

**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MINUTES
DECEMBER 9, 2024**

The December meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Chairman Ed Wengryn at 9:30 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

Ed Wengryn
Ray Cywinski
Sylvia Kovacs
Louise Davis
Michael Rigolizzo
Mike Haberland (rep. B. Schilling)
Dennis Contois (rep. S. LaTourette)
John Kocubinski
Joe Lomax
Dr. Stephanie Murphy (rep. L. Lawson)
Cormac Morrissey
Julie Hawkins, NRCS
Frank Minch, Division Director

John Showler, SSCC, NJDA
J Matos-Ramos, SSCC, NJDA
Sara Mellor, SSCC, NJDA
Craig McGee, Camden SCD
T. Wang, Mercer SCD
Rick Dovey, C/A SCD & NJACD
John Furfari, Gloucester SCD
Paul Califano, Freehold SCD
Janet Rekesius, HEP SCD
Christine Raabe, Ocean SCD
Mike Kent, C/A SCD
Mike Bonham, C/S SCD
Matt D'Alessandro, S/U SCD
Sandy Myers, UDCD
Bill Pollock, Ocean SCD
Matt Ward, HEP SCD
Ines Zimmerman, NJACD

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2024 MEETING

On motion by Louise Davis, second by Joe Lomax, the minutes of the September 9, 2024 meeting were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Secretary Wengryn reported the following:

1. He had been in discussions with NJDEP Commissioner LaTourette regarding soil conservation districts as stormwater utilities. Further discussion is needed.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT

Mr. Minch reported on the following:

1. **2:90 rule amendment update-** The rules were re-adopted "as is" in November to avoid the regulations expiring. The proposed changes are still under legal review by the Attorney General's office.
2. **SSCC member appointments**—Louise Davis (North) and Joe Lomax (South) were re-appointed NJACD representatives to the SSCC.
3. **Supervisor appointment(s)- Bergen-** The Supervisor Nominating Committee recommended Angelo Onello, a civil Engineer to fill the vacancy.
On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Morrissey, Mr. Onello was appointed to the Bergen SCD Board. Mr. Cywinski recused.
Somerset/Union- The Supervisor Nominating Committee recommended Jonathon Blank, a civil engineer to fill the vacancy.
On motion by Mr. Morrissey, second by Mr. Lomax, Mr. Blank was appointed to the Somerset Union SCD Board.
4. **2025 meeting calendar-** On motion by Ms. Davis, second by Mr. Lomax, the SSCC meeting schedule for the upcoming year was approved (1/13, 3/10, 4/14, 6/9 9/8 & 12/8).
5. **District Consolidation-** Due to staffing and various other issues, the Camden and Cape/Atlantic Districts are exploring the possibility of merging into one District. There are numerous steps to be taken by both Districts which are in the process of being addressed. One area of discussion is increasing the number of Supervisors on the proposed consolidated District Board. This would require a statutory amendment.
On motion by Mr. Lomax, second by Ms. Davis, formal approval was given to undertake exploration of statutory changes regarding Supervisor numbers and alternates.
6. **Open Public Meetings Act-** Although many publications are moving to exclusively digital formats, the Attorney General's office has indicated that meeting notices still must be published in printed media of the geographic area.

SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT

1. **Engineering Report-** Mr. Matos-Ramos provided a brief overview regarding some of the recent activities he and Mr. Showler have worked on over the last few months including technical assistance to the Districts.
2. **Quarterly Report-** This report covers the period from July 1, 2024 through September 30, 2024. There were 1,529 applications, 2,285 Reports of Compliance, 13,972 SCD inspections and over \$2.5 million in fees collected.
3. **Technical Bulletin (2024-1.0) -** This Bulletin covers the procedure regarding acceptance of digitally sealed/signed plans.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

Ms. Hawkins reported on the following:

1. NJ-NRCS has approximately \$30 million in mandatory financial assistance funds for FY '25.
2. Approximately 860 applications have been received. This represents a 20% increase over last year's sign up.
3. The State Technical Advisory Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday.
4. \$1.2 million is available in Conservation Innovation Grants.
5. Approximately \$75,000 is available in Urban Conservation Technical Assistance Grants.
6. FY '25 budget is under a continuing resolution through December 20, 2024.
7. FY '26 Training Plan is being finalized.

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NJACD)

Mr. Cywinski and Mr. Dovey reported on the following:

1. The annual conference was well attended.
2. The NJACD is transitioning Treasurers from Jim Hill to Cormac Morrissey.
3. The new NJACD budget will be adopted today.
4. Ms. Zimmerman is exploring several options regarding grant funds.
5. The DC "fly in" is scheduled for March 26, 2025.
6. The registration fee for the NACD annual meeting for Geoffrey Allen is to be paid by Agri-Drain.. A limited number of scholarships are awarded by Agri-Drain and only one scholarship can be awarded per state.
7. There is some confusion regarding hosting responsibilities for upcoming NE-NACD meetings. Mr. Cywinski will investigate for clarification.
8. There is concern regarding the impact of wildlife habitat and stormwater regulations on the agricultural community.

NJ SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

Mr. D'Alessandro reported on the following:

1. The Employees Association meets every other month.
2. Training sessions are held on a quarterly basis.
3. A 'meet & greet" with NRCS is being scheduled.
4. Mr. Kent reported that the National Association District Employees is looking for success stories to publish in their newsletter.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Contois reported on the following:

1. Many stormwater catch basins are clogged with leaves and debris.
2. DEP only accepts electronic signatures on applications.
3. A hiring and promotion freeze has negatively impacted DEP.

RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Mr. Haberland reported on the following:

1. A new County Agent has been hired in Warren County. The new Agent will start in March 2025.
2. Two candidates have been interviewed for the Salem County position.
3. Searches are underway for County Agents in Bergen and Burlington Counties.
4. The Atlantic County Agent is retiring at the end of the month.
5. NJAES has been discussing new technology in agriculture.

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Dr. Murphy reported on the following:

1. Last week of classes, final exams begin next week.
2. Personnel updates were provided.
3. Rutgers will lead several components of a \$72.5 million federal initiative to fortify coastal NJ against climate change impacts and extreme weather events. Rutgers will receive approximately \$16 million of the total grant to lead several program components.
4. Ferrero Hazelnut Company provided Rutgers University with a \$170,000 grant.

PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS

1. Mr. Ward thanked the Rutgers Urban Agriculture Agent for their hard work and dedication.
2. Mr. Lomax reported that there is a major effort to maintain and restore the 114 miles of Atlantic Ocean coastline in NJ.
3. Mr. Pollack reported that recreational harvesting striped bass is important economically for the state. Regulations are being revised which may have a negative impact on the industry and the economy of NJ.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 AM. All actions were by unanimous vote unless otherwise noted. The next SSCC meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch, Division Director

