**STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

 **DRAFT MINUTES**

 **OCTOBER 16, 2023**

The October meeting of the State Soil Conservation Committee was called to order by Assistant Secretary Joe Atchinson 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** John Showler, SSCC, NJDA

Joe Atchinson Tim Fekete, SSCC, NJDA

Joe Lomax Matt D’Alessandro, S/U SCD

Evan Madlinger NRCS Janet Rekesius, HEP SCD

Dr. Stephanie Murphy (rep L. Lawson) Christine Raabe, Ocean SCD

Ray Cywinski R Reitmeyer, Burl. SCD

Louise Davis Karol Blew, Gloucester SCD

Dr. Brian Schilling I. Zimmerman, Freehold SCD

Dennis Contois (rep. S. LaTourette) Mike Bonham, Cumb-Salem SCD

John Kocubinski T. Wang, Mercer SCD

Sylvia Kovacs Jim Hill, Hunterdon SCD

Mike Rigolizzo Paul Schiariti, Mercer SCD

Maurice Sheets M. Kent, Cape-Atlantic SCD

Frank Minch, Executive Secretary Matt Ward, HEP SCD

 Sara Mellor, SSCC, NJDA

 Laura Tessieri,

**MINUTES OF JUNE 12, 2023 MEETING**

On motion by Mr. Lomax second by Ms. Kovacs, the minutes of the June 12, 2023 meeting were approved with the following corrections, Mr. Cywinski abstained and Ms. Kovacs recused from voting on the Warren SCD Supervisor appointments.

**CHAIRMAN’S COMMENTS**

Assistant Secretary Atchinson introduced himself to the Committee. Mr. Atchinson indicated that interviews are underway to fill the Secretary position. It is anticipated the new Secretary of Agriculture will be in place by January 2024.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT**

Mr. Minch reported on the following:

1. **Annual Meeting- November 20th-** This meeting will be held November 20th at the Eco-Complex in Columbus, Burlington County. Speakers for the meeting are being finalized.
2. **District Review/Assessment-**The self-assessment forms are to be reviewed/completed and returned in a timely manner.

 **SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL ACT**

1. **Daniel’s Law/District Websites**- A reminder that each District must have a redactor and should be working on reviewing the Daniel’s Law website to ensure no pertinent information is divulged regarding judicial and law enforcement individuals.

In addition, all District websites should be up to date with meeting dates, agendas, minutes and financial information.

1. **Engineering Report-** Mr. Showler provided a brief overview regarding some of his recent activities including assistance to the Soil Conservation Districts, revising the Offsite Stability Standard and developing a draft Standard for the Installation of Solar Arrays.

 **NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Mr. Madlinger reported on the Following:

1. Mr. Madlinger is Acting State Conservationist.
2. The continuing resolution expires November 17th.
3. USDA-NRCS has been given an additional $11.3 million for EQIP.
4. The District Conservationists and NJ-NRCS leadership team are scheduled to attend the Annual NJ Conservation Conference on November 20th.
5. The deadline for EQIP sign up is October 20th.
6. Local workgroup meetings are being scheduled.
7. A State Technical meeting is in the process of being scheduled for December.
8. NRCS has signed new agreements with the Cape-Atlantic and Ocean Districts.

**NJ ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

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

1. The Northeast Regional meeting was held in Portland, Maine. It was a successful meeting.
2. The Annual NACD meeting will be held in San Diego in February.
3. 29 of 41 Urban Grant proposals were funded by the Federal Government. These grants totaled $1.1 million. The Cape-Atlantic grant proposal was funded. Mr. Kent provided an update on their $10,000 grant.

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1. Ines Zimmerman has volunteered to Chair the 2024 NJ Envirothon.

**DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Kent reported on the following:

 1. Mr. Kent is the Northeast Association President.

 2. A Board is being formed for the State Association.

 3. Training sessions will be scheduled in the near future.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Mr. Contois reported on the following:

1. Warren County was battered by severe storms that caused a great deal of damage. Repairs and rebuilding will cost a significant amount of money.
2. New Flood Hazard rules were effective July 17th.

**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Dr. Schilling and Mr. Haberland reported on the following:

1. A search is being conducted to fill 5 faculty positions.
2. An IPM Agent has been chosen but not announced.
3. Master Gardner positions are vacant in Essex, Somerset, Union and Warren Counties.
4. There are approximately 100 extension personnel and 25% are new to their positions.
5. There are new disease pressures in Warren County because of the heavy rain/storms in July.
6. Young/new farmers are eager to learn about new and emerging markets.
7. Farm business management is crucial for agricultural growers.

**SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

Dr. Murphy reported on the following:

1. The fall semester is in session.
2. Celebrating the establishment of Cook College (1973-2007). It has been 50 years since Cook College admitted its first class of students.
3. Ann Gould is the new Dean of Academic Programs at SEBS.
4. The U.S. Composting Council held a composting operations training course (July 31- August 4) covering composting processes, facilities, compost quality, and marketing in Blackwood, NJ.
5. The annual meeting of the USDA’s NE Coordinating Committee for Soil Testing was held at U.S. Forest Service’s Grey Towers facility in Milford, Pa.

**PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS**

Mr. Ward reported on the Exempt Municipality status of Newark. It has been several years since the city has received a satisfactory rating. A meeting is scheduled for October 30th with the city of Newark. If the meeting does not prove to be productive, the HEP District will move to revoke Newark’s exempt status.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 AM. All actions were by unanimous vote unless otherwise noted.

The next SSCC meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Minch, Division Director

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