

**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE  
NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
DRAFT MINUTES  
JANUARY 8, 2024**

The March meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Chairman Joe Atchison at 9:36 A.M. Mr. 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; mailed to The Star Ledger, the Courier Post and filed with the Office of Secretary of State.

The Flag Salute was recited.

Call of the Membership Roll indicated the following:

**Members Present**

Joe Atchison  
Joe Lomax  
Evan Madlinger NRCS (rep J. Hawkins)  
Dr. Stephanie Murphy (rep L. Lawson)  
Ray Cywinski  
Louise Davis  
Mike Haberland  
Dennis Contios (rep. S. LaTourette)  
Cormac Morrissey  
Sylvia Kovacs  
Mike Rigolizzo  
John Kocubinski  
Cristin Mustillo  
Frank Minch, Division Director

John Showler, SSSC, NJDA  
Tim Fekete, SSSC, NJDA  
Sara Mellor, SSSC, NJDA  
Diana Diaz, SSSC, NJDA  
Tim Thomas, Freehold SCD  
Rick Dovey, Cape/Atlantic SCD  
Mike Kent, Cape/Atlantic SCD  
C. Buscaglia, Freehold SCD  
Matt D'Alessandro, S/U SCD  
Karol Blew, Gloucester SCD  
M Bonham, Cumb.Salem SCD  
Janet Rekesius, HEP SCD  
B. Engisch, Hunterdon SCD  
C. Raabe, Ocean SCD  
J. Baluski, Ocean SCD  
L. Tessieri, No. Jersey RC&D  
I.

Zimmerman

## **MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2023 MEETING**

On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Lomax, the minutes of the December 11, 2023 meeting were approved.

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

Mr. Atchison reported on the following:

1. Deer fence and SADC appraisal regulations are on the Governor's desk for signature.
2. The NJ Ag. Convention will be held at Harrah's in Atlantic City, February 7<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT**

1. **Supervisor Appointment (Gloucester)**- On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Mr. Rigolizzo, Dan Brown was chosen to fill a vacancy on the Gloucester County Soil Conservation District Board.
2. **District Self-Assessment**- All 14 Districts submitted the required self-assessment forms. These forms are being reviewed and summarized.
3. **District Audits**- Policy dictates all District audits be submitted to the State office 120 days from the start of the new fiscal year. There are several outstanding audits.

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

1. **2:90 Rules**- These regulations sunset every 7 years. They are set to expire November 2024. Updates, modifications and changes to these regulations need to be completed by March so there is enough time to go through legal review, publication, public comment period, etc.
2. **Engineering Report**- Mr. Showler provided a brief overview regarding the 2023 Erosion Control Program Value. Concluding with year 2023, the program has prevented the loss of an estimated 32,202,637 tons of soil from construction sites across New Jersey. This has resulted in an estimated cost savings to the public of approximately \$1.6 billion. Comparing this savings to NJ conservation district fees for that time period (approximately \$236.5 million) yields a benefit to cost ratio of about 6.7:1.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Mr. Madlinger reported on the following:

1. In FY '23, NJ-NRCS funded 288 EQIP contracts for a total of \$8.9 million. In addition, 14 AMA contracts were funded for a total of \$520,000, 9 CSP contracts for \$201,380 and 99 Forest Management plans were funded.
2. For FY '24, to date, 612 applications have been received. \$8.3 million has been pre-approved.
3. The HEP local work group met Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Morris Local Work Group meets Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> and the Cape-Atlantic Local Work Group meets Jan. 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.
4. Tai Colon has been hired to fill the position of Outreach Coordinator.
5. The new Acting State Conservationist is Erika Boyland from Arizona.

### **NJ ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Mr. Dovey and Mr. Cywinski reported on the activities of the NJACD and NACD including the following:

1. Dates for 2024 Regional Supervisor meetings will be discussed at the afternoon NJACD meeting.
2. The upcoming legislative Outreach trip to Washington DC is being planned.
3. The 2024 NJACD budget is being drawn up.
4. Discussions are ongoing regarding the possibility of hiring a part-time Executive Director for NJACD.
5. Elizabeth Hite Vollavanh (HEP SCD) was awarded a scholarship to attend the upcoming NACD Annual Conference.

### **DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**

Mr. D'Alessandro reported that a meeting is scheduled for Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss goals, and training needs of the Employees Association. In addition, a training meeting is scheduled for Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> at the Freehold SCD office for 251 plan review.

### **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Mr. Contois reported on the following:

1. No updates regarding the NJ Flood Hazard regulations.
2. NJ-DEP is struggling to retain employees and fill vacancies.

### **RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Mr. Haberland reported on the following:

1. Ruth Carl was hired to fill the position of Statewide Consumer Horticulturist.
2. Interviews will be set up for the vacant Essex County Extension position.
3. The search is ongoing to fill the Warren County agricultural agent position.
4. The statewide fruit IPM Agent will start March 1<sup>st</sup>.
5. A search will be underway shortly for a new County Agent in Salem County.

### **SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

Dr. Murphy reported on the following:

1. Classes start next week.
2. There will be a Soil Health presentation at the upcoming NJ Ag. Convention.

### **PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS**

Noel ? from USDA? Reported on "Birth of Discrimination", which is a USDA reparation outreach program for minority and underserved individuals who feel they have been discriminated by USDA over the years. There is still approximately \$2.2 billion in the program. Applications must be postmarked by Jan. 13, 2024.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Mr. Rigolizzo, the Committee went into closed session.

A roll call vote was held with all members voting yes and Ms. Davis abstaining.

Mr. Minch read a resolution regarding entering into close session to discuss matters pertaining to the Morris SCD.

