

State Technical Committee Meeting

09/14/2011

9:00am – 12:00pm

The Nature Conservancy
22 Bridge Street, 4th Floor
Concord, NH 03305

Meeting Called By: Rick Ellsmore **Type of meeting:** State Technical Committee
Facilitator: Rick Ellsmore **Note taker:** Holly Boyson

Attendees:

Robert Johnson (NHFB), Carl Bartlett (NHFB), Dorn Cox (SCCD), Richard Lutz (NHACD), Grant Mecozzi (NWTf), Vickie Smith (NH Dept. of Ag), Deborah Weymouth (NRCS), Eric Williams (NH DES), Josh Jennings (FSA), Dan Wright (NRCS), Edna Feighner (NH DHR), Carol Andrews (NHACC), Joe Homer (NRCS), Terry Miller (USDA FS), Don Keirstead (NRCS), Wendy Weisiger (SPNHF), Joan Richardson (CCCD), Diane Bennett (CCCD), Don Richard (NRCS), Paul Susca (NH DES), Beth Ann Finlay (NRCS), Pam Gilbert (GGCD), Stephanie Walker (NHOEP), Jay Phinzy (FSA), Marilyn Ricker (FSA), Duane Hyde (TNC), Amanda Costello (CCCD), Tim Fleury (UNH CE), George Hamilton (UNH CE), Bruce Clement (FSA), Kerry Rickrode (HCCD), Lenny Lord (RCCD), Lisa Morin (BCCD), Stacy Luke (MCCD), Lorraine Merrill (NH Dept. of Ag).

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Opening remarks, introductions, and partner updates. **Presenter:** Rick Ellsmore, STC NH NRCS

Rick Ellsmore began the meeting at 9:06 am.

Agency Reports:

Robert Johnson – NH Farm Bureau

- No updates.

Carl Bartlett – NH Farm Bureau

- No updates.

Wendy Weisiger – Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

- No updates.

Grant Mecozzi – The National Wild Turkey Federation

- Completed the NRCS contract that they have been working on over the last year.
- Grant has been working with NRCS District Conservationists'.

Joan Richardson – Carroll County Conservation District

- No updates.

Dianne Bennett – Coos County Conservation District

- There will be a high tunnel demonstration Oct. 5, 2011.

Dan Wright – NRCS District Conservationist (Epping Field Office)

- No updates.

Lenny Lord – Rockingham County Conservation District

- Working on a number of environmental restoration projects.

Josh Jennings – Farm Service Agency

- No updates

George Hamilton – UNH Cooperative Extension

- The Strafford office closed in the spring, and they are hoping to re-open.
- There are a number of vacancies because they lost over 48% of staff due to state budget cuts.
- Working on reorganizing Cooperative Extension.
- They have 20 unfilled positions open due to cut-backs. If funding isn't secured another 20 positions will be lost.

Eric Williams – NH Department of Environmental Services

- DES has 319 programs.
- They have already been cut by 12% and proposed 18% for FY12. This is good news because it will make the programs more quantitative focused.

Paul Susca – NH Department of Environmental Services

- Drinking Water Program Coordinator at DES.
- Working on small grants for water supply sources.
- They have \$3million dollars for the "land protection corridor" project.

Don Richard – NRCS

- No updates.

Terry Miller – Forest Service

- No updates.

Dorn Cox – Strafford County Conservation District and Clean Start

- Funding was cut, but, he is optimistic that the district will be stronger in the future because there has been lots of support from the towns - Primarily on nutrient mismanagement, point source, and local farming.

Joe Homer - NRCS

- Carbon sampling update: Should be available early 2012.
- The Upper Ammonoosic Project: Joe is putting together a soils, forestry, and wildlife matrix. Joe hopes to present at the mud season breakfast.

Eric Derleth - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- The budget is uncertain for FY12.
- Continuing work on the New England Cottontail (NEC) habitat projects.
- Continuing work on planning projects for damn removals.

Carol Andrews – NH Association of Conservation Commissions

- Carol is working on upcoming meetings and events.

Dick Lutz – New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts

- Working on High Tunnels, and NEC.

- Let him know if there are any legislative issues to push through.

Lisa Morin – Belknap County Conservation District

- They are doing as much as they can with a limited budget.

Kira Jacobs – Environmental Protection Agency

- Will save her input for presentation

Kerry Rickrode – Hillsboro County Conservation District

- Working on re-designing their website.

Vickie Smith – Department of Agriculture

- Will be doing a project with NRCS.

Pam Gilbert – Grafton Count Conservation District

- There will be a fall tour Sept. 30, starting at Prescott Water Co., then a movable high tunnel on organic farm. Dress for all weather.

Edna Feighner – NH Department of Cultural Resources

- HR Update: Have lost a couple of long time members.
- Assisting the Fish and Game with a Moose Plate Wildlife grant.

Beth Ann Finlay – NRCS

- No updates.

Lorraine Merrill – Commissioner of Agriculture

- Really dealing with a lot of loss and hardship from the hurricane and flooding.
- Getting word that USDA will be assisting, but, not sure how. Crop insurance will cover loss.
- The USDA will assist with those without crop insurance.
- There is recognition in D.C. Of how bad it's been in the eastern states. This is critical because we were in a silage shortage prior to the storm, so, now it's even worse.
- FSA has been working really hard.

Steven Walker – Office of Energy and Planning

- Has been busy looking at 415 conservation Easements across state.

Duane Hyde – The Nature Conservancy

- Welcomed everyone to this space.
- They are in the midst of implementing a number on grants.
- There is an Ossipee Pine Barren fire going today.
- Working on a pitch reclamation project.
- Also working on an oyster project in Great Bay.

Agenda Item: Priorities for NRCS New Hampshire 2012,
Before & After Photos

Presenter: Rick Ellsmore
State Conservationist, NRCS

Discussion:

Priorities for 2012:

(Presentation maps created by Don Richard)

1. The first focus area is within 1 mile NH's 4 major rivers. If you are within a close radius of these major rivers, you will get additional points in the ranking system for the application process.
2. The second priority is the Quabbin to Cardigan (Q2C) focus area in the Southwestern and central part of the state (also a focus area in 2011). Q2C is considered the 2nd largest un-fragmented area east of the Mississippi next to the Great Maine Woods.
3. The third priority is the Upper Ammonoosic and Israel Watersheds. The significance of these two watersheds is the connection between the White Mountain National Forests, wildlife species, and controlling invasive species.
4. NEC focus areas, touches a large part of Rockingham, Strafford, and Hillsboro counties.

Rick then showed Before and After photos of success stories. He added that in this environment we need to focus on our conservation projects and how we are getting conservation on the ground. Rick showed several pictures including HUA, manure storage, invasive species, wildlife opening, access roads, stream crossings, stream bank stabilization, access roads, and Stream crossings (installing ½ arch culverts).

Agenda Item: Farm Service Agency Update

Presenter: Jay Phinizy
Executive Director, FSA

Discussion:

1. Jay discussed the Garcia/Love Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process.
Rick Ellsmore, Jay Phinizy, and Molly Lambert have been getting the word out.
 - This is a settlement outside of a class action lawsuit where people were deprived or discriminated against over 30 years ago by the USDA. Should you know of anyone deprived or denied, please contact the 800 number on the flyers Jay distributed.
2. The second issue has to do with Tropical Storm (TS) Irene:
 - FSA has received various calls from farmers and producers.
 - Risk Mismanagement insurance: There are different options from FSA which Jay discussed. In the meantime many farmers have insured their corn crops with risk management (crop insurance).
 - One instance that Lorraine Merrill brought to Jay's attention was that there was a quality issue with corn crops, so it would not be covered.
 - Action was taken and it was discovered that the corn crop can be covered.
 - Jay called his folks and told them to make the correction and gave out handouts discussing how the farmer can be covered if their crop was zeroed out.
 - As to TS Irene, Jay has been in touch with NRCS and Lorraine Merrill.
 - He provided handouts listing specific things they are required to deal with, like ECP.
 - They have not had many claims from this storm yet. He gave examples of levels of loss for reimbursement, i.e.: Live stock, honey bees, and fish as a program as well.
 - He hasn't yet heard of a livestock indemnity program.
 - Jay has started a fact sheet and is working with other agencies for example the New Hampshire Small Business Bureau.
 - VT has essentially had 15 times the Allstead floods. VT has 100-300 dairy farms that are Completely under water. We (NH) really lucked out compared to VT. We only had about 35% of our farms in Grafton and into Sullivan counties affected. Some of these areas were completely washed away. Jay's very concerned about several septic treatment plants that were flooded and

where that runoff went, plus oil waste tanks, dead animals, and other debris, this will all affect our farms and lands due to deposition of oil and other toxic wastes. He estimates the losses are around 1.1 to 1.5 million dollars in losses mostly to hay and corn fields.

- What he did hear from the people in VT is that they are going to propose a buy in on the NAPP Insurance Programs. At this point in NH the only people we can help are the people who've already bought into this insurance.
- George added that some of the insect problems we are starting to see are a real concern, we don't know if it was caused by the storm, but, the storm created perfect conditions.
- Jay added that there are emergency loans available as well. These loans are for getting back up and operating. 2 major problems with the ECP program are that there's a waiting list. For the entire US there is only \$330 million for the whole country. They can give up to \$500,000.00 for each eligible applicant, if you know someone please get in an applications sooner than later.
- Lorraine added that the farm credit is going into emergency status to allow people the help they need as well.

Rick thanked Jay and introduced Don Keirstead.

Agenda Item: State Resource Assessment

Presenter: Don Keirstead, NRCS

Discussion:

Don Keirstead gave a presentation on the State Resource Assessment:

- The presentation addressed New Hampshire's resources as a whole.
- Where will we be getting the most bang for our buck? Cropland, farmland, and forestland.
- Don showed slides of sediment erosion.
- 3 of the top 5 most declining rivers in the United States are in NH. We are trying to slow erosion and retain nutrients.
- Don showed a before and after picture of a riparian buffer on heavily eroded cropland.
- He showed an oyster restoration project.
- He showed a stream restoration that created pools and cascades; they dissipate water velocities and collected sediment in the stream channel. By adding wood to these systems it also rebuilds the trout population.
- Don discussed fragmentation and forest planning. NRCS has funded over 300 management plans.
- The TSP Program helps generate jobs and helps private landowners understand importance of regeneration.
- Don also discussed and showed an invasive map where we are targeting invasives.
- Don also talked about the importance of improving habitat for pollinators, soil quality, cover crops, and controlling invasives.

Rick added that the next meeting will be January 18th, 2012 and introduced Deb Weymouth

Agenda Item: Programs Update

Presenter: Deb Weymouth, NRCS

Discussion:

Deb Weymouth is the EQIP and Whip manager. She also oversees all programs staff. Deb introduced herself and wanted all to know that she is honored to be serving NH in this capacity and looks forward to working with

everyone in the future. She started off as an earth team volunteer in 1995 as a part time temporary employee. She went full time as soil conservationist and then became the DC in Walpole. She has taken two details at the state office and has 14 years outside of NRCS and 14 years in NRCS. She expects her staff to provide high quality from her staff as well.

We are all expecting hard times. Of the things that we can control we want to make the best for NH. Some of her goals are to:

- 1.) Make things more efficient and more streamlined.
- 2.) One focus would be to administer our Farm Bill more efficiently so we can get conservation of the ground and solve our resource concerns.
- 3.) Also she would like to decrease the numbers of modifications, cancellations, and terminations. How can we improve things from our workload, field staff, and New Hampshire?

Deb has 5 specific goals for the future:

1. Conservation planning – the basis for everything we do. Programs staff can develop a Program Timeline, so that it will work for everybody to plan for resource concerns. This year there is an Oct. 3rd deadline with continuous sign-up. Oct 3rd is the deadline to be considered for the first sign up.
2. Communication – We want to improve our communication.
3. Contract management – We are trying to get a handle on what is working and what changes are needed.
4. Collaboration and partnerships – We need to work better together and do more problems solving together. We want to engage more with each other. She has an open door policy.
5. Customer Service – If we don't have good customer service, no one will want to sign up. Deb is looking at where the hold-up is for getting conservation practices on the ground. She plans to work with staff to obtain feedback. If anyone has anything to add please let her know. She wants a plan for the Leadership Staff in December.

Rick added that we are in a challenging state and have moved up to rank 37th in the country. Our plan is to work on designs over the winter, so we can be ready to go come next spring and summer.

Rick then showed the priority slides of the 3 watersheds that are seriously endangered in New Hampshire. He added that the EPA has become a strong partner with NRCS in the last couple of years. We have the best system to put conservation on the ground in a non-regulatory type of way.

Agenda Item: New Hampshire Watersheds

Presenter: Kira Jacobs, EPA
Eric Williams, NH DES
Paul Susca, NH DES

Kira Jacobs (EPA) Provided a brief overview:

- She is from New Hampshire and is passionate about this project. She and Paul Susca work on non-source water protection. In New Hampshire we have great water quality and the goal is to keep it that way.
- Kira added that we all have to work together. Drinking water is not funded nationally. She was working in Washington D.C. last year and started hearing about the Salmon Falls project. Kira talked about the importance of these rivers in the drinking water community.
- She wants to make sure that NRCS helps landowners keep their lands forested.
- Historically the EPA and USDA haven't worked together and we are going to show Washington D.C. how to do it.

Paul Susca (NH DES):

- Source water protection means protecting the source of drinking water and water supply sources.
- The project that we are discussing is the “Salmon Falls Collaborative”.
- This program is 99% non-regulatory.
- They are working on a conservation activity plan.
- The reason we are focusing on Salmon Falls is because there are water systems in both states (Maine & New Hampshire) that use the river as a source.
- We have been trying to work with our partners on this collaborative. This is a different project because no one has the lead and we are all working together. They will be focusing on low impact development, and working with municipalities.
- There is a website and a monthly e-newsletter.

Eric Williams (NH DES):

- This is something they are hearing more about from EPA. We really need to focus on quantitative data.
- He explained how the system works for assessing water quality. The Water Quality Assessments come from the Clean Water Act. He showed the 305B list, which shows how are waters are doing in the state. The 303D list shows impaired waters. These have to be reported on every two years.
- The DES has a water quality report cards option.
- The clean water act goal is to make water fishable and swimmable.
- The final and most confusing is “Anti-degradation” which means when water quality is impaired it has to be brought back up to a usable quality.
- The CALM is a document “consolidated assessment unit”. It also works as a translator and is updated every 2 years.

Rick has charged Eric to look at 2 tiers;

1. Impairments caused from agricultural sources.
2. Impairments caused by pollutants that can be controlled by agricultural BMP's.

Take a look at the NH DES website and click on the A-Z list surface water quality assessments if you are interested.

- Sedimentation is a main source of pollution.
- There was a discussion about planning before a disaster.
- Looked at all watersheds that are impaired.

In closing, Rick added that the next State Technical Committee will be held Jan. 18th.

Reminder – In the past we have talked about ranking, this is now done by the **sub-committees**. These are led by Brandon Smith, Don Keirstead, and Sue Knight. We welcome anyone wanting to join these committees. Rick said there is a national discussion about consolidating our programs; we hope this will happen in the future Farm Bill. It helps our constituents and staff.

Rick said this is a challenging environment. Conservation has a big impact on drinking water and jobs in NH. We all do lot for what NH is today. NH gets revenues from tourism, hunting, fishing, etc. and conservation plays a major role in the economy.

The meeting convened @ 11:37

