



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 Kennebec/Lincoln County

12/6/2017- 10 am – noon

Whitefield, Maine @ Fire & Rescue building

Attendees Total of 16 people attending (see table at end of minutes)

Call to Order - Peter Abello began meeting at 10am

Introductions & Overview

- Those attending introduced themselves and signed into the meeting. Kennebec and Knox-Lincoln SWCDs identified their missions, highlighted a few district accomplishments, and explained the role as partners with NRCS. Membership application forms were distributed.
- Peter explained the role of the Local Working Group and then provided materials, explaining how they would help inform the process as we proceeded. He also explained the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) process for EQIP including application, contracting process and procedure as pertains to staff EQIP work, which included information about: Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged, Historically Underserved, Beginning Farmers, Eligible Practices, Payment Rates.
- Luis Aponte presented a brief PowerPoint that described the state and local funding pools, other NRCS programs; showed examples of EQIP projects completed under the local Fund Pool; and explained that the recommendations made at the meeting would be applicable to FY 2019, starting in October, 2018.

Review

- LWG reviewed the NRCS Local Fund Pool Categories, Percentages and Conservation Priorities from the previous year. FY 2018 priorities were:
 - Forestry - 13% (water quality/erosion/stream crossings; wildlife habitat/brush piles/bird boxes; forest stand improvement)
 - Soil Health - 12% (crop & pasture; erosion; productivity; reduced OM/soil degradation; cover crop/no till/rotation; rock removal)
 - Animal Waste - 75% (nutrients & pathogens; animal health; soil compaction; waste storage; composting)

In answer to a question, Peter offered that the 2018 EQIP funding categories seem to be working well for current applications and contracts.

- There was brief discussion about last year's Local Ranking questions and the effectiveness of their use. Peter reported that the local questions make a big difference in determining which applications get funded.

NRCS Summary of EQIP

- National and Statewide Initiatives were reviewed
- There was some discussion about how EQIP projects may access the statewide funding pool and the local funding pool. The LWG recommended using the Statewide pool first to maximize the effect of the Local funding pool.



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Resource concern priorities, funding categories and ranking questions

- Animal Waste was acknowledged as a priority concern for water quality and that manure pits have a large corrective impact. This led to discussion of how one large, expensive EQIP project (i.e. manure pits) may crowd out many smaller projects that might have a greater collective impact. Which is better – one large or several smaller projects? Questions were asked and answered about longevity of practices & contracts (manure pits - Peter explained that manure pits can be moved to another farm only after the lifespan of that manure pit is expired. There was additional discussion and explanation of how funding decisions are made at the State level to approach the targeted funding percentage.
- Discussion followed about resource concerns associated with funding of forest access roads. Peter explained that NRCS funds only the part of the project that corrects a problem.
- Another concern was expressed regarding livestock farming and carnivore pressure. How can this be addressed in the context of resource concerns so that farmers can protect crops and livestock? Forestry practices that promote healthy woodlands with healthy habitat could reduce the impact of predators on livestock. Could perimeter fencing and guardian dogs be considered to protect the health and wellness of livestock in the way that high tunnels protect the health and wellness of plants? There will be presentations at this January's Ag Trade Show on Biodiversity on the farm and woodlot
- There was substantial discussion about how to better address invasive plants with the recommendation that a measured analysis of need be used to locally rank the issue. A simple Yes vs No was considered inadequate by some as a property with a few problem plants would rank as high as a property with acres of invasives. Conversely, it was suggested that a small number of plants that could be eradicated was a worthwhile investment. There was then some discussion of the current Invasive Plant CIG grant, which is intended to help NRCS identify the extent of Invasives and evaluate methods of management. Management Plans are being developed so that landowners and NRCS can select appropriate populations and effective practices. Currently, NRCS standards for success of a practice seems to focus on eradication, whereas long-term monitoring and management is actually more realistic.

The LWG endorsed the following funding with a similar division at the previous year.

Resource Concern	% of Local Allocated Funding	Previous Year 2018	Previous Year 2017	Previous Year 2016	Previous Year 2015
Animal Waste	75 %	75%	87%	87%	
Forestry	13%	13%	8%	8%	
Soil Health	12 %	12%	5%	2% pasture 2% cropland 1% blueberry	
TOTAL	100 %	100%	100%	100%	



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Additional comments, issues, and suggestions from the meeting:

(These are comments that may or may not focus on the EQIP Program with comments directed to NRCS services and/or SWCD services.)

- It was suggested that future presentations include a table of contracts and the funding amounts used for each funding pool. This would help demonstrate how recommended funding targets align with actual obligated funds. Seemed that would help anchor the LWG funding recommendations with the actual contracts and practices funded including how the practices addressed the issues.
- Suggestion that LWG either be expanded or duplicated for a more general discussion about conservation priorities that may include NRCS and SWCD work that is NOT funded by EQIP.
- There was a question of having a report that gave this LWG an idea of what the other LWGs in the State were doing.
- There was a request to have a report or list that identified the types and examples of NRCS practices that were within the various categories of NRCS services.

Local Working Group	Kennebec & Lincoln-Soil and Water Conservation District LOCAL WORKING GROUP MEETING		
Date of Meeting	(12/6/2017)	Time	10:00 am to noon
Minutes prepared by:	Dale F, Hildy E & Peter A	Location	Whitefield, ME
Attendance at Meeting			
Name	Department / Division	Name	Department/Division
Dale Finseth	[Kennebec SWCD	Evan Longfellow	Augusta FSA
Jeff Tarbox	Lincoln Co Landowner; KLSWCD Supervisor	Catherine Vogel	Knox-Lincoln SWCD
Mary Ellen Barnes	Lincoln Co. Landowner; Lincoln Cty Regional Planning Commission	Harold Burnett	Forester both Ctys
Nancy Olmstead	Maine Natural Areas Program	Xandy Brown	NRCS & Kennebec farmer
Luis Aponte	NRCS	Peter Abello	NRCS DC
Christopher Hahn	Kennebec Farmer	Hildy Ellis	Knox-Lincoln SWCD
Geri Vistein	Lincoln Farmer	Kim Sweet	Lincoln Farmer
Nanne Kennedy	Lincoln Landowner	Bambi Jones	Lincoln Landowner];

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by: Dale Finseth, Hildy Ellis, & Peter Abello