



United States Department of Agriculture

# New Jersey State Technical Committee Minutes Thursday June 3, 2010 NRCS State Office, Somerset NJ

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m.

Those in attendance:

|                |      |                |                    |
|----------------|------|----------------|--------------------|
| Tom Drewes     | NRCS | Karen Sykes    | US Forest Service  |
| Janice Reid    | NRCS | David Glenn    | NOFA-NJ            |
| Tim Dunne      | NRCS | Audrey Moore   | US EPA Region      |
| Barb Phillips  | NRCS | Liz Thompson   | NJ Farm Bureau     |
| Lauren Rega    | NRCS | Troy Joshua    | USDA-NASS          |
| Fran Grasso    | NRCS | Mike Westendof | Rutgers Coop. Ext. |
| Gail Bartok    | NRCS | David Clapp    | NJDA               |
| Sharif Branham | NRCS | Nancy Coles    | USDA/FSA           |

Tom Drewes welcomed everyone. Tom asked the committee to introduce themselves, as there were a few new people that attended the meeting.

Tom mentioned that we were recently able to approve a Technical Service Provider (TSP) capable of developing our Farm Energy Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) under EQIP, which includes an energy audit as the basis for the plan. We will therefore be adding this CAP to our 2011 program. There has been no word about our 2011 budget yet.

March Meeting Minutes were reviewed and accepted with one typo noted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph.

### Committee Reports

Outreach - Barb reported that the Outreach committee met on April, 27<sup>th</sup>. The Pasture Guide is now available on-line. If funding becomes available to have the publication printed, two more pages would be added. Barb would like to see the committee populate the Google calendar more regularly. At the suggestion of Troy Joshua, Barb contacted Ed Tavernier, an Ag Economist from Rutgers, who has applied for a grant to reach the underserved. If he is awarded the grant, there will be opportunities for the Outreach Subcommittee to work with him this Fall.

Programs - Janice reported on the current program funds:

AMA – initial allocation of \$175,000; 2<sup>nd</sup> allocation \$49,000. We then requested and received another \$106,000 for a total of \$330,000. As a result, all eligible AMA applications will be funded.

AWEP – approved for \$216,000. There are 15 applications being processed which need to be obligated by July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

AMA – Agricultural Management Assistance Program  
 AWEP – 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

EQIP – initial allocation of \$3.6 million, 2<sup>nd</sup> allocation of \$364,000. We recently received our regional equity request of \$1 million for a total of \$5 million and are now signing contracts to use these funds.

WHIP – initial allocation of \$120,000, regional equity request of \$95,000. These funds were enough to approve all existing priority applications. We then received a 2<sup>nd</sup> allocation of \$100,000 and have held another sign-up which resulted in 19 applications now being processed.

FRPP – initial allocation of approximately \$7 million, regional equity request of \$500,000. We then requested and received another \$1.1 million for a total of \$8.7 million. 99% of the funds have been obligated to 14 parcels.

WRP – initial allocation of \$3 million. We do not have the applications to support this and have returned \$1 million for other states' use.

A new hire co-funded by NRCS and USFWS will begin on June 7<sup>th</sup> to work with WRP. The position will be housed in the US Fish & Wildlife Service office in Pleasantville.

Tom also mentioned a new position being established through the Forestry Service that will work with various agencies including NRCS.

Janice also gave a breakdown of how these funds have been obligated by priority area.

AMA – 24% cropland and 76% grazing land

WHIP – (to date) 37% grasslands and pollinator habitats; 25% woodlands, wetlands and disturbance dependent habitat; 38% Delaware bayshore area

EQIP – (to date) 22% dry cropland; 45% irrigated cropland (includes non-irrigation practices); 27% livestock; 1% forest land, 5% organic. These totals do not include the 15 Conservation Activity Plans (6 forest management and 9 CNMPs) that were approved.

FRPP – 14 new parcels were approved

#### Old Business

CRP – Nancy reported that the General CRP signup has still not been announced. She gave a breakdown of the program status in NJ.

CREP– 144 approved contracts: FY05 -7; FY06 -26; FY07 -28; FY08 -62; FY09 -12; FY10 -9

NJ SAFE – 14 contracts approved with 180.5 acres enrolled; 6 pending offers for 130.0 acres

Breakdown of the 3 approved SAFE areas:

Development of Landscape Scale Agriculture Heritage and Habitat and Habitat Conservation Plans (NJAS) – (project area is 300 acres)

Pending Offers 1, 41.7 acres

Approved Contracts 1, 35.9 acres,

Practices: CP38E-4 Vegetative Cover – Grass – Already Established

Grassland Habitat Restoration and Management (CWF) – (project is 400 acres)

Pending Offers 4, 70.5 acres

Approved Contracts 13, 144.6 acres

Practices: CP38B-3 Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain (2.5 ac)

CP38E-1 Established of Permanent Introduced Grasses & Legumes (15.7 ac)

CP38E-2 Established of Permanent Native Grasses (94.4 ac)

CP38E-3 Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Noneasement (23.5 ac)

CP38E-4 Vegetative Cover – Grass – Already Established (4.0 ac)

CP38E-7 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds (4.5 ac)

Raritan-Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership (RPWHP) Implementation of Grassland Conservation Plan – (project area is 300 acres)

Pending Offers        1, 17.8 acres  
Approved Contracts    0

Practice payment caps - Janice discussed the policy on capping payments which was originally brought up at the last meeting. Since that time, we have had the practice (summer cover crop) which initiated our discussion thoroughly reviewed by our national office. The result was a change in the payment rate for summer cover and the addition of another practice to include some of the payment components taken out of the summer cover practice. The recommendations made by the Programs Subcommittee to strengthen the requirements of the practice were also incorporated in these changes.

New Business

Healthy Forest Reserve Program - Tim Dunne spoke about HFRP and provided a handout that gave an overview of the program. This program is another NRCS easement program, however these easements are a maximum of 99 years.

Last year, the Nature Conservatory recommended a project area in Maurice River watershed; however that proposal was not submitted. Tim expects another Request for Proposals to be announced this fall or winter. As part of the program, there has to be a federally threatened and endangered species that is managed through the easement. PA has an approved area using the Indiana Bat. Tim would like to reach out to DE and have PA, NJ, DE and MD all target the same species. Tim's target area would be from Trenton North. There was a suggestion that maybe northeast PA and NY would make better partners for one multi-state proposal. Everyone concurred that we should proceed.

National and State Proposals - Janice reported on the National and State CIG. National pre-proposals were due May 26<sup>th</sup> and we know of only one covering NJ. Once we know which pre-proposals were approved for submission of a full proposal, we will need to review and prepare letters of support.

State CIG deadline is Friday, June 4<sup>th</sup> @ 4:30 pm. We have not received any to date. Our NJ review team will work on the ranking and meet June 24<sup>th</sup> to provide recommendations for Tom's final decision of funding.

There were only 10 eligible CCPI proposals received nationwide, none from NJ.

AWEP deadline for new proposals was May 17<sup>th</sup>. There were none from NJ and about 100 nationally.

Open discussion:

Dave Clapp – nothing new on the budget reported. Districts have received and will be signing the new confidentiality forms.

Mike reported that they are progressing well with their CIG and they are continuing to work with CNMP's. They are planning a NJDA composting school to focus on the new rules to allow small farms on farm composting. Also, Mike reported that they are almost done with a new nutrient management DVD. Tim reported to Mike that Oct. 26, 27, & 28 national folks will hold a manure management training session that TSP's will be invited to attend.

Troy reported that they are currently collecting information on grain crops, row crops and blueberries. A recent publication was released for vegetable and fruit production for 2009 and how we compare to other states. A GIS expert that recently came to NJ was very helpful with the collection of data.

Liz reported that FB has been busy with environmental issues. They recently met with the new DEP commissioner to discuss how they can function better together. EPA has recently released a new proposal covering chemical applications near water that may require blueberry and cranberry growers (and potentially others) to get permits.

Kathy reported that they are still working on the ag mini grant programs together with North Jersey RC&D and NJDA. The program will provide matching and separate funding to producers in the Mulhockaway, Spruce Run, Long Valley and Neshanic watersheds, which is the approved NJ AWEF area.

Audrey reported that the federal register should be released tomorrow in reference to the chemical application that Liz reported on. She also handed out a new EPA Oil Spill Prevention Control fact sheet.

Dave Glenn reported that they hired a new employee to start June 17<sup>th</sup> working with outreach efforts, Joanna Dillon. On June 10<sup>th</sup> Danlynn farms will host a twilight meeting on writing an Organic System Plan. This program may be repeated in north Jersey in the fall. NOFA is also holding a 12-day program on permaculture program this fall. The Farm and Food Guide highlighting NJ sustainable farms is scheduled for release on June 11<sup>th</sup>. Their next newsletter is under production and they would like something from NRCS by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of June. Finally, they hope to roll out the beginning farmer program this fall.

Karen talked about the "Common Waters" program headed up by the Pinchot Institute in the upper Delaware of NJ-NY-PA. There will be \$2 million involved. She also mentioned upcoming changes to the Forest Stewardship Program which provides funds to develop forestry plans. Plans may now need to be at the landscape level. Also, states are working on their state assessments, which are required under the farm bill to identify state and multi-state priority areas and are due on 6/18.

Nancy reported that FSA will be participating in an outreach event on June 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm hosted by Congressman Rush Holt. RD and NRCS are also participating. The event is part of a small business initiative; this particular evening will highlight USDA assistance to small farmers.

Barb Phillips mentioned that she has a 30 minute version of "Dirt the Movie" and it's now available to loan to anyone interested.

Sharif reported a backlog of CTA requests due to the Farmland Preservation Program.

Janice reported that Kathleen could not attend today due to a department-wide meeting on DEP reorganization. The Division of Watershed Management, for whom she works, is set to be disbanded.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 23, 2010 @ 10:00 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am.