

Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council

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

Meeting Minutes

VAST Conference Room Berlin

March 11, 2014

Present: Jill Arace, Michelle Gudorf, Sarah Damsell, Kerry O'Brien, Mike Middleman, Linda Corse, Hilary Solomon, Paul Wagner, Ed Lewis, Rita Bisson, Mike Raboin, Larry Kasden, Mary Childs, Toby Alexander, Vicky Drew, Jens Hawkins-Hilke

Meeting Opened: 1:10pm. Linda called the meeting to order

Roundtable Introductions

Previous Meeting Minutes: Michelle moved to approve the meeting minutes, Ed seconded. Kerry will add Linda to those present at the meeting. The motion was approved.

Financial Reports: tabled. Kerry will send to finance committee via email.

AOI Report: The AOI agreement has been signed and the program has started. Kerry presented the survey form that will be used to evaluate classes attended as a result of the AOI program. If the class is a UVM sponsored NMP class, they have their own form and the results will be shared. Kerry passed around the survey form created for other classes.

Sarah presented the template for the Soil and Manure tracking spreadsheet. The data from the soil and manure sampling sheets will be shared directly from UVM lab. Sarah discussed additional fields that would be handy for analysis, including inclusion of Rustle 2 and other data from LTPs. She presented the list of fields included in the spreadsheet

Ed moved to approve both, Rita seconded. The motion was approved.

Presentation: Conservation Planning in Vermont, Jens Hilke VT Fish and Wildlife

- **Highlights:**
Context: Resource based economy through time, impacts on natural communities and wildlife; erosion and flooding.
- How our experience, culture, economy influences our land use. The concept of sprawl, and its impact on wildlife habitat.
- Review of resources available for planning – looking and connectivity, communications, context in scale. Biofinder data and mapping
- Encouragement to review the suite of options for planning, and understanding the range of options from town plans to zoning, etc.

Discussion

Presentation: NRCS Forestry and Wildlife Programs, Toby Alexander

Review of NRCS programs and habitat priorities: Wetland, Riparian/Aquatic (water quality), Upland habitat/forestry.

- Agricultural Easements in critical habitat areas.
- CREP example, livestock exclusion, buffers, watering, crossing
- EQIP Forestry Programs, targeting species and improving forest stands for habitat
- Sharing of map overlays to determine species priorities

Update on District Performance and Reporting Standards:

The subcommittee met this morning. Jill discussed the purpose for developing a performance standard system: to raise the bar for all Districts and to garner more support for Districts at the state level. The subcommittee worked through a part of the assessment data Jill has collected, but will need to meet a few more times. Feedback will be needed from Districts before May 21, 2014. The subcommittee will be developing a system for assessing and reporting performance measures, and base funding for FY2015 will be tied to this.

Discussion of state and federal programs and how they're working on ag water quality, funding and budgets.

Set Next Meeting: June 19, 2014

Vicky introduced the idea of reviewing the MOU between NRCS and the NRCDs. The MOUs in play are out of date and need to be revisited. She suggested a subcommittee to work on the agreements and a half hour at the next meeting. The goal is to have Districts be integrated in the partner database, and to make current the document that grants us office space, computers, etc. A subcommittee was formed.

Adjournment: 4:19

