



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
220 Davidson Ave., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Somerset, NJ 08873

www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov

**New Jersey State Technical Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, September 14, 2011  
MINUTES**

Those in attendance:

Amy Hanson, NJCF	Dominck Mondy, NJ Nursery	Kristina Heinemann, USEPA
Barbara Phillips, NRCS	& Landscape Assoc.	Liz Thompson, NJFB
Bob Frierberger, Grain & Forage Assoc.	Don Pettit, NRCS	Maria Collazo, NRCS
Brad Smith, TNC	Fran DeFiccio, NRCS	Marie Banasiak, NJFB
Charles Roohr, NJDA	Janice Reid, NRCS	Mike Westendorf, NJAES
Christine Hall, NRCS	John Gibbons, NJASS	Nancy Coles, FSA
Dave Clapp, NJDA	Ken Klipstein, NJWSA	Sam Conard, Farmer
		Tim Dunne, NRCS

**WELCOME:**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00am by Don Pettit, State Conservationist. Don welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

**MINUTES:**

Both the March and June meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted. Janice Reid pointed out that the date on the June meeting minutes was the March date and it had already been corrected.

**NRCS/USDA BUDGET STATUS:**

Don gave a brief update on the status of the budget. He mentioned that both the House and Senate have passed 2012 budget bills; both have cuts to USDA but the Senate bill is more favorable with a \$43 million cut, resulting in a \$19.7 million budget. There is no watershed rehabilitation program included in either version. It is expected that a continuing resolution will be passed before October 1.

Don also spoke about the effects of Hurricane Irene. NRCS staff has been evaluating the damage from the hurricane for the Emergency Watershed Program. Limited funds for exigency work (issues with an imminent threat to public safety) have been provided to affected states. Non-exigency situations are also being evaluated and will be submitted for approval at a later time.

AMA – Agricultural Management Assistance Program  
 AWEF – Agricultural Water Enhancement Program  
 CAP – Conservation Activity Plan  
 CCPI – Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative  
 CIG – Conservation Innovation Grant  
 CRP – Conservation Reserve Program  
 CREP - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentive Program  
 FRPP – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program  
 GRP – Grassland Reserve Program  
 HFRP – Healthy Forest Reserve Program  
 SAFE – State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement  
 WHIP – Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program  
 WRP – Wetlands Reserve Program



## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

New Policy Recommendation: Janice presented the new 2012 EQIP Pre-Screening. NJ would like to institute a policy to address those applicants that have a terminated contract. Any applicant with a terminated contract within the last 3 years would not be eligible. If the applicant feels that they should not be prohibited from submitting an application, because the reason for contract termination was out of their control or for another valid reason, they may send a request in writing to the State Conservationist to explain the situation and request relief from the policy. Reference information for setting this policy is from EQIP Contract Appendix, Section 14 D 1(d).

### **OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

Barb Phillips reported that the committee is working on outreaching to underserved groups who may be interested in CSP and WRP. That work continues.

Barb also reminded Committee members that the Google calendar is available and should be used to post partner meeting and important deadlines. Using the calendar will help avoid scheduling conflicts, help keep everyone informed of each other's activities, and provide opportunities for cross training or outreach activities.

Barb mentioned that NRCS will be participating in the New Jersey Vegetable Growers Association meeting and the NJ Plant Show to be held in January (both meetings are being put on by multiple groups this year).

### **FSA PROGRAM UPDATE**

Nancy Coles gave an update of the Farm Service Agency programs – CRP, CREP, and SAFE. (see attachment)

### **WELL-HEAD PROTECTION PRACTICE**

Kristina Heinemann followed up on an idea she expressed at the last meeting by providing information about how Indiana is promoting well head protection (WHP) through CRP. Nancy Coles discussed how several states in the Midwest have received approval to include additional eligible land in their WHP program; NJ would be limited to cropland within a 2,000 foot radius around the well head. NRCS looked at the data available from NJDEP on well head locations, overlain by cropland acres. The preliminary indication is that there is very limited overlap, meaning little eligible land.

### **STATUS OF 2011 FARM BILL PROGRAM FUNDS & OBLIGATIONS**

Fran DeFiccio presented a handout of the status of 2011 Farm Bill program funds & obligations. She covered the number of applications in EQIP, WHIP, AMA, and AWEP. (see attached)

### **WRP PROGRAM STATUS**

Janice gave an update of the WRP program. All 2010 funded easements are now closed and restoration is being planned. Four offers were made and accepted for 2011. Restoration at the Duke site, which closed in 2010, is set to begin shortly. She also presented the *Restoring America's Wetlands: A Private Lands Conservation Success Story*, which includes a story from New Jersey.

### **NJ and NATIONAL CIG UPDATE**

Christine Hall gave an update of the current NJ and National Conservation Innovation Grants. There were 52 national CIG awards; 10 of these were in the Mid-Atlantic and one (Sure Harvest) will include at least one site in NJ being used to develop a sustainability index for

specialty cropland. In the statewide competition, we had 8 applications this year. After the peer review committee met, four of these were recommended for funding. One of the four determined they could not meet our requested revisions to their proposal and therefore 3 state CIGs will be funded this year. Once the awards are official, information will be posted on the website.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### **FRPP STATE PLAN**

Don reviewed the 2012-2015 FRPP state plan; it has been placed on the NJ NRCS website. The plan calls for NJ requesting \$9 million per year in FRPP to protect 1800 acres, with 1100 acres being prime & important soils. Overall, NJ expects to preserve through the state and non-profit programs upwards of 8,000 acres per year with an average value of just under \$10,000 per acre.

##### **WRP 2012 GEOGRAPHIC AREA RATE CAP**

The committee reviewed the results of the 2012 market survey update and noted the decline in land values found. All values are still above our 2011 Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC), and the committee felt that the importance of the potential sites to wildlife habitat in the target areas of Burlington, Ocean, Cumberland and Salem counties in meeting the goals of the state wildlife action plan were important enough to justify the maintaining the GARC rates as is.

##### **GRP 2012 GEOGRAPHIC AREA RATE CAP**

NJ has not had any applicants for GRP easements since 2004. Because of this, we have determined that an annual market analysis is not practical, and have used "80% of the appraised value" as our GARC. Experience from other states, however, has led to a recommendation that we set a maximum cap on the value that would be offered. The committee reviewed NASS data that showed a decline in the pasture land value from \$16,800/acre in 2007 to \$13,900/acre in 2011. It was noted that these values are higher than those in the WRP market analysis, however WRP targets more marginal land that has a lower development value.

After some discussion, the committee determined that \$10,000 was a reasonable cap to use for potential applicants of high value grasslands, while maintaining the 80% of appraised value as the GARC for lands of lower value.

##### **NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN 2012**

Don mentioned that high tunnels have been offered and paid for in other states. An interim standard was developed three years ago for this practice. All states may be mandated to offer this practice in FY 2012.

##### **2012 PAYMENT SCHEDULES FOR EQIP, WHIP, and AMA**

Fran explained that NRCS uses payment schedules scenarios to describe how conservation practices are implemented in typical situation and to support payments to program participants. In July a decision was made to nationalize and automate payment schedules with the primary objective of achieving more consistency in scenarios and costs across states. NJ was included in an 11 state region spanning from Maryland to the New England states. It was decided to split that region in two and now NJ is with Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York. Fifteen practices are in the process of being reviewed and a maximum of 8 scenarios must be agreed on. The 15 practices chosen were based on the most implemented practices nationwide. They are: Fence; Brush Management; Nutrient Management; Pipeline; Pest Management; Cover Crop; Trough or Tank; Forest Stand Improvement; Heavy Use Area Protection; Shallow Water for Wildlife; Prescribed Grazing; Pasture & Hayland Planting; Irrigation System, Sprinkler; Pumping Plant for Water Control; and Wildlife Upland Habitat

Management. Other practices remaining for FY 2012 will use the existing FY 2011 payment schedule. There may be changes submitted for practices other than the 15 mentioned but they must meet the same criteria as those currently being worked on.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION:**

Dave Clapp – Monique asked Dave to mention that the state cost share program is out of money.

Bob Freiburger – Mentioned that the life span of a hay planting is too long. The old ACP had a lifespan of 5 years, now the lifespan is 10 years.

Dominick Mondì – appreciative of the invitation to participate as now approximately 600 nursery growers in the association will receive information on the programs presented.

Amy Hanson – Amy mentioned that she heard that the USDA programs may be combine and asked for input. Don said that he has no details on that.

Kristina Heinemann – mentioned the upcoming EPA rule deadline for the spill prevention and counter measures for storage of oil. Storage threshold rule to be completed by 11/2011.

Nancy Coles – mentioned that Paul Hlubik, FSA State Director, participated in a Meet & Greet at the NJ State fair. Information can be found at: [www.countyfolks.com](http://www.countyfolks.com)

Brad Smith – TNC continues to have an interest in the CIG program for NJ.

Mike Westendorf – is working with the DC's on CNMP's. He encourages applicants to look at the TSP web-site. NJ Department of Agriculture & DEP changed rules on farm composting and hopefully materials will be available soon.

Marie Banasiak – reported that some farms were impacted by hurricane Irene and Farm Bureau has told those farmers to work with their local extension office.

Liz Thompson – mentioned that the annual Farm Bureau convention will be held November 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> at the Westin off of Rt. 1. FB is starting to work on policy for that meeting.

John Gibbons – mentioned that the data layer used for cropland in our well head analysis may not be as accurate as we think; it might be worth looking at again.

Ken Klipstein – joked that it looks like we will have plenty of water in the reservoirs going into next season after this fall's rain. He also mentioned that Tim Dunne did a great job at a recent meeting he attended explaining NRCS programs.

Barb Phillips – mentioned the ongoing Women's and Hispanic claim process.

Chuck Roohr – mentioned that the governor signed an appropriation bill for farm land preservation. He thanked NRCS for the tremendous help the department has received dealing with some issues in the central part of the state. He also requested a fact sheet for the NRCS impervious cover regulation.

Christine Hall – reminded everyone that the Clinton office has closed and the updated contact information for the employees that were there can be found on our web page.

#### **NEXT MEETING DATE:**

Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> @ 10:00 am in the NRCS State Office.

The meeting was adjourned @ 12:30 pm.