

RI State Technical Team Meeting Minutes (via Microsoft Teams)

November 8, 2023

Attendees: Darrell Moore, Joseph Bachand, Jennifer Dacey, Melissa Hayden, Jermaine Jenkins, Molly Allard, Ken Ayers, Eric Scheider, Jake Peterson, Audrey Mayer, Angelica Quintana, Cassius Spears, Phou Vongkhamdy, Wenley Ferguson, Marina Capraro, Maria Mack, Dick Wendt, Sara Churgin, Gina Fuller, Kira Jacobs, Ted Kendziora, Julius Kolawole, Amanda Freitas, Margherita Pryor, Mike Sullivan, Eric Scherer.

1. Opening remarks by Phou Vongkhamdy
2. Local Work Group Updates – Molly Allard
 - Spoke about RI Local Working Group what they would like to see NRCS address in the future. Two events were scheduled for 2023, one in person (not held due to snow), 1 virtual – discussed what resources are they are concerned about. Wildfire risk / standing dead wood, deer pressure and drought were some of the most common topics. A discussion ensued concerning deer fencing and possible funding. Looking ahead – district level meetings in 2024.
3. NRCS Programs / Field Updates –Joseph Bachand
 - Reviewed Financial Assistance Farm Bill Programs, Final FY23 Obligations by Program, FY24 Allocations by Program (EQIP, IRA EQIP, AMA, CSP, IRA CSP). Gave an overview of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and ACT NOW IRA Strategy for RI. Discussed deadlines for FY24 open sign-ups for FA Programs, Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG), RI Forest Health Works Project, FY24 Easement Allocation and closed / ongoing FY23 easement projects. Discussion ensued concerning funding for eel grass and bay scallop restoration.
4. Engineering Updates – Darrell Moore
 - Continuing with technical guidance, conducting a lot of work with EQIP programs, completing EQIP designs, watershed projects, also working on many watershed projects (Palmer River, Pawtuxet River, Paradise Brook, Bradley Brook, Running River, Blackstone River), working on four Emergency Watershed Projects (EWP). Flooding assistance available to municipalities.
 - Will send out slides of his presentation (unable to share during update).
5. Ecological Sciences Updates –Cassius Spears Jr
 - Gave updates on forestry/wildlife and endangered species. Spoke about Climate Smart Forestry and Agriculture (CSAF) activities, National Water Quality Initiative

(NWQI) Watershed and Source Water Protection area selection. Entered into a Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry agreement with URI.

6. Partner Updates

- Dick Wendt – State committee wants a partnership to work with agriculture and food security.
- Kira Jacobs – NACD was awarded \$600,000 to launch the new Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Forests and Water Partnership from Maine to WV and Ohio. EPA's Drinking Water Program is funding a meeting to be held in CT in 2024.
- Margherita Pryor - EPA announced on October 4 million in grants to RI. Also, DEM 319 RFP out today.
- Eric Scheider - DEM update – EQIP Oyster practices, shellfish restoration and enhancement plan. Southern New England Program developing a habitat suitability for oyster restoration.
- Ted Kendziora – Continuing New England cotton tail project and Young Forest/Pine Projects.
- Gina Fuller – Climate Smart Practices, farmers looking for RI to adopt shade structures practice for vegetable crops.

7. Closing Remarks by Phou Vongkhamdy

8. Adjournment