



State Conservation Committee

PO Box 3907 • Concord NH 03302-3907

February 21, 2008 • 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
Philip Bryce, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development
David Grobe, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs
Kenneth Kettenring, Belknap and Carroll CCDs
Lorraine Merrill, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
Calvin Perkins, Coos and Grafton CCDs
Jim Raynes, Rockingham and Strafford CCDs
Dick Uncles, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
Eric Williams, NH Department of Environmental Services

Members/designees/advisors absent

Tom Brady, University of NH Agricultural Experiment Station
Allen Brooks, Attorney General's Office
George Cleek, Natural Resources Conservation Service
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. He asked members if they would prefer a 9:00 AM meeting start time vs. the current 8:30.

Action: The May 15, 2008 meeting will start at 9:00 AM.

Accept Consent Agenda

Calvin moved to accept Consent Agenda. Jim seconded the motion. The motion carried. Charlie reported that the native landscapes booklet developed by Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension 2005 project was completed at the end of 2007.

Executive Director's report

Michele reported that a good part of her focus has been on the Moose Plate grants. There is one 2005 award still open and about fifteen for 2006 and 2007. There will be a dozen for 2008 if all are selected for funding today. She has been compiling request for proposals comments from applicants and SCC members to help with the annual refinement process.

Michele indicated that she is disappointed with the needs assessment input to date. The SCC may go ahead with what it has and work those who have provided their assistance requests and perspectives—those who took the time should not have to wait any longer for the SCC to begin its analysis and programming. However, it may be challenging to act at a statewide level on a needs assessment process where there has not been more participation.

Michele outlined her ideas for the online Supervisors Handbook and solicited SCC suggestions. She has been compiling links to SCC- and CD-related statutes, rules, and other governance that will comprise a section of the Handbook.

There are several initiatives that the SCC can fund with its current expense budget, including, new hard copy Supervisor Handbooks, Moose Plate Grant Workshop for the 2009 request for proposals, other workshops such as those providing training or guidance for CDs based in their needs assessment responses.

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

Nominations for appointments for Albert vonDohrmann, Coos CCD and Gerald Courser, Merrimack CCD were submitted by their respective boards. David reported that he had received a copy of a nomination from Cheshire yesterday for Michele Chalice Throop. Michele indicated that did not receive it. From the meeting, she called Cheshire CCD to see if that office could fax the nomination materials. The faxed nomination was received. Jim moved to appoint all of the nominations. Calvin 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

Calvin reported that he was notified by Ray Burton that he was reappointed. There is still a vacancy for the Hillsborough/Merrimack representative/

Action: Ken will contact Amy Bagley and John Lyford from Hillsborough CCD and ask them if they are interested in representing Hillsborough and Merrimack CCDs.

Plan of Work

Eric suggested that the newly merged POW and Budget Subcommittee be charged with his effort. Eric moved that the POW and Budget Subcommittee. The website and handbook updates and grant historical / chronological document that Michele detailed might be good additions. Calvin suggested that the results from the Easement Subcommittee process might be included. David seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: David Grobe will serve as Chair of the POW and Budget Subcommittee and convene the first call to complete the 2007-2008 POW and budget for recommendation to the SCC at its May meeting.

Needs assessments received and visits conducted as of February 1 and discuss of new due date for findings and recommendations

Michele reported that she discussed with Ken pushing harder to get Carroll, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, and Strafford. Michele has been working with the Rockingham/Strafford SCC Representative to schedule visits with those Conservation Districts. Michele has been speaking with Ken to schedule the Carroll CCD visit. Eric suggested that the results from the Needs Assessment Process should be forwarded to the POW and Budget Subcommittee for possible inclusion in the May draft. David moved to delay until May the completion of the Needs Assessment findings and recommendations. Jim seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele will work with David Grobe to convene a conference call with the POW and Budget Subcommittee to review the draft POW and current budget and expenditures along with preliminary results from the Needs Assessment process.

Action: SCC representatives for Carroll, Hillsborough and Merrimack, and Strafford and Rockingham will arrange SCC Executive Director visits and confirm them with her.

2008 Moose Plate Grants: decide on recommendations from Grant Subcommittee

Eric outlined the process for this year's grant program. He referred the SCC representatives to the ranking spreadsheet. There were notes on some of those projects recommended for funding to reduce funding or to support only conservation-related tasks including The Freedom and Brookline Conservation Commissions. The Subcommittee offered two options for the Acton Wakefield Watershed Alliance: one for two years of funding at \$92,775 and one for one year of funding at half that amount. Concern was expressed that this organization received a grant last year and may be looking at the SCC Moose Plate Grant Program as their base or institutional support and that the bulk of the SCC's funds is paying for salaries and other staff costs. Some felt that they would be more comfortable funding an application like this for another organization instead of the funding going to the same organization. Michele continues to compile comments and suggestions for refining the Grant program and request for proposals. The Committee discussed the relative merits of reimbursement-based payments vs. those contingent on completion of deliverables. The previous agreements followed a reimbursement structure with quarterly reports. The current agreements are based on deliverables. The reason that Eric and Michele are using the deliverables based agreements is that there have been instances in which the SCC paid substantial portions of an entire award to reimburse for materials and the project was not completed. The previous

agreements required more frequent reports. Currently, semi-annual reports are required and payments are based on deliverables. Jim noted that the Subcommittee did an excellent job on the review and recommendations. Jim moved to reduce the Acton Wakefield Watersheds Alliance award to \$46,387 and to accept the Subcommittee's recommendations. Calvin seconded the motion. The motion carried with one opposing vote.

Action: Michele will contact via telephone those applicants selected for funding and send letters to those who would not be funded.

Action: Michele and Eric will work together on finalizing project scopes and contracts.

Action: Michele and Eric will work together to convene and call or meeting of the Grant Subcommittee to discuss refinements to the SCC Moose Plate Grant Program and request for proposals.

Action: Michele will re-format the 2005, 2006, 2007, and future grant years' reports so that an encumbrance and balance available column is added.

SB409 SCC testimony

Michele provided background on the current RSA 477:47 and the proposed SB409. The bill proposed to fix a technical error in the language and refines other language in conservation easements relative to secondary other interest holders. Phil supports the change in the legislation. He expressed concern that in some cases, there may be too many parties involved in easements. In cases where 501(c)(3) organizations are holding easements, the state might become involved should the organization not be operating correctly and within the law. Charlie would like to see grants provided to those who hold easements but the federal funds carry with them restrictions such as the NH Fish and Game Department be named as an executory interest holder. Carol reported that there is a question about whether municipalities can contribute funds to a conservation easement without their holding an executory interest. The SCC Easement Subcommittee may wish to consider positions on current and future legislation regarding easement policy. Eric moved to send the letter of testimony supporting SB409. Carol seconded the motion. The motion carried with Phil and Jim abstaining.

Action: Michele will submit the SCC's letter of testimony supporting SB409 to the Senate and House Committees hearing the bill.

SLRs

The SLR 08-001 calls for an exchange of land between the Forest Society and the State of NH Gay State Forest in the Town of Jaffrey. Jim moved that the SCC file a letter expressing no objections to SLR 08-001. Calvin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The SLR 08-002 calls for a 25-year extension with the possibility of an additional 25 years of the long-term lease for the Belknap County Conservation District to make improvements to the Opechee Bay State Forest in the City of Laconia. Charlie expressed concern about the land management practices, particularly mowing schedules, relative to wildlife management activities. The vote is about extending the lease and not about the specific land management activities. Michele read an excerpt from the MOA between DRED and the Belknap County Conservation District that allows the latter to make changes as they support the described uses, including "wildlife management." Calvin moved that the SCC file a letter supporting SLR 08-002 but urging that Belknap County Conservation District consult with the NH Fish and Game Department about wildlife management objectives on the property. Eric seconded the motion. The motion carried with Charlie abstaining.

Action: Michele will draft and file letters documenting the SCC's positions on SLRs 08-001 and 08-002.

Committees with SCC representatives

Michele has been participating in the Lakes Management Advisory Committee meetings. There has not been a Conservation License Plate Advisory Committee or Marketing Subcommittee meeting since last year. Michele suggested that the SCC might be better represented on the Historical Agricultural Structures Advisory Committee (HASAC) by someone with more specific expertise on barns. Eric suggested that the SCC solicit from Supervisors volunteers to serve. At a previous meeting, a concern was expressed by SCC members that only staff or its members should represent the SCC at these meetings. Calvin suggested that Michele continue if only to elevate the SCC's profile with other state agencies and with the public. Phil is concerned that this may not be a priority for the SCC but Michele assured the Representatives that she would not let other SCC work suffer as a result. Charlie moved that

Michele solicit CD Supervisor nominations for this Committee and that the SCC would decide on its designee. Dick seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele will solicit Supervisors who may be interested in serving on the Historical Agricultural Structures Advisory Committee, representing the SCC.

Decide on next Agency Spotlight

Action: The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions will; be the May Agency Spotlight.

Reports from agencies, advisors, and Conservation District representatives

David Grobe renewed the Sullivan CCD Plan of Work, and is soliciting participation on the Board. The newsletter has been reinstated. They are moving to the a new office at the county complex in Unity. The District is sponsoring USDA Alternative Energy Grant workshop. Cheshire is considering sponsoring with Hillsborough CCD an NH DES Wetland listening session.

Jim represented the SCC at the Bear-Paw (Moose Plate Grant recipient) annual meeting. He was impressed with the meeting and organization. Strafford and Rockingham are likely the two largest Conservation District conservation easement holders. Jim indicated that a large and important easement for the Sanborn Family in Candia, on which Rockingham CCD has been working, will fall through because of NRCS's mismanagement. Jim attended the National Association of Conservation Districts meeting in Reno last week. Jim provided updates on windmills and other emerging issues. He provided information about certifying Supervisors, which many states have implemented.

Charlie reported that the Governor has nominated Glen Normandeau as the new Executive Director of the Fish and Game Department, has been submitted by the Governor. John Nelson, marine fisheries, and Jeff Grey, law enforcement, are both retiring at the end of February. The Legislature's F&G performance audit is complete and on the Department's website.

Carol updated the SCC on the NHACC's outreach activities including those on the April 1 changes to the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act. She is working on guidelines for conservation fund spending as well as for changes to the enabling legislation via SB381. The Association is supporting DES's Land and Water Project.

Lorraine Merrill provided background on her family's farm and her work in conservation. She expressed her gratitude to the SCC representatives for the dedication. Dick reported on the DAMF's activities including his serving as Pesticide Division Director while the search process is being conducted. The state hiring freeze will not apply to this position. This largest Division of DAMF receives a substantial amount of applications including those for mosquito control. Through a cooperative agreement with the US Department of Agriculture, the DAMF will be initiating label of origin program for fruit, vegetables, seafood, and meat (fresh and frozen but not processed). The Feed and Fertilizer Program will be re-invigorated. The nutrient grant program continues and works in concert with DES's grant programs. The DAMF is working on a limited term agricultural covenant bill, pursuant to the Farm Viability Task Force's recommendation. A Farm Viability / Sustainability Commission is proposed. There are other bills pending including animal right and Northeast milk regional and freshness labeling.

Eric updated the SCC on DES activities including its participation on the Governor's Climate Change Task Force. The DES is tracking the stormwater study commission bill. The stormwater utility enabling legislation came out of committee as ought to pass but there is a minority report. The bill enables municipalities to create utilities. Last year, the City of Manchester was so enabled to create a utility. The road salt load reduction bill, slated for passage, allows for the addition of parking lots, which constitute 50% of chloride loading.

Ken reported on Belknap and Carroll CCD activities. Lisa Morin is the new Program Coordinator for Belknap CCD. Nancy Rendall indicated that she will be stepping down as a Supervisor but will remain as an Associate. Their new meeting night has increased participation. Carroll CCD has been enjoying better communication with its county delegation. They have lost a long-term Supervisor. Carroll continues to work with many Cooperators and others in the region.

Phil asked to be included in the Easement Subcommittee correspondence. He indicated that he might be able to provide his Division's expertise. He provided an update on the Division's activities including their exploring using greenspace to infiltrate groundwater. There is a bill to enable Special Deputy Forest Rangers to enforce laws. The Environmental Policy for the State legislation, HB76, would have shut down many of the Department of Resource and Economic Development's programs. The Division is trying to

include to the Current Use bill a provision to not tax at the regular rate structures used for forestry management such as sheds. There are several proposals for re-calculating Current Use taxation for forest and agricultural lands. The DRED is working on the Ossipee initiative where there are many public and other uses. There is a bill clarifying Natural Heritage Inventory data collection and release restrictions. State and Private Forestry federal funds have been cut by 50%, which currently is 30-80% of the Division's budget.

Calvin reported on the New Hampshire Association of Conservation District's display at the Farm & Forest Exposition in Manchester last weekend. The Association is continuing to work on the National Association of Conservation District's Northeast Region meeting in August. Calvin reported that hasn't received much information from Coos. He plans to go to the next meeting after maple syrup season ends. Calvin reported that the Grafton District Conservationist has left but a vacancy still exists. The County Delegation meeting is slated for March and the Grafton CCD enjoys a good relationship with the legislators who attend the District's annual meeting. The Grafton County Cooperative Extension forestry and agricultural agents are retiring.

Action: Jim will provide to Michele information on certifying Supervisors and the item will be placed on the May SCC agenda for discussion

Action: Charlie, Phil, and other Representatives will forward to the SCC listserve information about their respective Department's initiatives.

Action: Michele will add Phil Bryce to the SCC Easement Subcommittee listserve.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.

Submitted by Michele L. Tremblay, Executive Director

The next meeting will be held May 15, 2008, 9:00 - 12:00 PM at the NH Department of Environmental Services, Rooms 110-111.