

State Technical Committee Meeting

NRCS/FSA State Office, Tolland, CT

January 18, 2017

NOTES

Participants: Tom Morgart, Joyce Purcell, Nancy Ferlow, Javier Cruz, Debbie Surabian, Mark Edmonds, Carol Grasis, Carol Donzella, Kristin Walker, Jim Hyde, Dan DePietro, NRCS; Chuck Lee, Doug Emmerthal, Judy Wilson, Joe Wetteman, Graham Stevens, Rick Jacobson, Chris Martin, DEEP; Rich Meinert, Tom Worthley, Bonnie Burr, Angie Harris, UConn; Lois Bruinooge, TLGV; Amanda Fargo Johnson, CTRC&D; Dan Mullins, ECCD; Steve Winnett, EPA; John S. Weedon, CFT; Cindy Corsair, USFWS; Abbie Maynard, CAES

Welcome/ Introductions: Tom Morgart

Tom reported that the new Secretary of Agriculture has not been appointed yet; he has received funding for staffing until the end of the year; there's the possibility of a 10% reduction with the new Administration; three new employees have been hired with plans to make offers on a few more.

Review Agenda/Review minutes of August 31, 2016: Joyce Purcell

The minutes were reviewed and accepted; no corrections noted.

Subcommittee Reports

National Water Quality Initiative Subcommittee

It was reported there are a number of on-going projects in the Little River and Broad Brook basins; NCCD was contracted to look to producers for potential projects in the Broad Brook basin; ECCD is working on three projects: a compost facility, planting equipment, and woodchip bio-reactor which is the first in the state.

Forest Practices Subcommittee - Mark Edmonds

No report was given.

Easement Subcommittee – Joyce Purcell

Joyce reported ACEP-ALE applications are due by January 20, 2017; the ranking sheet was reviewed by the sub-committee and updated slightly; they have been posted to the CT website for review/comments.

Wildlife Subcommittee – Tom Morgart

Tom reported that the new members consist of representatives from the CT Audubon, Nature Conservancy, DEEP, and NRCS. Other members are needed and are being interviewed. A person knowledgeable about turtles would be a good addition to the committee. Judy Wilson has offered to Chair the committee.

FY 2017 Program Updates – Joyce Purcell

Joyce reported that there are 9 new CT program bulletins, 6 new instructions, and 3 new initiatives: urban, monarch and drought; she reviewed the allocations for each program and EQIP sub-accounts; \$4.2m was allocated for ACEP-ALE program; 65 applications were received for RD1 EQIP/70 applications for RD2; the CT goal for 2017 CSP is 952 acres.

Resource Conservation Updates – Nancy Ferlow

Conservation Innovation Grants - the national applications have been submitted and will be reviewed shortly.

Northern Long-eared Bat - USFWS consultation sheets are working out well; landowner responses have a 30-day turnaround time; they're good for 1 year.

Working Lands for Wildlife – have added spotted and wood turtles; no focus areas yet; not sure of practices yet.

National Water Quality Initiative Updates - waiting on National to make an announcement on new watersheds selected for the program.

Practice Standards - there are new practice standards for conservation crop rotation, cover crop and conservation cover.

Tom mentioned a new policy where the landowner will be responsible for contacting DEEP for plan approvals; NRCS gives the plan to the farmer and the farmer authorizes DEEP. The draft policy will be sent to the Committee for review and comments.

Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easement Program – Kristin Walker

Kristen reported that she is Acting EWP-FPE Program Manager while Arde is on detail; RD1 West Haven demolitions are done and the agreement is being closed out; have started on the RD2s with more demolitions being planned; offer letters to Milford landowners will be sent out soon. The Sheffield Brook restoration EWP-FPE project in Old Lyme will start in March and completed by May. The goal is to have all the Hurricane Sandy projects completed by the end of the fiscal year.

RCPP Updates

Water Security, UCONN Ext. – Angie Harris

The project includes water meters and water needs; drought listening session in Hartford, a study on drought impacts on agriculture; setting up a clearinghouse for farmers, and an economic cost/benefit analysis.

Forest Conservation, TLGV – Lois Bruinooge

\$6.1m new dollars for forest conservation - \$1.5m EQIP/\$4.6m HFRP; Southern New England Heritage Forest in CT/RI/MA; 1.5m acres; 20+ partners; significant match; outreach to non-traditional customers; bird habitat, wildlife, forest CAPS; increase TSPs to do bird/wildlife CAPS; \$4.6m for HFRP easements.

Young Forest Initiative – Judy Wilson

Hire certified Foresters to put acres on the ground for cotton-tail and woodcock; broaden approach to outreach; a target of 100 acres per year; includes outreach, writing and conservation activity plan; multi-state project.

2018 RCPP Announcement can be found at Grants.gov and the NRCS website; \$2.5m is available for critical conservation areas; \$600k per state is available; national multi-state with \$10m cap. Talk to Tom about your proposal first.

Soils Update – Debbie Surabian

The soils staff offers a variety of services such as: technical soils services, ground penetrating radar, soil survey, web soil survey, subaqueous soil survey, and soil interpretation and data. Working with the CT Ag Experiment Station and Earth Team Volunteers to collect vegetative data; updating “The Relation of Forest Composition and Rate of Growth to Certain Soil Characters” data; will be utilizing GPR on wood chip bio-reactor project; looking at sea level rise and leach fields; recently acquired a PXRFA Environmental Analyzer for use in Urban Initiative, i.e. community gardens.

Open Discussion - All

- Thames River floating workshop on Roseland Lake is scheduled for June 9, 2017.
- Landowner and partner appreciation event is scheduled for April 13, 2017.
- Promoting Client Gateway – where you can electronically view plans, make requests, and sign up for financial assistance; available to Entities and landowners.
- Bi-annual report, 305 and 303(d) list being submitted for national review.
- DEEP re-organization meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2017 at 1pm.
- USFWS will provide contacts for the Urban Initiative; Lebanon project in 3rd year; working with Joyce Meters’ grazing group; meets 1st and 4th Thursday in February; Co-op ideas: ECCD, RC&D, NRCS and Last Green Valley to work on farm demonstration for water monitoring, edge of field, healthy soil, and cover crops.
- Massaro Farm soil health workshop had great turnout; about 50 people.
- UCONN dairy summit addressed dairy Ag stability needs and economic stability and the importance of innovation grants.
- Next new Farm Bill – educate not ask
- DEEP energy sprawl meeting; renewable energy site; 200 acres dedicated to renewable energy projects; consuming land was not its intention.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:22 PM.