



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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State Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

Date – June 12, 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, Rebecca Donegan, Resource Conservationist, NRCS, Peter Gibbs, Natural Resource Specialist, NRCS, Kim Glenn, Mgt&Program Analyst, NRCS, Virginia Green, FSA, Kevin Roberts, NYSDEC, David Haight, AFT and Kelly Sweeney, DEC.

Phone Participants – Kristina Heinemann, EPA, Sloan Crawford, DEC, Cathy Mural, Farm Bureau, Audrey Moore, EPA, Andy Hinickle, Audubon, Nichelle Billhardt, CDEA.

Welcome/State Conservationist Update – Don Pettit

Farm Bill – There is progress regarding the Farm Bill. Both the House and Senate have advanced versions with very little difference in Conservation Title. There is a streamlining of programs and restrictions placed on acreage for CSP and CRP.

Budget – Sequestration has resulted in 8% reduction in technical and financial assistance funds. What this means to NRCS New York is that a year ago there were 174 employees and currently there are 154. This limits the ability to backfill any positions. Fiscal year 2014 is estimated to be a 10% reduction from OMB.

Restructure – The state will be decreasing from 4 areas to 3. The Administrative Areas are located in Batavia, Marcy and Walton. The Field Offices will become Field Teams covering multiple counties.

Questions – none.

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) – Tammy Willis

Tammy presented a National Water Quality Initiative PowerPoint updating the committee of the three new watersheds Big Inlet, Prendergast Creek and Goose Creek located in the Chautauqua Lake that have been approved by National Headquarters for this initiative. These were the watersheds that were proposed at the March 13, 2013 meeting. For FY 2013 \$282,599.00 has been received for funding the NWQI in NY.



The logic behind selecting these three watersheds was that in addition to landowner interest there is potential for long-term monitoring.

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Easements – Peter Gibbs

Peter Gibbs provided a PowerPoint that gave an overview of the WRP easements in New York. Currently there are 984 easements that range in size from 1608 ac to 10 ac. The administrative and field office time spent on an easement is the same regardless of the size of the easement. Peter is proposing to the committee to have a minimum acre size for WRP enrollment that would still enable NRCS to meet the goals set by National Headquarters. It was pointed out that the total acres enrolled, doesn't necessarily mean that is the total acres being restored. In most instances it is less. If you are interested in being a part of the WRP sub-committee contact Peter Gibbs.

Action – Sub-committee meet to discuss topic further.

Action – Send sub-committee notification and include Kristina Heinemann (EPA).

Cancellations and Terminations – Chanda Lindsay

Chanda provided PowerPoint presentation on program contract cancellations and terminations. The total cancellations/terminations processed for FY 2012 was 79 contracts which resulted in \$1,467,449.45 returned to National Headquarters and the cost recovery from the participants was \$951.00. It was noted that the money does not stay in New York it is returned to the Department of Treasury and the fact that it is associated with the Farm Bill makes the funding restricted to that fiscal year. This has an adverse effect on all landowners in New York. The programs staff is currently working with the field to become more efficient and reduce the number of contract cancellations/terminations.

A question was asked as to what the percentage is of cancellations/terminations.

Action – Percentage will be calculated and sent out to the committee.

FY 2014 NRCS Local Work Group (LWG) – Request for Funding (RFP) – Rebecca Donegan

Rebecca presented the “Draft” RFP and worksheet to the committee members. In FY 2014 NRCS New York is planning to make a portion of EQIP-General and all AMA funds available to NRCS field teams through a RFP process. Each LWG may submit one EQIP proposal and one AMA irrigation proposal. This will not replace the typical NRCS EQIP fund allocation process but instead will give the LWG the opportunity to apply for additional, dedicated funding to focus on a specific resource concern if they choose.

Questions -

Q – Can you explain the process for the RFP?

A – 1) NRCS will review and set aside funds.

2) Advertise the RFP utilizing traditional methods – partners, etc.

Q – What is the criteria for determining a specific watershed?

A – The criteria is decided by the Local Working Groups.

Action – Press Releases and notifications will be posted to the website and sent to the State Technical Committee members.

State Resource Assessment (SRA) FY 2014 – Don Pettit

National Headquarters has set-aside additional funding for states to compete for. This is an Agency-wide effort for States to link their resource concerns and treatment needs to their future allocations and goals. The Chief may reserve up to 5% of Farm Bill Program funds to facilitate State efforts to address resource opportunities and future directions. States will identify priority treatment acres, examine existing Farm Bill workload for implementation, estimate the FA and TA needed to treat the priority treatment acres identified; and compete for the additional funding. New York has selected FRPP in the Lower Hudson River Valley as the focus for this additional funding. The reason for this selection is 1) proximity to NYC and the urban pressures 2) important food source 3) strong local partners and 4) Goal of the partners to protect sustainability of farmland in the region.

Additional and detailed information provided in the attached PowerPoint.

Forestry Advisory Committee Meeting - Chanda Lindsay

Chanda provided an update from the advisory committee meeting that was held May 21, 2013. Resource concerns were identified with Forest Regeneration being the over-arching concern in addition to deer control, wildlife enclosures and invasive species/insects. The ranking and practices will be associated with Forest Regeneration.

Don mentioned that the Chief has reviewed the Landscape Initiatives in the states and feedback will be coming soon on the NE/NY Forestry Initiative. The effectiveness, mission, and conservation benefits are being reviewed and this could potentially impact our ability to focus on forestry.

Soil Health Initiative – Ed Henry

Ed provided an update from the Soils Health Committee meeting and they are in the process of working on on-farm demonstrations with the focus being how profit and soil health fit together. The NRCS Soils Health Team is focusing on a training program for NRCS employees and partners. There is a growing understanding of Soil Health as a concept and this is extending to

our SWCD partners. Upcoming dates for training and demonstrations will be at the Empire Farm Days August 6 - 8, 2013. A Train the Trainer Workshop is scheduled for August 22nd, 2013 for NRCS employees and partners.

Edge of Field Water Quality Monitoring – Ed Henry/Rebecca Donegan

The Edge of field Water Quality Monitoring is a new program initiative for 2013. The purpose is to evaluate Conservation Best Management Practices (BMP) effectiveness, Field Scale Model Calibration and Adaptive Management. The areas of focus in New York are the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and Lake Champlain Watershed.

Additional information provided in the PowerPoint presentation.

Farm Service Agency Program Update – Virginia Green

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) allocated \$350,000.00 in funding, no funding for easements. Applications are being taken until June 14, 2013 and the rankings will be posted to the Sharepoint.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up until June 14, 2013.

Highly erodible – continuous sign-up.

NYS CREP received approval to expand which includes all of the Chesapeake Bay and Lake Champlain. These were targeted due to TMDL requirements.

FSA is working with partners on the Emergency Forestry Restoration Program.

Questions – none.

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