



State Conservation Committee

PO Box 3907 • Concord NH 03302-3907

August 16, 2007 • Meeting Summary

NH Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH

Members/designees/advisors present

Carol Andrews, NH Association of Conservation Commissions
Jim Oehler, NH Fish and Game Department
Darrel Covell, UNH Cooperative Extension
Kenneth Ketterring, Belknap and Carroll CCDs
Eileen Miller, Rockingham and Strafford CCDs
Calvin Perkins, Coos and Grafton CCDs
Tom Sloan, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
Tom Brady, University of NH Agricultural Experiment Station
Eric Williams, NH Department of Environmental Services
Stephen H. Taylor, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food

Members/designees/advisors absent

Allen Brooks, Attorney General's Office
Philip Bryce, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development
George Cleek, Natural Resources Conservation Service
David Grobe, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs
Robb Thomson, Farm Service Agency
Designee, New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts
George Travers, Hillsborough and Merrimack CCDs

Staff present

Michele L. Tremblay, Executive Director

Ken Ketterring opened the meeting and welcomed everyone including new representative Tom Brady and Jim Oehler for Charlie Bridges.

Accept Consent Agenda

Calvin moved to accept the consent agenda with the exception of the meeting summary, which was removed to the action agenda. Carol seconded the motion. Calvin moved to approve the meeting summary. Eric seconded the motion. Carol requested that the policy decision on the CORD decisions be corrected. The motion carried.

Executive Director's report

Michele reported that approximately 40 individuals had registered for the Moose Plate Grant Workshop. Ken, Eric, and Michele are slated to provide presentations focused on the history, purpose, and intent of the program as well as information about how to write winning proposals. Michele has been working on executing the 2007 grant agreements. Calvin suggested that the SCC draft a Plan of Work for the calendar or fiscal year. The Supervisor Handbook can be updated but the SCC discussed replacing all of the handbooks because some have been lost. Michele reported that she has been working on an online version of Supervisor Handbook that provides links to legislation and other information. In early August, Michele participated in the National Association of Conservation Agencies breakfast and afternoon meetings on behalf of the SCC (her own expense).

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

Re-nominations were received for Peter Blakeman, Brenda Digilio, and Terrence Frost, Merrimack CCD and a nomination for Emily Hague, Cheshire CCD. Eric moved to re-appoint all of the nominations. Bill 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 incomplete term. Rockingham and Strafford Conservation Districts are working on submitting a nomination to the Governor's office.

The Nature Conservancy scope of work change: discussion and decision

Eric presented the requested change in the scope of services to The Nature Conservancy's proposal. The 148-acre Rotberg easement will not be part of the project because the landowner does not wish to proceed with the transaction. The original proposal would have had the grant partially funding the purchase of an easement on the Hartshorn property. The proposed Rotberg easement donation added value to the proposal. It does not appear that the Rotberg parcel is in the Whitton Pond watershed. There are concerns that the proposal was scored and accepted based on the entire package. Darrel moved to accept the revised scope of work. Jim seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele will work with The Nature Conservancy to revise the SCC Moose Plate Grant agreement.

Policy

Michele explained that LSRs were due much earlier this year than in past years: September 20, 2007. In the past, the SCC has only reacted to legislation submitted by others. Michele suggested that perhaps the SCC might wish to take a more proactive vs. reactive approach based on searches for bills that match the SCC's keywords. Calvin felt that if there were more time, the SCC should continue with its efforts to secure dedicated funding for Conservation Districts. Ken would like to see each Conservation District get funding to support fully its District Manager/Administrative/Executive Director. Michele asked if all of the CDs have expressed a desire for dedicated funding. Eric said that some CDs have been concerned that should that funding become available, they would lose their county funding. There may be other ways to address the county funding concern such as the State requiring that the County match the funding. Calvin suggested that the SCC poll Conservation Districts to gauge their feelings on this funding arrangement because everyone would need to support it. The SCC's Needs Assessment results could be part of this process. Ken suggested forming a policy subcommittee for 2009 session. Calvin moved that the SCC craft legislation for 2009 and that the Chair appoint a subcommittee to make recommendation on legislative language and identifying sponsors. Kitty seconded the motion. The motion carried. Calvin and Ken volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Tom will work with Dick Uncles to see if he would like to participate in the subcommittee.

Michele provided an update on her activities with the Moose Plate Marketing Subcommittee. The group is exploring widgets, market research, and incentives as part of its marketing efforts. At a recent Conservation License Plate Advisory Committee, Virginia Beecher participated and was asked for data and other information that will help the Marketing Committee work with its limited \$50,000 data.

Action: Tom will work with Dick Uncles to see if he is willing to serve on the SCC Legislative Subcommittee.

Action: Michele will send the SCC representatives the dates, times, and locations of the CLPAC and HASAC meetings.

Tom will find the copy of the letter that Sam Doyle wrote asking for data on the Moose Plate registrations and forward it to Michele Tremblay.

SCC Moose Plate Grant Workshop

Eric highlighted the list of examples of fundable and non-fundable projects on page 3, 3A in the revised RFP. In addition to disseminating the SCC's Moose Plate Grants Program information, the upcoming workshop will provide a forum for dialogue about the Program. Applicants' suggestions will be considered when the 2009 request for proposals is reviewed.

Agency Spotlight: Steve Taylor, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food

Steve Taylor is working on legislation for a program to provide direct payments to dairy producers. The first program provides \$2.1MM for distribution to about 120 private dairy farmers (except for organic) to offset depression of 2006 price depression. Other New England states provide similar payments. The payment is calculated on the basis of the difference of \$16.94 per hundredweight vs. the actual paid price during four 2006 months. The application deadline is August 31. The largest producer will receive a payment of about \$144,000 with the smallest about \$78. Payments will need to be returned if production

drops or the operation ceases between now and 2009. The second bill relates to a milk commission which was abolished in 1969. This recent legislation re-creates the Milk Commission with a house, senator, and four public representatives. The 2.5 cents tax on retail milk was dropped from the bill but the Commission was created. While dairy prices are getting higher, their production costs such as grain, fuel, and land, have greatly increased. Homeland security issues have been a large focus at DAMF with the state veterinarian working on protections on the animal population from terrorist acts. Plant specialists are also working on security issues relating to vegetation. Steve reported that NH has more farms now than it did ten years ago with small and niche operations with value-added products. In other parts of the country, the trend is reversed with consolidation occurring, particularly with milk processing with the largest firm in Texas. A parallel consolidation is occurring with retail grocery outlets. Animal welfare issues have become an increasing concern for the NHDAMF with a large number of complaints about horse, farm, and pet complaints that the Department is required to investigate. Animal hoarding reports have increased. Ken presented Steve with a Certificate of Appreciation from the SCC. "Local" has surpassed organic and other niche markets as the most important decision factor when consumers make purchases. *Action: Jim Oehler and Darrell Covell will present the Agency Spotlight for NH Fish and Game Department and the University of NH Cooperative Extension at the November 15, 2007 SCC meeting.*

Reports from agencies, advisors, and Conservation District representatives

Calvin reported that Grafton CCD hosted an exhibit at the North Haverhill Fair that was staffed by volunteers. It was interesting what visitors wished to discuss including politics and conservation. Coos CCD is working on securing exhibit space at the Lancaster Fair.

Calvin Perkins updated the SCC on New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) activities. He distributed seacoast area brochures with save the date stickers for the upcoming National Association of Conservation Districts Northeast Region Meeting that the NHACD will host in August 2008. Michele participated in the meeting on behalf of the NHACD. Herb Vadney is retiring and will no longer serve as Envirothon Coordinator. The NHACD is conducting a search for a successor.

Kitty reported that Strafford CCD moved to Cooperative Extension's quarters and are settling into their new space. In the Town of Lee, \$6,000 has been appropriated for a Lee Farm Day slated for the weekend of the August 17. Kitty last visited the Rockingham CCD Board of Supervisors meeting in May.

Eric reported on the NH Department of Environmental Services's stormwater initiatives. The stormwater manuals used in the alteration of terrain programs are outdated (twelve and fifteen years old). Comprehensive Environmental was selected as the consulting firm to revise the manual. It will be ready in time for the new alteration of terrain rules, which are expected to be final in late spring 2008. The manual will contain low impact development and anti-degradation guidance for impaired waters. Three volumes are anticipated. The first is a sedimentation control guide for onsite use (waterproof paper), the second is for engineers and designers, and the third would provide pollutant-loading criteria for Best Management Practices. The City of Manchester received legislative authority to create a stormwater utility. This empowers the city to charge landowners for stormwater services as they are for other utilities. The funds would be used to maintain systems. There is interest in introducing legislation to enable stormwater utilities statewide. In outstanding resource waters, there can be no pollutant loading. "Natural" designed waters in the Rivers Management and Protection Program and White Mountain waters come under this regulatory requirement. There is a proposal to create a process by which a community can designate waters as outstanding resource waters.

Carol has been working on the November 3 New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC) annual meeting and conference. Working with the Center for Land Protection, the NHACC is producing a guidebook on how to use Conservation Fund and how to structure it. Documents will be available electronically so that municipalities may customize and produce it locally. Also included will be legal opinions on the ability of municipalities to "gift" funds to support projects where they do not take an executory interest or hold the easement. The Forest Society will be working on legislation to clarify this issue.

Darrell announced that the Forestry and Wildlife Program recently brought on Fred Gorman as Rockingham C forester. Retirements include Sumner Dole, Belknap Forester; Don Black, Strafford Forester. A new Forester for outreach in Cheshire County will be hired. The Extension entered into a contribution agreement with the USDA-NRCS for wildlife management for the WHIP and WRP.

Jim reported that Lee Perry has retired. Donald Park is Acting Executive Director. The Fish and Game Commission is conducting a search for a successor. Assistant Commissioner Dan Lynch has left

the board. Eric Orf has retired. The new Atlantic Salmon Restoration Specialist is Dan Greenwood. A land agent has left the Department and the position will be re-filled. A land management collaborative has been created in Northwood to manage local landscape initiative for cohesive ecosystem management including wildlife and stream connectivity and recreation. There are several public and private landowners involved in the initiative.

Tom Brady reported that he started as Dean on July 1. The University's organic dairy research farm is participating in the Lee Farm Day. There is potential for the University's organic dairy operation to serve as a model for other farms to show reduced impacts. There is a new Associate Dean for agriculture. A senior organic position has been approved for an education and research program.

Tom Sloan is one of three field inspectors who certify organic farms and inspections, fertilizer sampling, seed testing, monitor agricultural land conservation properties, investigate suspicious activities such as manure complaints (NHDES enforcement connection) and encourage BMPs, sugar house inspections, and judge maple syrup at fairs. He also visits and documents Farms of Distinction Awards and Commissioner's awards to farms and other operations that best convey rural agricultural life, egg and apple grading inspections, commercial and pet food inspections.

Calvin asked about funding for CDs and for agricultural fairs. Steve Taylor indicated that for the CDs, the case for leveraging county, federal, and other funds must be made. LCHIP's success was based on this principal. Agricultural fairs are supported with state funds in VT, ME, and other states but it remains a challenge in NH. New Hampshire hosted the first fair in the new world in 1722 (Nutfield, now Chester/Londonderry).

Ken reported that Belknap CC is working on a transition with its Program Manager retiring in December. Ken continues to participate in Carroll CCD meetings. They had the largest amount of funding though NRCS this and last year. They are very active with on-the-ground projects.

Other business

Ken presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Kitty Miller for her many years of service to the SCC and her representation of the Rockingham and Strafford CCDs.

Tom Sloan updated the SCC on the request that subscriptions be offered gratis to the Supervisors. Currently there are 8,200 subscribers to the *Weekly Market Bulletin*. There are 7,200 paper subscriptions with about 227 distributed electronically at the same price of \$22 per year. Because of the subscription and support structure, the NHDAMF does not have the financial ability to offer no-charge subscriptions to the Conservation District Supervisors. The SCC may wish to explore adding a budget item to the 2010 and beyond budgets to cover subscriptions for the Supervisors.

Action: Michele and Eric will work on getting NHDES's Environmental News to the Supervisors electronically or hard copy.

The meeting adjourned at 11:29 PM.

Submitted by Michele L. Tremblay, Executive Director

The next meeting will be held November 15, 2007, 8:30 - 11:30 AM at the NH Department of Environmental Services, Rooms 110-111.