

**Minnesota State Technical Committee Meeting
December 12, 2012
Stearns SWCD Office
Waite Park, MN**

DRAFT MINUTES

Participants:

Don Baloun, NRCS	Rhonda Osterman, NRCS
John Baker, ARS	Wayne Ostlie, Great River Greening
Ian Cunningham, MN Assn of SWCD	Thom Peterson, MN Farmers Union
Les Everett, U of MN	Ted Radintz, MN Milk Producers Assn
Wanda Garry, FSA	Josh Stamper, MDA
Jeremy Geske, MN Pork Producers	Lori Stevenson, USFWS
Jeff Hastings, Trout Unlimited	Lawrence Sukalski, MN Soybean Growers
Linda Hennen, FSA	Myron Taylor, NRCS
Bruce Henningsgaard, MN PCA	Brenda Tonn, NRCS
Lonnie Kemp, Consultant	Adam Wartheson, Land Stewardship Project
Riley Maanum, MN Corn Growers	Barb Weisman, MDA
Linda Meschke, Rural Advantage	Matt Wohlman, NDA
Aaron Meyer, MN Rural Water Assn	Bull Zurn, MN Soybean Growers
Krista Olson, NRCS	

Don Baloun, NRCS

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Minutes from the September 2012 meeting. Updated minutes will be posted on the web site. Let us know of any changes to be made and the final minutes will be posted on the web site.

Budget – NRCS did receive the first part of our budget based on the mandatory programs that were funded – EQIP, CSP, WRP, GRP, FRPP. Because we don't have a Farm Bill, we have no new enrollments. We have a situation where we can start EQIP signup – we are waiting on the final payment rates.

Also with the EQIP funds, we also received our budgets for the initiatives. We received the \$3M for the pilots on the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program. For the Driftless Area, we received \$511,000 in financial assistance. For EQIP Energy we received \$29,000; EQIP Organic we received \$400,000; High Tunnel received \$400,000 and then our water quality initiatives - Elm Creek, Chippewa and Seven Mile – received \$959,000 to be split up.

The other program is AWEP (Ag Water Environmental Protection) which is targeted to the western part of the state, received \$5,293,000 which we share with North Dakota and South Dakota – Minnesota's portion of that will be about \$2.2M.

Questions, Comments and Discussion followed

Matt Wohlman, MDA – Water Quality Certification Program

Matt distributed the letter that was sent to David Frederickson, Commissioner of Agriculture, presenting him with the recommendations made by the MAWQCP Advisory Committee. He reviewed the Advisory Committee's recommendations and answered questions from the MSTC members.

This letter may be viewed at the MSTC web site.

Questions, Comments and Discussion followed

Joshua Stamper, MDA – MN AgBMP Handbook

Joshua explained the implementation of the Handbook and showed how this would help get an understanding of which practices have measured pollutant reductions associated with implementation and determine which practices need additional research.

For more information, follow the AgBMP Handbook link:

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/cleanwaterfund/research/agbmphandbook.aspx>

Joshua's presentation can be found on the MSTC web site.

Caryl Radatz, NRCS – Soil Health Game Plan

NRCS is focusing more attention nationwide on soil health this year by educating our customers and the public about the positive impact healthy soils can have on productivity and conservation. The four basic principles that will improve the health of your soil are: 1) Keep the soil covered as much as possible 2); Disturb the soil as little as possible; 3) Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil; and 4) Diversify as much as possible using crop rotation and cover crops. Some of the core practices of a Soil Health Management System that can help optimize inputs, protect against drought, and increase production are conservation crop rotation, cover crops, no till, mulch tillage, mulching and nutrient and pest management.

MN NRCS began preparing for this focus last year by training a core group of their staff - soil scientists and resource conservationists - on the principles of soil health. This year training will be delivered to all field staff in partnership with other agencies. BWSR and MASWCD have already expressed interest in joint training opportunities. A Soil Health Coordinator will be selected early in January to help coordinate and accelerate the effort. NRCS staff has found cooperating producers that are using some of the practices such as cover crops and have already held tours to see the practices. A multi-agency group plans to meet with University of MN researchers very soon to find out what's going on with research related to soil health and identify research needs. NRCS will be placing an emphasis on practices that promote Soil Health such as cover crop options in 2013 EQIP.

NRCS produced a Soil Planner for 2013 that includes much helpful information about Soil Health. The planners are free and available by contacting Caryl Radatz (caryl.radatz@mn.usda.gov) or Julie MacSwain (julie.macswain@mn.usda.gov).

Wanda Garry, FSA – CRP

1. Conservation Authorities

The Food Security Act of 1985, Section 1231(a), as amended, provided the authority to

enroll land in CRP through September 30, 2012. No legislation has been enacted to reauthorize or extend this authority, to date. Therefore, County Offices have been instructed to not:

- Process offers for CRP/CCRP;
- Approve CRP/CCRP contracts.

County Offices may continue to accept offers for CCRP on or after October 1st; however, due to the lack of authority, the County Office shall not process or approve the offer.

For CRP-1's approved prior to October 1, 2012, County Offices are authorized to issue annual rental payments, PIP and SIP incentive payments and cost-share.

2. 2012 Annual Rental Payments

To date, Minnesota County Offices have issued over 71,300 annual rental payments resulting in close to \$106 million in payments. These figures show Minnesota is at 99.92 percent complete for FY2012.

3. CRP – FY13 Expiring acreages

Currently, MN has approximately 1.4 million acres under CRP/CREP/CCRP/FWP contracts. The breakdown for 9/30/2013 expiring contracts is as such:

GENERAL SIGNUP		CONTINUOUS SIGNUP		TOTAL	
ACRES	NUMBER	ACRES	NUMBER	ACRES	NUMBER
113,817	2,787	15,711	2,059	129,529	4,846

The breakdown for CRP contracts expiring in the next 4 years is as such:

Expiration Yr	General Signup		Continuous Signup		Total	
	Acres	Number	Acres	Number	Acres	Number
9/30/2013	113,817	2,787	15,711	2,059	129,529	4,846
9/30/2014	188,133	2,523	19,026	2,008	207,158	4,531
9/30/2015	67,075	1,607	33,603	3,104	100,677	4,711
9/30/2016	13,143	618	77,141	6,590	90,283	7,208
TOTAL	633,670	11,784	189,282	18,523	822,953	30,307

4. CRP – FY12 Expired Acreage

In Fiscal Year (2012), over 290,000 acres expired from under a CRP-1 agreement. As of November 1, 2012, National Reports indicated that Minnesota enrolled or re-enrolled approximately 148,000 acres into both CRP and CCRP in FY2012. Based on these numbers, approximately 50 percent (%) of the 2012 expired acreage will either be brought back into crop production or enrolled or maintained in other conservation type programs.

With the potential for thousands of acres returning to crop production in FY 2013, FSA and NRCS are working in a joint effort to notify all landowners and/or operators whose CRP acreage expired in 2012 concerning the need to obtain a NRCS Conservation Plan for Highly Erodible

Land (HEL), if applicable. This information will be issued by postcard mailed through the State Office.

5. Minnesota State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) Agreement

Last February, the CRP Subcommittee recommended and the Minnesota State Technical Committee approved a recommendation to amend the current Minnesota SAFE proposal to incorporate language for authorizing managed harvesting and grazing or emergency haying/grazing, if authorized and included in the conservation plan. This request was submitted to DAFP.

The Minnesota State FSA Office has received notification that this request has been approved. Therefore, FSA will be issuing a MN Amendment to the 2-CRP (Rev. 5) Handbook incorporating the authorization into the practice specifications.

6. FY 2012 Haying and Grazing Report

Due to the Extreme Drought Conditions experienced across the Nation, the Deputy Administrator of Farm Programs authorized the released of eligible practice acres for Emergency Haying and Grazing (EmH&G) of CRP acreage for Counties in a D0 drought category. With State Technical Committee recommendation and FSA State Committee approval, States were authorized to expand the list of eligible practices to include wetland related practices for EmH&G.

As requested by the State Technical Committee, the actual acres hayed or grazed under the emergency provisions is as follows:

**State Reports
29-Oct-12**

Managed Harvesting for Livestock- Contracts	517	Managed Harvesting for Livestock - Acreage	23,604.0
Managed Harvesting for Biomass - Contracts	0	Managed Harvesting for Biomass - Acreage	0.0

Emergency Haying Contracts - CP1, CP2, CP4B, CP4D, CP10, CP18B & CP18C	1341	Emergency Haying Acres - CP1, CP2, CP4B, CP4D, CP10, CP18B & CP18C	37,009.0
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP8A	17	Emergency Haying Acres - CP8A	30.6
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP23	381	Emergency Haying Acres - CP23	12,621.9
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP23A	48	Emergency Haying Acres - CP23A	1,138.2
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP27	76	Emergency Haying Acres - CP27	270.0
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP28	116	Emergency Haying Acres - CP28	800.2
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP37	7	Emergency Haying Acres - CP37	164.8
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP41	0	Emergency Haying Acres - CP41	0.0
Emergency Haying Contracts – CP25	329	Emergency Haying Acres - CP25	5,775.7

Total Emergency Haying Contracts	2315	Total Emergency Haying Acres	57,810.2
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- CP4B Wildlife Habitat - Corridors
- CP4D Wildlife Habitat
- CP10 Grass Already Established
- CP18B Permanent Vegetation to Reduce Salinity
- CP18C Permanent Salt Tolerant Vegetation
- CP8A Grass Waterway
- CP23 Wetland Restoration - Floodplain Wetland
- CP23A Restoration - Non-Floodplain
- CP27 Farmable Wetland
- CP28 Farmable Wetland Buffer
- CP37 Duck Nesting Habitat
- CP41 Flooded Prairie Wetland Rare and
- CP25 Declining Habitat

**State Reports
29-Oct-12**

Managed Grazing Contracts	28	Managed Grazing Acreage	1,097.7
Restrictive Grazing Contracts	0	Restrictive Grazing Acres	0.0
Permissive Grazing Contracts	0	Permissive Grazing Acres	0.0
Incidental Grazing Contracts	1	Incidental Grazing Acres	11.1

Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP1, CP2, CP4B, CP4D, CP10, CP18B & CP18C	126	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP1, CP2, CP4B, CP4D, CP10, CP18B & CP18C	5,491.7
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP8A	0	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP8A	0.0
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP23	19	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP23	743.5
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP23A	2	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP23A	58.8
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP27	5	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP27	23.8
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP28	4	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP28	37.4
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP37	2	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP37	26.6
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP41	0	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP41	0.0
Emergency Grazing Contracts - CP25	15	Emergency Grazing Acres - CP25	332.1

Total Emergency Grazing Contracts	173	Total Emergency Grazing Acres	6,713.9
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- CP1 Introduced Grasses
- CP2 Native Grasses
- CP4B Wildlife Habitat - Corridors
- CP4D Wildlife Habitat
- CP10 Grass Already Established
- CP18B Permanent Vegetation to Reduce Salinity
- CP18C Permanent Salt Tolerant Vegetation
- CP8A Grass Waterway
- CP23 Wetland Restoration - Floodplain Wetland
- CP23A Restoration - Non-Floodplain
- CP27 Farmable Wetland
- CP28 Farmable Wetland Buffer
- CP37 Duck Nesting Habitat
- CP41 Flooded Prairie Wetland Rare and
- CP25 Declining Habitat

Questions, Comments and Discussion followed

Dr. David Mulla, U of MN – Targeting Approach

Dr. Mulla gave a presentation on Precision Conservation – Tools and Strategies for Effectively Targeting Conservation Practices and Resources.

Here's a link to an article about my research at the Freshwater Society.

<http://freshwater.org/2012/05/29/targeting-conservation-where-its-needed-most/>

Questions, Comments and Discussion followed

The next MSTC meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2013 at the Stearns SWCD Office.

*All handouts are on the MSTC website: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/mstc/>

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