protection of NH Forests, SCC, and the Attorney General's (AG) office. Ken feels that the SCC could learn from this experience and be more proactive on this issue. He suggested forming a new submitted and asked Carol if she would lead the effort. Assistant AG Allen Brooks and Steve Walker at NH Office of Energy and Planning would be good resources with possibly Steve as a subcommittee member.

Decision: the SCC formed the Easement Subcommittee. Carol agreed to lead the subcommittee. Jim, Charlie, Dick, and George volunteered to be members.

Action: Michele will create a listserve for the new Easement Subcommittee and invite Steve Walker to be a member of the subcommittee.

Policy Subcommittee

Ken suggested that the SCC work with a sponsor to alter RSA 432:13 so that during CD meetings, more associate supervisors can be appointed to vote to fill up to the five supervisor positions. Currently, the statute allows only enough associates to be appointed to meet quorum (three voting members). This change would facilitate greater participation and leadership development and assure that votes have up to five decision makers vs. only three. Jim and Calvin noted have been filling their full voting contingent with associates. George and Jim asked if the CDs were consulted because George is uncomfortable going forward with a change without asking all of them. Michele reminded the SCC of the representational nature of the agency. All ten CDs are represented by the five SCC members that the CDs nominated, that the Governor appointed, and that the Executive Council approved. They should be conferring with the two CDs that they each represent and be able to speak for them at SCC meetings. Jim felt hat he wishes to work with his two CDs and then make a decision at the next SCC meeting. If the SCC waits until February to make a decision, it will likely be too late for this session and will have to wait until next year. David moved that the decision to move forward on legislation be made pending the decision by the membership

at the state association membership on December 14. Calvin seconded the motion. The Belknap County CD plans to submit a resolution for consideration at the state association meeting. Eric doesn't feel that the SCC should make a decision based on another organization's decision but instead the SCC should rely on its own representational structure to make this decision. The motion carried with one abstaining vote.

Calvin asked if the Legislative Service Request tracking list could be distributed to the CDs. The Policy and Legislation Subcommittee mailings can be distributed to the CDs as well as the subcommittee and SCC members. Dick Uncles is working with a legislator on a conservation easement bill that will include a definition of a temporary easement, or covenant restriction, for agricultural purposes (pursuant to one of the recommendations in the Farm Viability Task Force report). There is a useful and arguably successful model in Massachusetts. Charlie was concerned about term easements because he doesn't believe that the end result would be ongoing conservation of the working land.

Action: Pending the outcome of the Belknap CCD resolution vote at the state association meeting, Ken will contact sponsors of existing bills to see if they would be interested in changing RSA 432:13 to enable Conservation Districts to appoint Associate Supervisors to vote to bring the number of voters to five (vs. the current three that is in statute).

Agency Spotlight: Charlie Bridges, NH Fish and Game Department

Charlie presented the Department's Wildlife Action Plan. The Plan is posted at wildlife.nh.gov. Charlie included in his presentation a list of projects that would support the WAP and might be a good fit with the SCC's Moose Plate Grant Program and Farm Bill programs including:

- Local regulation and policy;
- Education, information, and technical guidance;
- Habitat management; and
- Landowner incentives.

The Land Conservation and Heritage Incentive Program has adopted WAP priorities when scoring applications for land protection. Charlie provided the Department's nongame publication and the wildlife magazine with the annual report.

Reports from agencies, advisors, and Conservation District representatives

Calvin reported that Coos CCD Chair, Charlie Baylies resigned this week. There are several new Supervisors on the Board. Grafton CCD held its annual fall tour of current or potential conservation projects including a Moose Plate Grant Program funded project.

Calvin provided an update on the state association's activities. The NHACD has interviewed candidates for Envirothon Coordinator and is contracting with an excellent professional. The annual meeting, hosted by the NHACD, will be held on December 14 at the Urban Forestry Center. The NHACD is hosting the National Association of Conservation Districts Northeast Region meeting will be held August 3-5, 2008.

Eric reported that the Watershed Conference would be held at the NH Technical Institute. Walk-ins will be accepted at the door for a \$10 fee. Eric indicated that there is a bill for salt use relative to Total Maximum Daily Load that may be of interest to CDs and state agencies. The proposed 20% reduction does not include new construction. The bill would provide a local mechanism to better quantify (through an accounting system) salt application. The change to RSA 36 would enable municipalities to regulate salt application on private parking lot or road applicators. Another bill would authorize municipalities to create stormwater utilities to pay for infrastructure to improve management. The City of Manchester currently has this authority. The DES has signed the first partnership agreement with the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions. The SCC and the NHACD may wish to pursue this option for their own agreements.

Carol reported that the NHACC convened its 37th annual meeting with over 24 participants. No water bottles were distributed. Local foods were featured with vegetarian options.

Tom provided an update on University of NH College of Life Sciences and Agriculture and Agricultural Experiment Station activities. Several departments are being consolidated to four in number with a new natural resource department formed. The new Associate Dean of Agriculture and assistant head of the Experiment Station position has been created. The SCC could be a stakeholder in the process to determine natural resource education for UNH students. There is now a master plan for the organic dairy operation and organic production will be added to current dairy curriculum.

Jim reported that the Rockingham CCD recently met with members of the SCC to discuss an easement issue. He has been involved with the regional study for 44 communities involved with the coastal outfall pipe.

Dick reported that Commissioner Stephen H. Taylor retired and the Governor's nomination of Lorraine Merrill's is before the Executive Council at its November 28 meeting. Commissioner Taylor agreed to remain until the end of November. Tom Sloan is Acting Director, Pesticide Division, and will no longer be the SCC representative. Dick provided further information on some of the Legislative Service Requests in the SCC meeting briefing packet. A new round of nutrient grants is due in December.

Charlie reported that the current use board is holding its annual public forums around the state. The forest land assessment formula is being considered. The results could be significant to forest landowners. The Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge is holding hearings on their management plan including proposed refuge expansion.

George provided the status on the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service transition from the current to new Farm Bill and appropriations (second continuing resolution at 2006 spending levels). One of the agency's priorities is implementing the current conservation contracts to get the funding on the ground. The Emergency Watershed Project in southeast NH is nearly complete with plantings pending in the Warren Brook watershed. This fall's focus is on Environmental Quality Incentives and Conservation Stewardship Programs. The NRCS is performing an analysis of its operational structure relative to the efficiency of its delivery of services. There are several vacancies that need to be filled despite the national hiring freeze.

David reported on Cheshire and Sullivan activities. Cheshire CCD has resolved its employment tax difficulties. They are working on agreements with the Forest Service and other grant programs. Sullivan CCD is looking forward to the return of its District Conservationist.

Ken Desmarais provided an update on the Division of Forest and Lands activities including the Natural Heritage Bureau's new administrator who started last week. The Forest Protection Bureau is short four out of its twelve rangers. The Forest Management Bureau is planning a timber harvest in the Pisgah State Forest and is working with several private and public organizations to write a management plan for the property.

Ken Kettenring reported that the Belknap CCD did well with its budget process. The delegation supported a six-week transition process for its lead staff position. Out of over two dozen applicants, Belknap CCD selected last night a new Program Manager who Carroll CCD Supervisor Don Johnson, announced his resignation from his Board of Supervisors. Several nominations are under consideration. Last year's \$7,100 increase request was voted by the delegation at only \$100. Since then the \$7,000 has been restored to the Carroll CCD budget and the support is likely for this year.

Other business

Michele suggested that the SCC may wish to explore a partnership agreement with the NH Department of Environmental Services. She suggested that the Policy and Legislation Subcommittee take the lead on exploring options for the agreement content and provide recommendations to the SCC. The SCC's consensus was to move forward with the recommendation. Tom Brady is willing to serve on the Policy and Legislation Subcommittee.

Calvin suggested that the SCC invite the new DAMF Commissioner to its February 21, 2008 meeting. The SCC reviewed the Rockingham County Conservation District letter that it distributed to the Conservation Districts.

Action: Michele will work with Ken and the Policy and Legislation Subcommittee on drafting a partnership agreement between the SCC and the NH Department of Environmental Services.

Action: Michele will forward Ken Kettenring's letter to the Rockingham CCD to the other nine Conservation Districts.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.

Submitted by Michele L. Tremblay, Executive Director

The next meeting will be held February 21, 2008, 8:30 - 11:30 AM at the NH Department of Environmental Services, Rooms 110-111.