



Members Participating: Rick Dovey, Mike Rigolizzo, Matt Ward, Jim Hill, Ray Cywinski, Charlie Buscaglia, Gina Berg

Also Participating: Ines Zimmerman, Acting Executive Director; Sara Mellor, SSCC; Robert Reitmeyer, Burlington SCD; Janet Rekesius, HEP SCD; Michael Kent, Cape Atlantic SCD; Tim Thomas, Freehold SCD; Erika Boyland, USDA-NRCS

Call to Order: President Dovey convened the meeting at 12:02pm.

Motion to Approve Minutes: The minutes from the February 5, 2024 meeting were presented. Hearing no questions or comments, **Ray Cywinski made the motion to approve the minutes. Motion was seconded by Mike Rigolizzo. No abstentions or objections. Voice vote: All members voted “aye” in the affirmative. Motion carried.**

Financial Report: Treasurer Hill gave a report but had to leave from his online participation. He gave an account update and sent the budget electronically earlier in the week.

Annual Budget: The budget will need to be circulated to the full membership for a 30-day comment period, and then be presented for approval at the April meeting. Dues for the districts will remain the same for the foreseeable future. The Annual Business Meeting and Conference and Partnership meeting is the same event. Ray Cywinski recommended modifying the budget presented to be a balanced budget. As presented, the income and expenses differ by \$95. Cywinski also asked if the contributing funding from NJDA and NRCS is confirmed. President Dovey stated that the partner funding is reliable.

Matt Ward moved the circulation of a revised balanced budget. Gina Berg seconded. Voice vote: All members voted “aye” in the affirmative. Motion carried.

Contracts: The information technology contract for services with Chris Edwards was discussed. Chris circulated his expenses and service fees from 2023 and stated that he would extend these rates to 2024.

“Rates for the NJACD are offered at \$50/hour and the NJ Envirothon remains \$25/hour. This is negotiable to some extent, likely not to exceed \$2,500 annually.”

President's Report: The National Association of Conservation Districts' Spring Fly In is scheduled for March 20, 2024. Five supervisors and department representatives are expected to attend from New Jersey. Training webinars are scheduled through the NACD website, and one page Farm Bill and program handouts are printable for the Hill visits.

Ines Zimmerman, Acting Executive Director, explained how scheduling with the legislative representatives is progressing. Upon confirmation of times with each office, a schedule will be emailed to the attendees.

Erika Boyland, NJ-NRCS Acting State Conservationist, will be joining the team and requested a brief virtual meeting with the NJ attendees to review the program status and concerns specific to NJ. It was agreed that March 14, 2024, at 4pm would be best. Ines will schedule a virtual invitation.

Executive Director Report: The 2024 NJ Poster Contest brochures were circulated. Districts are holding their own contests and grade level winning posters will be sent on to NJACD for state level judging and awards.

The 2024 NJ Envirothon is scheduled for May 18, 2024, at Big Brook Park in Monmouth County. Teams are entering the competition through the updated website. Station coordinators are preparing their tests, and they are scheduling team training for early April.

NJACD has been asked to partner with NJDA and the NJ Water Supply Authority to apply for a grant from the USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP). The goals of the grant application will focus on:

Increasing conservation planning capacity at the soil conservation district level.

Increasing the use of agroforestry practices in New Jersey.

Demonstrating and increasing the use of green infrastructure on agricultural lands. The timeline for the grant would likely be submittal by July, with awards announced in October.

NACD Board Member Report: Ray Cywinski, NJ Representative to NACD, reported:

The Northeast Hugh Hammond Bennett Producer Award went to Lindsay Napolitano and Johann Rinkens from Frenchtown, New Jersey this year. To honor their achievement, NJACD could invite them to a Regional Supervisor meeting, a SSCC meeting and/or NJACD meeting. Although not timely, could invite them to our annual Partnership meeting in Nov.

Nika and the NACD Communications Team can be of support with this.

Also, the NACD Summer & Northeast Region Meeting is scheduled for August 10-13, 2024 in Boston, MA at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel. The agenda and training opportunities are well underway.

NRCS Report: Erika Boyland, NRCS Acting State Conservationist, offered funding updates from the Farm Bill-EQIP program and the Inflation Reduction Act allocations. In combination, New Jersey awarded 19.7 million dollars in contracts. Even so, there was a shortfall due to the amount of assistance application received. NRCS made a request for an additional 6.5 million dollars in Farm Bill funding and 1.5 million from the Inflation Reduction Act pool.

NRCS has also requested that the Conservation Stewardship Program-CSP opportunities be amplified to partners. This program offers producers payments to maintain existing conservation efforts and incentives to implement additional conservation activities. A webinar is scheduled to get the information out to producers. March 29, 2024 is the deadline for applications.

Erika reported USDA-NRCS Chief Terry Cosby will visit several state offices in the next few weeks. NJ is scheduled for a staff meeting day as well as a partner meeting in the Hamilton Twp. state office. April 11, 2024 is the tentative date. Invitations will be sent via email to partner representatives.

Motion to Adjourn: Hearing no additional comments or discussion, **1st Vice President Rigolizzo offered a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ray Cywinski. By voice vote, all participating members voted “aye” in the affirmative. Motion carried.**

The meeting concluded at 12:50pm. The next meeting will be held on April 15, 2024, immediately following the regularly scheduled State Soil Conservation Committee meeting.

Approved On:
_June 10, 2024_____

Minutes Prepared by:

Ines Zimmerman, Acting Executive Director