

**TENNESSEE STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**  
**UT Extension Conference Rooms A & B**  
**315 John Rice Boulevard**  
**Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37129**  
**October 3, 2012**  
**8:30am – 12:30pm**

**Presiding:** Kevin Brown, State Conservationist  
USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service

***Members/Representatives in Attendance:***

**Central Hardwoods Joint Venture**

Larry Heggemann

**Land Trust for Tennessee**

Emily Parish, Land Protection Manager

**National Wild Turkey Federation**

Jason Lupardus, Regional Biologist

**The Nature Conservancy of Tennessee**

Leslie Colley, Duck River Program Director

Corey Giles, Tennessee Protection Manager and Duck River Landowner Project Manager

Alex Wyss, Director of Conservation Programs

**Southeast Tennessee Rural Planning Organization**

Linda Hixon, Environmental Representative for Technical Committee

**Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts**

Danny Sells, Executive Director

**Tennessee Department of Agriculture**

Sam Marshall, 319 Nonpoint/CAFO Program Manager

John McClurkan, Administrator, Water Resources Programs

**Tennessee Department of Agriculture – Division of Forestry**

Herb Paugh, Forestry Program Specialist

John Woodcock, Forest Management Program Specialist

**Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation**

Brian Bowen, Program Administrator, State Natural Areas Program

**Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation**

Tiffany Howard, Assistant Director of Commodities

Stefan Maupin, Associate Director

**Tennessee Poultry Association**

Dale Barnett, Executive Director

## **Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency**

Mark Gudlin, Private Lands Liaison

## **University of Tennessee Extension**

Shawn Hawkins, Assistant Professor, Biosystems Engineering & Soil Science

Forbes Walker, Associate Professor and Environmental Soil Specialist, Biosystems Engineering & Soil Science

## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

Matthew Granstaff, Biologist

## **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Karl Anderson, District Conservationist

Robert Anderson, State Conservation Engineer

Kevin Brown, State Conservationist

Carol Chandler, State Resource Conservationist

Kevin Davis, State GIS Specialist

Craig Ellis, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

Mike Hart, Area Conservationist

Matt Hutchison, Soil Conservationist

Tate Jenkins, Realty Specialist

Jason McAfee, Resource Conservationist

Allen Persinger, Resource Conservationist

John Rissler, State Resource Conservationist

Pat Turman, State Agronomist

AnnSue Wattenbarger, Resource Conservationist

## **USDA Farm Service Agency**

Pat Gibson, Agricultural Program Specialist

David Sweany, Farm Programs Chief

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Brad Bingham, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

## ***Welcome and Introduction***

### **KEVIN BROWN:**

- Thank you all for joining us today. State Technical Committees were authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 (Farm Bill), as amended in 2008. Each state was required to establish a State Technical Committee to assist in technical considerations and to develop technical guidelines necessary to implement conservation provisions of the Food Security Act. Membership is composed of individuals who represent a variety of natural resource sciences and occupations, including USDA agencies and other Federal agencies and groups; State agencies, departments and groups; and private interest representatives such as agribusiness, agricultural producers, and nonprofit organizations with demonstrable conservation expertise. If there is someone that's not here that should be here, we would like to have them here next time.
- We're all waiting to see what's going to happen with the Farm Bill and if we will have a 2012 Farm Bill. Danny will speak about this a little bit later today. We know we won't have a Farm Bill before election.

- Our new fiscal year started on Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup>. We still have authorities for our programs, but we don't have money available because the Farm Bill expired. We're still going to hit the ground running, we won't wait to see what happens.
- My vision for this State Technical Committee is to keep our eye on a bigger picture. We need to come together in Tennessee and pull our resources together. It's going to take this group working together to do this. Next time when we send out the notice for this meeting, I would like to have all of you on the agenda to discuss how we can work together.

### ***INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AROUND THE ROOM***

- It looks like we're missing farmers and other private land owners.
- You'll see a push from all of us on Soil Health. John is going to show a brief video on soil health. If we have good soil health, then we have everything. We need to think of things like "not runoff problem, but an infiltration problem." Good cover crops will go a long way to addressing any resource concern that we have.

### ***SHORT SOIL HEALTH VIDEO SHOWN***

#### **JOHN RISSLER:**

- We've spent more money than we ever have on Cover Crops. I think we'll get the environmental benefits that we're looking for. We're really trying to mimic nature, especially with mixed cover crops. We want to mimic what a prairie has in it because that's where we're growing plants and we'll increase soil health. There are stories of people that have eliminated commercial fertilizer. We can move towards less and less commercial fertilizer.
- Google "NRCS soil health" or "Ray Archuleta soil health" for the videos.
- If we can really address Soil Health, we're addressing a lot of other resource concerns.
- One of things we did this year is create some cover crop test areas. They're basically doing some on-farm testing on their own. Our goal is that they'll do it on their own. We required that they left some strips out so they could see a yield or soil quality gain. They won't see all of the benefits in the first year.

### ***EQIP***

#### **ANNSUE WATTENBARGER:**

- We did receive almost \$20 million in EQIP this year. This is unheard of – without our District employees and all the partnerships we have, we couldn't have done it. Last year we obligated a little under \$12 million. This year we started with \$14 million but picked up another \$6 million. Back in 1996, our total allocation was under \$2 million for the entire state.
- Sub-accounts in EQIP – County Crop is by county if the Local Work Group chose it. Only one county chose County Forest sub-account.
- Payment column - \$4.9 million, amount of payments that have already been made on FY12 contracts. About 25%. This is amazing because it shows that conservation is getting on the ground fast.
- DCs and ACs have done a great deal of outreach. In Lewis County, they've done a few extra field days and there was a record there in the county this year.

- There was some extra money. \$1.7 million in drought money. We were ready for it and taking money from other states. We don't rank an application until they're ready to implement. All they're waiting on is money so we can go a lot faster. We still have 500 applicants in eligible status (everything is ready) on Monday.
- Equivalent of \$26 million in conservation when you count the landowners' contributions.
- \$31.61 that could not be spent.
- Four Field Offices that are in excess of \$1 million. Henry County, Hawkins County, Hancock County, Bradley County, and Polk County. It was an incredible year.
- Several sub-accounts in WHIP. National Office said no general WHIP FA. We didn't have anything to offer until we had WLFW Golden Winged Warbler money. This was for East Tennessee at elevations of 2,500 feet or above. We had some interest but they didn't quite make it to contract.
- Drought money for EQIP and WHIP. \$200,000 in WHIP.
- Predominant practices in EQIP – highest to lowest.
- State and Local Questions for EQIP Ranking Tools. National questions are always provided to us by NHQs. We can't edit them. We do have flexibility on state and local questions except for special initiatives. They will provide state questions for initiatives.
- Organic, On-Farm Energy, High Tunnel – all initiatives. Three separate ranking periods and funding directly from NHQs. On-Farm Energy was very successful. They ran out of money after the first ranking cutoff. All three of these initiatives should be offered in FY13. We only have input on local questions
- MRBI – state questions were provided to us. We developed our own local questions. Three watersheds proposed. Obion River, Red River, South Fork of Obion River Watershed.

### *NWQI and MRBI*

#### **JOHN RISSLER:**

- National Water Quality Initiative – great success for the timeframe we were given. We were under short timelines. East Tennessee, we identified a dairy that could have been the sole source of listing and we think that will take it off the list.
- Two out of three of the watersheds went off the list before the first practice went on the ground. We don't have any control over TDEC doing their testing. We had no way of knowing they would go off the list.
- Current contracts will go through, but we probably won't put additional money into those watersheds.
- **CAROL CHANDLER:** We were required by NHQs to use 2010 303(d) list. Testing done again in 2011, but by the time the results came out we had already contracted them.
- The intent is that we would select additional watersheds this year. We should be selecting some new ones and getting ready for those. We can't announce until we have funding.
- **KEVIN BROWN:** Measuring conservation and environmental benefits is very difficult to do. CEAP project is on-going – it is ARS's program. I'm not sure if it's fixed. I'll check into it.
- MRBI:
  - We funded a number of contracts. We have a new DC in the Red River. We'll see improvement there. I think we're getting some good benefits. Monitoring will be happening. MTSU is going to do the monitoring with one of our producers. Obion has most, then Red River, and then South

Fork of Obion River. Only one current monitoring contract. FY13 is the final year of the agreement – additional funding that comes to the state.

- One of the trends we're seeing in the state is additional irrigation interest since crop prices are so high. There are a lot of irrigation systems going in. Ground water and surface water will be concerns in the state as we continue to irrigate for production purposes.
- We offer more irrigation than other states in our payment region. Not offering Flood Irrigation, Furrows. We are doing Micro-Irrigation, Sprinklers, and Center-Pivot.
- **STEFAN MAUPIN:** Five or ten years from now there will be more irrigation systems that are faulty or using too much water. So, that's something to look forward to for future planning.
- **ROBERT ANDERSON:** A lot of other states have a mobile testing lab for irrigation systems. That is probably a need for Tennessee.
- **CRAIG ELLIS:** Variable rate irrigation systems might be something we want to look at as well. Nozzles can put out different types of water depending on your type of soil.

### *Additional Practices and Funding Timelines for FY13*

#### **BRAD BINGHAM:**

- USFWS was approached last year by an investment resources firm in Rhea County. There were headwaters on their property and road crossings where they moved their timber products in and out were creating fish passage issues. They asked, "Can you help us repair our crossings and eliminate fish passing issues and in return they will offer a permanent easement on headwater streams on their properties?"
- Could lead to de-listing of species. There were five to six crossings. Some were pretty intense with big drop from upper headwater to lower system. Engineering will be most costly aspect of project. I approached John to see if they had funding and in-kind engineering services. We have \$20,000 in partners funds. Also applying to two grants.
- **JOHN RISSLER:** On our list of practices, we don't have fish passage. We have culverts that come out and drop three feet, species often can't get through there. We've looked at doing some fish passage work. We probably want to have that available to us as a benefit. Could be WHIP or EQIP.
- This is a golden opportunity to protect headwater of this species and eliminate listing this species. Great showcase project for all agencies involved. Identified 300 ft buffer from stream edge following all of the tribs. Donate that in return for us buying material and getting culvert systems in. Currently they're on the hook for any impacts they have on the species.

### *Easement Programs*

#### **TATE JENKINS:**

- In Tennessee, we have 199 acquired easements totaling 31,600 acres. About two-thirds of Trousdale County. Mostly in West Tennessee. 30,000 acres located west of Tennessee River.
- WRP
  - In WRP, 48 easements for additional 6,000 acres. 17 new easements through MRBI along Mississippi River totaling 3,800 acres.
  - 41,000 acres in closed easements and easements in acquisitions.
  - No funding for WRP right now. We'll be taking names and contact information for interested landowners. Not taking new applications right now.

- Every year we do a GARC for the counties on WRP and GRP. Don't do individual appraisals per site. Will probably be very close to 2012 GARCs, we're just doing an update to verify that the rates are good. It has been pretty consistent over the past few years with the exception of a few highs and lows. We will have three prices per county – open land, other land (swamps), and woodland.
- GRP:
  - Five easements – 430 acres. One pending easement for 105 acres. Similar to WRP, this is an easement we purchased from landowner. Gives them more usage of the property than WRP. Mostly located in Middle Tennessee.
  - Rentals – 7,800 acres. 10, 15, or 20 year rentals. We will continue to honor those, but there is no funding for new applications now.
- EWP:
  - Not dealt with acquisitions. Year to year thing, depends on funding. Not guaranteed every year. Five statewide.
- FRPP:
  - Allen Persinger is the Program Manager.
  - 4 permanent easements. 894 acres. One that we're trying to close for additional 670 acres. Working with Land Trust of Tennessee. If we do get funding for FRPP in FY13, we'll probably get around \$2 million. There are a lot of eligible properties out there; it's just a matter of finding matching funds. Land Trust has been an excellent partner.
- WRP is our biggest program. We're taking sites in West and Middle Tennessee and we've seen some growth in interest in East Tennessee even though most of our current easements are in West Tennessee.

### *Special Project Development*

#### **MARK GUDLIN:**

- NRCS is a great conservation partner. Their staffs do a great job getting as many conservation dollars coming to Tennessee as possible and getting those dollars on the ground. Sometimes we're more focused on the dollars than what we're getting. Federal and state agencies have a huge target on our backs, Congress and taxpayers want to know what we're doing with conservation dollars.
- What tangible conservation achievements do we have to show for all of the EQIP money we've spent? This is introspective for my agency as well. It benefits us all to continually look at ways to best compete. There are ways that we can get ahead of the curve. I want to put together some ideas on how to better utilize the State Technical Committee.
  - Special Project Development Sub-Committee – we can look at NWQI, are there other high-priority watersheds that overlap with high priority species?
  - We can do a better job of mining NRCS data. What sort of format do we want to see data come from? Map showing over timespan since we've had WRP and EWP, where are these easements going? It shows to our constituents what WRP is doing for us. It's helping habitat along river systems. These are the sorts of things we need to do – look at data and boil it down to what landowners want to know.
- As a group, we can start identifying who is doing what monitoring and where? We might need another meeting in May to June between our February meeting and October meeting. We can take all day to look at the data and make a more detailed assessment. Gives us a chance to strategize before our full

meeting in October. It may be a way to get ahead of the curve. There are opportunities for us to put together a project from the ground up instead of receiving direction from NHQs. Maybe we can publish an annual Farm Bill report that gives an overview of these programs?

- We have the potential to pull our resources to be ahead of the game better than what we've done in the past.

## **CRP**

### **PAT GIBSON:**

- John McClurkan and I worked together to pull different agencies and resources and instead of doing CREP from Headquarters, we did an internal CREP. Picked a small 6 mile long stream. Contacted all landowners up and down stream. TDA sponsored a lunch for them, and NRCS, FSA, and Extension explained benefits of buffer and benefits of CRP. Explained amount of income coming from marginal land right along the stream. We ran into several roadblocks. That may be something that we want to revisit. We may want to target some specific watersheds and do some internal CREP and pull all of our partners. Anything we can do to encourage participation in buffers is good.
- General Sign-up – hard sell with commodity prices right now. A lot of re-enrolled acres. It's very difficult to encourage producers to put cropland into CRP with the commodity prices being so high. We can really push our riparian buffers and some continuous sign-up practices.
- Out of our 557 offers, we accepted 530 (95%). 97% of the acres that were offered. Some bad news is that the acres we had enrolled of April 2012 (190,000) expiring acres and new acres coming in, we're have a little less than 180,000. A year ago, we had 200,000 acres enrolled. In early 1990s, we had 500,000 acres enrolled. Acres have been slowly dropping off. We're doing what we can with continuous sign-up practices, but those are very small acreages. 50,000 acres expiring next year, hopefully we can get a lot of those re-enrolled. We might have a little bump this year because shares weren't very good in drought areas.
- I wanted to inform you of a new initiative on the Highly Erodible Land Initiative – for land that has an EI of 20 or greater; they'll allow that to become continuous sign-up. With that, we can accept applications all year. 23,300 acre limit in Tennessee. We probably won't reach that. This is a nationwide initiative – 750,000 acres. We do not have the authority to approve any additional contracts. CRP is on hold right now because of the Farm Bill expiration.
- Severe drought with a lot of counties interested in emergency haying and grazing on CRP acreage. Bottom line was that statewide, we had 11 contracts for 276 acres for emergency haying. That's the initial report, not final. We only have 2 contracts for 60 acres for emergency grazing. A lot of producers went with managed haying because they could cut the entire field.
- I am excited about what we've been discussing – there are a lot of things we can push and encourage. There are so many practices available. For each producer, there is a different tool that will work with them. We have to work with each landowner and figure out what benefits them the most. The more education we can do out there, the more participation we'll get.
- Emergency Conservation Program:
  - We had 9 counties that requested ECP for drought this year. They were mainly in Middle Tennessee. ECP Drought is a hard program to administer. Basically it's dry and we need an alternative water source. We can drill wells. We had a special practice for hauling water. We

have to re-evaluate when there is rain to see if there is still a need for emergency water. Very difficult for counties to administer. Getting funded is also very difficult.

- Last week we requested a little under \$400,000 for those counties. A lot of this will be used to compensate producers that have been hauling water.

#### **DAVID SWEANY:**

- In 2008 in Kansas, we had a similar situation where there was no general CRP sign-up. We had contracts expiring and producers wondering what to do. I don't know if history will repeat itself, but I'm betting on it. They authorized those contracts to expire if they enrolled to a continuous practice by June 1<sup>st</sup>, they do not need to meet the needs criteria for CRP. What I did was combine practices in my county in Kansas to create a wildlife habitat. Most landowners were willing to do it because it could get them close back to their prior CRP payment. We'll have a joint training with FSA and NRCS. Other agencies are encouraged to participate.

#### ***Payment Schedules and HEL/Wetlands Compliance***

#### **JASON MCAFEE:**

- Payment Schedules:
  - Tennessee, along with the rest of the country, is going to a regional payment schedule. Our region includes Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina. Very diverse. Two representatives for each state – me and Chris Hancock.
  - Process is moving fast. There was a National Cost List Team that developed cost list and scenarios at national level. Those were then sent to the region. We looked at all practices and decided which ones we wouldn't use. Took those out. Then we get with our Technical Specialist and get input to make sure that Tennessee has the scenarios that will work for us. Each practice can have so many scenarios. For the past three months we've had a dialogue with the other states in our region. We're doing things a lot different than West Virginia or North Carolina, etc. We're making sure that Tennessee has what we need. Our region should have everything reviewed and submitted to quality assurance next week. National will say that it is approved or needs edits. 23 practices waiting for NHQs to review. Longer it takes, the shorter time Tennessee has to fine tune this. We're in a fast paced mode. We have a teleconference today. We're trying to go through 20 practices. We have a good team but there is a lot of variation between the states.
  - This is part of the streamlining process to make things easier – maybe along down the line it will be easier. As a planner, over the first couple of years it will be more difficult for the field. No bundling of practices. Grassed Waterway would be a single contract item in a contract. Grading and Shaping, Seeding Component. Now this will be a two component contract. We have no control over that. There's inconsistency with national because thankfully Heavy Use Area has all of the components. Making sure the price is right for Tennessee. Appalachia is ahead of the rest of the 15 regions.
  - All needs to be in by October 10<sup>th</sup>. Quality Assurance will get back to us and then we'll go back to the state to fine tune them. We have a lot more work to do in a short amount of time.
  - November 9<sup>th</sup> – everything finalized and updated to Toolkit and ProTracts. Very ambitious deadline.

- HEL/Wetlands Compliance
  - Tennessee has developed policy. We've had separation of duties for HEL Status Reviews/Spot Checks. ACs assigns DC from another county. It seemed to work fairly well. We'll have the same separation of duties with Wetland Compliance but it will consist of Wetland Team from each area with Area Soil Scientist, Area Engineer, and Area Biologist. DCs will still be the POC. TN Bulletin will be sent out soon with Job Approval Authority for making certified wetland determinations. ACs will make sure that we have the right training. We set this in place to have proficient and sound wetland determination calls.
  - We have a lot of other issues with commodity crops and land being cleared. I look forward to meeting with David and working with his staff to try to get that communication open. Work towards consistency across the state.
  - Joint training on compliance with FSA and some of our other partners – that's something that we can explore.
  - This is a huge workload on the field for both agencies. We need to have those issues taken care of so we can work together. We're all here for conservation, taking care of the land, and working with farmers.

### *Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)*

#### **MATT HUTCHISON:**

- Conservation Stewardship Program
  - FY12 – 96 contracts made up of 306 different practices that cover over 44,000 acres and \$732,000 obligated.
  - Different than many other programs – encourages growers that are doing a good job to do an even better job by enhancing air quality, energy, cropland, soil quality, plant quality, water quality, etc.
  - 2008 Farm Bill – currently have 601 active contracts totaling \$3.5 million.
  - Security – 49 remaining contracts. \$8.5 million.
  - In 2012, of 44,000 acres, over 4,000 had practices or enhancements that benefitted wildlife. It's not WHIP, but there are a lot of benefits.
  - In 2012, some new contracts with limited resource participants, socially disadvantaged, and beginning farmers.
  - They've made some changes. There are 8 new enhancements available. 6 new combinations of bundles. Didn't change any of the practices.
  - We have enrollment authority through 2014. We will be taking applications, but NRCS has not determined if we will have funding.
  - **KEVIN BROWN:** It has never been funded at the level where it could be a success. But, I can pick the places where they have a CSP contract. You can see where they've addressed all of the resource concerns. I love this program. The problem is that we can't keep the conservation on the ground. With CSP, at least we can sign a contract that says it will stay there for 10 years. I don't know if it will ever be funded appropriately.

## 590 – Nutrient Management

### PAT TURMAN:

- We have a committee formed to look at the 590 Standard. National released the National 590 Standard and new Nutrient Management Policy in January 2012. We have one year to update our standard. Nutrient Management implementation policy was there to guide us. 7 members of the 12 member committee are here today. We started as the MMP Committee and we worked on different things with CAFOs. Now we've shifted to the 590 Committee. They've done a great job. We've had really good discussions.
- Committee's task: Update standard. Create nitrogen leaching index. Update phosphorous index.
- Nutrient Management Standard
  - Sent out in an email. What is in black was in the National Standard. We can be more strict, but not less strict. What we added for Tennessee is in the blue text. We have one section in red. Still waiting for concurrence from TDEC. Hoping to receive the approval this week. We'll post the standard for public review. We would like to hear your comments on this – it should be on eFOTG. Please send it to others if you know they would be interested. Send the comments back into me. Once it's posted, there are 30 days for comments. In our next meeting, we'll review the comments.
    - Right rate, right source, right placement, right time. Taking suite of different practices that we're giving the crop what it needs and promoting environmental benefits. Standards look at crop need and risk assessment.
  - Nitrogen leaching index – Forbes Walker is the leader. It shows a potential of nitrogen leaching. Looked at seasonal weather precipitation (November to March), soil hydrologic group, and annual rainfall. Rating that came out of RUSLE2. Then created scoring. If you have any questions or comments on that, you can contact me or Forbes.
    - **FORBES WALKER:** UT Extension publication. Working on this for about six months now. Getting ready to send to my colleagues. Hopefully we'll have it as a publication before the end of the year.
  - Phosphorous index update. We'll go to low, moderate, and high rating. Look at annual RUSLE2 loss for the year manure is applied. Once it is updated and committee approves it, we'll send it to regional and then they'll approve. They want to make sure that how we rank and score on phosphorous index is representative regionally. There are five CIG grants across the nation to look at regionalizing phosphorous index and Tennessee received two of the five.
    - Farmer needs to work with us on the entire planning process. Nutrient Management is very broad. From CNMP Team, what we're looking at will apply across the board. How do we bring the producer in? We want to make it simpler for the producer and get more buy-in. They also want to prevent more regulation in the future. This is a pro-active approach.
  - **FORBES WALKER:** Requirement of 590 Standard tells us what we need to do. Nitrate leaching index – we're making it as simple as possible. If you have a high potential, it would be good to use these types of practices, etc. It's not binding. Bigger changes are with the phosphorous risk index. Most states are developing a p index, some are complex. Ours is simple. We tend to be more on the conservative side than the neighboring states. With this revision, we have the opportunity to strengthen it.

## *What Does the Future Hold?*

### **DANNY SELLS:**

- Farm Bill ended on September 30<sup>th</sup>. In the 2012 appropriations bill, EQIP was extended to 2014, along with CSP, WHIP, FRPP, and AMA. There may be some questions as to how much authority actually exists.
- WRP, GRP, Energy Title, and Forestry Title do not have base. They just funded it for the life of the Farm Bill, so there is no funding there.
- Senate passed a Farm Bill with a \$6 billion cut in conservation. House cut \$6 billion as well, but their bill never actually came to the floor.
- Current authorities are impacted by some of the changes proposed in the bills. There is a combination of programs. Currently have 23 cost-share programs, they reduced it to 12 or less. After they do pass the Farm Bill, we have to figure out how to fit into these combined programs.
- Anything that was done in this session will die in January when they seat a new Congress. November 17<sup>th</sup> will start a lame duck session after the election. I cannot imagine a scenario with the current members that anything will happen during this session.
- Sequestration – \$1.3 trillion in cuts.
- Debt ceiling.
- Bush tax cuts expire.
- These issues are so large that it makes the Farm Bill look like a minor problem. No one really knows what is going to happen.
- How are these programs changing? How is sequestration going to affect us? Would have \$3 billion impact just for FY2013. Food stamps and nutrition programs are protected. All other programs take the hit.
- How do we as Districts develop capacity? How do we come together to salvage opportunity to use funds in Tennessee by Tennessee landowners to protect their resources? We have some serious issues to deal with over the course of the next few years and no one knows what is going to happen.
- **STEFAN MAUPIN:** Precarious times when you look at the mindset of Congress. Farm Bill is an easy target. All ag organizations see that the world has to double food production over next 40 years, but we're going backwards on research and conservation, etc. There's a real discussion that needs to take place outside of election year with Congressional members to see what is at stake right now. From a policy perspective, we're in some interesting times.

### *Final Comments*

#### **KEVIN BROWN:**

- I do appreciate all of you spending your time here. I'm going to work with Mark on how we can set up a sub-committee or direction committee to work within this group. The main thing is that we all have the same concern – keeping farmers on the farm. We have to keep them financially viable so that they can put conservation on the ground. We have to bring in the other interest groups. I appreciate you working for the same goal.