

State Technical Committee Minutes
Richmond, Virginia
March 1, 2011

Attendance: Wade Biddix (*NRCS*), Jack Bricker (*NRCS*), Libby Norris (*CBF*), Mark Schonbeck (*VABF*), Patricia Stansbury (*VABF*), Nelson Link (*FSA*), Chad Wentz (*NRCS*), Kevin Schmidt (*VDACS*), John H. Parker (*VA Pork*), David Phemister (*TNC*), Diane Dunaway (*NRCS*), Katy McCune (*TACF*), Jeremy Stone (*NRCS*), Chris Teutsch (*VCE/VFGC*), Ron Wood (*NRCS*), John Scrivani (*VA TACF*), Dean Cumbria (*VDOF*), Betsy Bowles (*DEQ*), Todd Groh (*VDOF*), Dale Gardner (*WSI*), Mary Elfner (*NAS*), Russ Perkinson (*VA DCR*), Stephanie Martin (*VA DCR*), Katie Frazier (*VA Agribusiness Council*), Maribeth Pettigrew (*NRCS Recorder*).

Jack Bricker, NRCS State Conservationist, opened the meeting at 10 a.m. and welcomed those present. He also welcomed back Wade Biddix, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, who has been detailed to Headquarters.

PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS: Jack reported on the partnership listening sessions held with NRCS's Conservation and Agricultural Partners on February 12th and 13th, facilitated by Frank Dukes. The question prompting the sessions was "How can we do a better job – not with just you, but with everyone – to get conservation on the ground?" One of the strongest messages that came back to us was what a good job the field staff is doing.

Jack gave some background information: In the past few years, NRCS has been well-funded. However, with these economic times, it is projected that the 2012 Farm Bill will be much more austere. It's hard to make long range plans right now with no budget in place. However, we do still have the allotted Farm Bill monies from the 2008 FB. The reality is that the next Farm Bill will not be as generous. So the question asked above re: putting conservation on the ground has to include the codicil of "in this time of limited resources".

Another positive piece of feedback that came during the partnership meetings was in reference to the State Technical Committee and also of the EQIP subcommittee. Jack noted that NRCS is seen as a leader in conservation training, and that is a result of all the help we get from our partners in assisting with technical training. Comments were also made affirming the effect of agreements which have been made with specific agencies, i.e. DCR and DOF, and the suggestion was made that our partners would like to see more of that.

One weakness of which we are very aware is the lack of adequate staff to support the nutrient management plans. We know we need more people, particularly in the Valley.

An idea that is being explored is to set up a clearinghouse of a searchable database to share information. There is so much out there; it would be nice to centralize it. Jack directed this subject to Wade and Wade noted that we are not just talking about ideas from the federal government, but all the resources. A good handout was distributed at the recent CREP rally that had a lot of the various sources of funding listed.

A **handout** was distributed with a summary of the information gathered, and the group was directed to the section re: emerging issues. Overall, most of our partners expressed the opinion that the meetings were useful and Jack communicated NRCS's appreciation for the positive feedback.

Mark Schonbeck made the comment that it would be helpful to have the actual pay schedules of programs readily accessible on the website. He knew that part of the delay in providing that information had to do with NRCS Headquarters and that this matter might be out of the control of Virginia's NRCS, but he expressed the feeling that he felt if that information was more accessible, NRCS would see a lot more participation with sign-up. (*The payment schedule was recently posted to the NRCS website*).

Jack turned the time back over to Wade, who noted he would be leaning heavily on Chad Wentz during today's meeting since Chad had been handling all Farm Bill issues during Wade's time on detail in D.C. He also recognized Mat Lyons' assistance covering Water Resource issues during his absence.

CREP MEETING: Chad reported that the reaction to the recent CREP rallies seemed positive, with feedback indicating that the meetings brought "everyone" together. The proof will be in the numbers. He pointed out the map of the state with the "green dots" and commented that we hope to get everyone "greened" up and get more people signed up.

The 14th of this month is the next deadline for CRP sign-up. This program is confined more to cropland. Lots of producers come in regarding reenrollment. We anticipate an active sign-up. It is a competitive bid process and there are a lot of flyers and brochures out there promoting it.

Mary Elfner asked specifically concerning SAFE. She wondered if this is affecting the whole country or just Virginia. Chad emphasized that the sign-up for CRP is continuous; there are just closing deadlines for specific periods for consideration. She wondered in terms of size and if 10 hectares was large enough to qualify.

Another question was asked inquiring as to whether we are seeing any marginal cropland going into corn. The initial response was that one thing is certain about grain priorities, and that is that they are uncertain! Chad indicated that in the West and Midwest of the US, things are certainly different than in Virginia. Our land here in Virginia has historically been tobacco land and the drought has really affected us. *Libby Norris* commented that Nebraska has lost a lot of its CRP contracts. The comment was made that most general CRP contracts involve planting pines and do not normally come out of trees after coming out of CRP.

Stephanie Martin noted that DCR was represented by Mark Holberg, filling in for Gary Moore. But for the State portion, all feedback is being sent directly to Gary, so will be waiting to get results from him. Right now, DCR doesn't have anything specific to add.

CIG: Chad explained that CIG is to help promote promising new technologies. Twenty five million in grant monies has been allocated for this program nationally. It's a 2-stage process. Pre-proposals had to be submitted by December 1st. The pre-proposals were then screened and certain applicants were asked to submit final proposals by the first part of March. Nineteen from Virginia were asked to proceed to the second stage and submit full proposals. All of them should be reviewed by March 25th.

As far as the state component, \$225,000 was allocated for the group that closed on February 18th. There were nine pre-proposals submitted, and the review committee asked six of those to take it to the next step and submit full proposals. The total requested from those six is just under \$300,000. The final proposals are due by April 25th. By May 6th, they will have been reviewed and those selected will have been notified. There are two state-funded CIG projects currently underway.

CCPI: This is also a national program; it's designed for Partners with specific proposals and is divided into two sections: National and Chesapeake Bay-related. Those applications closed at the end of January. Virginia sent two National and three Chesapeake Bay proposals (one of the Bay ones was multi-state with Maryland and Delaware). We don't know exactly when notification will be made about whether funding has been awarded.

Clarification: this money is not take from the state's allocation of EQIP. CCPI is all new funding. CIG is also additional monies, except for the State CIG monies – but National funding is in addition to other funding.

AMERICAN CHESTNUT FOUNDATION (ACF): (*John Scrivani*) The foundation just had a big regional meeting in January; Blaine Delaney from NRCS assisted with that meeting. After thanking Blaine for his assistance, John presented a PowerPoint, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. He talked of how the American Chestnut was considered a keystone crop in early America. It was a major source of wood for fences

and cabins. Most of them were wiped out by a rapidly-spreading blight about the turn of the 20th Century. Efforts were made to stop the blight and to develop a hybrid, but by the 1960s and 1970s, the American Chestnut was basically “written off”. In 1983, the American Chestnut Foundation was founded with the goal of restoring the native range.

In Virginia, over 34,000 acres at Meadowview (near Abingdon) is dedicated to this restoration chestnut project. It took 27 years to develop a hybrid (from the Chinese chestnut and survivors of the American Chestnut that still exist) that could be called the “restoration chestnut”, crossing and back-crossing. To establish them back over the former range, work is needed to develop regionally adaptive breeding populations. That requires one last backcross in the breeding process with a local strain – so a survivor from the blight has to be found and used to process the last step. Virginia is ready to start this process and the next step is identifying localized breeding land, most of which will be private from landowners volunteering to participate.

ACF is also looking for partnerships. There is a need and an opportunity to engage other relevant parties. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DOF that was originally established in 2004, but was updated in 2010 to include NRCS.

The beginning focus was on breeding a comparable strain that would be healthy. But now the need is to engage private, non-industrial landowners to assist. It makes sense to partner with NRCS.

That’s why John has joined with the STC: to become acquainted with NRCS and what we do and learn how to work with us to reestablish the American Chestnut where it was previously. A major need currently is to identify local survivors (from before the blight) and harvest local pollen. The goal is to establish a breed that will have the best resistance to future blight and the best growth potential. Breeding and restoration test plantings will take 50-100 years.

John introduced Katy McCune, who is with him, as the Mid-Atlantic Science Coordinator for ACF. DOF provides her office space in their Charlottesville office.

Mark Schonbeck asked if there are seedlings available. The answer is yes, for anyone who is willing to invest in the restoration planning. In other words, they “reward” donors.

There are some surviving trees still in Virginia’s Coastal Plain. It was a fast growing tree/plentiful before the blight hit.

Someone asked if it is being regarded as a tree to harvest. The answer is that both cutting and fire favor it, because of re-sprouting abilities.

Someone else asked if the local surviving trees have some kind of natural resistance. It seems they don’t, but that is still an open question. The American survivors are desired for local adaptation – the blight affects the bark, but not the roots. The resistance to the blight from the Chinese tree is VERY strong.

So the question is whether the restoration chestnut will have 100% resistance. That is still an open question, but currently, in a controlled environment, the answer is yes.

The discussion was ended with a few more technical questions and thanks to John for his presentation.

FARM BILL: Funding for this year came in early. We’ve had two sign-ups periods already for most programs. (They are, for the most part, continuous sign-ups, but there have already been two cut-off dates where applications were processed afterwards.) Even in these tight economic times, there is a high demand for the cost-share programs.

Dan Solomon: **EQIP and CBWI:** About 80% of the funds have already been allocated. There are more than enough applications to use all the allocated funds, and interests are varied. March 4th is the cutoff for the next allocation period.

Anyone with specific questions re: these two programs should contact Dan directly.

CSP (Conservation Stewardship): There have been 78 applications so far. Things are moving along and retraining for the new program is being done via contracts. These should also be complete by March 4th. Sign-up is down for CSP, currently. Normally, we receive more than 200 applications, so have not even received 50% of usual requests. *Dale Gardner* asked why we thought sign-up was down. Dan suggested it might be because the Field Office staff wasn't as familiar with CSP, so perhaps it wasn't being promoted as much as other programs. It is a more complicated program from our side. We don't really have any idea why from the landowner's side of things. In the past, it was hard to qualify for it, but the new CSP is NOT hard. However, it does take some time to go through the interview application process. *Chris Teutsch* requested a "30 second snapshot of CSP". *Jack* explained that the program is designed to reward HISTORIC stewardship (in other words, reward people who have continuously been using good conservation practices. It's not a "fix-it" program. It's been dubbed the "green" payment. However, it is required that the recipient continued enhancements. CSP is NOT tied too closely to standard conservation program. There is a bit of a challenge for our people to learn the program better. For this program, there is a lot of funding out there, and future projection makes it the rare program that will actually increase in funding.

There was a question concerning how much "historic" conservation and how much in new enhancements qualifies a farmer for CSP. The answer is that there is a threshold qualification, but the program does put a lot of emphasis on future efforts planned.

Both agricultural and forest lands are eligible. It does require a five year contract. There is no minimum acreage; it can be any sized field. Of course, the more acres, the more likelihood there is for future enhancements, so that potential does add points toward what is required to qualify for payment. NRCS will send out a summary sheet to STC members.

Ron Wood: **ORGANIC INITIATIVE** – The first ranking period will end March 4th, also. (Organic growers are also eligible to sign up for "regular" EQIP). So far, there are only nine applications for the initiative, so it is slow again this year. Evidently, a lot of people just don't feel a need to become USDA certified Organic. By May 2nd, all contracts have to be "signed, sealed and delivered". Otherwise, National Headquarters may require any unobligated money allotted to Virginia be returned. Typically, we have more allocation than sign-up in this area.

Mark Schonbeck asked if there is a high-tunnel side to the organic initiative. There is, but there is no breakdown of actual practices.

Once a grower is certified and awarded a contract, the certification must stay active for the length of the contract (that varies from 2-10 years). It is also possible to get started as a "transition" grower; that requires certification within 3 years.

A specialty crop can qualify under both regular EQIP and Organic. *Chris Teutsch* asked about livestock. The answer is that Animal Waste is one of the ONLY ones that is NOT in organic. Answers to what qualifies – list – can be obtained in the Field Offices. Every DC should know.

WHIP: Already more money has been requested than the allocation we've been given. We are hoping for more money to be allocated; we WILL request more. In the past, we have received an increase when we have been able to show need through sign-up. Thus far, \$454,000 has been allocated; \$150,000 is designated for Longleaf Pine.

Mark Schonbeck said that he is stumped that there has not be an increase in the participation for the Organic Initiative. VDACS has evidently had fewer applications, too. The USDA certification honestly CAN be cumbersome, so if they don't get the certification, they don't qualify for funding.

If all the money we are allocated is not used in WHIP, there is some flexibility to move from one "pot" to the other. That is NOT the case with Organic monies – those monies do go back to NHQ.

Question as to whether people interested in getting involved with the chestnut restoration should go through WHIP. Actually CCPI would probably be the way to go with the chestnuts. It could also qualify under Upland Habitat. Ron will work with John Scrivani to determine the best answer to this.

Diane Dunaway: **EASEMENTS (WRP & GRP)** – Handouts. Response has been excellent. We've already gone through two sign-ups and ranking periods since the first of the year.

GRP: Reviewed first. Initial allocation was \$634,720. She has already requested additional funding. There was a lot more response than we had funding to cover. There were four "rentals" who also applied.

WRP: A bunch of applications just came in; Initial allocation is \$1.1 million. She expects to ask for additional funding with WRP, too. (Reviewed spreadsheet handout) We are finishing up 6 WRPs to close this fiscal year and there are another 6 that have already closed and restorations are underway.

Jeremy Stone: **EASEMENTS (FRPP)** – There's lots of opportunity for anyone who can come up with matching funds. The allotment is just over \$1.5 million. We've had two applications, one that is 152 acres in Clarke County requesting \$437,000. From Frederick County, there is one application for 55 acres requesting \$70,000. It was the goal to close 6 FRPPs by the end of the month, but three of them are hoping for extensions because their matching funds have "dried up". FRPP can provide up to 50% of the fair market value.

Blaine Delaney: **PROJECT PROPOSALS** – There is an opportunity for additional technical staff in the Valley. Currently there is not adequate staff, especially in the Bay area. There is an idea to set up a Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT) made up of non-federal employees. It would be a three-yr. employment opportunity. This would be in the Bay states – 3 years – 3 states 3 million dollar cap.

(See handout.) We are hoping for 5 positions. The focus would be on Smith Creek. We're hoping this will go through. They would implement the existing Farm Bill contracts and get new ones, specifically within the Bay Watershed area. Hopefully, the lessons learned there can be replicated in other watersheds.

We need another partner to step forward as the actual employer for these 5 positions. The job specifics are still open to change. Everything is dependent on funding. DCR may be able to provide jobs for two, but cannot do all five. Projecting a probably 45 day hiring process, we

would like to start soon, but things are still up in the air. It probably will be part of the FY2012 Initiative, but the positions have to be in place during FY2011 for this to work.

In terms of WHY the Valley? The workload is great there. The needs in the Valley surpass what this would handle even. The staff in that area really needs help. Libby Norris supported that claim by saying, “We’re all working Sundays.”

Chad Wentz: **LONG LEAF PINE** – Two million has been allocated nationally. There are nine eligible states, so Virginia will only be given a small percentage. We have asked for funding for one forester and are still waiting to hear. The forester CANNOT be a federal employee, so again we’re looking for a willing partner. The same timeline applies; these are all part of the same initiative plan with one budget proposal to Congress for \$25 million nationwide.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and USDA dollars proposals: There are five key proposals nationally, three focused on Virginia – one LL Pine, one CB, and one Early Successional Habitat. Grants will be announced April 4th.

Agency Updates:

Mark Schonbeck (VABF) – They are currently integrating organic and sustainable system; 4 sub-teams are working on it. It is a learning process and they are establishing practice standards. The idea is not to just make more organic benefits, but also to strengthen conservation benefits. They aim to use NRCS expertise to improve their conservation footprint, both in terms of training and to make their stewardship more transparent. They will focus on technical service providers. Two and a half years is the projected life of the project and it is underway.

Patricia Stansbury (VABF) – Recent Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference was a huge success. Many more people wanted to come than they were able to accommodate. Just under 500 attended. Elliot Coleman, a specialist in 4-Season Growing, was the featured guest. Patricia invited all to put next year’s conference on their calendars for February 2012. They are currently trying to locate an adequate venue so much people can participate.

Katie Frazier (VA Agribusiness Council) – State budgeting issues: Ag Stewardship was tripled in size. The Governor has funded two additional positions, and it has been retained in the budget. That’s good news for complying with water quality requirements. Two legislative initiatives this year. One was re: urban turf grass professionals – group negotiated terms for monitoring of lawn maintenance fertilizers. Some of it goes into effect by 2014; golf courses by 2017. By 2014, good practice labeling will be required. They are also including consumer education toward proper lawn care maintenance. The second resulted in the legislature passing a bill to create additional incentives to implement resource management teams. Deemed to be in compliance – unique farming operations. There are specific details as to accountability. This is not just a CBI; it is relevant to the entire state.

Libby Norris (CBF) – Ag Stewardship – they are working with field staff in the Valley to try to get everything on the ground. There will be another “Farmer to Bay” trip in March. A few slots are still available; let Libby know if interested.

Russ Perkinson (VA DCR) – CB livestock exclusion initiative – committed \$4 million. Work is either actively under construction or has been implemented. Districts were to survey clients and communities. \$3,375,000 has been committed; \$675,000 to be put into TMDL – implementation for livestock inclusion. The districts are actively working to get the systems on the ground. It’s moving aggressively; NRCS helped – with design, etc.

A technical advisory committee meeting will be held on March 7th at DOF. It's an open meeting. This is a wrap-up period for the committee to submit the 2012 program to the director.

They are contemplating doing away with NM2 (a record keeping practice). It was a sort of farmer self-certifying process where they tried to get a handle on who was implementing. The problem is that the Bay program gives DCR no credit for actual implementation. They feel they can use the funds in a more useful way.

NACD – working with Bay states NRCS – how are we gathering data and reporting information?

Stephanie Martin (VA DCR) – NACD has received a grant from NRCS to work with the five Chesapeake Bay states to evaluate the consistency of Ag BMP data collection and how it is submitted to EPA. Dana York (formerly of NRCS) is working as a contractor to NACD for this project. NACD is coming to Virginia to see a demonstration of the Ag BMP Tracking Program and how our data is transmitted to EPA using the NEIEN process. They will start their visit at Hanover/Caroline SWCD for a demonstration of the Tracking Program and then meet with DCR staff for information on our process of reporting.

The General Assembly created the Water Quality Improvement Fund that receives 10 percent of any surplus revenue at the end of the fiscal year. The end of Fiscal year 2009 resulted in approximately 32 million dollars. The General Assembly allocated \$5 million to the Reserve Fund and \$27 million to the Natural Resources Commitment Fund. The Director of DCR will decide if these funds will be split and used for AG BMPs for Program Year 2012 and 2013 or used for 2012 only. In addition, to this funding, the Commonwealth collects funds from the Land Recordation fee to be used for Ag BMPs. The estimate is \$9 million for this program yr 2011.

The collection of Voluntary BMPs is still under development. There were no special monies appropriated to address this effort.

Betsy Bowles (DEQ) – The State version of the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) has to go to a regulatory advisory panel in the next month or so. There's a big focus on small dairies from EPA, with a baseline of 200 cattle. To qualify, dairy would have to prove it's contributing to water quality pollution. There is a need to have a meeting with the dairy farmers in the Valley. Eastern Shore is the other focus. DEQ wants EPA to describe and explain expectations. This is THEIR focus. There will be some inspections, probably in mid to late April. DEQ and VDACS are committed to working together as a partnership, not just for across the board permitting, but on a NEED basis. If BMPs can be put into place, that will take care of needs.

There are approximately 800 farms that are not required to meet the BMP permit level. Site inspections will be done and rankings given and individual plans will be done on all of those by 2015. Those farms with permits have already been inspected. This is not limited to dairies per Betsy's understanding. Someone asked if they were all livestock related. Betsy thinks they are mostly swine, beef, dairy and poultry, but that goat, sheep, llamas, and horses also will need to be considered.

The Red ID regulation for poultry waste permits has gone into effect. Everyone is in good shape; all permits have been reissued.

Chris Teutsch asked how EPA chooses which farms they will visit. The priority is set by examining aerial photos with Google maps and determining how close operations are to streams and how/if they have water quality issues. *Chris* wondered if they would choose "bad actors" and then draw conclusions re: the whole industry. We do NOT want "bad" ones used as the model. EPA governs this whole process. DEQ's hands are really tied, but we do want EPA to be comfortable with DEQ handling the designation of small CAFOs. There was a discussion about at what point enforcement actions are taken and whether this EPA action was just focused on Region 3 and the Chesapeake Bay or whether it was taking place throughout the country. It is kind

of a “Big Brother” thing and a lot of farmers wonder who they can trust. It definitely has people running scared and that is how EPA wants it, even though it seems counter-productive. DEQ is trying to coordinate the message to the farmers.

John Scrivani (VA TACF) – Expressed concern about NRCS changes re: Code 590 that has to do with phosphorous indexes – threshold application and nutrient management. Chad remarked that lots of comments had been received re: Code 590 and that the open comment period would close on Friday, March 4th.

Kevin Schmidt (VDACS) – Conservation and Easement workshop next week in Lexington. They are targeting working landowners. It will be at the Virginia Horse Center on March 9th and is a one day workshop. FY2011 funding was only \$100,000. FY2012 begins July 1st and funding has been increased to 1.2 million. Localities will have two years to spend the funds.

Dean Cumbria (DOF) - It’s time to plant trees. Loblolly pines have been planted. They still have some hardwood trees available, though they’ve run out of some species. For any contracts, NRCS can extend and requests can be made to local DCs for waivers and extensions.

February was a heavy fire month for Virginia throughout the State.

Some good progress has been made with interagency training.

Todd Groh (VDOF) – RT – State cost share: more money is available. \$230,000 more was added in January. They expect there will be carryover.

Chris Teutsch (VCE/VFGC) – The Winter Forage Conference with Temple Grandin as featured speaker went well. Chris thanked NRCS for their support. He referred the group to www.vaforagers.org. A fencing school is coming up; this is the best fencing program in this part of the U.S. Chris noted that J.B. Daniels has put together a very helpful fact sheet re: grasslands and suggested we might want to put together similar fact sheets for each area.

Mary Elfner (Audubon) – They have a very limited staff. Their current goal is to get 1,000 acres signed up but have none signed up thus far. Farm Bill programs don’t translate well for Audubon except for quail. There are a lot of hoops to jump through and Audubon has requested a lowering of the minimum acreage requirement. That issue is still going round and round. Audubon has held some workshops and formed some good partnerships. Mary referred to the SAFE program re: cutting over timberland to establish native grasses. It is difficult to get that going, and she feels they may need to spend more one on one time with individuals. This is limited to Culpeper area, currently. Libby Norris suggested that with the Quail Initiative, perhaps this needs to expand out of that area. Information has been sent to Marc Puckett in this regard.

Libby Norris (CBF) – Libby commented on J.B.’s success with the CREP workshops and the handouts. She suggests compiling more handouts and bringing in partners more. She noted there are 14 different programs to finance stream fencing, and they need to be coordinated/consolidated. Someone from NRCS stated that Pat Paul (NRCS Public Relations Specialist) would love to connect and work with agencies to partner and consolidate. Please contact Pat if you would like to serve on a Communications Subcommittee and work on these type issues.

CLOSING:

Wade – With the continuing resolution, we’re in a bit of limbo. We do have to start transition and bring together sub-committees to see where we’re going for next year. We may want to at least set up a framework. In terms of proposals, we want to try not to change too much, but there may be some things that need to be tweaked. He asked the group to “keep that on the radar”.

Jack – Thanked everyone for coming and asked them to get their coalitions together and start talking about the upcoming Farm Bill. We need to do a better job with cost share and easement programs on a Federal level. Everyone agrees that we need to simplify, but it just keeps getting more complicated. We need to consolidate. It's difficult to approach this issue on a Federal level because there are so many different statutes. Right now, NRCS doesn't have any specific recommendations, but we do want to work toward having a more unified program.

The next meeting of the STC is scheduled for May 24th, 2011, at 10 a.m.

The meeting was closed at 12:45 p.m.

State Technical Committee Agenda

March 1, 2011 - 10:00 a.m.
Richmond NRCS State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Ste. 209

Welcome and Opening Remarks	Jack Bricker Wade Biddix
Summary from Ag. and Cons. Agency Meetings	Jack Bricker
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP & CREP)	Emily Horsley Gary Moore
Conservation Innovation Grants National CIG State CIG	Chad Wentz
Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative	Chad Wentz
American Chestnut Foundation	John Scrivani
FY2011 Farm Bill Program Status (Overview) EQIP/CBWI/CSP Organic Initiative WHIP Easement Programs WRP and GRP FRPP	Wade Biddix Dan Solomon Ron Wood Ron Wood Diane Dunaway NRCS - Stone
Project Proposals Chesapeake Bay Watershed Long Leaf Pine	Blaine Delaney Chad Wentz
Agency Updates	All



Next Meeting - May 24, 2011

Shenandoah Valley SWAT Team

NRCS Funding = 75%

DCR Funding = 25%

Non-federal term positions for 3 years.

SWAT Team would work in the High Priority Watersheds within Augusta, Rockingham, Page + Shenandoah Counties. They would implement Farm Bill Contracts and develop new Farm Bill Contracts within these 4 counties, with special emphasis on the Smith Creek Showcase Watershed.

SWAT Team	Location (VA)	Position	Technical Skills
Shenandoah Valley (#1)	Harrisonburg	Soil Conservationist (GS-11)	Develop conservation plans and contracts.
Shenandoah Valley (#1)	Harrisonburg	Soil Conservationist (GS-11)	Develop conservation plans and contracts.
Shenandoah Valley (#1)	Harrisonburg	Agricultural Engineer	Design waste storage facilities (313) and other engineering practices.
Shenandoah Valley (#1)	Harrisonburg	Soil Conservation Technician	Plans, designs, lay out and certifies a wide variety of complex conservation practices.
Shenandoah Valley (#1)	Harrisonburg	Outreach Coordinator	Conducts outreach mailings, prepares news releases, makes "cold calls" and provides administrative support.

Partner	3.1.11 – 9.30.11	10.1.11 – 9.30.12	10.1.12 – 9.30.13	10.1.13 – 5.31.14	TOTAL Contributions
DCR	\$34,965	\$104,895	\$104,895	\$69,930	\$314,685
NRCS	\$104,895	\$314,685	\$314,685	\$209,790	\$944,055
TOTAL	\$139,860.00	\$419,580.00	\$419,580.00	\$279,720.00	\$1,258,740.00

SWAT = Strategic Watershed Action Team

VIRGINIA NRCS SUMMARY REPORT ON AG AND CONSERVATION GROUP PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS – January 12 & 13, 2011

Purpose: To solicit input from partner agencies and organizations in four areas: with regard to the partnerships, what is working, what can be improved, how can we work together to get more conservation on the ground, and what are emerging resource concerns on the horizon.

Participants: 31 representatives from agricultural and conservation partner agencies and organizations plus the NRCS State Conservationist and 6 NRCS staff. (Sign-in sheets attached)

Format: Half-day sessions facilitated by Frank Dukes, Director of the Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia

NRCS State Conservationist Jack Bricker welcomed everyone and began each session with introductions of NRCS staff and participants. He stated the purpose for the meeting -- to seek ideas on how NRCS can be more effective through our partnerships in getting more conservation on the ground in an era of diminishing resources and what emerging resource issues they see on the horizon. He noted that a summary of comments would be distributed to participants and used at future State Technical Committee meetings to develop policies and program offerings.

Common themes from both meetings:

- 1) Water quality is the top resource concern.
- 2) Maintaining NRCS on-site technical assistance is vital for partners and landowners.
- 3) Farm Bill plans and programs need to be tailored to the landowner and resource needs.
- 4) Streamlining conservation programs will make it easier for landowners and field staff.
- 5) Keeping pace with changes in technology will enable us to work more effectively with farmers.
- 6) In the face of diminishing resources, maintaining partnerships and pooling resources will help achieve a common goal of getting more conservation on the ground.
- 7) Decisions we make affect all of us, and the State Technical Committee is a valuable way to bring everyone together to arrive at these decisions.

Summary comments by question:

- 1) *What's working:*
 - a. State Technical Committee is open, diverse, good venue for information and addressing issues, NRCS listens (both groups)
 - b. EQIP subcommittee of State Technical Committee deals directly with specific interests such as poultry (Ag Group)
 - c. Interaction and cooperation at the local level with conservation districts (both)
 - d. CIG grants allow investment in cutting edge technologies (Ag)
 - e. Visibility and participation of State Conservationist at partner meetings (both)
 - f. NRCS's willingness to share training (both)
 - g. New program for aquaculture (Cons. Group)

WHIP FY11

Fund Code	Account Name	Allocated	All Eligible Applications	Contract Approval	Obligated	Unobligated
75F 51	Virginia	\$454,185.00	\$641,915.68	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$454,185.00
	Sub Funds	\$444,185.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$444,185.00
75F 51 AW	Aquatic Wildlife Habitat Creation	\$34,536.00	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$34,536.00
75F 51 BF	Beginning Farmer	\$10,140.00	\$7,886.50	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,140.00
75F 51 CC	CCPI - DGIF	\$61,082.00	\$39,720.50	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$61,082.00
75F 51 TU	CCPI - Trout Unlimited	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00
75F 51 HM	Habitat Maintenance/Protection	\$34,537.00	\$126,251.18	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$34,537.00
75F 51 LR	Limited Resource	\$10,140.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,140.00
75F 51 LP	Long Leaf Pine	\$150,000.00	\$110,200.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$150,000.00
75F 51 SD	Socially Disadvantaged	\$10,140.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,140.00
75F 51 UW	Upland Wildlife Habitat Creation	\$103,610.00	\$353,857.50	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$103,610.00
75F 51 119	FY11 WHIP Reserve	\$10,000.00	\$641,915.68	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00

	Long Leaf Pine - National Initiative	
	10% of Non"earmarked" funds to Historically Underserved Clients	\$0.00

GRP - Feb. 18, 2011 Batch (Completed applications and ranking due March 4.)										
GRP & WRP Funding Ranking - 2011										
	Area	Ranking Score, hi to lo	County	App. Date	Acres	\$ per Ac. Pymt.	\$ Total Landowner Pymt.	\$ Restoration Costs	\$ Total	Perm., or 30, or 10 yr.
Permanent										
	1	192.0	Rockingham	1/5/11	76	4200	\$ 319,200	3040		Perm
	1	137.0	Clarke	2/17/11	99	4429	\$ 437,585			Perm
	2	168.0	Washington		1026	2100	\$ 2,154,600			Perm
	2	167.0	Washington	2/1/11	184	2590	\$ 476,560			Perm
	2		Carroll	1/14/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	1/14/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	1/14/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	1/12/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	2/2/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	2/2/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	1/2/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	1/24/11						Perm
	2		Grayson	1/12/11			\$ -			Perm
	2		Grayson	1/7/11			\$ -			Perm
	3	157.4	Lunenburg	1/13/11	100	2500	\$ 250,000			Perm
	3	148.5	Pittsylvania	2/10/11	108	2500	\$ 270,000			Perm
	3	138.0	Pittsylvania	1/28/11	199	2510	\$ 499,490			Perm
	3	125.0	Pittsylvania	1/27/11	227	2510	\$ 569,770			Perm
					2019		\$ 4,977,205	Prelim. Totals		18 Perm
Rental										
	4		Dinwiddie							Rental
	3		Buckingham	1/27/11	62		\$ -			Rental

WRP Funding Ranking - 2011 - Draft Report 3/1/11, NRCS										
WRP - Jan. 14, 2011 Batch										
GRP & WRP Funding Ranking - 2011										
	Area	Ranking Score, hi to lo	County	App. Date	Acres	\$ per Ac. Pymt.	\$ Total Landowner Pymt.	\$ Restoration Costs	\$ Total	Perm., or 30, or 10 yr.
Permanent										
	1	219	Madison	5/18/2010	27.83	5000	\$ 139,150			Perm
WRP - Feb. 18, 2011 Batch (Completed applications and ranking due March 4.)										
	Area	Ranking Score, hi to lo	County	App. Date	Acres	\$ per Ac. Pymt.	\$ Total Landowner Pymt.	\$ Restoration Costs	\$ Total	Perm., or 30, or 10 yr.
Permanent										
	1		Fauquier	1/13/2011	115	\$ 4,750	\$ 546,250			Perm
	1		Culpeper	2/15/2011	9	\$ 5,000	\$ 45,000			Perm
	1		Frederick	2/17/2011		\$ 2,500	\$ -			Perm
	1		Shenandoah	12/17/2010			\$ -			Perm
	2		Craig	2/15/2011			\$ -			Perm
	2		Craig				\$ -			Perm
	2		Craig				\$ -			Perm
	3		Brunswick	2/18/2011		\$ 2,510	\$ -			Perm
	4		Greensville		8		\$ -			Perm
	4		Accomac				\$ -			Perm
	4		Accomac				\$ -			Perm
	4		Accomac				\$ -			Perm
	4		Charles City				\$ -			Perm
									Total	13 Perm.
10-yr. restoration agreement										
	3		Pittsylvania	2/7/2011	1.7		\$ -			10 yr.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Summary

03/05/2011

NRCS allocated \$1,587,170 to Virginia to assist in the acquisition of eligible lands under the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011. To date we have received two applications for FY 2011 funding under FRPP. The first application was for \$437,550 to assist with the purchase of an easement on 152-acres of agricultural land in Clarke County. The second application requested \$67,500 to assist with the purchase of an easement on 55-acres of agricultural land in Spotsylvania County.

We have heard from several other potential applicants who anticipate applying for assistance under FRPP in fiscal year 2011. These applicants are interested in preserving both agricultural lands and land with historical significance.

EQIP Funds Status 3_4_2011

Account Name	Allocated	Contract Approval	pre-approved	funds remaining	backlog all eligible
Virginia	\$11,047,157.00	\$1,503,768.10			
Sub Funds	\$10,821,195.00	\$1,503,768.10			
Beginning Farmer	\$304,422.00	\$0.00	\$148,083.00	\$156,339.00	\$2,592,349.00
CAP 102 CNMP Development	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00
CAP 104 Nutrient Management Plan	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00
CAP 106 Forest Mgmt Plan	\$30,000.00	\$4,529.00	\$5,269.00	\$20,202.00	\$938.00
CAP 118 Irrigation Water Management Plan	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00
CAP 122 Energy Audit Headquarters	\$20,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,930.00	\$17,070.00	\$2,040.00
CAP 124 Energy Audit Field Operations	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	\$0.00
CAP 130 Drainage Water Management	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00
CAP 138 Transition to Organic Conservation Plan	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00
CCPI-Fish America	\$928,504.00	\$187,279.00	\$391,413.00	\$349,812.00	\$0.00
Cropland - Christiansburg	\$200,400.00	\$0.00	\$21,943.00	\$178,457.00	\$94,742.00
Cropland - Farmville	\$425,600.00	\$0.00	\$302,819.00	\$122,781.00	\$102,453.00
Cropland - Harrisonburg	\$300,600.00	\$0.00	\$195,000.00	\$105,600.00	\$0.00
Cropland - Smithfield	\$451,200.00	\$9,342.00	\$370,768.00	\$71,090.00	\$84,535.00
Forestry - Statewide	\$700,000.00	\$497,542.10	\$173,679.00	\$28,778.90	\$421,368.00
Groundwater Conservation	\$147,304.00	\$0.00	\$147,304.00	\$0.00	\$498,622.00
High Tunnel Hoop House Initiative	\$200,000.00	\$0.00	\$199,563.00	\$437.00	\$221,626.00
Limited Resource Farmer	\$304,422.00	\$6,600.00	\$19,700.00	\$278,122.00	\$0.00
Livestock in Confinement - Christiansburg	\$1,911,894.00	\$198,008.00	\$1,811,184.00	-\$97,298.00	\$3,457,628.00
Livestock in Confinement - Farmville	\$504,504.00	\$0.00	\$505,892.00	-\$1,388.00	\$1,537,066.00
Livestock in Confinement - Harrisonburg	\$765,239.00	\$0.00	\$765,239.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Livestock in Confinement - Smithfield	\$348,450.00	\$0.00	\$348,450.00	\$0.00	\$173,045.00
Orchard - Pest Management	\$100,000.00	\$62,280.00	\$6,000.00	\$31,720.00	
Organic Certified	\$385,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$385,000.00	\$101,442.00
Organic Transition	\$385,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$385,000.00	\$82,160.00
Pasture - Christiansburg	\$750,101.00	\$221,357.00	\$506,424.00	\$22,320.00	\$2,020,417.00
Pasture - Farmville	\$625,824.00	\$133,906.00	\$473,439.00	\$18,479.00	\$1,122,170.00
Pasture - Harrisonburg	\$386,332.00	\$0.00	\$126,088.00	\$260,244.00	\$152,500.00
Pasture - Smithfield	\$181,977.00	\$0.00	\$116,023.00	\$65,954.00	\$30,287.00
Socially Disadvantaged	\$304,422.00	\$182,925.00	\$54,445.00	\$67,052.00	\$1,039,742.00
FY11 CIG State Component	\$225,000.00	\$0.00		\$225,000.00	

CBWI Funds Status 3/03/2011

Account Name	Allocated	Contract Approval	Pre-Approved	Funds Remaining	Backlog-Eligible
Virginia	\$14,307,833.00				
Sub Funds	\$14,207,833.00				
CBWI - Animals in Confinement	\$4,874,700.00	\$0.00	\$4,536,585.00	\$338,115.00	\$3,209,670.00
CBWI - Aquaculture	\$100,000.00	\$0.00	\$76,060.00	\$23,940.00	\$7,500.00
CBWI - Cropland	\$3,565,363.00	\$91,472.00	\$2,146,169.00	\$1,327,722.00	\$399,973.00
CBWI - Limited Resource Farmer	\$451,361.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$451,361.00	\$0.00
CBWI - New Farmer	\$451,361.00	\$0.00	\$430,628.00	\$20,733.00	\$823,470.00
CBWI - Pasture	\$3,046,687.00	\$264,372.00	\$2,770,162.00	\$12,153.00	\$1,914,906.00
CBWI - Socially Disadvantaged	\$451,361.00	\$0.00	\$197,485.00	\$253,876.00	\$2,010.00
Shennendoah Valley RCD_CCPI	\$720,000.00	\$0.00		\$720,000.00	\$0.00
Smith Creek Showcase Watershed-Cropland	\$150,000.00	\$0.00		\$150,000.00	\$55,610.00
Smith Creek Showcase Watershed-Pasture	\$350,000.00	\$0.00		\$350,000.00	\$272,806.00
Trout Unlimited	\$47,000.00	\$0.00		\$47,000.00	\$0.00
Trout Unlimited - Stream Restoration	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00
FY11 CBWI Reserve	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	