

State Technical Committee Meeting

4/4/2013
9:30am – 11:30pm
The Nature Conservancy
22 Bridge Street, 4th Fl
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, Matt Strassberg, Wendy Weisiger, Colin Lawson, Robert Johnson II, John Hodsdon, Artie McCollum, Lionel Chute, Dave Welsch, Charlie Bridges, Kira Jacobs, Erik Beck, Sarah Holmes, Diane Bennett, Roger Noonan, Joan Richardson, Ted Kendziora, Rodger Krussman, John Lanier, Jan McClure, Jay Phinizy, Tom Thomson, Eric Williams, Jasen Stock, Gregg McPherson, Vickie Smith, Dorn Cox, Tim Fleury, Jade Nield

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Welcome, introductions, and partner updates

Rick Ellsmore, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Began the meeting at 9:30 am.

Members Updates:

Gregg McPherson, Rural Development (RD): We still have money for programs

Rodger Krussman, The Trust for Public Land: Completed an exceptional partnership project protecting College Woods, drinking water & NEC

Charlie Bridges, NH Fish & Game (NHFG): Discover Wild NH Day on 4/20th - lots of exhibits - also Trust for Public Land project just finished and now conserved under F&G - Wednesday Night Talks; Adventure Series, through month of April, open to public

Eric Williams, NH Department of Environmental Services (DES):

1. DES is launching a new Soak up the Rain Program, partnering with watershed organizations to install homeowner-scale stormwater BMPs, such as rain gardens and infiltration trenches. The goal is to build capacity within the local organizations to lead additional installations throughout the watershed.
2. DES is updating the state Nonpoint Source Management Plan covering the next five years and will be in touch with many of you for your input on recommended actions.

Matt Strassberg, NH Agricultural Mediation Program:

Providing mediation services for Ag producers, organizations and agencies – have had several successes in mediation since last meeting.

Jan McClure, The Nature Conservancy:

I am replacing Duane Hyde; Duane is going to Southeast Land Trust. Plans for the Ossippee Pine Barrens; slower burn areas w a plan to burn this summer - finishing restoration & sand pit - Oyster project on track for this summer; an acre at the mouth of the Lamprey.

Joan Richardson, President District Employees Assoc., Carroll County Conservation District (CD):

Most districts are funded for 2013, but it is getting more difficult each year. We have a June 7th date contracted for Social Media & News Releases Training w details coming soon.

Diane Bennett, Coos County CD:

Announced her retirement effective on 4/30th – We have lots of workshops this spring / summer w Extension

Erik Beck, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

Problems getting budget under sequestration & furloughs (13 days mandatory)

Jasen Stock, NH Timber Owners Association (NHTOA):

Our logger training programs started this week. We work closely with UNH Cooperative Extension. This year we will also be having classes with Quality Deer Management Association on how to manage for wildlife. May 18th the NHTOA is having its Annual Meeting at the Remick Farm. In addition to our programs, we do a lot of advocacy which is 80% of what I do. I am currently monitoring about 50 bills with our focus on two this session; a biomass renewable energy bill, and a proposed increase to the gas and diesel tax.

Ted Kendziora, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS):

Working w New England Cottontail (NEC); still have money to fund projects

Sarah Holmes, Representative, Senator Shaheen's Office:

The Senator has been working on eliminating across the board cuts, the Continuing Resolution, CSP and a 9 month extension for Farm Bill

Dave Welsch, US Forest Service (USFS):

Budget very tight w sequestration, but still pushing out funding

Wendy Weisiger, Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF):

We have been working to defend L Chip funds in legislature – Northern Pass has been temporarily blocked – A Land Protection Campaign w the Wilkins family – Annual Land Steward Training coming up April 26th and 27th – Doing Forestry Improvement Projects through Conservation Stewardship Program funding.

John Lanier, Wildlife Management Institute (WMI):

Focusing on Young Forest Initiative; together w F & G, we came out w a publication to help landowners working towards forestry management (www.youngforest.org) – Also working w NRCS in northern three counties to get this work on the ground - Ray Whittemore is coming on at the end of the month to work on Young Forest and NEC - WMI has some grants as well.

Colin Lawson, Trout Unlimited:

Focus on two projects; Post-Irene Restoration in White Mountain Nat'l Forest, and w NRCS, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Easements across the state to look at wood loading in streams (12 properties this summer).

Lionel Chute, Sullivan County CD:

Exploring feasibility for recycling ag plastics w a system that is able to pay for itself - focus on soil health w Cornell, and a workshop in Sunapee w Merrimack County CD to take soil samples, etc.

Dorn Cox, GreenStart, NHACD:

Working on Soil Health Initiative in four counties, 18 farms pilot project, and rolling that out w assistance for equipment, technical services, and workshops to assist Conservation Districts.

Tom Thomson, Thomson Tree Farm of NH:

We have a June 1st field day for forestry w UNH - 2013 Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year; Ned and Jean Therrien of Canterbury – The wood market is so-so; struggle is for operators around diesel fuel tax. **Tom asked a question** about the 1099 forms issue - **Rick**: the cost share payment is reported at the end of the year; NRCS changed their financial systems which caused payments subsequently causing incorrect 1099's. These are being corrected and should be on the way to recipients now.

Robert Johnson, II, NH Farm Bureau:

Working on budget and funding at the federal and state levels.

Kira Jacobs, EPA (for water protection):

We are moving forward on Merrimack and Contoocook projects and working in Henniker and Manchester protecting the Merrimack River and, also Piscataqua, because they are most threatened due to development - EPA travel has been restricted.

Vickie Smith, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food (NH DAMF):

Our budget is acceptable – We are busy doing inspections.

John Hodsdon, Belknap County CD:

We survived the fight between County Supervisors for funding because we are small relative to their budget.

Agenda Item: **Farm Bill, Programs Update, Priorities**

Presenter: **Rick Ellsmore, NRCS**

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

Rick: We did get a small amount of money for WRP & some for FRPP; I will provide the finalized details next time

Agenda Item: **'Troubling Federal Regulation – FSMA'** Presenter: **Roger Noonan, NH Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD), New England Farmers Union**

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

Comments:

Vickie: As a GAP auditor, how does this impact?

Roger: This replaces it; the exemptions are unclear right now.

Tom: seems to add to the rules & regs that will put small businesses out

Roger: food borne illness drives this, but people want to eat local food. Also, the local food movement has hurt the huge growers in CA

Lionel: Has Chellie Pingree commented on this?

Sarah: She has a bill that has come out to respond to this

Agenda Item: **Farm Service Agency (FSA) Update**

Presenter: **Jay Phinizy, FSA**

- Payments made to be made to producers in certain programs are pending acceptance by Congress of the secretary's plan to apply "DCP" (Direct and Counter Cyclical) funds towards the difference needed in certain programs. Those programs affected and important to New Hampshire producers are: the "MILC" (Milk Income Loss), "NAP" (Non Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program), and "SURE" (Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments) Programs. Payments in these programs should resume on or after the middle of April.
- The "new" Microloan Program and the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program were reviewed.
- Availability of loan funds through the Farm Loan Program at present are limited to socially disadvantaged and new and beginning applicants. All other funding is pending allocations from the continuing resolution.
- The agency is in the process of training all employees in the new web based, record keeping and management system or "MIDAS" (Modernize and Innovate the Delivery of Agricultural Systems). Over 8,000 employees will be trained within the next 4-6 weeks.
- Leasing: Concord lease extended 2 years, Lancaster lease just signed, and Walpole lease ends at the end of September 2013.
- "CRP" (Conservation Reserve Program): General Signup from May 20 through June 14, 2013.

Comments:

Jay: NAP & MILC are most important to our Farmers - even through furlough we will continue to work so that our producers

are not at a disadvantage.

The guaranteed loan program is up (*provided a handout on micro-loan program*) - this is a fast tract loan program for direct financial assistance now. We also have a farm storage facility loan for raw products w low interest rates.

FSA will be training 8,000 people around the new record keeping to cut down on paper - FSA, RD & NRCS are working very well together.

Tom: USDA did not consider trees a crop after the Ice Storm, this is a problem for NH being 84% forested – I am hoping that Senator Shaheen's office notes this

Jay: under the NAP program, we tried to create a scenario around preventive tapping, this is what I want for Maple Producers - we do have the Emergency Conservation Program that will repair taps, & Emergency Forest Restoration Program. I'm hoping to organize maple producers across NH to establish a baseline for cost per tap.

Tom: if I'm growing trees for timber instead of maple/sugar, these trees are not covered

Agenda Item: US Fish & Wildlife – WoW Express Presenter: Artie McCollum, Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge (FWS, NFWR)

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

**Please contact Artie to contract the WoW - the website has a calendar of scheduled events*

http://www.fws.gov/r5soc/educational_resources/watershed-on-wheels.html

Agenda Item: Engineering and Emergency Watershed Program Update Presenter: Jade Nield, NRCS

**PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

Comments:

Jade: We are putting together a New England States EWP Team so that we can share engineering staff in these emergency events.

Charlie: Due to current weather conditions is the 100 year storm rule apply practically?

Jade: Building to the 500 year would still not be practical because of costs; we just updated our rainfall data based on current data.

John: Are you working w municipalities to limit the permitting for houses on these river banks?

Jade: That would be outside of our jurisdiction.

Rick: It is unfortunate when we have to spend money to repair where houses shouldn't be built.

Colin: How is the budget figured out for this?

Jade: When a disaster occurs and is declared by the President, we get funded, otherwise, we do a damage survey report for each site and submit it to DC for funding - exigent projects happen quickly, non-exigents take longer - they are cost benefit analyses. We have a project agreement w the Town which is who we deal with.

Rick: we would like to be able to coordinate at the state level instead of town, and are having these discussions now.

Matt: We do work with EWP in VT to help with the dynamic between landowner & town.

Eric Williams: Our river flumologists are now getting info to towns about what will happen to specific river areas in storm events.

Jade - Anaerobic Digester Conversation:

We met w six NH dairy producers to discuss an anaerobic digester pilot project - partnering w RD, NHDAMF, UNH Extension, & our Public Utilities Commission (PUC) & an experienced energy consultant - we toured 3 VT dairy farms (small, medium & large) w these partners and producers. Our farmers are excited about the possibilities of implementing a digester in NH!

- Building this partnership in NH to mirror that which exists in VT w goal to install an anaerobic digester on one of our dairy farms
- Manure separation might be a good first step for some farms because this is part of the methane digestion process and it provides cheap bedding and a potential revenue source from the sale of composted solids.
- We will continue with this team approach

Kira: We had a digester discussion in CT at State Technical Committee Meeting; w an excess of manure and not enough land to apply the manure, this would create a market for it.

Jay: we tried to combine farms in the Walpole area where there is not a manure surplus & they want to use it for fertilizer.

Jade: Because the manure is separated, liquid from solid, there is still manure for applying as fertilizer. The solids become recycled bedding.

Rick: Closing & Questions

- Our next meeting is TBA in September 2013
- Budget cuts have not been finalized yet and we haven't heard yet about furloughs for NRCS, but when we lose employees, we may not be filling behind.

Tom: During Alstead, we pulled a lot of NRCSer's to do work, like w Irene, (George Cleek, then STC); if a project doesn't get completed, or started in the contract time for EWP, do they get extended?

Rick: An MOU between our states will help w that so that we can share engineering staff - I've got to manage EWP so that we can also continue our Farm Bill work.

Thank you for coming...

Meeting Adjourned

