

# State Natural Resources Conservation Council

An Agency of Vermont State Government, Serving Vermont's 14 Conservation Districts

## **NRCC Meeting Minutes December 1, 2016**

### **UVM Extension Classroom, Barre**

**Present:** Marli Rupe (VT DEC), Alan Shelvey (South Central Union Rep), Rick Hopkins (Winooski NRCD); Richard Noel (Northwest Union Rep), Corrina Parnapy (Winooski NRCD), Kerry O'Brien (NRCC Administrator, Caledonia County NRCD), Louise Waterman (VTAAFM), John Thurgood (NRCS), Jill Arace (VACD); Stephanie Mason (Northeast Union Rep)

On Phone: Hilary Solomon and Ed Lewis (PMNRCD); Bill Manner (Southeast Union Rep); Vicky Drew (NRCS)

**Absent:** UVM Extension Representative

**Meeting Opened:** 9:40am – Alan called the meeting to order

**Previous Meeting Minutes:** Louise moved and Richard seconded to approve the minutes. The motion was approved.

### **NRCC Administrator Update:**

NRCS agreement with NRCC executed for \$19,600 – Oct 2016 to Sept 2017. Kerry set up a google drive folder for NRCC business – containing the annual budget, all subagreements and parent agreements, financial procedures and other documents. **Kerry will provide the board access** and requested District Managers also be provided access. The board agreed to **include Districts**. The Finance committee is updated monthly, check authorizations were recently updated but needed to be updated to remove Mike Raboin. Current Alan, Kerry and Andrea (bookkeeper) are authorized signers. Financial procedures indicate 2 board members to sign checks – need to add one more. Richard Noel indicated he will also sign checks. **Kerry will process the necessary paperwork.**

### **Debrief on NRCC meeting with VTAAFM Secretary Ross:**

Annual overview meeting with Secretary Ross, provided update, presented annual report. The conversation moved into discussing resources in implementing Nutrient Management Plans, gaps in service and workload. There was acknowledgement at the end of the meeting that improved collaborative partnerships were necessary to execute the amount of work the state has with implementing the RAPs. It was acknowledged that there is a shortage of people in the state to certify NMPs.

### **Takeaways and recommendations:**

- It was recommended that NRCC follow up with new Secretary when/if one is appointed to coordinate schedule and get them more engaged in Districts/NRCC. Have more strategic dialogue about NRCC agreement and budget, and the deliverables associated with it.
- Need to have meetings more often
- Keep him on the mailing list for minutes

- Would quarterly update work? (Need more resources and coordinator)
- More reliance on Rep to VTAAFM to communicate within the Agency about Districts/NRCC work and opportunities.
- More negotiation – strategic dialogue with state to accomplish shared goals
- Need NRCC calendar work plan for communications strategy throughout year, legislative strategy
- Reserve slot on new Secretary schedule in January/Feb 2017 – Vicky will join
- Obtain projection of how long it will take to get NMPs done with our current resources, including private sector, NRCS, VACD/UVM Extension

#### **Debrief on VTAAFM RFP**

Water quality funding was made available by VTAAFM through an RFP. Sixty proposals were received, decisions likely in mid-January. Categories of funding were:

- Education & Outreach
- Innovative Phosphorus Reduction
- Capacity Building

VTAAFM thought there could be more collaboration among Districts in their proposals, even with separate proposals. Districts did collaborate, meet and have conference calls on their proposals. There were proposals from other organizations as well that were duplicative with Districts proposals. NRCC would be in a position to consolidate agreements with Districts. There will be another round next year. There would be a good opportunity with Districts/Supervisory Unions to coordinate regional applications with partners.

#### **Debrief on ERP**

69 proposals totaling \$4.5 million. It was clear from the applications who had attended the workshops ahead of time. Proposals are reviewed and ranked by Basin Planner, then go to DEC to technical review teams. Decisions should be made by the end of December. Some may be partially funded.

#### **Strategic Planning/Work Planning NRCC and Districts**

The group started by reviewing notes from Ray Ledgerwood's strategic planning sessions with whole group and just with NRCC at the annual meeting. NRCC has a historic mission statement, and another was developed (without reference to the first) at the annual meeting. Both were read and compared and a new version was developed but not yet approved.

The mission of the Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council is to promote the conservation, development and wise use of Vermont's natural resources by providing local perspectives on programs and policies in a strategic dialogue with state and federal partners through leadership and support for and accountability of the fourteen conservation districts.

Additional planning tasks to accomplish:

Proposed work plans to AAFM and DEC with appropriate budgets – invite dialogue  
NRCC Strategic Plan

A strategic planning committee was recommended to work on a framework to bring to full board meeting. Need to locate previous strategic plan – Marli will work with Hilary and Rick to find this.

Committee members will include: Marli, Alan, Rick will stay in the loop until appointed, Jill and Kerry as administrator.

DMs (Corrina, Kerry and Hilary) will begin a framework for DEC and AAFM base service work plan and budget. Alan would like contribute to DEC work plan.

Marli moved to provide compensation to Hilary to contribute time to a work plan, Louise seconded. The motion was approved. Corrina will utilize funds from her Capacity Building planning grant to assist.

#### **Update on NRCS Cooperative Working Agreement**

John reported that the agreement draft was taken to legal teams at AAFM and ANR who provided comments and additions. The new draft was released to the Districts to provide final comments by December 9<sup>th</sup>. After the 9<sup>th</sup>, NRCS would like to reconvene the committee to finalize. Louise, Rick, Corrina and Jill were the previous committee members, they agreed to a conference call. The goal is to have the Secretaries sign on December 15<sup>th</sup>, and finalize by the end of the year. Vicky recommended that the national office will also have some input prior to finalization. Vicky will follow up with national office to expedite their review process. Kerry will write to Districts to ask if there are any anticipated comments to expedite that part of the process. There is concern the revisions will require an additional legal review. Teleconference scheduled December 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm. A press event or press release will be discussed with the committee.

#### **Other updates:**

Winooski NRCD will have a 4-page feature in the Burlington Free Press next week. NRCC thanked Louise for her service to NRCC and Conservation Districts, she is retiring at the end of December.

#### **District Capacity Building Committee:**

Alan sent a summary of the Districts' comments on the Performance Assessment. Alan will communicate directly with the Districts to acknowledge their feedback. He also summarized a list of training needs, this could provide some guidance for strategic plan, capacity building. It was also suggested that a memo be put together for DM to digest and discuss at a meeting.

It was acknowledged that a "District Review" with a dialogue with the Districts is ultimately the goal, however the resources are limited and the Performance Assessment and capacity building grant may not provide an adequate mechanism for this. The DCB committee will continue to work on this.

#### **Supervisor Handbook**

NRCC released a request for proposals to update the Supervisor Handbook. A proposal was received from 4 District Managers (Heather Robinson, Eliza Rudegair, Jeannie Bartlett, and Marina Welch). The proposal was well presented. NRCC was concerned that a \$4000 budget is too high to accommodate. NRCC confirmed a \$2200 allowable budget and Kerry will work with them on the process to help reduce the scope of the work plan.

**Next Meeting:** February 23<sup>rd</sup> 9:30-12:30pm. Kerry will confirm location.

**Meeting adjourned: 12:25pm**