



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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October 14, 2011

Massachusetts State Technical Committee

Dear Members,

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will hold a State Technical Committee meeting at the Doyle Center, 464 Abbott Avenue, Leominster, MA on Wednesday, December 7, 2011. The meeting will start at 9:00 AM and end at noon. For directions and information on the Doyle Center see the website at: (<http://www.thetrustees.org/places-to-visit/central-ma/doyle-reservation.html#t3>)

Please note the information on the Wetlands Reserve Program on page 2 of this announcement and the attachments to this message. Review the draft agenda items below. If you wish to include additional items contact Barbara Miller at (413) 253-4380, or email: Barbara.miller@ma.usda.gov.

DRAFT AGENDA ITEMS:

- State Conservationist's comments on budget and outlook
- Review of minutes from the May 2011 meeting (attached)
- Farm Bill Program 2012
 - Funding
 - Initiatives
 - Regional Equity
- Reports from Local Working Groups
- Easement Programs – WRP/FRPP/GRP
See information on page 2 for WRP. Action needed by November 7, 2011
- State-wide Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) – discussion

*If you need any special accommodations, please notify Barbara Miller by
Thursday, December 1, 2011 at 413-253-4380*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine S. Clarke".

CHRISTINE S. CLARKE
State Conservationist, Massachusetts

Enclosure: Minutes – May 2011
WRP Ranking & WRP Policy information

Wetland Reserve Program

As you are aware, many functions of NRCS pertaining to the Farm Bill require input from the State Technical Committee as we develop how the programs are delivered in the state. We have now entered the new Federal fiscal year, and must update some of our procedures. This message is specific to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the ranking system used to evaluate applications. We are sending this to you for input and concurrence so we may continue processing current applications. If you have an interest in how WRP is implemented in Massachusetts, please continue reading. We appreciate your comments.

Due to the increased interest in WRP in MA, we have revised the WRP ranking process to allow for increased differentiation between applications which will allow us to better prioritize applications and select projects for funding. The WRP manual provides specific guidance on what environmental and economic considerations should be included in the ranking, yet it allows states the flexibility to fine tune them. (The attached document, Establishing WRP ranking criteria, contains guidance from the WRP program manual for further information.)

Also attached is the proposed FY2012 MA WRP ranking. Please note that we have contracted for an updated market analysis for active cranberry bogs and will review the economic thresholds (on page 3 of the ranking) once we receive this. Currently, all of our applications for the program have come from the southeastern part of the state. As we receive WRP applications outside of southeastern MA, we will allow the local working groups to develop a relevant question to replace the one under Environmental Considerations on page 2 under water quality – “Enrollment area is located less than 1 mile from the coast,” as this is not a concern in non-coastal watersheds.

If you wish to provide comments, please respond by November 7th to Beth Schreier, beth.schreier@ma.usda.gov or 413-253-4393.