

**State Technical Committee Meeting**  
**Wednesday July 8, 2009**  
**NRCS State Office**

Persons Present:

Marie Banasiak, NJFB	Kathleen Hitchner, NJDEP-DWM	Gail Bartok, NRCS
Dave Clapp, NJDA	Ken Klipstein, NJWSA	Sharif Branham, NRCS
Nancy Coles, FSA	Torrey Reade, Cum-Salem SCD	Maria Collazo, NRCS
Troy Ettel, NJAS	Charles Roohr, SADC	Tim Dunne, NRCS
Tim Fekete, NJDA-SSCC	Eric Schradling, USFWS	Fran Grasso, NRCS
Anne Heasley, RPWHP	Liz Thompson, NJFB	Tom Drewes, NRCS
Amy Hansen, NJCF	Tom Wells, The Nature Conservancy	Barbara Phillips, NRCS
		Janice Reid, NRCS

Welcome

Tom Drewes opened the meeting at 10:05 and asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the prior meeting. Nancy Coles requested the reason for her absence last meeting (she was ill) be added to the minutes. Introductions were made.

Outreach Committee

Barb Phillips said the subcommittee meeting will be scheduled for August. The Google calendar has been set up and will soon be readied for presentation by the fall. Horse Pasture publication will be completed shortly.

Program Committee

Janice Reid directed attention to the posters hanging at each end of the room on two 2008 CIG funded projects which will be showcased at next week's Soil and Water Conservation Society meeting in Michigan.

AMA – Have \$272K to spend, received \$413K worth of requests; awarded 8 contracts for funding. All but one have been obligated.

EQIP – \$4.5M allocation is divided into 4 different pots, some have flexibility and others are fixed. Air Quality funds and Organic funds are fixed, leaving \$3.4M for all other contracts. We had \$7.3M in requests; 23 contracts will be funded in air quality, and 60 contracts in regular EQIP. Organic ranking is on-going. We cannot announce State CIG until national CIG awards announcement has been made; however, loads of good projects this time.

WHIP – Held second signup in May generating more applications, yet overall applications are down due to eligibility requirements. Difficult to get interest in private lands under WHIP, will probably have to return some monies. We have \$1M allocation; expect to use less than 75% of that.

Old Business

CRP/CREP/SAFE – Nancy Coles reviewed notice of allocation by acreage for wetlands restoration...still no acres authorized for NJ. She updated CRP and CREP data for the state. CRP acres total 232.2 on 229 contracts, and include 254 practices. There have been five new CREP contracts since March, total of 130 active contracts now on 559 acres. Under SAFE we have approved 160.4 acres.

CCPI/AWEP/CIG – Janice reported we know nothing at this time about the CCPI or AWEP proposals. NJ had one AWEP proposal submitted, which could mean future EQIP money for the state. EWPP had 3 applications (2 of which were eligible and 1 was funded, accepted and is in process).

State CIG – Tim reported on the State CIG. Eleven applications received this year for NJ competition. Audubon helped enrollment numbers with well attended workshop. Applications received in varying amounts ranging from \$8k-\$75. Projects have been ranked by the members from the state technical committee and information provided to Tom. Limited dollars but should be able to fund between 3 and 5 contracts.

FRPP – Janice reminded everyone of the different application process for FRPP this year. This time you must identify your project upfront. Thirteen projects were submitted - allotted almost \$6.5M for FRPP this year and should be able to fund 8 projects under agreements with three of the four entities who applied. Now working towards closing and the hard work has already been done up front so this should be a speedier process. The funded projects total 740 acres in Mercer, Hunterdon and Somerset counties.

EQIP Conservation Activity Plans - Janice provided an overview of the Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) using a power point presentation. These are new with the 2008 Farm Bill and allow us the flexibility to use financial assistance funds to develop specific resource plans on farms. There are 10 potential plans, 8 of which are applicable to NJ. Tim referred to the information that was emailed to show the detail required in each plan. This year we funded CNMPs without ranking competition because they were deemed self-regulating; any contracted plan must be completed within 12 months of contract signing. TSPs are required to write the plan, and must be certified. Requirements are pretty stringent. After some discussion it was agreed to pursue 4 new CAPs for 2010, in addition to CNMPs. These are Fish & Wildlife, Forestry, Integrated Pest Management, and Energy.

### **New Business**

GRP –2009 sign up closed in early June. Janice reported there were some rollover applicants from prior years which resulted in 10 eligible interested applicants, eight of which will be funded. A mandated national target of 40% rental and 60% easement must be met by the end of the farm bill. This year NJ received no easement applicants, so a request to use the total allocation for rental contracts will be made.

Janice also stated that despite having no easement sign-up, we still need to establish a Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) for the program. She handed out one rationale based on data from the SADC on preserved farms. Compared to our WRP GARC of \$6,000 for non-irrigated cropland, where the US purchases all rights except the right of quiet enjoyment, the proposal is for \$4,000 for a GRP easement on pasture land where the landowner retains the right to graze or hay the land. Committee members felt this value was low since it also takes away development rights; however it was agreed to submit the rates for 2009, take a look at neighboring state rates, and discuss again before any updates are needed in 2010.

Forestry Initiatives – Tim is trying to increase interest in forestry EQIP in NJ, hope to have more sign-up 2010. He proposed using the state Forest Stewardship Committee, and existing group with multi-agency and non-profit representation, as a new State Technical Committee sub-committee to help facilitate future plans, discussions and outreach.

Healthy Forest Reserve Program – Tim mentioned that The Nature Conservancy has requested NRCS help in putting together a proposal for NJ. We missed deadline this round but should start thinking about next year's RFP, and which areas to target so we can bring additional funding to the State. Next step would be to discuss at the State Forestry Stewardship meeting in September.

Organic Initiatives – Tim proposed putting together a workgroup to address conservation practices, payments, and how to outreach better to the organic community. Amy volunteered and thought that NOFA-NJ and Rutgers (specifically Dave Lee) should participate also.

### **Open Discussion**

Anne – Two plans funded for Hunterdon/Somerset township's for forest plans and watershed plans which hope to be done by fall. RPWHP is also interested in a potential HFRP project for the Sourlands area.

Amy – A \$400M question will be on the November ballot to again provide temporary funding to the NJ farmland preservation program.

Tom W. – asked about the status of the Forest Stewardship Bill. Amy and Liz provided some background about the Farm Bureau concerns with softening too much the farmland assessment rules. Tom also mentioned that the ATV bill, restricting ATV use on public lands, may still be passed.

Nancy – Acreage reporting will be extended to August 14<sup>th</sup> due to rains/delays in plantings. DCP has been extended to August 14<sup>th</sup> as well.

Tim F. – On CAP we are now working on agreement renewals with Gloucester and Mercer counties. Water allocation issues in progress – resolution in sight. Currently transferring final funds from old CCSP Program to the State cost share program; will be finalized in August. Deer fence program - 24 of 34 eligible applications were awarded; program is probably over since no more fencing is available. Budget passed, contracts ratified, NJDA feels relatively safe until Dec. 2010.

Chuck – clarified differences in FRPP easement deed and SADC easement deed regarding ability to install conservation practices. Concern exists with installing small shallow wetlands; some CADBs do not allow farmers to implement. Janice mentioned that as long as the practice is in the approved conservation plan, the farmer is following the plan, it should be OK.

Next meeting will be Wednesday, October 7, 2009.

Meeting adjourned at 12:12 pm.