

State Technical Committee Meeting

10/17/2012
9:00am – 12:00pm
N. H. Audubon
84 Silk Farm Road
Concord, NH 03301

Meeting Called By: **Rick Ellsmore, STC, NH NRCS** Type of meeting: **State Technical Committee**
Facilitator: **Rick Ellsmore, STC, NH NRCS** Note taker: **Shari Cohen, NRCS**

Attendees:

Rick Ellsmore, Shari Cohen, Heather Foley, Don Keirstead, Brandon Smith, Matt Strassberg, Ray Konisky, Wendy Weisiger, Linda Grames, Lorraine Merrill, Stacey Luke, Jillian McCarthy, Colin Lawson, George Hamilton, Robert Johnson, II, Simon Thomson, John Hodsdon, Carol Andrews, Vicky Stafford, Artie McCollum, Tim Fleury, Lionel Chute, Dave Welsch, Thomas Chapman, Steve Walker, Charlie Bridges, Kira Jacobs, Erik Beck

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: **Welcome, introductions, and partner updates**

Rick Ellsmore, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Began the meeting at 9:10 am.

Members Updates:

Wendy Weisiger, Society for the Protection of NH Forests

- Finished first CSP project - hired two foresters - protected 15,000 acres last year – Trying to raise \$2 mil for Northern Pass, looking to protect 4 properties, I encourage you to give to help.

Tom Chapman, US Fish & Wildlife Service

- One of our priorities is the New England Cottontail (NEC) working in collaboration w/ NRCS; making progress w/ wildlife initiative - completed NEC strategy for overall effort to reach goal to preclude listing - we are very well organized & working in cooperation w/ the state as well as NRCS.

Artie McCollum, Silvio O. Conte Refuge

- Focus is on CT River Watershed
- Mobile visitor center - Watershed on Wheels (WoW); in process of completing new kiosk focused on NRCS programs.

Simon Thomson, Senator Kelly Ayotte's Office

- Here to listen in

Charlie Bridges, NH Fish & Game

- We are in the middle of the Fall hunting seasons with black bear and the archery deer seasons currently open - Moose season begins this coming weekend on Oct. 20
- The Department has budget concerns as we enter into the biennial budget process.

Robert Johnson, II, Policy Director, New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation

- We are monitoring the electoral process, state legislation being filed for next year and the Farm Bill

George Hamilton, UNH Cooperative Extension

- CE is going through reorganization; we will have 4 teams, I'm on food & ag - Each team is divided by expertise.
- We are rehiring one coordinator for each county to continue 4H programs - replacing field specialists as well.
- Fruit fly update; survey of growers shows approx \$100,000 in damage due to fruit fly, especially late berries - attending conference in Geneva to get this insect into better check.

Ray Konisky, Marine Director, The Nature Conservancy (will be presenting restoration work on coast)

- TNC is also engaged in restoration of other areas of CT River Valley & in Ossipee

Colin Lawson, Stream Restoration Coordinator, Trout Unlimited

- Working on crossings – We have a cost share w/ NRCS and are starting our first project next week w/ a landowner in Acworth – The ideal is to have two landowners on both sides of a stream to achieve full ownership of the stream.

Dave Welsh, Watershed Forester, USDA Forest Service

- Grant 09-DG-159 - Enhancing Brook Trout Habitat Through Forest Management, is a project to develop a key to determining which stream trout habitat conditions would benefit from additions of large wood, how appropriate contributions of large wood to streams might be maintained over time through forest management and what the cost / benefit might be to participating landowners. The project has been ongoing since FY 09 and has resulted in several research areas being established and monitored, assessment of results and proposal of appropriate rule changes governing the addition of wood to streams. It is a cooperative project involving the Maine Forest Service, Maine Inland Fisheries and Game, the timber industry and the US Forest Service. Primary contact is Keith Kanoti Maine Forest Service.

Steve Walker, New Hampshire Fish & Game

- We are keeping very busy with the stewardship and monitoring of conservation easement properties. NHF&G and DRED Forest & Lands continue to complete land conservation easement projects adding to our list of work. DRED's are mostly Forest Legacy projects which tend to be large acreage, and working forests.

Heather Foley, Acting Resource Conservationist, NRCS

- We have already passed our first round of funding and will be announcing round two in December.

Tim Fleury, Forester, UNH Cooperative Extension

- We hope to be hiring out more foresters' jobs as well.

Jillian McCarthy, Stormwater Coordinator, NH Department of Environmental Services

- DES has published a new document, *New Hampshire Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management*. It includes step-by-step instructions for property owner's to manage stormwater on their properties and includes fact sheets for practices like rain gardens, dry wells, infiltration basins and others that homeowners can install on their own without having to hire an engineer or a contractor.
- In order to promote the new homeowner guide and encourage the installation of the practices in the guide, DES is developing a new stormwater outreach, technical assistance, and local capacity building campaign called Soak up the Rain NH. This program will provide resources to build the capacity of local watershed groups to assist homeowners in installing these practices. We have formed a work group of various stakeholders to help us develop the components of the program. The first work group meeting will be held at DES on October 30th.
- We will be updating the New Hampshire Nonpoint Source Management Plan in the next year. The plan was last updated in 1999. All states are required to update their plans by September 2014. We are still figuring out what the stakeholder input process will look like, and many of the State Technical Committee members will likely hear from us about this in the coming months.

Carol Andrews, NH Association of Conservation Commissions

- Conference coming up 11/3rd where we will have many workshops; NRCS is a sponsor and will be there to present
- Watching to see what happens w legislature

Lionel Chute, Conservation District Manager for Sullivan County (office in Newport)

- Have been developing a farm and hopefully I'll be helpful and do good things for the county & state.
- Working w/ Amanda Costello on farms to schools initiative and menus - they will be making their third delivery today – farm food deliveries are also going to a nursing home and a jail.
- Contact me re: anything in Sullivan County

Vicky Stafford, Rockingham County Conservation District

- Working in partnership w/ other CD's on small farm initiatives
- Also focusing on invasive species management

Erik Beck, US Environmental Protection Agency

- Working on nonpoint source pollution in New Hampshire

Kira Jacobs, Source Water Protection Program - Drinking Water Branch, US EPA- New England

- Covering drinking water protection in all 6 states, and working in part of collaborative w/ NRCS and FSA (see attached handout / toolkit)
- Please read about the success of The Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative.

Agenda Item: NH Agricultural Mediation Program

Presenter: **Matt Strassberg, Director, NHAMP**

Handouts

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

- Hoping that you will contact us for help - services are free of charge and we have mediators spread throughout NH w/ ag backgrounds.

Agenda Item: 2013 NH Resource Concerns Review

Presenter: **Rick Ellsmore, NRCS**

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

Comments:

Lionel - Forest land description says that many acres of forest are not well managed, so I wonder if non-management is being considered bad?

Rick - We will correct the wording on that

Charlie- How are these priorities translated into programs?

Rick - Right now they're done nationally - We send National Headquarters our resource concerns attached to a budget request to address those concerns.

Kira - Other practices could be replicated by priority two – Maybe you can add a reference in priority 7 to include Forest Management Plans (CAPs) and possibly Forest Stand Improvement.

Agenda Item: Farm Service Agency Update

Presenter: **Linda Grames, FSA**

- ✚ Reminder: USDA is taking applications for Hispanic & Women Farmers & Ranchers Claims Process
- ✚ We are in a holding pattern w/ no farm bill, so I have no new program announcements to make.
- ✚ We recently made our last Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program Payments.
- ✚ We have been able to make MILC Program payments over the last three months. However, September is the last month in the program. In addition to this being the last month, the percentage for the program payment drops from 45% to 34%, the maximum pounds a payment will be made on drops from 2.985 Million to 2.4 million, and the feed cost payment is calculated against \$9.50 rather than \$7.35. Therefore we expect that if there is a payment for September milk, it will be reduced from the previous months.
- ✚ There is an acreage recording requirement change; forage crops will be reported in the Fall instead of next Spring.
- ✚ Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance program is ongoing.

Agenda Item: **Program Allocation Review & Sub-Committee Updates** Presenter: *Rick Ellsmore, NRCS*

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

Rick

- We are accepting applications for WRP & GRP but we cannot do site visits or address the applications at this time
- CT River Watershed has been designated a National Blue Way
- Please let me know if you would like to be on a sub-committee; ag, forest/wildlife, or easements

Agenda Item: **Soil Health Update** Presenter: *Brandon Smith, NRCS*

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

Comments:

Brandon - This new national initiative is still in formation - in NH we've funded a CIG w the idea to develop CAPs specifically associated w soil health.

Lionel - How can you get this new technology to small/beginner farmers - is it expensive & will the costs come down?

Brandon - No, costs will go up because of new indicators - we do provide the cost share for it & the tests are paid for through our programs.

Lorraine - These are basics that have been around for a long time - we have a bill introduced in legislature that aims to make for more land available to beginner farmers - so we do have state agencies and non-profits that have no expertise in ag and soils; is there a role for NRCS to work w some of these other organizations?

Brandon - Yes, let's talk more about that to make the connections.

Linda - There is testing of soils in high-tunnels - is that on-going?

Brandon - when high-tunnels started we did a test w each one - we've done some follow-up testing - it is variable because of the soils they started with, but we will be looking at the results.

Agenda Item: **NE/NY & Working Lands for Wildlife** Presenter: *Don Keirstead, NRCS*

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

Don

- NH is the lead state getting funding for forest management plans – we have over 40 private TSP foresters
- Cutting first, spraying next is the best way to control invasives
- We're offering a cost share to bring the cost of the Forest Management Plans down to help the landowner - 750 acre plan may be \$7 - 8,000.
- Pollinator plantings is also a cost share program at different price levels - seeds for this are coming out of PA and other mid-west states but we try and keep the plants native to NH
- NRCS looks for Non-commercial areas for forest stand and improvement near successional areas

Agenda Item: **Oyster Restoration Projects** Presenter: *Ray Konisky, Ph.D., The Nature Conservancy*

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

- This work is for the purpose of water quality - supported by NRCS

Comments:

Erik - It looks like you're moving around the bay a lot; how do you decide where to work?

Ray - By where the existing oysters are and we want the beds to be undisturbed and on channel bottoms where there is flow, that's the criteria + we're putting our eggs in different baskets which helps us diversify locations.

Colin - How high are the reefs off the substrate?

Ray - About 6" off the substrate. Shells are more beneficial in the water than rock -

Silt is really the enemy of this project; because it's a natural system that could kill this project, we need help controlling run-off into the system to mitigate sediment loads.

Rick - what is the source of the sediment?

Ray - These are erosional hot-spots and a storm is the game changer where a massive amount of sediment is introduced, much more so than ag or road building.

Closing Comments:

Rick Ellsmore

- Five New England States are signing a letter to go up to our Chief to support Oyster Restoration.
- Here's what we know now; Both the Senate and House versions of the proposed 2012 Farm Bill have \$6 billion in cuts to conservation programs over a ten year period
- There is a national + 50 states meeting scheduled in mid-February, so in lieu of choosing a *next State Technical Committee meeting date now, I would like to wait until that meeting, and the continuing resolution concludes, so that we have more information for a productive meeting.
- Thank you for your input; we hope that we can continue serving landowners.

Kira

- Thank you for your leadership, Rick, we are now getting calls from all over the country about our truly effective partnership.

Lorraine

- I agree; EPA and NRCS is a great partnership for the state.

**Next State Technical Committee Meeting date: TBD due to an All-State Conservationists meeting with National Headquarters in February*

Meeting Adjourned

