

State Technical Committee Meeting

NRCS/FSA State Office, Tolland, CT

December 12, 2018

Draft Meeting Notes

Participants: Joyce Purcell, Arde Ramthun, Nancy Ferlow, Debbie Surabian, Javier Cruz, Carol Grasis, Carol Donzella, Sal Donzella, Todd Bobowick, Jacob Isleib, NRCS; Steve Winnett, EPA; Tom Worthley, Rich Meinert, UCONN; Doug Emmerthal, Chuck Lee, Chris Martin, Lisa Wahle, Dan Peracchio, Judy Wilson, Joe Wettemann, DEEP; Lois Bruinooge, TLGV; Wayne Woodard, TNC; Jeanne Davies, RC&D; Peter Beringer, USFS; Dan Mullens, ECCD; Cameron Weimar, DOAG; Kip Kolesinskas, Consultant; Brian Hulburt, CFBA

Welcome/Opening Comments/Review Agenda/Minutes: Joyce Purcell

Joyce welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that the Farm Bill had not yet been passed; she announced that Matthew Lohr was appointed the next Chief of NRCS and will be visiting with the states soon; a video clip introducing the Chief was shown.

Review Minutes of May 23, 2018: All

No additions or deletions were noted; minutes accepted.

Subcommittee Reports:

Easement Subcommittee: Wayne Woodard

Wayne reported that the committee will review the ACEP-ALE ranking criteria for FY-19 and make recommendations; he is looking to refill Henry Talmage's position on the committee; Brian Hulburt volunteered.

National Water Quality Initiative Subcommittee: Chuck Lee

Chuck reported that the Farm River watershed was selected for the initiative; a steering committee is being formed.

Forestry Wildlife Sub-Committee: – Judy Wilson

Judy reported that there has been no movement forming this sub-committee; if there's an interest she will pursue it.

FY2018 Program Updates: Carol Grasis

Carol gave a year-end review noting 139 contracts were funded; she reviewed the sub-accounts and activity plans and asked the Committee for recommendations on how to use the funds for FY-19; to date limited funding has been received; applications are being taken.

Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC): Carol Donzella

Carol provided a hand-out on the proposed methodology for FY-19 WRE GARC compensation which included utilizing individual USPAP appraisals; offering 90% of the FMV not to exceed \$5,000/acre for most of the state and \$7,200/acre for priority areas of the state identified by TNC and habitats of T&E species and species of Special Concern. The Committee reviewed, commented and approved the proposed methodology.

Resource Conservation Updates: Nancy Ferlow

Nancy commented on the 2019 Payment Schedule noting that mostly minor changes were made, however one major change was to the Forest Trails which no longer have temporary stream crossings; the 2020 Payment Schedule is out for review and if anyone has comments to contact her immediately; requests for components and costs are due by Feb 1st and requests for scenarios by Mar 1st. She also noted there are two new Payment Schedules: pesticides (596) and wildlife herbaceous plantings (420) for pollinators/monarchs, and there's a change in the HEL/WC rules that is currently out for comment. The Farm River (NWQI) watershed's readiness will be determined by the newly forming Steering Committee.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program/Watershed Dam Rehab: Arde Ramthun

Arde announced the Sept 25th storm event that affected Middletown and New London counties was declared a disaster by the President; EWP Recovery funding is being requested to assist the towns of Chester and Clinton; Round 3 of the EWP Floodplain easements is underway; 60 applications were received; watershed dam rehabs are underway.

Soils Update: Debbie Surabian

Debbie updated the Committee on the various work her section has been working on which includes providing technical assistance to Districts, State agencies, universities and internal and external customers; holding a variety of workshops and conferences and utilizing the new pXRF unit. She proudly noted the CT websoil survey was the most utilized in the country.

RCPP Updates- Partners

Paths to Pathogens – Rich noted that the water sampling and 5 species pathogens tracking through DNA testing continues; Farmers are excited about being involved in the process, however they have limited funds to install needed practices; many are dairy farmers.

Last Green Valley – Lois noted that they received 30 HFRP applications for over 3500 acres of woodlands; CT will be able to fund 2-3 parcels; forest management plans with bird habitat assessment applications are being taken until Jan. 18th; these plans will be incorporated into the restoration plans.

Agricultural Water Security - Joyce Purcell

Joyce reported the FA funds has been used; new irrigation practices were installed; UConn will follow-up with landowners.

Long Island Sound – Joyce Purcell

Joyce reported this 5-state project has two components: soil health and forestry; RI and NH are focusing on soil health, CT, VT and MA are focusing on soil health and forestry (HFRP); Walter Smith is stepping down from his position as Exec Dir of the Council.

Young Forest – Judy Wilson

Judy reported they have exhausted all their FA funds, too. The Forester continues to write FMPs and oversees the projects on the ground; they are moving forward with contracts. She also mentioned they hired a new Botanist/Diversity Specialist and are looking forward to opportunities to create new habitat.

Precision Agriculture – Steve Winnett

Steve talked about the benefits of precision agriculture and the utility of *Profit Zone Manager* software for producers to use to save time while increasing yields and profits – doing less to make more money. It focuses on individual acres inputs/outputs, return in investment rather than on revenues or yields and can evaluate other land outputs.

Steve also update the Committee on the new proposed definition of *Waters of the US* which is out for public comment.

Forestry Update: Chris Martin

Chris reported that they are currently back-filling 4 positions lost to retirement; the Forest Action Plan is being revised for 2020 and comments from the Committee are welcomed; he noted that a single *Spotted Lantern Fly* was found in CT, and a cap on spending by the USFS on wildfires is in discussion with FEMA possibly providing additional dollars.

Open Discussion - All

UConn has a new Dean at the Department of Agriculture. More details coming.

Next Meeting: TBD

Adjourned at 12:00 PM