



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:	12/12/17	Time	__ 10:00 am to __ 11:30 am
Minutes prepared by: A. Wotton	Location Houlton, ME		
Attendance at Meeting			
Name	Department / Division	Name	Department/Division
Gene Lawlor	Livestock, SASWCD Board chair		
Perry Lilley	Dairy, SASWCD Supervisor		
Jamison Hagan	Potato producer		
Erica Peabody	Potato producer		
Shawn Haskell	IF&W, Ashland		
Helena Swiatek	DC, NRCS		
Phil Quint	Soil Con, NRCS		
Angela Wotton	District Mgr, SASWCD, organic grower		

Local Working Group Meeting Minutes, Southern Aroostook SWCD

The annual meeting of the SASWCD Local Working Group was held at the USDA Service Center, 304 North St, Houlton on December 12 from 10am – 11:30am.

Following a brief review of the role of the Local Working Group, a sub-committee of the State Technical Committee, Helena explained how Local Working Group recommendations were utilized to provide input for the Environmental Qualities Incentives Program (EQIP). Attendees received handouts of the proposed statewide EQIP funding for FY2018, 2017 EQIP allocations, local issues ranking elements, and cost list of NRCS practices.

Proposed statewide EQIP funding for 2018 was discussed with explanation of different categories and funding differences between federal and state sub-accounts like irrigation, socially disadvantaged, etc. Reminded LWG that we are able to add or remove a funding pool.

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:

Cropland: Questions regarding “application addresses invasive species control” and the reason for its inclusion last year (primarily management of bedstraw). The 35 points is not enough to bump an application up for funding so group decided to remove that ranking and distribute points as follows: 10



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points to “addressing point source pollution (sedimentation),” 10 points to “addresses soil compaction issues,” and 15 points to “soil health through adoption of high residue crop, companion cropping, reduced tillage, or cover crop mixes.” Points added to this last ranking was noted as a goal of the SASWCD.

Ag Waste: After discussion, LWG decided to deduct 20 points from “application addresses excess nutrients in an impaired watershed” and added them to “excessive nutrients in ground AND surface water are not at planning criteria at the benchmark condition but will be with the proposed action.” Reason for this was that related points are given for being in an impaired watershed and we would rather add the points to nutrient runoff.

Pasture: Wells (with some exceptions) and perimeter fencing has been removed from funding of NRCS practices. Alternative is Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through Farm Service Agency but they do not currently have funding and may not until there is a new farm bill. LWG’s feeling is that intensive grazing is a good way to bring back soils depleted by row cropping and excessive tillage and is an effective tool as well at controlling invasive weeds like bedstraw. The group voted to keep pasture in the ranking with 10 points reduced for “applicant new to NRCS programs” and added to “application fences livestock out of a perennial stream or waterbody.” The LWG respectfully recommends funding to remain for fencing and wells within pasture category.

Forestry: LWG discussed incorporating wildlife into forestry practices and adding something small, like even 1 percent, would help fund a couple of grassland bird habitat benefit practices. Group voted to add another ranking element to “prioritize grassland bird habitat on acres greater than 20 acres” with points distributed evenly with rest of forestry ranking.

Houlton EQIP practice limitations were discussed for the current “incentive payments for mulching will only be offered twice on eligible lands.” After LWG reviewed FY18 cost list, group voted to reduce mulching rate by 50%. There was also discussion of differentiating mulching practice between those who are mulching a small area such as a waterway versus entire farm fields.

The group recommended the following allocation percentages:

2018 EQIP Funding Pool Category	Percent of FO Allocation
Cropland (includes hayland)	50
Pasture	4
Animal Waste	40
Forestry	5
High Tunnels	0
Wildlife	1
Water Use Conservation	0

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.