

Windham County Natural Resource Conservation District Minutes

Wed, August 19, 2020, 6:30 pm

Meg's house, 236 Barrows Road, Brattleboro, VT

Present: Linda Corse, Meg Kluge, Katie Ross Morrison, Geof Dolman: board supervisors;
Cory Ross: district manager, Joshua Allen, NRCS.

-Started with introductions since Josh is newly joining us. Josh is the LGBTQ coordinator for Vermont NRCS; he represents clients if they have complaints, and generally promotes diversity in the NRCS.

Race and Equity:

- Last meeting we talked about wanting to educate ourselves about where we're at in Windham County in terms of race, equity and inclusion.
- Josh is going to send out content from a forum that he was part of addressing diversity and equity in Vermont/NRCS.
- Cost of living is higher here, which makes it less accessible.
- It's also hard to find a support system here, as an outsider, not knowing how people are going to receive you.
- Has worked with Northeast Queer Farmer's Alliance, which is a valuable.
- Important to develop a support system for folks coming in/ who might want to work with NRCS/ the district. How do we do this? Try to work with us and producers to put together an email list and possibly a newsletter; have a quarterly meeting to get producers together, discuss different questions about growing, funding, share success stories. Maybe we could add to the quarterly NRCD newsletter generally, and also specifically introduce Josh in an upcoming newsletter.
- There are quite a few environmental groups in the area; it would be great to connect various environmental groups. Also need more action fewer ideas. There's competition for grant funding which in part can lead to a lack of unity among environmental orgs.
- Josh asked if the district has done a field day. We have in the past, haven't had as many recently (in part due to corona virus).
- Ideas for workshops: invasive plant id walk; wildlife walk to highlight importance for managing for wildlife (along with water quality).
- How do we get the word out? Also a challenge because there are so many events.
- Also in terms of recruiting board members: how can we be more equitable? Avoid just recruiting people we know; advertise in more places than just the newspaper; build a network so we have a wider pool of folks to draw from.
- Nate Brown (Northwind Farm; goats, cows, pigs chickens, high tunnels, honey, forestry), Ashlyn (Rebob Farm), Hans Estrin (UVM extension) are potential folks to be involved.
- Another idea: a calendar; that comes out every year, including advertisers on relevant services (so also a fundraiser).
- Another option: hold our meetings at other locations, visit other farms and landowners and find out what issues are important to them.

FY21 Budget Update:

Meadowlark Project Update:

-It turns out we aren't a 501c3 so we can't host a charitable GoFundMe. This year we may end up being a pass through for the money and next year they'll try to find someone

F&W Watershed Grant Update:

-We ended up getting the Fish and Wildlife watershed grant for outreach at Lake Raponda (\$2035) and Sweet Pond State (\$3000) Park. Thankfully a lot of the work was already done.

Core Agreement:

-We were granted \$3000 for the NRCC core services agreement.

Design Grant for Ellis Brook

-Grant was accepted for \$23,757 from Southern Windsor RPC, for 30% design for berm removal and floodplain restoration.

-A motion was made to accept the updated budget; motion was accepted.

Other News:

-Game of Logging scheduled Sept 26 and 27 in Newfane.

-Conservation practice survey grants: trying to gather information on farmer-funded practices (such as buffer plantings, water bars, cover cropping, etc). Any LFO, SFO, MFO, or CSFO qualifies for this survey.

-Trees for Streams: looking for landowners willing to be hosts; RFP will come out in Sept. There is a potential property in Dummerston.

Secretary's Report:

-Move to approve the minutes; minutes approved.

-Add water bars to discussion of unfunded conservation practices. Water bar building for various uses is also a potential future workshop.

-Other July minutes edits: dam safety and no-till training. And change Abby to Abbie.

Next Meeting:

-Wed Sept 9 at 6:30pm at Meg's.

-Possible future candidate to come to a meeting: Andrew at NRCS; Laura Johnson at UVM Extension; Sam Schneski (county forester).

Future Agenda Items:

-Discuss Ames Hill land purchase/ forest management plan (and issues related to current use program/ forest management plans/ carbon sequestration).