



Penobscot County Soil & Water Conservation District

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December 20, 2022
USDA Field Office
Bangor, Maine
10am-12:00 pm

Attendees:

- Penobscot County SWCD: Mary Wilson, Carol Weymouth & Daniel Kusnierz
- NRCS: Victor Tuschen, Charles Penney & Misha Vargas
- Public: Charles Loring PIN

The meeting was called to order by District Conservation, Victor Tuschen at 10:00 AM.

Mission Statement PCSWCD:

The Penobscot County SWCD provides leadership, information, education, and technical assistance to conserve, improve and sustain our natural resources through partnerships with individuals, businesses, organizations and government.

Objective: The objective of the Penobscot County Local Lead Working Group is to utilize EQIP to promote the use of conservation practices to benefit the environment while promoting sustainable agriculture and maintaining open farmland.

Priority Resource Concerns: In Penobscot County, the Local Working Group (LWG) has identified and prioritized the following resource concerns:

HIGH- Soil Quality, Erosion Control, Forestry, Manure Management/
Animal Wastewater Quality, Air, Water Quality, Climate Smart,
Cropland & Pollinators.
MEDIUM – Wildlife, Invasives
LOW –

Eligible Practices and Payment Rates: For a list of practices eligible for EQIP financial assistance in fiscal year 2024, see Penobscot County Eligible Practices and Payment Rate List.

Sign-up: All program sign-up is continuous, and applications may be taken at any time. Sign-up will be conducted according to local priorities and grouped along the lines of the resource areas that the State Technical Committee defined and that the

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LWG have recommended be funded in 2024.

For each funding cycle, a cutoff date will be established to provide time for screening and ranking. Applications received after the cutoff date will be considered for the next funding cycle.

Conservation practices (both structural and management) in Forestland will be eligible for inclusion in a cost share contract only when a Forest Stewardship Plan, or other forest management plan that meets the State of Maine Stewardship Plan standard, has been developed for the acres to be enrolled in the program. Applications involving animal waste management such as waste storage facilities, silage leachate control, waste water treatment system, and heavy use area protection require the development of a comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) prior to funding. There may be opportunities for financial assistance to obtain these specific types of plans. Landowners should contact the office to request assistance and information.

Ranking: All eligible applications received prior to the funding cycle cutoff date will be screened. Those determined to be High priority will be ranked based on an on-site resource inventory and assessment. Planners will develop alternative measures to address resource concerns based on their assessment and work with the applicant to come to decisions for practice application. Ranking will be based on the decisions the applicant makes for addressing the resource concerns.

The combined ranking sheet for Penobscot County, which incorporates resource concerns and applicable quality criteria from the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide, is the basis for ranking applications. A single combined ranking sheet will be completed for each farm or planning/contract area. Points will be assigned for those resource concerns that do not meet quality criteria in the benchmark condition and will be improved as a result of implementation of the client's contract.

Applications will be selected for contracting in ranked order by resource area, according to the score, as available funds allow. If available funds are insufficient to contract all eligible applications, applications may be held (deferred) and considered for funding with any subsequently received applications during FY 2021 if another application ranking period is announced.

Funding: Periodic requests for program allocations will be scheduled throughout the year as funding permits. Separate program requests will be submitted by the District Conservationist according to the resource areas that the State Technical Committee defined and that the LWG has recommended be funded in 2024. Each of these requests will constitute a separate pool of ranked applications.

Allocation decisions to each Field Office will be made in the State Office based on national, state and local priorities, and the nature and extent of requests. Field Office Allocations will be split between each of the resource categories based on percentages

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set by the LWG, as shown below. Unfunded applications will be deferred to the next program request date.

Review Eligible Practice List & Recommendations: NRCS has changed the practice list to national rates.

- The LWG decided on no change for Animal Waste.
- The LWG agreed on changes to Cropland. Cropland will go from 15% down to 5%.
- The LWG has added High Tunnels back at 2%

National Initiatives and State Initiatives: There are three National Initiatives that will be offered this year and eight state initiatives.

National Initiatives

- On-Farm Energy
- Organic
- National Water Quality

State Initiatives

- Beginning Farmer
- CAPS
- CIG
- Aquatic Organism Passage
- Irrigation
- Working Land for Wildlife
- Socially Disadvantaged
- Tribal

2021 Farm Bill Delivery

- 1) 2022 Program Overview: A breakdown of Fiscal Year 2022 programs was presented. There were 37 new contracts totaling \$1,018,168.82 There were 71 active contracts at the end of FY 2021.
- 2) 2023 Planning and Evaluation: The program schedules from Maine NRCS State Office were presented.

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Resource Concern Priorities

1) 2023 Application Evaluation Ranking Tool: The local questions were changed to:

a) For Livestock Waste

- i. Ag waste, does this farm have no existing manure storage or stacking sites available? If yes award 25pts
- ii. Are the proposed practices designed to address silage leachate runoff? If yes, award 25 points
- iii. Are the planned practices situated in the Sebasticook Lake or Kenduskeag Stream watershed? If yes, award 25 points
- iv. Are concentrated nutrients negatively affecting perennial streams, rivers, ponds or lakes that are located within 500 feet of the source? And will be addressed by this contract? 75 points
- v. Are concentrated nutrients negatively affecting perennial streams, rivers, ponds or lakes that are located within 500-1000 feet of the source, and will be addressed by this contract? 50 points

b) For Cropland

- i. Are planned practices on soils classified as HEL? If yes, award 100 points
- ii. Are the planned practices implementing new crop rotations to reduce tilling or increase soil residuals to improve soil quality? If yes award 50 points
- iii. If practice 340, cover crops, is planned, will multiple species mix (minimum of 5) be used? If yes award 50 points.

c) For Forestry

- i. Has the applicant NOT had an EQIP contract obligated in the last three years (2019-2021) EXCLUDING a forestry CAP contract? If yes award 50 points
- ii. Are the proposed practices going to address forest health conditions identified in the FMP that target invasive species and/or pest species? If yes award 50 points

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- iii. Is the producer willing to participate in the New England Pollinator Partnership and is there at least 1 planned NRCS core practice that's going to benefit pollinator species and habitat within the proposed planned woodlot. 25 points.
- iv. Was the application deferred and not funded in the 2021 sign up and being resubmitted for the same practices in 2022? If yes award 25 points.
- v. Does the application have an (AOP) Aquatic Organism Passage or a Stream Crossing practice planned for 2022? If Yes award 50 points.

d) For **High Tunnel**

- i. If selected, will this be the first EQIP contract for this participant, or has the participant had no EQIP contracts awarded to them within the last 10 years? If yes, award 20 points.
- ii. Does the farming operation sell agricultural products at a farmer's market? If yes, award 50 points
- iii. Does the farming operation sell agricultural products to local, regional, or national businesses? If yes, award 50 points
- iv. Does the farming operation offer customers a community supported agriculture (CSA) share? If yes, award 50 points
- v. Will this be the first Seasonal High Tunnel used by the applicant for the production of crops in the ground? If yes award 30 poin

The funding rates for Penobscot County's EQIP allocation for 2024 will be:

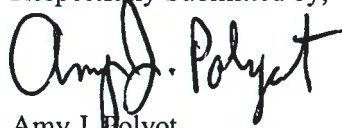
Resource Concern	% of Total Allocation Funding	Previous Year 20	Previous Year 20	Previous Year 20	Previous Year 20
Animal Waste	45%				
Forestry	48%				
Pasture	0 %				
Cropland/Hayland	5 %				
Soil Health	0 %				
Water Quality	0 %				
Local Fund Pool	0 %				
Seasonal High Tunnels	2 %				
Irrigation	0 %				
Wildlife	0 %				
TOTAL	100 %				

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Meeting/Project Name	Penobscot County Soil and Water Conservation District LOCAL WORKING GROUP MEETING		
Date of Meeting:	12/20/22	Time	10:00 am to 12:15 p.m
Minutes prepared by: Amy J. Polyot		Bangor, Maine	
Attendance at Meeting			
Name	Department / Division	Name	Department/Division
Amy Polyot	PCSWCD		
Mary Wilson	PCSWCD/Farmer		
Victor Tuschen	NRCS		
Charles Penney	NRCS		
Misha Vargas Via: Phone	NRCS		
Daniel Kusnierz	PCSWCD		
Charles Loring	PIN		
Carol Weymouth	MACD		

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Amy J. Polyot
District Manager