



2283 Hartford Ave, Johnston, RI 02919
401-934-0842

MEETING MINUTES
November 9, 2011
9:00 AM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair Eric Offenberg called the meeting to order at 9:03.

Eastern RI
Conservation District

Northern RI
Conservation District

Southern RI
Conservation District

Director
RI Department of
Environmental Management

Governor's Appointee

Present: Chair Eric Offenberg; Emerson Wildes, ERICD; Dick Went, RIACD; Ken Ayars, DEM; Paul Dolan, Gina DeMarco, NRICD; Jessie Blackledge, ERICD; Harriet Powell, Eric Scherer, SRICD; Ramona LeBlanc, SCC; Pooh Vongkhamdy, NRCS; Kristen Castrataro, Kerri Stenovitch, URI.

I. Minutes: A motion was made to accept the minutes of the September 2011 meeting:
Harriet/Emerson; unanimous.

II. Financial Report: A motion was made to accept the financial reports as presented:
Harriet/Paul; unanimous.

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

III. New Business:

A. Need For Tech Assistance to Farmers/Landowners: A subcommittee will be formed to discuss growing need for technical assistance to farmers and landowners. With growing technical staff and the establishment of a fee for service protocol, the CD's may be able to meet needs that are not currently being served by NRCS, URI or other agencies. Each CD will be represented on subcommittee and each Board will be asked to identify any areas of assistance that they feel the CD's can address. Current agreements have created new technical assistance positions and initiatives that will aid in the expansion of the CD's role in addressing needs of landowners. The subcommittee will meet in mid-December to begin exploration. A specific plan will be developed and any additional staffing needs will be identified before any new projects/initiatives are undertaken.

B. Performance Reviews: As the CD's move forward with new NRCS agreements, the SCC wants to ensure that work quality meets high standards. In cooperation with NRCS, a protocol for review of work completed will be established. Currently, technical liaison for NRCS agreements reviews quarterly reports before payment requests are authorized. It was suggested that quarterly reviews become part of the process.

C. Statewide Agreements/District Agreements: The reorganization policy will be modified slightly and redistributed with changes highlighted. The SCC will continue to sign agreements for statewide programs but CD's can enter own agreements for core programs to be completed within their District. To ensure uniformity and consistency within core programs, the SCC will provide administrative support for these District programs.

D. RIACD Website: A subcommittee was formed to discuss creating a new website with links to individual sites to be funded through SCC outreach budget.

IV. Old Business:

A. FFOS:

1. Farm Plan Reviews: Eric Scherer will review 3 farm conservation plans done by each ag tech.
2. Non-Compliance: Landowners who do not respond to attempts to meet to develop required farm conservation plans will be removed from FFOS program. Ramona will work with DEM to develop protocol to notify these landowners that they must either comply or be removed.
3. Existing Enrollees: Farms currently in FFOS will be reviewed in spring 2012 to begin process of determining if they have current conservation plans and to require them to have one created if none exists.

B. RI Land Trust Council: The SCC is working with two land trusts to determine best agricultural use of two of their properties. These two pilots will be used to help determine a fee for service schedule in cooperation with Rupert Friday of RI LTC.

C. NRCS Agreements:

1. Ag Inventory: Glocester and Scituate are being updated to include growers and forest landowners (Phase I included only livestock owners). New towns will be surveyed in spring 2012.

2. Geese: A proposed work plan for new agreement was approved by NRCS. Jessie will continue to do field work in ERICD but will attempt to engage municipalities statewide to implement their own egg oiling programs.
 3. Outreach: A series of NRCS workshops will be held in December. A second series will be held during winter and will feature an open house format. The goal is to host this series on farms in each District. The third series of workshops will be held in spring. The CD's will become the first point of contact for all new NRCS applicants. The ag techs will also assist NRCS in updating existing client files.
 4. Engineering: Interviews for engineering tech will be held in late Nov.
 5. Water Bodies & Waterways: A report of water bodies in ERICD (which will address resource concerns) will be compiled by 1/31/12. NRCS will use this report to prioritize which water bodies will be selected for a full assessment.
- D. Appointments to SCC/FFOS: The Governor will be asked to fill vacant seats on the SCC and the FFOS subcommittee and to extend expired terms on the same.

IV. Reports:

- A. Chair: Nothing to report.
- B. SRICD: New staff has been hired to work on NRCS agreements, RC&D agreements and to develop proposal for storm water managements plan in South Kingstown.
- C. NRICD: SRWEP theme will be "Water, Food & Community." One focus will be the positive impact of conservation farming on the community.

The District's Annual Dinner was held at Salisbury Farm and featured a farm tour.

Governor Chaffee and DEM Director Coit toured Confreda and Urban Edge Farms.
- D. ERICD: Annual Dinner meeting was held November 9.

Becca Buckler will conduct feasibility study for equipment bank for RIACD's BFR grant as an ERICD employee.

Website will be operational very soon.

E. URI Cooperative Extension: Kristen introduced Kerri Stenovitch, new ag agent at URI. Work has begun on BFR development grant and proposal for additional, 3 year BFR grant will be submitted.

F. NRCS: Written report distributed.

G. RC&D: Eric Scherer hired as Executive Director with oversight of several current agreements.

H. RIACD:

- Annual meeting to be held on 11/14.
- NACD annual meeting will be held in Las Vegas in January.
- Dick will attend an informational meeting for a New Roots Performance Evaluation training. Deadline for application is 12/1.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00.