



Natural Resources Conservation Service
441 South Salina Street, Room 520, Suite 354
Syracuse, NY 13202 – 2450
(315) 477-6504 FAX (315) 477-6560

State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date - March 13th, 2013

Attendees – Donald Pettit, State Conservationist, NRCS, Tammy Willis, ASTC – Programs, NRCS, Chanda Lindsay, Resource Conservationist, NRCS, Angela Wishoff, Executive Assistant, NRCS, Ed Henry, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS, Kim Farrell, State Biologist, NRCS, Steve Page, Acting State Soil Scientist, NRCS, Mabelle Simmons, ASTC (FO), NRCS, Kevin Roberts, NYSDEC, Jim Meinhart, Growmark, FS, LLC, Andy Hinickle, Audubon, Carl Schwartz, FWS, Sloane Crawford, DEC.

Phone Participants – Jan Surface, ASTC for Water Resources, NRCS, Sheldon Hightower, ASTC(FO), Judy Littrell, President, NYACD, Alecia Reinmund-Martinez, EPA, Region 2 Representative.

Welcome/State Conservationist Update – Don Pettit

Farm Bill – Secretary testified the importance of getting a Farm Bill in place. Congress extended it until the end of the Fiscal Year. NRCS received additional funding for the Chesapeake Bay.

Budget – Sequestration has resulted in 5% reduction in technical and financial assistance funds. Current Continuing Resolution runs through March 27, 2013.

Restructure – Efficiencies, 5-Year Plan – ultimately less resources in the future. The focus is on local delivery and to relieve the administrative burden. Counties will be grouped together with one District Conservationist who will supervise a staff to provide technical assistance to the field.

Questions – none.

Action – none.

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) – Tammy Willis

Tammy presented a powerpoint slide that explained the purpose of the initiative and the guidelines set forth by National Headquarters (NHQ) and what the “focus waters” must have as a criteria in order to receive funding. She explained that we have received \$282,599.00 for FY 2013 and proposed funding three new watersheds in the Chautauqua Lake. The previous



watersheds Ball Creek, Bemus Creek and Chadakoin River do not have a large enough farm base (only 25 farms found), and there is not enough interest in the original watersheds to generate adequate sign-up. The proposed watersheds Big Inlet, Prendergast Creek, and Goose Creek meet the criteria for selection. A request to change watersheds for 2013 will be submitted to NRCS National Headquarters.

Discussion –

The committee agreed and supported the decision to change watershed areas agreeing that landowner interest and sign-up is critical. It was explained that the previous sub-watersheds can sign up for other programs that NRCS offers however, the 2013 NWQI funding would only be for the three proposed watersheds and that this would not decrease any funding that NRCS has already received.

Action – State Technical Committee supports changing NWQI watersheds for 2013.

Chesapeake Bay New York will receive additional funding that is allocated specifically to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative. The Farm Bill extended CBWI for an additional year. The question whether or not forestry was going to be offered for the CBWI was asked. This year it will not.

There has been a lot of time invested in EQIP forestry applications, and there is currently more than enough work to be done, unfortunately due to budget constraints NRCS is not able to enter into new agreements. Steuben County alone had (35) applications and funding was provided to eight of them, it was agreed that this is worth further discussion at the next State Technical Committee meeting.

Action – For the next meeting add Forestry as an agenda Item.

GLRI – Tammy Willis

Tammy Willis provided an outline of the program initiative in her powerpoint (attached). Don Pettit explained that the difference in this program initiative was that EPA is providing funding. The money is not allocated to NRCS directly. The Great Lakes Initiative is similar to the CBWI and there are priority areas. Currently, there are 18 farms contracted for \$704, 353.00. It is anticipated that we should receive the same amount of funding this year.

Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) – Chanda Lindsay

The CIG is a component of the EQIP and is an annual competitive grant process that ultimately is the approval of the State Conservationist for the State competition. There is \$250,000.00 set aside for NRCS New York. This year one focus for New York is on Soil Health and we are looking for innovative ideas to promote soil health and identify the areas where the gaps in technology are. Outreach and Partner collaboration are key to this initiative. The committee was invited to provide their input on topics to be included in the NY CIG.

Discussion – none.

Action – Ed Henry, NRCS, State Resource Conservationist, for NY is the Soils Health Initiative point of contact.

Historically Underserved Categories and Outreach – Chanda Lindsay

The 2008 Farm Bill provides incentives for “historically underserved” farmers in the following categories – Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource Farmer and Beginning Farmer. The incentives may include increased payment rate, advanced payments and evaluation under special funding pools as specified in program regulations. Applicants self-certify their status. Here in New York 8% of our farmers are socially disadvantaged.

Discussion – none.

Questions – The question was raised that out of the approximately 280 historically underserved farmers that are in New York do we know what number or percentage are enrolled in NRCS programs or have received funding?

We do not currently have that information documented, however, we will follow up on the question and provide the information.

Program Rollout 2014 – Tammy Willis

Local Working Group (LWG) – EQIP 2014

Local Working Groups are made up of local people who identify resource concerns and provide feedback to the State Conservationist. Some counties are more active than others and some have the perception that they provide feedback but nothing changes. This year we are considering changes regarding the LWGs and how they can be engaged. Each LWG would be invited to write up a proposal and provide justification to the STC on why their concern should be funded. A percentage of the funds would be set aside and used to address the concerns that received the STC approval. The goal is to promote localization and accountability for the LWGs.

Discussion – A question was asked concerning the makeup of the LWGs, it was explained that they are county based and that the Soil & Water Conservation Districts convene the groups. The groups will be multi-county in the future due to the restructuring except for Long Island which will not be grouped.

The map displaying the Restructuring and the new Area/County boundary lines was displayed to the committee.

Questions – none.

Action – Provide Re-structuring maps to the State Technical Committee.

Action – Provide additional guidance to the field regarding the LWGs and how they will compete and receive funding.

Soils Health Initiative – Ed Henry

Ed Henry gave the committee a background on this new initiative for NRCS. It is both a National Initiative and a State Initiative with an internal team and an external committee. The Internal Team includes both state office and field representation and the focus is on NRCS and Partner's technical knowledge of Soil Health and coordination with the National direction and initiative. The External Committee is a subcommittee of the State Technical Committee and includes the committee members and other partners such as SWCDs, State, Non-government agencies and academia. The initiative will provide outreach and public education including sharing of NRCS events with the public and listen to recommendations for the effective use of NRCS programs and initiatives. To date the team has met with the Cornell Soil Health lab and had meetings with the Internal Team, there has been a Soil Health and Cover Crop Demonstration at the Big Flats PMC, and future plans with the Grazing/GLCI program to further provide outreach and awareness on soil health concepts through Soil Health walks. The next steps for the External Subcommittee is to set up goals and priorities by integrating partner goals on Soil Health, align and recommendations for organization of NRCS programs for Soil Health. An Outreach strategy needs to be developed and implemented. Educating and training NRCS staff and partners on Soil Health concepts is a priority.

Questions – none.

Meeting ended early and the next State Technical Committee meeting date will be forthcoming.