

State Technical Committee Meeting
May 23, 2011
Spectacular Events Center
Bangor, Maine

Juan Hernandez, NRCS State Conservationist, opened the meeting and welcomed the State Technical Committee (STTC) members. He stressed to the members that the major function of the committee is to make recommendations on technical information they receive at these meetings. He also requested that they do more outreach to diversify the members in order to get different perspectives on issues.

Juan requested the committee to rank the 2011 Maine State Resource Assessments and he and his staff will translate the priorities and needs collected from the committee and forward them to National Headquarters. Juan will inform the committee when he receives the final ranking results. He stated that all State Conservationists in the country have been requested to complete this ranking process.

State Technical Committee Functions, Responsibilities and Membership – Christopher R. Jones, NRCS State Resource Conservationist

Chris stressed that the major responsibility of the committee is to provide USDA with technical advice on our USDA conservation programs. He asked for assistance from the committee in diversifying and expanding the membership by sharing the location of the membership form on the Maine NRCS website <http://www.me.nrcs.usda.gov/StateTechCommittee.html> and other important information about serving on the committee with potential members. Chris reviewed the function of the committee in relation to the implementation and technical aspects of conservation programs under Title II of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of the 2008 Farm Bill. This Farm Bill stated that the State Technical Committee shall be composed of agricultural producers and other professionals that represent a variety of disciplines in soil, water, wetland, and wildlife sciences. The role of the State Technical Committee is advisory and has no implementation or enforcement authority. The USDA will give consideration to the recommendations made by the committee in administering the appropriate programs. Chris asked the STTC to send him agenda items for future STTC meetings and requested that they look at the Maine State Technical Committee membership list at <http://www.me.nrcs.usda.gov/STTCmembers.html> and communicate to NRCS any revisions that need to be made.

State Resource Assessment – “County” Resource Assessments - Mark Hews, NRCS RC&D Coordinator

Mark explained the ranking process was to solicit input on the four major land uses (crop, pasture, forest, and other association agricultural land) used in the eight major resource concerns and 31 national resource concerns. This process was also conducted at the county level and compared the issues at the state level assessments. Most districts identified economic viability of agriculture and forestry as an issue. Many of the districts acknowledged a need to adopt innovative alternatives to help landowners. Mark mentioned that as part of the county level assessments, the districts also were asked to identify opportunities for their districts and NRCS. The districts used a combination of surveys and public meetings, along with information from resource studies, reports, and databases to identify resource issues and opportunities in the eight landscapes. The conclusion of this brainstorming process included

opportunities for districts and NRCS. The opportunities identified were Outreach/Education, Partnerships, Better Use of NRCS and Other USDA Programs, Farmland Protection, Forest Management Planning, and Low Impact Development. Many districts acknowledged a need to adopt alternatives to assist landowners and the need to address the changing demographics influencing districts. The changing demographics seems to be influencing the approach districts are taking to natural resource issues.

Mark informed the committee that the county districts have an advantage that NRCS does not. The districts work at a local level and are flexible on working on various projects. The information NRCS receives from the districts helps the district conservationists develop conservation plans, business plans, recognize partnership opportunities between NRCS and the districts and other needed technical support.

State Resource Assessment – Mark Hews,

Mark Hews explained to the STTC that NRCS wanted their input on the priority of the natural resource concerns for each of the following landuses: Cropland, Pasture, Forest, and other associated agricultural land. Each agency/organization represented ranked the natural resource concerns. The totals were tallied and are listed below in order of priority.

Cropland

- 1) **Water Quality Degradation – Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters**
- 2) **Insufficient Water – Inefficient use of irrigation water**
- 3) **Soil Quality Degradation – Organic matter depletion**
- 4) **Degraded Plant Condition – Excess plant pest pressure**
- 5) **Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife-Habitat degradation**
- 6) **Soil Erosion – Concentrated flow erosion**
- 7) **Air Quality Impacts – Emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors**

Pasture

- 1) **Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable plant productivity and health**
- 2) **Water Quality Degradation – Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters**
- 3) **Soil Quality Degradation – Organic matter depletion**
- 4) **Livestock Production Limitation – Inadequate feed and forage**
- 5) **Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife – Habitat degradation**
- 6) **Livestock Production Limitation – Inadequate livestock water**
- 7) **Soil Erosion – Concentrated flow erosion**

Forest

- 1) **Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable plant productivity and health**
- 2) **Degraded Plant Condition – Excess plant pest pressure**
- 3) **Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife – Habitat degradation**
- 4) **Soil Quality Degradation – Compaction – Excess plant pest pressure**

Other Associated Agricultural Land

- 1) **Water Quality Degradation – Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters**
- 2) **Inefficient Energy Use – Equipment and facilities**

Maine's "Game" Plan for Deer – John Pratte, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

John spoke about Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) plans to restore the deer herd in parts of Maine. See attached presentation. MDIFW stated that their biologists are available to assist NRCS conservationists to develop conservation plans with clients in the targeted areas of Maine that are interested in addressing deer habitat. MDIFW is currently developing a list of different deer habitat management techniques that landowners might use and will then work with NRCS to see how they dovetail with NRCS Conservation Practice Standards. MDIFW agreed to provide NRCS maps of Maine detailing the areas that need deer habitat improvement. MDIFW is also developing a Best Management Practices document for "small" forest owners. This document will detail what these landowners can do to improve habitat for deer.

Maine's Game Plan for Deer:

http://www.maine.gov/ifw/hunting_trapping/pdfs/WTD%20Plan_4Mar2011_FINAL.pdf

Closing Remarks – Juan Hernandez

Juan stressed that the importance of feedback and opinions on issues discussed at these meetings and relaying these opinions back to the members. The committee needs to receive good or bad feedback on their ideas and recommendations and what the outcome was. Juan wanted the members to know that he appreciates all input and ideas from the committee. He has received feedback that some members do not agree with some of the recommendations that were made by the attending members. Timing of attendance is very critical for the committee's presence and voices to be heard in order for NRCS to carry out the recommendations made at these meetings. He recognizes that everyone has different schedules during different times of the year, but encourages members to attend these meeting.