

State Technical Committee Meeting Minutes February 10, 2009

In attendance:

Jim Baird, American Farmland Trust; Keisha Brown, NRCS; Karl Brown, PA SCC; Pat Buckley, DEP; Christopher Clouser, BluAcres LLC.; Craig Derickson, NRCS; Dan Dostie, NRCS; Chrystal Fetzer, FSA; Don Fiesta, DEP; William Foose, FSA; Barry Frantz, NRCS; Suzy Friedman, Enviro. Defense Fund; Doug Goodlander, PA SCC; Kelly Ireland, NRCS; Hosea Latshaw, NRCS; Susan Marquart, PACD; Tom Matticks, NRCS; Rob McAfee, NRCS; Susan McDowell, EPA; Jedd Moncavage, TeamAg Inc; Trudy Moore, RD; Gene O'Dato PA DCNR; Kelly O'Neill, Ches. Bay Found.; Kenn Pattison, DEP; Mike Pruss, PA Game Comm.; Ed Rajotte, Penn State/IIPM; Ron Ramsey, The Nature Cons.; Marel Raub, Ches. Bay Comm.; Abe Repine, NRCS; Carl Rohr, DEP; Kelly Shenk, EPA CBPO; Gary Smith, NRCS; James Stiehler, PA DCNR; Fred Suffian, EPA; Karen Sykes, USFS; Bob Thomas, PGC; Russell Wagner, DEP; Bill Wehry, PDA; Ed White, NRCS; Jerry Whiteside, LCCD; David Wise, Ches. Bay Found.

Craig Derickson, NRCS State Conservationist, welcomed everyone and stated that we are here to continue PA implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill and to reinvigorate the State Technical Committee and :Local Work Groups and provide involvement.

Current Status of PA Conservation Program Activities – by Barry Frantz, Assistant State Conservationist – Programs.

We are 1/3 of the way through guidance on implementation of the Farm Bill programs for NRCS staff in the National Office. Comment/application periods for certain rules may be extended and dates on Federal Register Document Status may be amended.

Payment Schedule: practice list/cost-share list/incentive payment list – still in draft version; some payment rates/practices may change. We are trying to set up the same payment rate in different programs, which cannot be done in all cases. We must pay higher rates to those who qualify – beginning, socially disadvantaged, and limited resource farmers, may get up to an extra 15% on practices they would be eligible for.

The rule states that we no longer use the terms “cost-share” and “incentive”. All practices have a set price; no adjustments to those.

Q: Are practice rates still set by NRCS? Does NRCS have any control to change the rates? Could principle forgiveness be used?

A: Yes, NRCS has discretion. The EQIP rule states not more than 75% can be cost-shared. We don't manage or talk about costs lists as we used to; the staff still sees and uses the data. Outreach and farmer contact may be more difficult in the Chesapeake Bay areas. It would be terrific if a non-federal entity could tackle this.

Rankings: waiting for policy final decisions. More weight on those with current conservation plans. Good rankings to those who do good practices.

Fund Categories & Priority Areas: handout shows current fund categories. Most practices have one or two activities. EQIP at the national level, by law, must target 5% to the underserved (socially disadvantaged, beginning farmers). They will also get higher incentive rates, so there is a good chance they would be awarded a contract. This is mandatory in EQIP and encouraged in other

programs. Socially disadvantaged points are given to minorities including African Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Hispanic, Native Americans.

EWP Flood Plain Easements: this is not a Farm Bill program but there may be funding (including nation-wide funding). In the past PA had funded stream bank protection, repairing critical areas destroyed by floods, etc., as well as potential flood plain easements. We are waiting to get confirmation on this request. PA was volunteered to try to use some of these funds for this purpose. There are constraints on stream bank restoration.

Q: What type of flood plain (100-year)?

A: Flooded once every ten years or twice in the last year. Not a 100-year flood plain. The idea is to get different areas protected (non-hydric soils or pristine wetlands not altered to begin with).

Q: Is this just to protect areas or remove structures?

A: Cannot remove structures.

Farm Bill Update

Rules & RFPs Released: Rules are out for comment at this time. Comment period goes into March and may be extended. We will operate with the rules we have at this time and will adjust as needed. We cannot sign contracts with applicants for another couple of months. Need input before finalizing within the next few weeks. Urging field employees to continue to plan and work with those interested in applying for programs. 2009 has a tremendous amount of conservation opportunities; we have more Farm Bill work to do this year than any previous year. No practices will be removed from potentially funded list.

Historically Underserved:

Q: Are Amish in this category?

A: Not at this time, unless they are beginning farmers. We are working with our national office to get that interpretation.

Q: Is EQIP funding new farms or existing operations?

A: New farmers must demonstrate they earned \$1000 of income (must have income to be considered "farmer"). We are waiting for manual guidance to verify if non-farmer farm owner could apply for EQIP, even if they haven't sold anything yet. And we are identifying new farmers not engaged in farming for 10 consecutive years. Types of practices would be determined by resource concerns. Expansion plan allows for 25% expansion, but if there is no livestock there is nothing to expand – no resource concern.

Q: Does this include new and beginning woodland owners?

A: They would have an easier ride through eligibility in the category of non-industrial privately-owned forestland (could be eligible for EQIP). Only if eligible as new farmer could they get a higher rate.

Q: Farmer status comes from 1040 form?

A: Schedule F, and would not have been filed for 10 consecutive years.

AWEP & CIG: proposal programs, nationally announced opportunities (available in the federal register).

CRP Status: reauthorized, continue with continuous sign-up/CREP where acres are available.

CSP: no new contracts. Those already established will be paid out.

EQIP Air Quality Initiative: manure storages, barnyard improvements
Air quality has 21 non-attaining counties. This is an area of interest to DEP. Might be hard to explain to producers how this ties into conservation planning. Air quality is based on EPA's non-

attainment particle matter 2.5 and ground level ozone. Most counties are in the SW/SE area. Looking at Core 4 and associated practices (bio-filters, covers for manure storages, aerators, separators, digesters, wind breaks, composting dairy barns, roofing, drag hose and injection and manure are BMPs to be considered). Water and air quality are related and all practices assist with saving money and energy. EQIP has a \$300,000 payment limit for six years.

Q: Are these for odor control or to clean the air?

A: Targeted on non-attainment -- two issues....particulate matter and ground level ozone. Issues that contribute to this are the same that contribute to smell.

Comment: EPA is pushing for restrictions on ammonia and hydro-soil, instead of actual monitoring of the site.

Q: What about pesticide drift in crop rotation?

A: Not targeted at this moment. There is an air quality task force meeting coming up and we are looking for input as to what can be done on those specialty crops.

Q: Digesters to a certain extent – what is qualifier?

A: Cost-share is limited, might go to \$100,000 with add-ons for associated practices.

In EQIP we are traditionally not allowed to fund portable equipment. Perhaps could fund on a per acre basis, or for each piece. There could be some technology here to fund innovative ways of managing certain practices.

Grazing under EQIP: not funding perimeter fence; focus on management improvements.

Cropland: lumped core practices into cropland (to include forestry – could apply under state cropland).

Irrigation: no changes.

Forestry: want to put \$250,000 to \$500,000 into forestry. There are three identified conservation landscape initiatives in PA (and talked about opening up to other areas).

Comment: there is interest from landowners in all parts of state (many because they have money from gas wells). Getting more stewardship plans written. The Bureau of Forestry has staff ready to go, and have 3,000 stewardship plans already on their books. They are looking at water quality and wildlife and want to target the bay area.

The forestry initiative is relatively new. We have a great working relationship with the Bureau and US Forest Service. Philosophy is to use EQIP funds that are available to implement forest stand plans already in existence/developed. Experts will provide TA and assist in implementation.

Partnership Projects: 3rd party entity might submit proposal on behalf of farmer or landowner having project with all of these farmers to get good results in small watersheds.

Comment: CCPI – EDF is big supporter of this idea. PA is well suited with a lot of initiatives already under way. AWEP and CCPI offer many opportunities.

AWEP & CCPI together: RFP allows a partner to develop proposal for a group of producers to handle a suite of conservation practices (conserve water, improve water quality, ground water). If proposal is approved, those producers would enter into EQIP contracts to carry out the activities. We have a set-aside for EQIP and WHIP on this program (CCPI).

Comment: AWEP is applied nationally where a portion of CCPI goes thru the state. If within that umbrella producers do not have to compete with other rankings. Neither will allow funding to be used for TA by partners. Nutrient management would be looked at in a different manner. Typical EQIP – whatever partnership brings a group together could not use AWEP or CCPI. All payments still go to farmer. TA would come from EQIP.

Q: will March 2nd deadline be pushed back?

A: there are requests to extend closing dates for these rules. Could provide recommendation if some feel extensions are needed.

Q: with AWEP an organization could receive money or do outreach to a targeted area and farms in area would receive money for CNMP?

A: with AWEP a partner proposes a conservation issue where it has identified persons to participate in program (goes in as RFP) and if funded those participants would be on fast-track to get contract approved for implementation. This is where it becomes normal for EQIP contracts (batching applications for particular area or resource concern).

Q: would farmers identified in advance?

A: identify scope of what the producer is going for – don't need names.

Q: is CCPI different?

A: maybe a little different; there would be flexibility in CCPI for a broader range of resource concerns than with AWEP. Difference is that AWEP is focused on water quality/water quantity, CCPI is conservation covering a broader range of options.

HFRP: funds easements on forestland focusing on threatened species.

Q: Any feed back on why timber cannot be cut?

A: Possible funding issue here.

WRP: easements must have been owned for seven years. Have a good bit of money for those with non-public wetlands to be restored.

AMA/CBW/EQIP/WHIP Person Eligibility: WHIP news release completed and sent out. Have over \$400,000 in WHIP, all private-lands focused. Want to get word out.

CBWI Funded: fact sheet gives basic info, still tweaking this. Priority watersheds include 12-digit HUCs which are posted on the NRCS website. Nutrients, nitrogen phosphorous yields, local water quality impairments are considered high priorities (high potential to cause nutrient issues for bay area). Where is the implementation opportunity? Adjustments made based upon implementation possibilities. We are looking for input for potential 2010 watersheds. Through ranking and screening tools we will prioritize applications from priority areas first and applications for our list of core conservation practices (basic field erosion and sediment control, residue management, no-till conservation tillage, cover crops, conservation cover, permanent cover plantings, structural erosion control, grass waterways terraces, conversions). Targeted at nutrient-loss reductions and more advanced nutrient management techniques, precision implementation (feed management is a core practice). Third area is stream corridor protection (grass buffers and streambank fencing). Look at applications (screening tool) – if located in PA priority watershed, doing one of the practices, and in good standing/eligible, will use EQIP rules to implement program and will have abbreviated ranking, nutrient practices, stream practices, etc (will be expedited process). Looking to have more general list to include practices for barnyard protection, grazing systems to have ranking more in depth. Don't want to limit if issues need to be solved and get benefit. Want to get outreach to those not usually using programs. Keep focused on priority functions and locations. First two years for implementation, 3rd year for observation and maintenance. Want to hit nutrient and sediments head-on with these dedicated Chesapeake Bay funds. There are six states in the Bay program; may hear of special-consideration areas (4) which apply more to Maryland (receiving extra ranking points in each of those states as well). Looking to fund what is on the books now and be in position to carefully target initiative.

Q: seems oriented to broad-acre animal functions. What would they put into this?

A: depends on practices on erosion and sediment control. Trying to be more landscape focused. Some are specific to animal agriculture.

Q: is there any way to track higher level of precision nutrient management under 590?

A: list of different options – if doing any options under nutrient management that would make you high priority. Have to look at what type of nutrient management you are going for. A list of 590 scenarios will eventually be available and are well described.

Q: will reports systems be available to the public?

A: currently at 8-digit HUC which might not be available this year.

Q: will you provide accelerated technical or educational assistance to get word out?

A: back in August we didn't know if Chesapeake Bay would be funded, but were willing to use small portion of EQIP. We are interested in providing contributory help to special effort but under continuing resolution budget don't have funds (making best of it by using traditional procedures).

Comment: encourage folks to meet with specialty crop people with practices that cut across these items/practices (water conservation, air quality, precision nutrient management). The veggie folks would have a keen interest if they were packaged. This could be put under a partnership project.

Q: would a farmer signing up need to know what pot to go after?

A: could apply under multiple programs. New form has up to six programs. NRCS will figure out which one to go for. But farmer should know what the options are.

Q: this map is broader than Conewago... is that on hold?

A: we received full funding for the CBWI (have \$5.4M to write contracts) -- ½ as much as we already had in EQIP. The expanded area will make good use of that money and if carried over will go to next fiscal year. Conewago going on Phase II of NFWF grant and expected to be fully funded and operational.

Q: trying to expedite getting contracts on ground...using AWEP in Chesapeake Bay area doing Core 4 are these stackable? Does ranking go up if hitting all of those things?

A: potentially yes. In 2010 and beyond, with a better understanding of the programs, we would be able to realize efficiencies.

Q: do these preclude nutrient credits?

A: none of the programs preclude anyone from participating.

Q: what type of outreach is being done? Is there and organizational effort in this program?

A: we are informed and know what the need is – we are at the beginning stage of this. Open to all ideas on how to get the word out.

Q: what is the relationship between NRCS & EPA pertaining to this?

A: EPA is in charge of the Chesapeake Bay Program office at Annapolis which involves all six states who are part of the Bay. This program was implemented thru the Farm Bill by the Secretary of Ag. The Bay office and other partners meet a few times a year and on a monthly basis with some and welcome additional participation.

EQIP Conservation Activity Plans: this is new in the Farm Bill and talks about conservation plan development. Hiring technical service providers to develop conservation nutrient management plans. Opened up now and will add air quality as a CNMP to fund in FY09. Not a practice plan but an issue/practice plan (looking at the entire air quality resource need). Farm Bill law says to give farmer money to develop plan rather than NRCS doing plan.

Q: is filing required in public office?

A: no, some privacy requirements in the Farm Bill. Cannot release anything provided by farmer to NRCS. General FOIA requests cannot be answered. Plan is filed with NRCS.

Q: a lot about eco-system services are being redesigned to support pollinators. Are these concepts moving with the new rules?

A: like to fund where there is a practice. All resource concerns are inter-related. Have set aside land designed to solve water quality problem to be re-evaluated to provide additional benefits. Have TA to do this, up to committee to recommend how much of a priority this should be.

Q: are there provisions in CRP to provide additional funding to CRP participants to plant wild flowers, etc for pollinators?

A: have some practices that provide vegetation management that could be adjusted to provide pollinator benefits.

Q: is energy something to be looked at in the future (as a big focus under CRP)?

A: option to look at in the future. PA has strong interest in energy and bio-fuel production. We will look to better integrate programs to accomplish this.

FRPP: looking for national training on this program.

Specialty Crops (organic farming): looking to put IPM under specialty crops under EQIP. Want to maintain flexibility under different programs. Things like mushrooms might go under here. Looking for input in this area.

Water Quality: nothing specific here but looking for input.

New Rule & Role for STC:

Participation by Specific Agencies & Groups:

Sets up minimum membership of agencies listed on handout. National Food & Ag is re-formulation of cooperative state extensions which funds research and extension. Most government organizations and agencies are represented. Weak on ag producers, owners of industrial forestland, minorities, disabled, socially economic/disadvantaged (could possibly set up subcommittee/ workgroup). Would be advisory group – no votes but recognized as members. Want more involvement with FSA State Committee and RD to have better coordination and communication among the federal agencies.

Local Work Groups: want to make sure ideas get shared. Want to build up local input showing resource priorities so programs are more effective (taking advantage of already formalized workgroups and subcommittees). Make good use of subcommittee process, asking them to take issues and bring back recommendations to the State Tech Committees.

Subcommittees: developed as issues arise. Invitation to participate will be issued.

Q: is there a subcommittee for land easements?

A: could be. Few years had FRPP-specific group established to come up with ranking systems. Not a bad idea to combine different programs involved with this practice.

Q: could subcommittees be scheduled after this meeting? Yes

Q: are these subcommittees in place or just ideas?

A: ideas. No subcommittees in place.

Comment: if there is already an entity...don't reinvent (such as air quality steering committee).

Q: who manages specialty crops -- organic subcommittee?

A: no committee established (trying to build relationships with state veggie growers and the state horticulture association).

Comment: found that a regular schedule is beneficial (spending less time catching up on what's happening and more time getting results on issues). Using conf calls, especially with subcommittees, is beneficial.

Q: is there a list of the State Tech Committee?

A: will make association with who was here and identify who is not represented (this will be sent out with minutes).

Allocation of Resources:

Financial Assistance Funds: have more money to help install practices but have less people. There is concern that farmers won't commit to do work because of the economy (will be a challenge to get farmers who will use this money). Need resources to tap into to get the word out.

Comment: in the past have asked NRCS and ag staffs to bring other entities in to know what the potential workload is. Anything that can be freed up thru TA or cooperative agreements would be beneficial to the other entities.

Comment: have a lot of resources available statewide, but if NRCS could develop marketing tools and offer to districts to put on websites, having a link from other agencies to NRCS. This would get more folks to see NRCS info.

Workload Management: where we have bulges of work (northeast CREP is heavy) we won't have as much Chesapeake Bay The southeast and south central will be challenged this year with CBWI and EQIP funds. Will be talking about staff and what can be done with what we have. PA is still in a budget deficit under the continuing resolution. Thoughts are to partner up and strategically address conservation opportunities with people we have.

Q: contribution agreement arrangements can be a boost to NGOs partnering with NRCS. Reliability of those funds is abysmal. Does NRCS see any changes there?

A: work and need is still there but money is not. If it were more reliable we would look at it more seriously. Federal budgets will be dealt with by March 6th. Have been in a level but declining mode. PA has lost 55 positions in the last five years.

Comment: components can be driven by industry if we could find a way to do it. Industry would be more than willing to do the outreach if they could package it right.

Comment: example would be bay farms program to get out the CBWI. Have about 15 crop consultants and folks that sign up. They could join program to get additional guidance and TA.

Outreach to farmers and landowners: NRCS was represented at the veggie growers and PASA conference (specifically targeting underserved groups). We are collecting lists of organizations who we think can help get the word and materials out. A link on the NRCS home page will showcase these materials.

Comment: Core 4 working group will have PDA, NRCS, and others together but no reason why this group cannot look beyond Core 4. Could there be a common publication that is tied more to conservation? Rather than scattering throughout many pages of advertising?

Comment: notice outdoor agencies are not represented. Using local folks to share sphere of influence would be beneficial.

Q: is there a funding project limit on CIG?

A: \$75,000 cap on state CIGs. Will have to tell national office if going thru. Goes to state for consideration at different stages.

Comment: NFWF coordinating CIG to review applications (for all NRCS states). PA has had success with state level CIG grants. Clarification: NFWF is not coordinating CIG this year, NRCS will be doing that itself.

Wrap Up – if there is an interest for specific subcommittees please suggest.

Comment: PA Game Commission has adopted a Redneck Pheasant Plan (2008 – 2017), would like to do a short presentation about the grant at the next State Tech Committee meeting.

The State Technical Committee will meet quarterly. Tentative dates for 2009 State Technical Committee Meetings are: May 21, August 13, and November 10.

Structure and membership of PA State Technical Committee

§ 610.22 State Technical Committee membership.

(a) State Technical Committees shall include agricultural producers, nonindustrial private forest land owners, and other professionals who represent a variety of disciplines in soil, water, wetlands, plant, and wildlife sciences. The State Conservationist in each State will serve as chairperson. The State Technical Committee for each State shall include representatives from among the following:

- (1) NRCS, USDA;
- (2) Farm Service Agency, USDA;
- (3) Farm Service Agency State Committee, USDA;
- (4) Forest Service, USDA;
- (5) National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA (formerly CREES);
- (6) Each of the federally recognized American Indian Tribal Governments encompassing 100,000 acres or more in the State;
- (7) State departments and agencies within the State, including the:
 - (i) Fish and wildlife agency (PGC and PBFC);
 - (ii) Forestry agency (DCNR);
 - (iii) Water resources agency;
 - (iv) Department of agriculture (PDA);
 - (v) Association of soil and water conservation districts (PACD); and
 - (vi) Soil and water conservation agency (SCC);
- (8) Agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock or poultry raised within the State;
- (9) Owners of nonindustrial private forest land;
- (10) Nonprofit organizations, within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, with demonstrable conservation expertise and experience working with agriculture producers in the State; and
- (11) Agribusiness.

(b) The State Conservationist will invite other relevant Federal agencies, and persons knowledgeable about economic and environmental impacts of conservation techniques and programs to participate as needed.

(c) To ensure that recommendations of the State Technical Committees take into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the USDA, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent the conservation and related technical concerns of particular historically underserved groups and individuals; *i.e.*, minorities, women, persons with disabilities and socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

(d) In accordance with the guidelines in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of this section, the State Conservationist establishes membership on the State Technical Committee. Individuals or groups wanting to participate on a State Technical Committee within a specific State may submit to the State Conservationist of that particular State a request that explains their interest and outlines their credentials which they believe are relevant to becoming a member of the State Technical Committee. Decisions of the State Conservationist concerning membership on the committee are final and not appealable to any other individual or group within USDA.

§ 610.23 State Technical Committee meetings.

(a) The State Conservationist, as Chairperson, schedules and conducts the meetings, although a meeting may be requested by any USDA agency as needed.

(b) NRCS shall establish and publish in a **Federal Register** notice national standard operating procedures governing the operation of State Technical Committees and Local Working Groups. The standard operating procedures will outline items such as: The best practice approach to establishing, organizing, and effectively utilizing State Technical Committees and Local Working Groups; direction on publication of State Technical Committee and Local Working Group meeting notices and agendas; State Technical Committee meeting summaries; how to provide feedback on State Conservationist decisions regarding State Technical Committee recommendations; and other items as determined by the Chief of NRCS.

(c) In addition to the standard operating procedures established under paragraph (b) of this section, the State Conservationist shall provide public notice of and allow public attendance at State Technical Committee and Local Working Group meetings. The State Conservationist shall publish a meeting notice no later than 14 calendar days prior to the meeting. Notification may exceed this 14-day minimum where State open meeting laws exist and provide for a longer notification period. This minimum 14-day notice requirement may be waived in the case of exceptional conditions, as determined by the State Conservationist. The State Conservationist shall publish this notice in at least one or more newspaper(s), including recommended Tribal publications, to attain statewide circulation.

§ 610.24 Responsibilities of State Technical Committees.

(a) Each State Technical Committee established under this subpart shall meet on a regular basis, as determined by the State Conservationist, to provide information, analysis, and recommendations to appropriate officials of the Department of Agriculture who are charged with implementing and establishing priorities and criteria for natural resources conservation activities and programs under Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985, including:

- the Conservation Reserve Program (**CRP**),
- Wetlands Reserve Program (**WRP**),
- Conservation Security Program (**CSP**),
- Conservation Stewardship Program (**CStP**),
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (**FRPP**),
- Grassland Reserve Program (**GRP**),
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (**EQIP**),
- Conservation Innovation Grants (**CIG**),
- Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (**AWEP**),
- Conservation of Private Grazing Land (**CPGL**),
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (**WHIP**),
- Grassroots Source Water Protection Program (**GSWPP**),
- Great Lakes Basin Program (**GLBP**),
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program [Initiative] (**CBWI**), and
- Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program.

Such recommendations may include but are not limited to recommendations about:

- (1) The criteria to be used in prioritizing program applications;
- (2) The state-specific application criteria; and
- (3) Priority natural resource concerns in the state.

(b) The role of the State Technical Committee is advisory in nature and the committee shall have no implementation or enforcement authority. The implementing agency reserves the authority to accept or reject the Committee's recommendations. However, the implementing USDA agency shall give strong consideration to the State Technical Committee's recommendations.

(c) State Technical Committees shall review whether Local Working Groups are addressing State priorities.

To ensure that recommendations of the State Technical Committees take into account the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, in § 610.22, committee membership shall continue to include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability and skills concerning natural resource conservation subjects specific to historically underserved groups and individuals; i.e. minorities, women, persons with disabilities and socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

§ 610.25 Subcommittees and Local Working Groups.

(a) Subcommittees. In some situations, specialized subcommittees, made up of State Technical Committee members, may be needed to analyze and examine specific issues. The State Conservationist may assemble certain members, including members of Local Working Groups, to discuss, examine, and focus on a particular technical or programmatic topic. The subcommittee may seek public participation, but it is not required to do so. Nevertheless, recommendations resulting from these subcommittee sessions, other than sessions of Local Working Groups, shall be made only in a general session of the State Technical Committee where the public is notified and invited to attend. Decisions resulting from recommendations of Local Working Groups will be communicated to NRCS in accordance with the standard operating procedures described in § 610.23(b).

(b) *Local Working Groups.*

- (1) A Local Working Group shall be composed of conservation district officials, agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock or poultry raised within the local area, nonindustrial private forest land owners, and other professionals representing relevant agricultural and conservation interests and a variety of disciplines in the soil, water, plant, wetland, and wildlife sciences who are familiar with private land agricultural and natural resource issues in the local community;
- (2) Local Working Groups provide recommendations on local natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs.
- (3) The Local Working Groups will follow the standard operating procedures described in § 610.23(b) and the public notice requirements set forth in § 610.23(c).

Current email listing of all interested members of the PA State Technical Committee

Bill	Achor	Landstudies, Inc.	bill@landstudies.com
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John	Ayers	Penn State University	jea@psu.edu
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N.	Bair	Pennsylvania State University	nab4@psu.edu
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John	Courtney	PA GLCI	-
Jan	Cowan	USDA/FSA County Committee Member	
Kristen	Crawford		
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