

SCS CRC Meeting Minutes

July 13, 2011

Members/Advisors Present

Myra Jones
Amy Maxwell
Daniel Cabaniss
Bobby McQueen
Antron Williams
Jayson Mas
Kim Johnson
Tria Yang
Ann English
Dennis Mobley

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Antron Williams at 10:00am.

NRCS State Conservationist

- Lots of cultural transformation going on and we must be able to embrace change
- Budget is getting cut even more. We are going to have to pull together and fix some things. Office equipment and vehicles are being discussed.
- State Organization plan into areas is still a go. The Chief has signed off on this and is in full agreement. Civil Rights HQ has to report on the plan then it will go to the Department. Ms. English may have to go to HQ to talk about the effects of the reorganization. It may take longer than originally planned and may have to change a bit, but will definitely be completed.
- Introduced Dennis Mobley
 - Mr. Mobley wanted everyone to get with Curtis Hall on training.
 - Everyone needs to let him know how long they've been on the board.
 - Wants to know what kind of activities the committee has been working on and what's been happening.

Review and Approval of Minutes

- Minutes for February and April were approved and sent to Sabrenna.
- We need to be sure we're getting our minutes Posted on SC NRCS Civil Rights Committee Website.
- Minutes will now be approved by email. The board discussed approving minutes by email in order to get the minutes posted for viewing in a more effective time manor.

Chair's Report

- Submitted a Demographic profile of SC NRCS Civil Rights Committee to Elvin Gant, JR. (this was corrected in the meeting from 1 white female to 2 white females).
- Wrote a bulletin notifying SC NRCS family about the cancellation of Cultural Awareness Day 2011.
- Wrote Bulletin concerning the two vacancies on the committee—to be released.
- Contacted Kim Johnson concerning the development of the SC Affirmative Employment Plan.
- Arranged teleconference with NRCS' Talent Management Division for the CRC.

Ongoing Activities

• Women and Hispanic's Lawsuit

- Amy is doing a report every week on what NRCS has been doing in the state in order to reach the community to help notify the Hispanic and women populations.
- Amy would like to have everyone do one thing and report by 12 noon by next Tuesday.
- She has sent out the email and phone number people to call to talk to someone about any issue they've had.

1. Updating CR/EEO Poster for SC

- Amy gave out posters for everyone to update any information on the poster.

FY 2011 Treasurer's Report

- No report.

Federal Women's Program Manager—Myra Jones

Compensation for Claims of Discrimination

- Announced on February 25, 2011.
- Background:
 - Federal courts decided to not certify lawsuits brought by Hispanic and women farmers as a class action.
 - This meant claims would have to be individually brought through the federal court system.
- Answers to allegations of discrimination made against the Department by Hispanic and women farmers.
- A joint effort with the Department of Justice.
- Provides Hispanic, Latino and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination an option for a streamlined process to resolve their claims.
- If you have anyone claim that USDA improperly denied a farm loan between 1981 and 2000 because they are Hispanic, Latino or female you can have them find information about the claims process at www.farmerclaims.gov or by calling 1-888-508-4429.

- Claimants will have 180 days from the opening date of the Claims Period, to be announced by the USDA, within which to file a complete Claims Package.
- I have further information if anyone is interested.

Other Updates

- WIN
 - Been working closely with the WIN (Women in NRCS) website committee
 - Received bids for website creation which are now being reviewed. The bids ranged from about \$600 to \$4,000.
 - Currently waiting to receive the articles of incorporation in NY before we can start accepting membership. As soon as we can accept membership I will let everyone know.
- Attended Federal Women's Program Teleconference
 - Currently trying to come up with a list of reason why we believe that there might be problems with retention.
- Will attend Barrier Analysis Training on July 27, 2011.
- Completed Survey Monkey on Barriers within NRCS.
- Submitted updated Plan of Work to Sabrenna Bryant to be placed on the SC FWP Civil Rights Page.

Completed outreach at Camp Conservation in Newberry. Taught students about the importance of soils in our environment.

Black Emphasis Program Manager—Antron Williams

- Special Organization Meetings have all been cancelled.
- Had a question on if we would be able to recruit due to funding. Answer was that we can recruit, but the budget will be tight. Kim said there will be opportunities but they will be slim.

Disability/Veteran Emphasis Program Manager—Bobby McQueen

- No Report

Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager—Jayson Mas

- Cliff Eady made an awesome poster for the Hispanic Heritage month. The award if you win is \$300.
- Has been working on translating information.
- In the national teleconference they are talking about getting a certified translator to translate materials.
- Is working on translating some pamphlets for state use but nothing with legal jargon on it.

Asian Pacific Emphasis Program Manager—Tria Yang

- Submitted AA/PI quarterly report to National AA/PI.
- Will attend the AA/PI Barrier Analysis Training online on 7/21/2011.
- AA/PI poster sent out during AA/PI heritage month and sent out the 2011 Asian Pacific/Islander Farmer/Rancher Conservation Award participants nominations.
- AA/PI SEPMs of several states asked for translated material information to use as outreach to various Asian American groups. There is some information and brochures now available in Chinese, Hmong and some other languages while other translations are still in progress.
- “Conservation Practices and Programs For Your Land” brochure is translated to Chinese and is available to producers / landowners and other NRCS offices to distribute for outreach. Here is the link:
http://www.apio.org/forms/Farm_Bill_2008_brochure_Mandarin_Chinese_31May2011.pdf
- Farm Bill 2008 brochure translated into Hmong and English.
- Conservation planning workbook translated to Hmong from North Carolina. It contains application form, ranking questions, programs, and success stories of various farmers.

Native American Alaska Native Program Manager—Daniel Cabaniss

- Employee conference has also been cancelled for this group
- Bureau of Indian Affairs may not be funded through congress this year
- There are still issues with USDA programs and Indian Trust Lands and the way they are set up. They are not eligible for USDA programs. Other “fee” lands that are owned by the tribes but taxes are paid on these lands.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Program Manager—Staci Henry

- Sharon Nance has been selected as NRCS civil rights leader for LGBT.
- USDA National Member is Perry Stevens.
- June was Pride month, emails were sent out detailing change within the agency regarding same sex partners and history.
- Things are still moving slow, but goals right now are:
 - Make people feel safe and comfortable.
 - Be careful with terminology.
 - Gather reliable resources.
 - Don't put pressure on people to “come out”.
 - Identify workforce barriers
- Training: Attended New SEPM teleconference training and have civil rights training in August.

Members at Large—Brad Poston

- No report

Outreach Report—Amy Maxwell

- **Overstreet mentioned two outreach workshops that SC NRCS has hosted (in June and July, on Saturday's), with a focus on eligibility for USDA programs**, which were hosted by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. She, Ms. English, Melton, and Mobley attended and presented info. Ms. English also mentioned the Hispanic and Women's Lawsuit Claims to the participants and folder's that were distributed included contact info for the toll free number and farmerclaims.gov website.
- **Overstreet said the Civil Rights/EEO poster for SC (which should be posted on all official bulletin boards in field offices) needed updating.** She asked all committee members to review it and get back with her asap if changes were needed. She also said that the [Civil Rights Advisory Committee website](#) needed review and update as well, and asked that all members visit the site and suggest edits, and that SEPM's review their specific webpages as well, and all CRC members send changes/updates/additions to Webmaster Sabrenna Bryant asap.
- **Overstreet emphasized the importance of outreach regarding the Hispanic and Women Farmer's Lawsuit claims** and said that Secretary Vilsack has tasked all USDA employees with reaching out to potential claimants to make certain they are informed. Overstreet is submitting a weekly report, by COB each Tuesday, to the Department that details SC NRCS' outreach efforts regarding this issue. **She tasked each member of the CRC to send her at least one outreach item/accomplishment related to the lawsuit claims by mid day next Tuesday, July 19th.**
- Overstreet talked to the committee about **Cultural Transformation (CT)** and mentioned that she and English were serving on the national CT committee to help roll out the initiative within NRCS. Cultural Transformation (CT) is the process of creating a workplace where all employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect, and provided the opportunity for success. You can find out lots more information at <http://culturaltransformation.usda.gov>.
- Overstreet said that the **inaugural year of SC's New and Beginning Farmer Program** will conclude next week with a graduation ceremony in which Ms. English will take part by presenting each of the 36 graduates with a certificate and an NRCS lapel pin. The applications received for the second year of the program are currently under review, with the second session beginning in the Fall. There were 50 outstanding applications. The program is funded by a \$750,000 USDA NIFA 3-year grant received by Clemson University , and the program is co sponsored by NRCS, Clemson, and SC Dept. of Ag.
- SC is initiating work on a **SWAT (Strategic Watershed Action Team) agreement focusing on restoring/protecting longleaf pine ecosystems in SC** that will incorporate a working relationship with SC State University (SCSU). SCSU will host a series of 8 outreach

workshops over a 2-year period, within the area of SC defined as a historic longleaf area, and the events will target small/limited/socially disadvantaged forest landowners and help educate them about the importance of longleaf protection and restoration.

Overstreet encouraged CRC members, and any NRCS employee who would like to, to **submit an application to serve on a national outreach strategy team. National Bulletin 230-11-21** set a July 31st deadline for applications for individuals who wish to serve on a diverse team which will develop a national outreach strategy for NRCS. Employees must obtain first level supervisor and State Conservationist signatures on their applications before submitting.

Title VII & Employment Report—Kim Johnson

- Discussed new hires and their demographics and locations
- Gave out a DN-714 which shows the change of demographics with people employed in SC.
- Development of FY12 CR/EEO plan.

Next Meeting

- October 12, 2011

XVII. Focus Group Teleconference with Rebekah Dewind, of NRCS' Talent Management Division

- This teleconference focused on employee retention and what are some things that are preventing some people from staying with the agency.
- We also discussed telecommuting and virtual employment and what we thought about this topic as a balancing tool used between work and home.

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SNH