



## RI State Technical Team Meeting Minutes (via Microsoft Teams)

July 18, 2024

Attendees: Annie Ragan, Julie Wright, Michael Wilkinson, Cassius Spears, Marckenzie Boutin, Fabian Carmona Ortega, Audrey Mayer, Amanda Freitas, Kira Jacobs, Isaac Bearg, Matt Tracy, Jermaine Jenkins, Dick Wendt, Jacob Peterson, Ken Ayars, Reuben Macfarlan, Paul Dolan, Eric Sherer, Marina Capraro, Brunilda Velez Diaz, Molly Allard, Joe Bachand, Michael Sullivan, Gina Fuller, Julius Kolawole

1. Opening remarks by Jermaine Jenkins
2. Local Work Group Updates

Molly Allard

- Initiated working group for growing Spanish farmers. Invasive species management is a common concern. Highlighted notes from previous working group meeting. Interested in increasing more attendance in meetings. Concern for attendance, weather, and logistical issues for working groups. Priority on sugar kelp, which grows well in our region. Farmers can apply for programs to farm kelp from October to May for underutilized waterways. It would improve the local ecology. Producers are selling processors in Maine but not here in RI. Kelp has potential for growth in RI.

3. NRCS Programs / Field Updates

Joe Bachand

- Easement allocation for FY24 by program: agriculture, wetland, and forest reserve. Reported closed easements throughout RI. WRE restoration projects for local environment with Save-The-Bay. Identified easement portfolio to date (80% of programs rely on partnerships).

Annie Ragan

- Reviewed Financial Assistance Farm Bill Programs and updated on FY24 Allocations by program (EQIP, AMA, CSP). Reviewed Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for RI. Discussed climate smart agriculture practices for soil health, water quality, water quantity, energy efficiency, plant and animal health, pasture and hay land planting, and forest health and agroforestry. Small-scale conservation scenarios for urban and smaller farmers for soil health, water conservation. Combustion system improvement (372) to reduce emissions is a new program under IRA funding.

Marina Capraro

- RCPP Forest Health Works: discussed easement applications for land, which is a great accomplishment for RI.

4. Engineering Updates

Michael Wilkinson

- EQP is the top priority for the department. Implement training for new technology to reduce emissions. Watershed is very active. Short term program for flooding in the region. Five active EWP projects. Acquired 18 parcels of land in East Providence for restoration. Last week, stream bank restoration project initiated in response to inclement weather and erosion. Debris removal project underway to unclog the local waterways. DSRs and EWP projects underway from storms in March. Identified three flood prevention projects in planning phase and nine programs established to determine feasibility of projects.

5. Ecological Sciences Updates

Cassius Spears

- Working on a series of projects supporting field office and state for best practices. 1,676 practices (much of which are climate based for IRA funding) and 2,000 acres for climate smart practices. About 643 oyster restoration projects that will likely be accepted as practices in RI for IRA funding. Looking at new ways to use practices for climate mitigation with field staff to focus on conservation plan. Forestry and Agriculture program with URI on climate in the coming years. Approved to increase staff (a state archeologist and an agronomist) to maintain compliance for soil. Focus on grazing and urban/ small-scale agriculture. Job training for pathways program with interns. Plan in place for raised beds for small-scale farming. Established pollinated gardens fact sheet for public and urban planters. Partnerships with Save-the-Bay, habitat projects, Audubon society, and food projects to keep the public aware of upcoming initiatives.

6. Partner Updates

- Ken Ayars – Forestry management programs implemented in RI.
- Reuben Macfarlan – Expanding EQIP and CIG Kelp growing in RI. Focus on shellfish restoration and introduction of new species in local fisheries.
- Kira Jacobs – Discussed conservation meetings in August.
- Isaac Bearg – Work on wasted food solutions actions program for improved food sustainability.
- Matt Tracy – Southside Community Land Trust received a grant to hire a conservation associate for outreach with underserved producers.
- Gina Fuller – Updated on meeting in Exeter: focus on flooding.

7. Closing Remarks by Jermaine Jenkins

8. Adjournment