**WCNRCD Board Meeting**

April 23, 2025 6:30 PM

Geof Dolman's House: 301 Barrows Rd, Brattleboro, VT 05301

and over Zoom

**Present:** Cory Ross, District Manager; Meg Kluge, Linda Corse, Katie Morrison, and Geof Dolman, Pieter van Loon, board supervisors; Isabel Bowman, Conservation Specialist, Heather Blunk, Ag Resource Specialist.

**Zoom Participants:** Garrett Manchester, Conservation Assistant; Olivia Carlson, NRCS Acting District Conservationist for South Zone; Heather Blunk, Ag Resource Specialist

**NRCS Updates:**

* Having another person fill the conservationist position fell through, so Olivia will still be the Acting District Conservationist.
* Hired a national wild turkey federation forester. Will be helping with Windham County forestry workload. Will also be helping with Rutland and Bennington Counties. Do have CSP Renewals happening, letters went out to relevant producers. Have had EQIP preapprovals. Local fund pool for windham County forestry - 20 applications; Will be spending $369,560 on that pool. 14 applications windham small scale funding pool.
* RCPP with American Farmland Trust - 2 preapprovals in process.
* 2nd round additional CSP, $20,000.
* Toby Alexander - state biologist and forester will be in the office May 5, anyone can come and make use of him as a resource, ask questions etc.
* Wood turtle trainings, tree and shrub training, grassland bird training and other trainings coming up, reach out if interested.
* NRCS didn’t use any inflation reduction act, so their funding doesn’t seem threatened.

**Financial Consultant Proposal:**

* We have $10,000 to spend on a financial consultant. We don’t have to go through a bid proceess. Reached out to Structural Integrity, because they’ve worked in this area. Had a meeting with them to discuss vision. They put together a draft scope of work.
* In hiring a financial consultant, we need better financial oversight and better division of labor. Also want to be in a better spot if we need to do a federal audit.
* Comfortable that this plan will cover our needs within our given budget.
* Will share contract with VACD.
* Would mainly be working with Cory, Geoff and possibly the new administrator.
* If better systems are in place, would make an unexpected shift in staffing easier.

Motion to approve the proposal from Structural Integrity.

**Plant Sale:**

* Changes:
  + Generated packing slips with the website
  + Four-digit order numbers

Recommendations from last year:

o Number cards brought back to runners so they can go back to the front desk

o List of customers that have a credit or owe a payment

o Need to coach runners

o Improve flow for shop area: Have tents for shop areas

o Have pollination requirements for fruit trees on board

o Have a master gardener in the back for same day sale

o Tables to check orders should be towards the front area for access

· Want to recruit kids for assistance with the sale

· Isabel to send out volunteer schedule sheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TBh-HlNbyBzy0uLPe79r690K7jIZHw2110ZFYJbeqKA/edit?gid=0#gid=0

· Needs:

o Bags: Potato, romaine, grapes, small sizes

-Ask for bags from a few organizations

o Barrels, shears, sharpies, tape

\*Blueseal will allow fliers for the plant sale

**Update on Federal Funding and Policies:**

**·**  VACD was paid by NACD

o Haven’t gotten a response from the letter sent to White River

· Stiltgrass and Nitrogen project good to go

· AFT: Sarah is back from leave and is scheduling an AFT update

· State Funding: seems to change each week about what may get funded

**Strategic Planning Update:**

· Want two dates:

o Discuss criteria for priorities for WCNRCD work (90-minute meeting)

- Cory will ask Claire if this is a public meeting

6:30pm, Zoom, retreat in person, 90 minutes session via Zoom. May 21st at 6:30pm.

Retreat date - need to go back to Felyce to get other options (tentative September 10th)

**Update on Hiring Process:**

*Motion to go into executive session to discuss personnel decision 7:35pm*

*Motion to leave executive session at 7:56p*

*Motion that the preferred candidate for the administrative assistant position be offered a position, assuming the last reference is positive.*

*Motion approved.*

*Motion that the preferred candidates for the greeter positions be offered positions.*

*Motion approved.*

*Motion that the candidate for the invasive technician position be offered a position*

*Motion approved.*

*Motion that the preferred avian technician be offered a position.*

*Motion approved.*

**VACD Update:**

* Court situation, conservation district in RI was a part of, the district won, but not sure where that will go.
* Transition with the executive director. Michelle is transitioning effectively, is doing more work in Montpelier than Jill did. Looking at Jill finishing sometime in June.
* Michelle has a work plan. Board packet has a report from Momentum. Michelle will be using report to guide her actions. Jeff Farbor is retiring, he’s done a lot of hiring in the past, currently amidst shuffling roles, so not sure how many of the recommendations will be followed.
* Michelle is working with some districts to get up to speed. So far she’s been big on accountability. Overall there’s good feeling about the transition.
* Jeff and Jill’s retirement party is May 15 in Montpelier, 3-5:30pm; everyone is welcome, low key, potluck.

**Monthly District Report:**

* Isabel and Garrett have been going around and checking on progress of old plantings. Found one that’s doing well; others have all died. Funding from council.
* A lot more energy looking at effectiveness of plantings long term.
* The Whetsone Woods planting: the trees are 3-4’. What should we do to protect against deer, there’s a lot of deer pressure in that area.
* You can also put up pie plates/cds to scare away deer.

**Funding Updates:**

* NRCS is going to be losing staffing. They’re looking to the districts doing more work (i.e. more planning work). Need to have realistic discussion about what the district can take on, and there needs to be funding for the work we’re doing.
* AgCWIP has fallen by the wayside, there’s just so much to do.

**Minutes Approval:**

* *Motion to accept minutes as presented.*
* *Motion approved.*

**Next Meeting**

* Geoff’s, May 14, 6:30pm.

**Other Business:**

* Setting up a refreshment stand at the Rest Stop on August 1st, as a fundraiser.
* Shed: needs to be lockable. Is 12’ long enough. One they’re looking at at Home Depot is $5000. Will it fit stream table? Can we find a local person build one? Need a shed soon.
* Usually with small building like a shed, you don’t need a permit.

*Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.*