



Penobscot County Soil & Water Conservation District

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January 3, 2024
USDA Field Office
Bangor, Maine
10am-12:00 pm

Attendees:

- Penobscot County SWCD: Amy Polyot, Mary Wilson, Ryan Crane, Pam Wells, Carol Weymouth, & Daniel Kusnierz
- NRCS: Josh Pratt & Sam Farrar
- Public: Kirby Ellis, John Williams, and Allison Bistine-East

The meeting was called to order by District Conservation, Joshua Pratt 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.

Eligible Practices and Payment Rates: For a list of practices eligible for EQIP financial assistance in fiscal year 2025, 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 LWG has recommended be funded in 2025.

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

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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:

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 2024 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 2025. 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 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 to split 5% from Animal Waste bringing it to 42.5%
- The LWG agreed to adding 2.5% to Forestry bringing it to 42.5%.
- The LWG has agreed to leave Cropland at 15%

National Initiatives and State Initiatives: There are three National Initiatives that will be

Providing conservation assistance to the landowners of Penobscot County for over 60 years.
An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

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offered this year and eight state initiatives.

National Initiatives

- On-Farm Energy
- Organic
- Organic Transition Initiative
- National Water Quality Initiative
- Urban Agriculture
- RCPP

State Initiatives

- Tribal
- Inflation Relief Act (IRA)
- Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC)
- Source Water Protection Areas
- Statewide Cropland
- Deer Wintering Areas
- New England Pollinator Partnership Project
- CIG
- Aquatic Restoration
- Irrigation
- Working Land for Wildlife
- Socially Disadvantaged
- Beginning Farmer

2023 Farm Bill Delivery

- 1) 2023 Program Overview: A breakdown of Fiscal Year 2023 programs was presented. There were 24 new contracts totaling \$426,277.38 There were 48 active contracts at the end of FY 2023.
- 2) 2024 Planning and Evaluation: The program schedules from Maine NRCS State Office were presented.

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Resource Concern Priorities

1) 2025 Application Evaluation Ranking Tool: The local questions were changed. New questions are highlighted.

a) For Livestock Waste

- i. Ag waste, does this farm have no existing manure storage or stacking sites available? If yes, award 25 points.
- 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 and will be addressed by the practices in this application?
 - a. Proposed practices located within 500 feet of the source and will be addressed by this contract? If yes, award 75 points.
 - b. Proposed practices are located within 500-1000 feet of the source and will be addressed by this contract? If yes, award 50 points.
 - c. Proposed practices are located greater than 1000 feet of the source OR not addressed by this application? Award 0 points.

b) For Cropland

- i. Are planned practices on soils classified as HEL? If yes, award 90 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 a species mix of 1-2 be used? If yes, award 30 points.
- iv. If practice 340, cover crops, is planned, will multiple species mix of 3+ be used? If yes, award 50 points.
- v. Would any practice planned provide pollinator benefits? If yes, award 10 points.

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c) For **Forestry**

- i. Are the proposed practices going to address forest health conditions identified in the FMP that target invasive species? If yes, award 45 points.
- ii. 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. If yes, award 35 points.
- iii. Does the application have an (AOP) Aquatic Organism Passage or a Stream Crossing practice planned for 2025? If Yes award 45 points.
- iv. Will the proposed planned practices benefit species of greatest conservation need listed as Tier I,II, or III of the State of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Action Plan? If yes, award 40 points.

The funding rates for Penobscot County's EQIP allocation for 2025 will be:

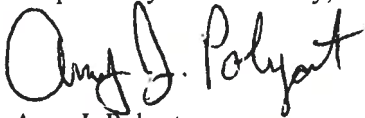
Resource Concern	% of Total Allocation 2025	Previous Year 2020	Previous Year 2021	Previous Year 2022	Previous Year 2023
Animal Waste	42.5%	45%	45%	45%	45%
Forestry	42.5%	40%	40%	40%	40%
Cropland	15 %	15%	15%	14%	14%
TOTAL	100 %	100%	100%	100%	100%

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Meeting/Project Name	Penobscot County Local Working Group LOCAL WORKING GROUP MEETING		
Date of Meeting:	1/3/2024	Time	10:00 a.m. to 12:35 p.m.
Minutes prepared by: Amy J. Polyot		Bangor, Maine	
Attendance at Meeting			
Name	Department / Division	Name	Department/Division
Amy Polyot	PCSWCD	Ryan Crane	PCSWCD/Farmer
Mary Wilson	PCSWCD/Farmer		
Joshua Pratt	NRCS		
Samuel Farrar	NRCS		
John Williams	Farmer		
Daniel Kusnierz	PCSWCD/PIN		
Pam Wells	PCSWCD/Wood lot owner		
Carol Weymouth	PCSWCD		
Kirby Ellis	TSP		
Allison Bistine- East	UMO		

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Amy J. Polyot
District Manager