

**PUERTO RICO STATE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
DECEMBER 4, 2013, 9:00 A.M.  
USDA NRCS CONFERENCE ROOM  
SAN JUAN, PR**

**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

**NRCS State Office Conf Room**

**Edwin Almodóvar, NRCS  
José A. Castro, NRCS  
Ramón L. Rivera, DNER  
Ismael Matos, NRCS  
Magaly Figueroa, FS  
Marisol Morales, NRCS  
Leopoldo Miranda, FWS Atlanta GA.  
Iván Llerandi, FWS  
José A. Sustache, DRNA  
Hon. Dr. Mirna Comas, Secretary Dept. of Agriculture  
Dr. Louis Petersen, USVI Commissioner of Agriculture  
Manuel Ríos, NRCS**

**Cristina Cabrera, DRNA  
Juan Rodríguez, FCPR  
Ana M. Román, FWS  
Norberto Gabriel, (rep.APHIS-PPQ)  
Jay Rodríguez, NRCS  
Nilda González, NRCS  
Evelyn Huertas, USEPA  
Franshua Franceshini, DA CSA  
Carmen L. Santiago, NRCS  
Damaris Medina, NRCS  
Jaime Valentín, NRCS**

**Via VTC from Mayaguez**

**Prof. José Zamora  
Lissette Fas, Cafiesencia  
Isela Ortiz, Distrito Suroeste  
Zulma García, NRCS**

**Via Telephone**

**Roberto Viqueira, Guánica Project  
Paul Sturm, Guánica Project**

***The moderator, Jaime Valentín, announced that the attendance list was passed around. Minutes and agenda were distributed by email previously. The moderator provided information about places to have lunch and about the ladies and men's rooms.***

***The Chairman announced that it will be a flexible agenda since we count with Dr. Louis Petersen, USVI Commissioner of Agriculture and also waiting for the Secretary of the PR Department of Agriculture.***

***Welcome and Introduction:***

***Chairman Almodóvar called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and immediately thanked the group for their attendance. He asked the audience to introduce themselves.***

***The Chairman gave a brief welcome to Dr. Petersen to the meeting and asked him to start with his presentation.***

***Dr. Louis Petersen:***

***Petersen provided an update on the initiatives held in the Virgin Islands and brought up pending establishment of a joint agreement between the USDA NRCS and the VI Department of Agriculture to develop and implement infrastructural improvement projects on public farmland. Petersen discussed at length his initiatives in the VI and his desire to have more collaboration from other agencies in Puerto Rico.***

***ACTION:*** Schedule meeting with NRCS leadership to discuss getting support for improvement for the public land.

***Edwin Almodóvar thanked Dr. Petersen for his presentation and went on to briefly explain the State Technical Committee's purpose, role, responsibilities, etc.***

***Professor Zamora asked to be excused after his presentation since he has another commitment. The Chairman agreed to advance his presentation. Zamora spent considerable time discussing the UCAR 2011 initiative.***

***Jaime Valentín, NRCS***

- ***Payment Schedule - Working with the next year payment schedule--the system used to pay practices to the farmers. It has been reviewed for last years. We continue paying at 75% minimum and 90% maximum.***
- ***CIG - We expect to have CIG programs for 2014 with the initiatives submitted by people that will turn in benefit for the agriculture.***

***José A. Castro, NRCS***

- ***Castro announced that the CSP is open.***
- ***The announcement of the Puerto Rican parrot is going in conjunction with Agroforestry project to recognize the Coffee shade project. We will have the opportunity to enter in agreements with FWS and other agencies.***

***Leopoldo Miranda (FWS - Regional Director of Ecological Services in Atlanta, GA.)***

- ***Thanked for the presentation on the Coffee shade held in Adjuntas. He said that we have now the effects of that initiative.***
- ***Talked about land turtle initiative.***
- ***OMB received a proposal from the Interior Department, NRCS will support it.***
- ***Briefed other initiatives and asked for support.***

***Iván Lleraldi:***

- ***Corporate agreement between the three agencies for vegetative material.***
- ***Talked about "El Bosque Modelo," DNER initiative. Will be focusing on that. There is meeting scheduled with Edgardo González. Envirosurvey is making arrangements.***
- ***Talked about the primates' removal project. It will be ended in approximately three years. Will talk with the PR Department of Agriculture to sound their assistance with funds. Will meet with Isela to sound how the Noroeste District can provide assistance. Franshua Franceshini from PRDA will find out how they can help. Ricardo López is the contact person.***
- ***Talked about the "Iguanas" and wild pig.***
- ***Briefed on the problem of the water trough for livestock where the wildlife drowns. Ricardo commented that the farmers continue with their concern about the water quality. Will prepare an informative flyer.***

- *Forestry - The subcommittee continues evaluating the new plans referred to them.*
- *Magaly Figueroa from Forest Service asked Iván for a meeting to discuss the possibility of buying lands on Law to establish the community forest.*

*The Chairman welcomed the Secretary of PR Department of Agriculture, Mirna Comas.*

- *The Secretary Dr. Mirna Comas thanked the Chairman for the invitation to the meeting and greeted all present. Then, she discussed at length their projects, pointing out the following:*
  - ✓ *Agricultural Development Plan in PR. She appreciated the assistance provided by the Director of NRCS and Suroeste Conservation District.*
  - ✓ *Briefed the limitations for the agricultural development and the NRCS concern on these limitations.*
    - *Climatic changes – is the major risk factor for food production and distribution.*
    - *Activating the Board of Soil Conservation Committee to include federal agencies and the College of Agricultural Sciences to establish the Soil Conservation District to be presented to the Legislature.*
    - *Rice initiative.*
    - *Production of beef cattle.*
    - *Fishermen – it is potential area we want to work.*
    - *Establish mitigation banks (apply to agricultural lands). It will be a useful resource to work with “El Bosque Modelo.”*
    - *Iván Llerandi (FWS) indicated that they are working with the coffee shade for about fourteen years.*
    - *Talked about the Rice project.*

*Damaris Medina (NRCS):*

- *There is a report of “El Valle Coloso.” We can provide copy to the Secretary.*
- *Isela from El Distrito Suroeste is holding meetings to work with the situation of drains in farms.*
- *Guánica project – Now they have the designs for the bioengineering project.*

*Edwin Almodóvar – Closing remarks*

- *Talked about his conversation with the DNER Secretary, Carmen Guerrero, where she informed that the permit procedures will be evaluated because there are waivers to move forward with the projects.*
- *Closed the meeting with a special thanks to the DA Secretary, Dr. Mirna Comas, and the USVI Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr. Louis Petersen. Also thanked the audience through the VTC and by telephone.*

*There being no further business to discuss, meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.*

*Recorder: Nilda González*