WCNRCD Board Meeting

September 19, 2024

USDA Service Center 28 vernon street, suite 332, Brattleboro VT, 05301

And over zoom

**Present:** Cory Ross; District Manager, Isabel Bowman; Conservation Specialist, Linda Corse, Meg Kluge; Board Members, Garrett Manchester; Americorps

**Zoom Participants:** Heather Blunk; Agricultural Specialist; Pieter van Lon; Board member, Olivia Carlson; Acting NRCS Zone Conservationist

**NRCS Update:**

* Still working through obligations
* Heather will be getting mobile tools that are non-mobile phones. These will be useful for working in the field on mapping
* Our new hire is getting background checked and will get a USDA computer
* Locally led process meeting in Randolph on September 27th, this will meeting also be recorded
* South zone staff meeting in Bromley on September 20th
* ProTracts is the payment system used by NRCA and will be shutdown for processing – will be down for two weeks in October

**FY24 Financial Reports**

* NRCC is our largest funder – lots of state grants. Sales programs, rentals and workshops were the second largest, and the third largest was municipal and towns.
* Natural Resource conservation and restoration is the largest income by area of work, mostly comprised with dam removals. The second largest is from agriculture.
* Funding by activity were mostly from sales program, secondly outreach, education and technical assistance to producers, and thirdly greeter program and water chestnut survey and removal
* Funding by staff time is mostly greeter program, secondly outreach and technical assistance to producers, and thirdly conservation planning.
* Our 5-year district budget growth shows a jump of $10,000 up to $80,000 since last year
* Looking at the budget (setup in December) to actual, the biggest discrepancy is the Long Island Sound Futures Fund (LISFF), followed by the Dummerston implementation as the work was completed after July 1. The Jacksonville berm contractors are working to meet the project deadline but that will be moved into the next fiscal year.
* American Farmland Trust (AFT) came in under budget. Heather wasn’t fully trained before, only one contract was assigned to AFT RCPP, working towards allocating more time to AFT in the next year,

**Update on Agricultural Resource Specialist Hiring Process – Board to potentially approval hire**

**Motion to approve hiring Maelean Masson was moved, seconded and passed**

**Annual meeting planning**

* Still need a keynote speaker: Vern Grubinger
* Need ideas for what they could speak on
  + Speak about the Conservation Districts
* Catering and location deposit paid for
* Musician secured
* Need desserts from board meeting
* Registration page is setup. People can email us if they need to register for free
* Silent auction is still needed. Will speak with Blue Seal. Tour of Corse farm. Literature or posters. Equine Experience with Meg. Have a gift certificate in envelopes and summary document.
  + Bascom maple syrup
  + Green Mountain Orchard cider
  + Paradox bakery
  + Sidehill farm jam
  + Boyd farm
  + Retreat farm
  + Kayla yoga class
  + Plant Skyd
  + Swag

**DEI Self-assessment session**

* Chinese mid autumn festival videos and discussion

**District Manager’s report**

* Adopt a drain raising awareness about storm drains
* Significant increase in funds from this time last year. Cory has been invoicing quickly to keep funds in our account.
* Decolonizing event was very organized and detailed. Serin provided a great perspective.

**Motion to approve June 5 and August 22 was moved, seconded and passed.**

**Other business**:

Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership farm tours were beneficial to hear from a smaller dairy farm in Franklin County and small vegetable operation that had helpful critiques of NRCS to get more engagement. Rural Development provides funding gaps.

Strategic planning is on the horizon to have more organization. This effort is being worked on in with outside consultants for VACD.

Next meeting on October 9th at 6:30pm.

**Motion to go into Executive session was moved, seconded and passed. Executive session began at 8:27pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Isabel Bowman