

Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) meeting
Friday January 9, 2009
VAST Conference Room, Berlin Vermont

Preparer's notes: DM refers to District Manager; 'Council' and NRCC are used interchangeably:
Italicized text indicates NRCC motion and vote.

In Attendance: (Districts-10 represented)

Meg Kluge (Chari), Windham
Jonathon Chamberlin, Otter Creek
Bridget Bowen, Rutland
Bob Drachman, Rutland
Larry Kasden, Ottaquechee
Jerry Yates, Franklin
Dayton Fleury, Franklin
Hank Robinson, Grand Isle
Michelle Gudorf, Lamoille
Ed Lewis, Poultney Mettowee
Harry Evans, Windham
Chris Lagis, Caledonia
Paul Daniels, Orleans
Renaë Masse (DM for Franklin)
Jolene Hamilton representing all DMs

Partners:

Jim Leland (AAF&M)
Laura DiPietro (AAF&M)
Rick Hopkins (ANR)
Judy Doerner (NRCS)

9:45 Meg Kluge called meeting to order

No Agenda had been distributed prior to this meeting; therefore Meg established the agenda as follows:

- Discuss and determine Council's future direction-how to proceed
- DMs were asked to review and comment on draft policy for the DM account expenditures that was proposed by Council on November 6, 2008. Discussion of their comments on draft.
- Meg concluded that as we didn't have available copies of the Nov 6, 2009 meeting minutes and as we didn't have a budget, that we could not approve those items and would approve those at the next meeting

Discussion on Future of NRCC

Thus far we know that AAF&M is committed to maintaining the following:

Providing audits, Providing bookkeeping, Handling Elections, Annual report, Meeting assistance, Supervisor and DM training

Council needs to discuss and decide one of the following options:

1. Does Council wish to meet once a year and simply allocate funds?

OR

2. Does Council wish to redirect its emphasis to take on policy and conservation issues? If yes, then supervisors need to explore identify the conservation issues they wish to pursue at a statewide level. Rick Hopkins presented a very brief explanation upon Bob Drachman's request, on fluvial geomorphology as an example of how NRCC board meetings could function.

Several Supervisors questioned about the need for NRCC and VACD to coexist. Several in attendance explained the differences in their roles and responsibilities:

Role of NRCC

- Council is part of the Executive Branch of the Government and therefore cannot make a stand on any fiscal issues (cannot lobby) but can assist in writing new legislation or advocate for correct decision.
- Council operates like local districts to make land based and conservation decisions.
- Council consists of a group of state land partners to advise district supervisors on conservation and agricultural issues and programs.
- Council must exist to appropriate the funds districts receive from the legislature each year.

Role of VACD

- The Association is a non-profit organization of Vermont's 14 Conservation Districts whose mission is to help the Districts carry out natural resource oriented programs at the local level.
- VACD focuses on advocacy necessary to address the legislature to write new laws or appropriate the funding to develop projects
- VACD represents districts at the state and national level.

Notable points from this discussion:

- Need to spend less time on admin issues; Supervisors of any districts may be able to assist NRCC on task forces (or subcommittees) rather than relying on 6 supervisory union reps to bear the brunt of the workload; partners are the advisors to Supervisory unions-suggested supervisors (districts) take this board back and function in the manner that this council was intended and allow committees to deal with the admin aspects so that the NRCC board could fly through these tasks and free up time for land based issues.
- Allow partners to educate supervisors so that we can better represent the problems and solutions and therefore better represent the landowners in our districts (for example, educate supers on fluvial geomorphology so that supers in addition to DMs can go to landowners in their districts and have educated discussions with their constituents); also to discuss policy and program issues encountered and/or offered by partners. Can expand from partners to industry folks for presentations and expertise on issues.
- Districts serve purpose to partners on council by providing feedback to partners about programs and issues (find gaps in programs and let partners know about those)
- Jon A. pulled together for suggestions for duties and responsibilities for Supervisors; will take a strong commitment from supervisors;
- Suggestion that DMs educate their supervisors on conservation issues so that they can understand their local issues and then bring their local gaps in conservation programs or issues up to council

Meg Kluge asked from each districts represented at this meeting for feed back on option 1 and 2 listed above:

- Franklin: wants an invigorated NRCC and is in favor of growing it
- Grand Isle – questioned where council stood on earlier suggestion to eliminate supervisory unions and move to representation on council by 14 districts. This would require a change in statutes at the legislative level; Meg noted that even if we decide to change the structure but in the meantime we could ask for a representative from every district to serve on task forces and subcommittee – wants to grow council
- Otter Creek there is some redundancy and its role should be reduced to funding roll through. Districts should identify conservation issues through one organization as a bigger group and bring

those ideas or issues back to NRCC or meet when needed. In favour of having NRCC meetings 4 times per year and to coincide with VACD meetings

- Rutland wants an invigorated NRCC and is in favor of growing it
- Lamoille wants an invigorated NRCC and is in favor of growing it
- Ottaquechee-should be about getting education at NRCC and bringing that info back to districts –keep a more active council
- Windham – wants an invigorated NRCC and is in favor of growing it
- Caledonia – exist in limited form (1 meeting/year)
- Orleans – wants an invigorated NRCC and is in favor of growing it, but coincide meetings with VACDs
- PM – wants an invigorated NRCC and is in favor of growing it

Paul Daniels motioned that NRCC meet 4 times per year and those meetings would be held on same day and at same location as VACD full board meetings. Hank Robinson seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Jim Leland (representing AAF&M) abstained from vote.

Meg called for special Programming Task Force pull together and effective agenda that is light on administration issues and program heavy on conservation or program content. This Task Force will actively solicit suggestions from districts for the next agenda:

Bridget Bowen
Meg Kluge
Larry Kasden
Chris Lagis
Jerry Yates

Districts should contact Meg Kluge or one member of this task force to offer suggestions from districts.

Note that Jeff Cook is contact (conduit) for funds at AAF&M level to continue to provide bookkeeping.

Discussion on Draft policy for the DM account expenditures:

On November 6, 2008, Council determined that a policy for the DM account expenditures should be proposed and presented to DMs for their discussion and approval. Jolene Hamilton will present this information to the DMs for discussion. Ed Lewis motioned and Bob Drachman seconded that ‘Council submits the following draft policy to DMs for review:

1. DM account funds will cover up to 4 DM meetings per year,
2. DM account funds will cover trainings sponsored by or agreed to in advance by NRCC (e.g. Quickbooks training),
3. DM account funds will cover the per diem and mileage of the appointed DM representative (or alternate) to attend the NRCC meetings (Note that DMs will need to review the current per diem and determine if that amount is adequate to reimburse the DM Representative to NRCC for time),
4. NRCC will provide reimbursement to the districts for DM mileage, per diem and registration (and not directly to the DM).’

Jolene Hamilton presented a report from the district managers with suggestions to the November 6, 2008 draft policy as follows:

1. Remain as written
2. DMs were concerned that on occasion, trainings may come up that have not been approved by the full board, but DMs would still like the opportunity to attend. They requested a modification to

this policy rule. *Hank Robinson motioned and Ed Lewis seconded that council be willing as a temporary measure to allow NRCC Chair to approve Training that was not pre-approved by the NRCC board. Motion carried unanimously.*

3. Change in verbiage to indicate DMs will receive “a reimbursement” to the district for expenses incurred (changed from “per diem”). And this would be \$50/meeting plus mileage. *Ed Lewis motioned and Hank Robinson seconded to move reimbursement to \$50. Motion passed unanimously.*
4. Change in verbiage to indicate DMs will receive “a reimbursement” to the district for expenses incurred (changed from “per diem”). Change from \$40 to \$50 as reimbursement for DM meeting attendance and any training they attend. *Ed Lewis motioned and Hank Robinson seconded to move reimbursement to \$50. Motion passed unanimously.*

Jolene suggested one addition not covered in initial draft of NRCC proposal; NRCC didn't mention DMs attending regional meetings and this should come from DM funds (and not from individual districts budget). *Motion to Meg and seconded by Ed Lewis to add Regional meeting attendance in addition to training as agreed upon in advance by the NRCC and will be covered under DM allocation. Motion carried unanimously.*

Motion to adjourn by Hank Robinson and seconded by Ed Lewis. Meeting adjourned at 12:10.