

**State Technical Committee Meeting**  
**January 23, 2012**  
**\* Minutes \***

**Welcome:** Denise Coleman, PA NRCS State Conservationist, welcomed all.

- 12:30 p.m. meeting start time set for the afternoon to allow for travel.
- Agenda notices and handouts provided in advance to allow early review by members and hardcopies available prior to meeting. They are available and should be considered part of these minutes.

**Purpose of State Technical Committee (Denise Coleman):**

A lot on the Agenda today! We recently received allocations. FA side is looking pretty good. Barry Frantz will be giving overview of cost share programs. Hathaway Jones will go over WRP, and GARC rates. The Nutrient Management Committee will be meeting to go over the 590 Nutrient Management Standards. In addition, Bill Wehry will give overview of FSA office closures.

**Financial Assistance Overview and Funding Pools – Barry Frantz/Katrina Thompson, NRCS**

**National Allocations - Barry Frantz**

- Program Update PowerPoint (handout)
- FY2012 PA NRCS FA Fund Pool Options Spreadsheet (handout)
- 2012 FA Program Fund Management Map (handout)
- Provided a breakdown on 2007-2012 funding for cost share programs. Advised we have a little less than last year to start out with. See PPT.
- \$31 million for EQIP/CBWI combined.
- \$0 for WHIP.
- Distributed PA map on 2012 FA Program Fund Management.
- Advised AMA fund pools have been targeted for irrigation and specialty crops.
- EQIP fund pools include Air Quality for both National and State.
- With no WHIP money some EQIP money to be shifted for Wildlife Fund Pools (ie; “Golden Winged Warbler” areas).
- Reviewed the 2012 Payment Schedule which include; 15 practices that will use regional rates, organic rates sets nationally , Farmstead Energy Improvements have 374 set at State Level.
- There will be 9 types of Conservation Activity Plans.
- Seasonal High Tunnels applicant criteria discussed as well as EQIP Person and Land Eligibility outlined.

**Q:** Is it hard to gauge aggregate impact to environment of CBWI across all of Chesapeake Bay watershed?

**A:** Barry advised ProTracts and PRS (Progress Reporting System) will be able to track.

**Q:** EQIP for public lands?

**A:** Generally, EQIP has to be a private land applicant. There are a few limited situations if public land is part of a private producers operation, practices on public land can be funded.

**Q:** When will we know 3 PA Water Quality watersheds to be selected?

**A:** Details to be announced soon.

### **CCPI Update – Barry Frantz**

- NRCS will not be advertising for new CCPI projects for 2012. Prior year projects will use all available funds.

### **CSP – Katrina Thompson**

- Distributed (Handout) CSP Talking Points. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces 2012 Conservation Stewardship Program.
- Announced that the new ranking period cut-off date for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is January 27, 2012. Producers interested in CSP should submit applications to their local NRCS office by the deadline so that their applications can be considered during the first ranking period of 2012.
- A \$1,000 minimum annual payment is still offered to socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource farmers.

**Q:** CSP for public Forestry land?

**A:** Has to be private owned.

### **CIG – Noel Soto, NRCS**

- NRCS National Request for Proposals (handouts for Regular & WQ credit trading)
- PA Draft State Request for Proposals (handout )
- The difference between National and State is amount that could be funded, National is up to \$1 million and State is up to \$75,000. Also, the Water Quality credit trading markets CIG has up to \$5 million set aside for Bay states.
- A webinar will be held tomorrow, 1/24, for the new trading credit component for all members to listen if interested. Reminder, the state component of CIG is not open yet, however, PA NRCS expects to set aside \$300,000 for this year.
- Last years PA CIG examples; tractor running on straight vegetable oil, temperature manipulation in compost to increase survival of beneficial microorganisms, Hog manure odor reduction, greenhouse heating using tree cutting discarded wood.
- Draft copy of PA CIG was handed out for members to send comments to Noel.

## **Easement Program Overview – Hathaway Jones, NRCS**

- WRP 5 Year State Plan (Handout)
- GARC Rates (Handout)
- WREP Announcement(Handout)
  
- FY 2012 allocations: FRPP allocated \$4 million (FY12 PDA has submitted six applications totaling about \$1 million).
- GRP has \$600,000 for easements and \$14,000 rental.
- HFRP has about \$1 million allocated.
- WRP has about \$6 million easement enrollment and \$1.6 million restoration funding for backlog.
- WRP/GRP - 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Applications and FY11 deferred application packets are due January 31, 2012.
- The GARC rates as shown on handout have some increases over 2011 but are mostly the same.
- The WRP 5 Year State Plan was made to handle new WRP enrollments and backlog from prior years in the next five years as NHQ wants states to plan for and address the backlog.
- FRPP has 6 applicants.
- WREP is a funding opportunity for wetland protection, restoration and enhancement activities on eligible lands in Pennsylvania. Proposals for projects are due by February 17, 2012. Funding comes through the agency's Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP), with up to \$17 million available nationwide.

**Q:** What is HFRP for?

**A:** Private forestland easements.

**Q:** Every easement has to have a restoration?

**A:** Yes.

## **Subcommittee Reports**

### **Air Quality Task Force**

No Report at this time.

### **BioEnergy – Ryan Koch**

- No Report at this time.

### **Feed – Dan Ludwig (TBD)**

- Customer survey of current feed management contract holders was developed by the Penn State Extension Dairy Team and mailed to the participants. Survey included 9 questions about their feed management plan and their experience with the process. It also gives producers an option to request a follow-up phone call to complete the survey if they would like to do so, instead of mailing it.

- Paul Patterson, Poultry Specialist from Penn State, recommended to the organizers of the Mid Atlantic Nutrition Conference to have Dan Ludwig speak at the conference about the Feed Management Program from NRCS. I received a request to speak at the conference and have accepted.
- 2-3 more Qualified Nutritionists have been added to the Plan Writer list on the Penn State Dairy Extension Team website, bringing the total to approximately 23 Feed Management plan writers
- Over 40 nutritionists attended the Feed Management Certification Workshop held at the Dairy Nutrition Conference held in Grantville in November 2011. Approximately 15 or so took the ARPAS exam to start the process of becoming qualified to write Feed Management Plans.
- Approximately 10 nutritionists attended the Beef Feed Management Plan session at the Nutrition Conference and all took the ARPAS beef exam.
- Penn State Department of Dairy and Animal Science has a grant looking at phosphorous and ammonia emission reductions on farms. Feed Management is one part of the project and has opportunity to work with farmers in both the Upper Kish and West Branch of the Lower Conestoga Creek watersheds with feed management.

#### **Forestry – Andy Duncan (Handout - Quarterly Report)**

- Distributed September Committee Meeting minutes. Discussed Golden Winged Warbler case study. Advised they have had good communication between all agencies involved. Andy was able to get some feedback from State Stewardship subcommittee and put together several recommendations which were passed onto Katrina Thompson (NRCS).
- Advised he has been working to get Stewardship plans (3,100) and where they are at in PA for partnering purposes.
- Also, the PA Forest Magazine is oldest in the country and he has helped put together 5 or 6 articles for publication.

#### **Wildlife and Fisheries – Mike Pruss (Handout - Quarterly Report)**

- Advised, the wildlife fisheries met on conference call, 1/13/12. Main discussion was the Golden Winged Warbler (GWW). An IUP grant was received to help protect. NRCS hosted an initial meeting to bring all partners up to speed on PA GWW initiative. \$50,000 of EQIP allocated for GWW.
- Eastern Brook Trout is a model species for monitoring for Climate Change and Marcellus Gas impacts and EQIP forestry practices that could benefit.

#### **Nutrients – Mark Goodson (Handout)**

- Mark Goodson spoke on the nationally issued 590 Standard released 12/13/11. Distributed one page subcommittee report to all STC. Provided evaluation of the National Standard and advised how PA will review and adapt to our PA eFOTG. Mark will call meeting to order for interested parties on CAFO process and what has changed. He will keep this subcommittee updated on this year long process to adopt. Gave overview of PA flexibility to adopt the National version and technical changes. Advised the Nutrient Management Committee will be meeting for breakout session to go over the 590 Nutrient Management Standards.

### **Organic – Lee Rinehart (Handout)**

- Distributed January 6 Notes from Subcommittee Report. The committee met and went over practice payment schedules, ranking and program overview. They recognize need for research and new methodologies to incorporate into subcommittee and thought subcommittee could make impact for conservation on the ground.

### **Specialty – Gwendolyn Crews**

- New Committee. Has not met yet. Hoping to have group determined and first meeting before next State Technical Committee meeting.

### **GLCI – Handout - Susan Parry (Handout)**

- On Wednesday, January 18, the PA GLCI met and discussed the purpose of the State Technical Committee including the GLCI role. The group considered opportunities to provide input to NRCS, including research and innovation, practice standards and payment schedules as well as outreach and training for producers and field staff.
- At a previous meeting (October 19, 2011), the information about the original FY 2012 fencing standard was presented and the group voiced concerns regarding restrictions to NRCS fencing program guidelines that seem to indicate that fencing would not be supported as part of the grazing system. They also expressed desire to see continuation of Solar Energy initiatives and other new technologies being applied to grazing systems. In January, they were informed that the fencing standard was again going to be revised to include conversion of cropland to pasture (per Barry Frantz presentation).
- Pa Forage/Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (Pa GLCI) has been very successful in developing educational programs and trainings through collaboration with NRCS and other partners. Last year, GLCI financially (and technically) supported at least 16 events for a total of over \$6,000 in funding assistance. There were local field days, regional workshops and statewide conferences, and local partners two “grazing schools” for producers in Pennsylvania, one focused on beef operations and one on dairy. GLCI is also in the process of finalizing two video projects, one on stocker cattle and one on small ruminants. The videos will be available on the website, which will be updated completely.

### **FSA Update – Chrystal Fetzer, FSA**

- FSA Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) will receive \$1.875M in funding and technical assistance funding for Hurricane Irene damage from September 2011. Counties receiving the Primary Presidential Designation and therefore eligible to receive funding were: Bradford; Dauphin; Schuylkill; York; Lancaster; Northumberland; Lebanon; Lycoming; Susquehanna; Sullivan; Wyoming; Columbia; Montour; Northampton; and Luzerne. Practices that can be cost shared include: debris removal; grading, shaping, and releveling; restoring conservation structures; and restoring fences.

- FSA has not received a final decision as to whether there will be a General Conservation Reserve Program Signup (CRP) in 2012.
- PA currently has 190,431 acres on 10,744 contracts enrolled in Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Approximately 5,000 acres on 322 contracts re-enrolled their acres which expired on September 30, 2011. There are 26,567 acres on 1,296 CREP contracts scheduled to expire on September 30, 2012. FSA and NRCS will be working with all parties interested in re-enrolling their expiring acres.

#### **USDA Office Closures - Bill Wehry, FSA**

- 131 FSA County Offices in 32 states are recommended for closure. Pennsylvania has 7 County Offices that have been recommended for closure. Below is a listing of FSA County Offices proposed for consolidation in Pennsylvania -

Blair County Office - Hollidaysburg, PA,  
 Carbon/Monroe County Office - Lehighton, PA,  
 Fulton County Office - McConnellsburg, PA,  
 Lebanon County Office - Lebanon, PA,  
 Mifflin County Office - Burnham, PA,  
 Perry County Office - New Bloomfield, PA.  
 Wyoming/Sullivan County Office - Tunkhannock, PA

- FSA is required to hold a public meeting within 30 days to take public comment on USDA's proposed office consolidation plan in each affected county being considered for consolidation. After public meetings are held on the future of each office the USDA Secretary should make a final decision in 90 days. FSA is doing outreach (postcards, media, etc.) to make everyone aware and individuals can provide written comment by emailing Bill Wehry, SED, at email [bill.wehry@pa.usda.gov](mailto:bill.wehry@pa.usda.gov).

#### **Denise Coleman**

- Pennsylvania will receive \$12 million in (EWP) Emergency Watershed Protection funds to help with natural disaster recovery efforts throughout the state. This funding will be used to help restore streams whose natural flows were disrupted by the flooding from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee the end of last summer.
- The funding will enable NRCS to assist local government entities in removing debris from streams and stabilizing severely eroding stream banks that threaten homes, business, and utilities.
- Typical projects funded under EWP include removing debris from waterways, protecting eroded stream banks, reseeding damaged areas, and in some cases, purchasing floodplain easements on eligible land.
- Through EWP, NRCS provides up to 75 percent of the construction funds needed to restore areas damaged by flooding. The community, local, or state sponsor for the work must pay the remaining costs, which can be provided by cash and/or in-kind services.

## **Closing/Comments**

- Susan Beal recognized PASA members in attendance. Advised if anyone else interested in being on a sub committee to advise her. Also, any sub committee who would like to have guest speakers should let Denise know for future agendas.
- Dave Day announced online right now is chance for public comment on National Fish Wildlife Climate and Plant adaptation Strategy. A national effort to adapt climate adaption strategies. Go online for more details. <http://www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov/>

## **Upcoming State Technical Committee Meeting Dates with start time of 12:30 -**

April 17, 2012

July 18, 2012

October 25, 2012