

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 13, 2008

9:15 AM

USDA NRCS Conference Room

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Eastern RI
Conservation District

Northern RI
Conservation District

Southern RI
Conservation District

Director
RI Department of
Environmental Management

Governor's Appointee

ADVISORS

Coastal Resources
Management Council

RI Association of
Conservation Districts

RI Resource Conservation &
Development Area, Inc.

RI Statewide Planning Program

RI Department of
Transportation

RI Water Resources Board

URI Cooperative Extension

USDA Farm Services Agency

USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Services

Eric Offenberg called the meeting to order at 9:15 am.

In attendance were:

Eric Offenberg, Chairman;

Members – Harriet Powell, Southern District Representative; Paul Dolan, Northern District Representative; Gregg Cassidy, RIDEM Representative.

Advisors – Mike Moorman, USDA NRCS; Kristen Dame, URI Cooperative Extension; Kevin Nelson, Statewide Planning.

Others – Alicia Lehrer, Southern District; Gina DeMarco, Northern District; Ramona LeBlanc, State Committee Administrative Assistant; Peter Ginaitt, guest.

I. Old Business

- A. Discussion on Outreach to RI Legislators: Eric welcomed Peter Ginaitt to the meeting, introduced him to those present and re-capped Peter's accomplishments while he served as Chair of the State Committee. Eric expressed his hope that Peter would be able to advise and guide the Committee as to how to best present the Districts to the legislators. Peter reminded the Committee that there is good publicity for legislators who support environmental issues and that there is a need to make contact with individuals within the legislators who can act as advocates for the State Committee and the District, particularly with regards to State funding. He stressed the need to show what each District is doing within each city and town, referencing specific items and going back a few years. Environmental issues and the environmental scorecard give legislators something positive to reference alongside the eminent deficit and budget cuts which are expected to continue for several years. FFOS, open spaces are very popular with voters with bonds being passed repeatedly. The Districts are absolutely essential to these programs.

He emphasized that one on one contact is needed and that bulk mailings are not effective. It is important to target the Finance and Environment subcommittees. Legislative Day (if nothing else going on) and Agriculture Day can be effective tools for getting in touch with legislators and reminding them who the Districts are, the work

they do and the cost benefit of funding the Districts.

Eric asked Peter to set up a meeting between Jan Malek and a few members of SCC to re-introduce the Districts to him.

Peter also stressed the need to become less dependant on State funding and to find sustainable headquarters for each of the Districts. Eric asked that a list of legislators, Finance Committee and Environmental Committee members from both House and Senate be forwarded by Ramona to each District, from which each District is to select four legislators to engage in a face to face discussion of the Districts. He set a deadline for this contact of 6 weeks from the meeting date. The SCC will contact eight legislators, bring the total to twenty.

Further, Eric will set up a meeting with Mike Sullivan, since SCC and the Districts are funded through DEM's budget.

Eric suggested the possibility of each District having a Legislative Day.

- B. FFOS: Meeting scheduled for 1:00 on the 14th with it unlikely any changes to recommended values will be made. An executive session of the SCC will meet at 3:00 to vote on those values which must be forwarded to the DOA by February 15th.
- C. Governor's Appointments: As the Committee and District meet with legislators over the next months, there is an opportunity to push for appointments. Harriett will make an appointment with contact in Governor's office (Eric or his designee will also attend) to push for appointments. Eric himself would like to step down as Chairman as his job is requiring more travel and he is afraid it will negatively impact his role as Chair. He would like to stay on the Committee, but in a different capacity. He will remain until replaced.
- D. SE&SC Handbook: Eric sees the replacement handbook as a way for the Districts to get out in the public eye and work with the 30+ cities and towns that have ordinances on erosion and sediment control. He asked that a report with a completion schedule be presented by RC & D at the next meeting.
- E. CIG: Last year's agreement has been completed and billed. Each District held workshops to develop pre-proposals and each had about 20 people attend. 11 pre-proposals were submitted and responded to. Even though not all who attended submitted CIG proposals, they were exposed to other programs and the Districts. Mike Moorman stated that he is pleased with the work completed and that the pre-proposals made stronger projects. The final date for submitting proposals is 2/28 and ranking will begin in March. A new contract needs to be signed (work has already begun); wording is complete

but waiting for final budget to finalize numbers and funding.

- F. Districts Publicity: With Jeannie's absence, NRCS's commitment to lend a staff member to the Districts to help with publicity is on hold. On a national level, the NRCS Chief wants to push a publicity campaign and the tools developed there will hopefully be able to adapt to a local campaign. Stu Nunnery continues to work on a unified campaign for environmental partners in RI with a potential theme/slogan of Save the Land2. Southern started working with Chip Young and once the CIG ranking is completed, that will be publicized.
- G. Checking Account: SCC has a newly opened checking account with Paul and Eric as signatories.

II. Minutes

Motion made to accept the minutes: Harriet/Gregg, unanimous.

III. Financial Report

Increased work associated with campaign to talk to legislators may result in higher Administrative Assistant's salary. Districts may need to be approached about how to make that work within the budget.

Motion to accept financial reports: Harriet/Gregg, unanimous.

IV. Reports

URI: Kristen mentioned that the Dean/Associate Dean received supportive letter regarding the Cooperative Extension and Eric noted that given the importance of the Extension to the SCC, he would be willing to also write a letter and suggested the Districts do the same.

Statewide Planning: With budget situation, department is short-staffed but still responding to requests. A survey is posted on web-site re: comprehensive planning process. (planning.ri.gov).

Eric suggested utilizing the Districts to solicit grant applications stating that there would be no cost to the State to do so and the Districts would benefit from increased exposure. Kevin will discuss within department and respond.

DEM: Riparian buffer grants will be awarded in spring. Eric commented that this is another area that the Districts can get involved with.

SRICD: See emailed report; The District may have the opportunity for a permanent office space. Eric encourage the other Districts to pursue this possibility as well.

ERID, NRIC, NRCS: See emailed reports;

V. New Business

Legislative Packet: Annual Reports from Districts, Proposed Budgets and Plans of Work for 2008-2009 were delivered to the legislators, Governor and Mike Sullivan with cover letters from Eric.

Motion to adjourn at 11:10: Harriet/Paul, unanimous.