Southeast Supervisory Union

Joint Meeting between the Windham NRCD and Ottauquechee NRCD

January 21st, 2025 7:30 PM

Via Zoom

Participants: Cory Ross, (Executive Director of WCNRCD), Meg Kluge (WCNRCD Board Member), Judith Howland (ONRCD Board Member), Isabel Bowman (Conservation Specialist with WCNRCD), Heather Blunk (Agricultural Resource Specialist with WCNRCD), Garett Manchester (VHCB Americorps with WCNRCD), Linda Corse (WCNRCD Board Chair), Bill Manner (ONRCD Board Chair), Kelly Stettner (District Manager of ONRCD), Mae Masson (Agricultural Resource Specialist with WCNRCD), Pieter van Loon (WCNRCD Board Member), and Ron Rhodes (ONRCD Board Member).

NRCC updates:

* The last council meeting was December 18th, 2024. Clare Ireland is attempting to have us have more regularly scheduled meetings, minutes in progress from this meeting. Core services one time funding of $100,000 with a focus for districts to get equipment as needed to comply with open meeting law, but this can cover more than that scope.
* Council is starting a statute committee. This was within the VACD Governance Committee but this was given to council as the council is the Vermont agency. Council is looking for volunteers to join this subcommittee. A representative of the South East Supervisory Union will be involved further in the process. Currently, unsure if the state house still has interest in revising the statute. Last year, opening statute led to a big push for Districts to review the statute. Additionally, last year, a story book ending exercise has helped get the Districts working on future goals.
* Clare Ireland and Lina Smith have been working to review the statute. They found some benefits in the statute for example access to state government purchasing records.
* Clare spoke to Natural Resources Committee and is continuing to work with the State House.
* VACD has contracted with Action Circles to advocate for the Conservation Districts. This will change from last year due to a new contract.
* VACD Executive Director interviews are happening this week.

NRCC Finance Committee met last January 15th, 2025:

* + Core service one time funding. Applications have been reviewed. Most districts will get something (although one district did not apply). Clare will be sharing the final awards for that soon so that when meeting with legislators, we can show that we spent the money wisely. Awards were prioritized based on meeting legal status.
  + Still have funding for enhanced design and implementation block grant available. The next open RFP is April 3rd, 2025. WUV will have their grant applications due on March 21st.
  + February 13th is legislative action day. People with guidance and following protocol can meet with legislators.
  + Trees For Streams is available to apply for. While the applications materials list only the Lake Champlain area, Jess Miller confirmed that our area can apply for this as well.

NRCC representative election:

* Will attend periodic meetings throughout the year to work on the council budget.
* The Council is made up of six supervisory representatives who must be supervisors from Conservation Districts, and an additional three representatives can include the department of agriculture, UVM Extension, and DEC. They are the voting members of council. Other representatives, such as VACD’s Executive Director, serve as advisors.
* Shifts from district to district every four years to allow for every district to be represented.
* Nomination for Linda Corse as the South East Supervisory representative. The nomination was seconded, the nomination passed.
* Nomination for Bill Manner to serve as the alternate. South East Supervisory representative. The nomination was seconded, the nomination passed.

Celebrations and Concerns - sharing from each district:

ONRCD:

* Kelly Stettner celebrated 1 year for ONRCD and 25 years with the Black River Action Team. She wrote an article about bridge installations for VT Digger and got statewide attention.
* Hired a consultant to handle grant management and financial assistant. Have a bookkeeping service to do heavy lifting on the books.
* Working with the WRNRCD on this year’s Local Work Group
* Having issues getting NRCS to be involved. NRCS is being restructured into teams rather than zones. This will not go into effect until 2026, so NRCS will likely be spread thinly.
* NACD e-news blast included a federal hiring freeze that may go into effect. At NRCS office hours, they clarified that they do not follow all federal regulations, such as the option to keep teleworking. The hiring process for NRCS is far enough along that those positions are likely going to be filled.
* BRAT update: Contacted Community Outreach person for Senator Welch. Follow-up meeting to come.

WCNRCD:

* Gained two new employees!
* Had a great annual meeting at Scott Farm Orchards that was organized mostly by Heather Blunk.
* Linda, Mae, and Heather, attended the CRWFA meeting
* Concerns with future funding options
* Concern with CRWFA as Windham County has only the Corse farm as a due-paying member

Motion to adjourn was seconded and passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Isabel Bowman