

WASHINGTON COUNTY USDA LOCAL WORKING GROUP MINUTES

1/10/18 10 a.m. USDA Service Center, Machias

Attendees: Stephen Follette, SWCD Supervisor and Professional Forester; Marilyn Ness, SWCD Supervisor and Community Specialist; Geneva Duncan Frost, SWCD Associate Supervisor and Professional Forester; John Massey, Natural Resources Program Manager at Sunrise County Economic Council; Bob Bills, District Conservationist NRCS; and Nate Pennell, District Manager SWCD.

The meeting was called to order by Nate Pennell. Introductions were made. Nate provided a brief overview of the purposes of the meeting and handed out a summary of the Districts 2017 accomplishments and proposed 2018 district work plan, goals and objectives.

Bob Bills, NRCS District Conservationist discussed the application process and scoring procedure for the EQIP Program including Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged, Historically Underserved, Beginning Farmers, Eligible Practices, and Payment Rates definitions.

Bob reviewed the previous year's categories, percentages, and conservation priorities as well as the ranking questions and points. He summarized the national and statewide initiatives. Bob reviewed the NRCS funding categories and discussed the ranking sheets and funding allocations by resource concerns. Those present discussed the best way to address needs in Northern Washington County, since those farmers are closer to the Houlton Field Office than ours. They also discussed the need to diversify conservation needs and increase applications from some of the newer farmers who are experiencing many needs and not much income to address them. Those present reached agreement on the following recommendations. 45% Cropland, including blueberries, row crops, etc. 40% Forestry, including implementing management plans, 10% Seasonal High Tunnels, 5% Other including animal waste, pasture management, water quality, etc. These are the same as the prior year. The group did not add points to any ranking question.

There was unanimous agreement to encourage diversity of conservation practices and to reach out to farmers working on new crops and new markets to assess their conservation needs. We will work with our partner organizations as much as possible to maximize our efforts. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Pennell, District Manager and Secretary to the Board of Supervisors