

# Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council

An agency of State Government, Serving Vermont's 14 Conservation Districts

## Meeting Minutes

UVM Extension Classroom, Berlin

June 19, 2014

**Present:** Linda Corse (Rep from SE), Michelle Gudorf (Rep from NW), Vicky Drew (NRCS), Bill Manner (Ottawaquechee NRCD), Rick Hopkins (VT DEC), Ed Lewis (Rep from South), Bridget Bowen (Rutland NRCD), Hilary Solomon (PMNRCD), Jill Arace (VACD), Kerry O'Brien (CCNRCD, NRCC Administrator), Alan Shelvey (Rutland NRCD), Mike Raboin (Rep from Central), Mike Middleman (VTAAF&M)

**Meeting Opened: 1:00pm.** Linda called the meeting to order.

**Previous Meeting Minutes:** Ed Lewis, Michelle seconded to approve the previous meeting minutes. Rick made a correction to add his name to list of attendees. The motion was amended with corrections. The motion was approved.

## NRCC Reporting and Performance Standards Subcommittee

Michelle introduced the subcommittee, and the reasons for its creation. There was difficulty in increasing funding for Districts, and it was clear there needed to be better definition of District services and a base level of services to justify an increase in funds. In addition, Districts needed to communicate their results more effectively. Over several meetings both with staff and supervisors, project results or "beans" were discussed, and the subcommittee was formed. Jill from VACD took the lead in organizing this effort and drafting the language and paperwork. The subcommittee includes Jill Arace, Michelle Gudorf, Linda Corse, Mike Middleman, Rick Hopkins, Kerry O'Brien, and Kim Komer. Jill presented the system that was drafted by the committee.

The mission of Districts and the mechanisms for how our mission is achieved was discussed, as described in statute. The deliverables for the FY2015 funding was reviewed. The first \$6000 payment to Districts will include the Project Results Survey and Financial Report. This report will count "beans" and provide reporting for both NRCC and VACD in one form. The committee intends to make this reporting form online in another year. The second payment of \$2000 will involve two additional components. One is a District Natural Resources Assessment – which will include a summary of what the NR concerns are in your District, which is the context for our work. The goal of this exercise is that every District should know their resource concerns and have the ability to communicate and represent those to landowners and other partners. The second component is a Performance Assessment. This survey will help Districts review their operations, where they are doing well, and where they need improvement. Districts funding was increased this year to support this effort, with an additional \$750 included. If there are areas identified where improvement is needed, Districts can apply for an additional \$1000 or more to address this effort. In total, \$9000 or more will be available for each District. There are also funds set

aside for Jill to be available for supporting individual Districts through this effort, or to trainings or consulting as needed.

Alan mentioned that it's important to include a place to identify where additional support is needed, in addition to communicating results. For example, indicating that if engineering was available, then several projects would be ready. In addition, a way to show how to help market resources related to organizations or businesses that need support or are operating responsibly, and adding development needs to our assessments.

Mike Raboin moved we accept the Performance and Reporting Standards as presented. Rick seconded. Additional discussion about how it will be executed, if it will enable Districts to remain unique, and if it will be laborious. Training and support will be available to District that need assistance or are finding it difficult. The motion was approved.

Next Steps: Existing committee will continue to refine documents, they will meet again to review process. Alan will help review language via email. In October, a new District Capacity Building subcommittee will review District assessments and Capacity Building proposals. Vicky Drew volunteered someone from NRCS to be on the new committee, Rick Hopkins, Michelle Gudorf, VTAAF&M Rep (Mike or Laura), Bill Manner. The new committee will be reconfirmed at the next meeting.

#### **NRCS Cooperative Working Agreements**

NRCS is reviewing MOUs/Agreements between NRCS and Conservation District and State Agencies that have historically been in place but have not been revisited in quite some time. Vicky discussed co-housing agreements between NRCS and NRCDs.

There are three agreements, Mutual, Cooperative, and Operational

Mutual Agreement: Same for each District, not proposing any changes. It codifies the relationship between NRCS and the Districts.

Cooperative Agreement: Vicky reviewed this document, and the work the subcommittee did to revise the language. NRCS requests that any feedback or thoughts on the agreement be sent to Jim Wood. [Jim.Wood@usda.gov](mailto:Jim.Wood@usda.gov). The subcommittee has met and will continue to meet, with the process expected to take up to a year. The final draft of the agreement will be sent out in advance of the NRCC meeting for review. These agreements are individualized by state, but would be the same for each District.

Operational Agreements: These would be individualized for each District. These have not been visited yet.

#### **NRCC FY215 Budget**

Kerry reviewed the current budget proposal. The budget was discussed largely in context with the subcommittee. Funding for FY2015 is up from \$112,000 to \$155,500 for base funding, but the additional AOI funding was not offered for FY2015. Ed moved to approve the budget as proposed. Mike Raboin seconded. The motion was approved.

### **AOI Update**

Kerry reviewed the AOI program and discussed how the program has helped show areas where additional resources are needed, including Land Treatment Planning needs and computer labs. NRCS mentioned some additional funding opportunities: RCPP and possible TA funds. NRCC would like to get feedback from UVM Extension on how this program is working for them.

### **Legislative Update**

Mike discussed the Ag working groups and the proposed legislation and larger water quality bill, which didn't pass. EPA was part of the equation in their approval of the TMDL. Once the TMDL is passed, it will help inform the water quality bill.

Shorelands Protection Bill was passed, focusing on habitat protection on 10-acre or greater waterbodies. A statewide forestry study was passed.

ANR has been tasked with creating a funding plan for water quality, including the idea of the stormwater utility fee.

Districts conducting legislative breakfasts was discussed, and their importance.

### **NRCC Finance Committee**

Linda asked if any NRCC member had an interest in joining the NRCC finance committee, which includes Michelle and Linda right now.

### **Other Business**

Alan discussed the TFS program, and mentioned that many towns adopted language restricting development in a floodway, which in some towns development may include planting trees. He thought this should be considered when identifying properties.

There will be a going away party for Rita Bisson, who is moving to Virginia.

**Next Meeting:** Will include NRCS Cooperative Meeting, The Capacity Building Committee, Partner Database update. Please send any other agenda items to Kerry.

Kerry will send out a doodle poll for the next meeting date.

**Meeting Adjourned: 4:06pm**

