



Maine Association of Conservation Districts

Working for Maine's Conservation Districts

PO Box 541 Portland, ME 04112

Maine Soil and Water Conservation District Local Working Group (LWG) Meeting Minutes

Meeting/Project Name	Southern Aroostook Soil and Water Conservation District LOCAL WORKING GROUP MEETING		
Date of Meeting:	2/2/23	Time	10am-11:45am
Minutes prepared by: A. Wotton		Location	Houlton, ME
Attendance at Meeting			
Name	Department / Division	Name	Department/Division
Philip Quint, Jr	NRCS staff	Lauren Ouellette	Maine Forest Service
Ethan Hill	NRCS staff	Angela Wotton	SASWCD staff
Erica Fitzpatrick Peabody	Potato producer		
Kathy Hoppe	Maine DEP		
Kirsten Thompson	Maine DEP		
Bill Sheehan	Maine DEP		

Local Working Group Meeting Minutes, Southern Aroostook SWCD

The meeting of the SASWCD Local Working Group was held at the USDA Service Center, 304 North St, Houlton on February 2 from 10am – 11:45am.

Following a welcome, introductions, and brief review of the role of the Local Working Group (LWG) by Phil and Angie, funding pools and ranking documents were provided for discussion of FY2024 needs.

The group reviewed prior year funding pool categories and percentages, inquiring if the percentages for fund pools addressed the need.

Discussion for the following local issues are as follows:

General:

New ranking elements for every funding pool category: "Applicant has been unsuccessful getting funded for the past two years" (remove "Is the applicant new to NRCS programs")

Cropland: Cropland has two ways to get funding through EQIP and Climate Smart. Possibility of Urban Ag as well, as long as core practices are met. Climate Smart is state-wide.

What about use? Are there practices that aren't getting utilized that can help other categories?

Ranking elements within cropland seem to capture a diverse set of resource concerns and the LWG advised to leave as it is currently written.

Discussed taking 3 points from cropland and applying to another category for one year and revisit at next LWG but ultimately declined to take action on points deduction.



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Ag Waste: Phil explained what is commonly known as “blockers” where state funding steps in with set-aside funding when an ag waste project is so large that it is “blocking” other ag waste projects to get funded. Used only when additional money is needed to help large projects get picked up and is not something Phil sees that would be utilized in this office currently. Generally have 3 -5 ag waste projects to rank each year.

Pasture: Pasture applications remain under-utilized and LWG decided to temporarily remove all 5 points and apply to Forestry category for one year only. Reinstating points will be revisited at next annual LWG meeting.

Forestry: As with last year, Phil noted that the Houlton field office has more applications pending than funding available. Discussion on ranking elements and points such as importance and promotion of pre-commercial thinning. Difficult due to crew access as there aren't many available based on the fact that the practice is primarily hand work. Discussion about many benefits of PCI. Other current concerns include erosion from stream crossings on forest land.

LWG agreed to increase points from 50 to 75 on ranking element, “Application addresses erosion on stream crossings.” Also recorded the change to not being funded for the past two years as indicated under “General” above with point values reduced to 25 from 50.

Wildlife: LWG discussed pulling deer wintering habitat ranking element since there is a separate state-wide funding pool. Those 30 points were placed into ranking element of those not funded the past two years. The ranking element, “Is the application within ¼ mile of a State of Maine Habitat or Species of Concern” has been changed to “Enhance or create a shelter belt, riparian buffers, and hedgerow plantings for wildlife habitat and corridors” for 60 points.

The group recommended the following allocation percentages:

2024 EQIP Funding Pool Category	Percent of FO Allocation
Cropland (includes hay)	53
Pasture	0
Animal Waste	25
Forestry	17
Wildlife	5

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.