

## State Technical Committee Meeting

NRCS/FSA State Office, Tolland, CT

May 24, 2017

### Meeting Notes

**Participants:** Tom Morgart, Arde Ramthun, Nancy Ferlow, Carol Grasis, Abbie Cadman, Carol Donzella, Jim Hyde, Todd Bobowick, Javier Cruz, NRCS; Steve Winnett, Kira Jacobs, EPA; Tom Worthley, UCONN; Abbie Maynard, CAES; Doug Emmerthal, Chuck Lee, Chris Martin, Lisa Wahle, DEEP; Lois Bruinooge, TLGV; Wayne Woodard, TNC; Joan Nichols, CFBA; Amanda Fargo Johnson, Jeanne Davies, RC&D; Cameron Weimar, Linda Piotrowicz, DOAG; David Simmons, USFWS

**Welcome/Opening Comments/Review Agenda/Minutes:** Tom Morgart  
Tom reported on the status of the new Farm Bill, the Rescission Bill, competitive agreements, new employees, and the upcoming Civil Rights Compliance Review which requires the demographics of the STAC.

**Review Minutes of October 25, 2017:** All  
No additions or deletions were noted; minutes accepted.

#### **Subcommittee Reports:**

The National Water Quality Initiative Subcommittee: Chuck Lee

Chuck reported on the status of the Little River and Broad Brook watersheds; they are working with ECCD on a number of projects including monitoring the newly installed woodchip bio-reactor and collecting water quality data. Tom noted that we can have three watersheds and would need to develop an area-wide plan to enroll it in the NWQI process.

2018 Easement Subcommittee: Wayne Woodard

Wayne reported that the committee met on January 11, 2018 to review the ranking criteria for the FY-18 ACEP program. He was pleased with the diversity in disciplines that each member brought to the table and thought their recommendations were well thought out. They offered a few suggestions to tweak the point value on two questions and remove a third question replacing it with the importance of farmland infrastructure. The notes from their meeting were distributed to all members; no comments were received. The point values were adjusted in the final criteria which was used to rank the FY-18 ACEP-ALE applications. The importance of farmland infrastructure was tabled until next year.

Other Subcommittee: No discussion.

**FY2018 Program Updates:** Carol Grasis and Tom Morgart

Carol reviewed the programs and allocations including EQIP general, NWQI, and WLFW, and application, batching, ranking and obligation dates. She reported that a webinar was held to rollout the ACEP program and 7 parcels with one Entity has been funded for FY-18. The RCPP funded projects (LIS and LGV) are all moving forward.

**Resource Conservation Updates:** Nancy Ferlow

Northeast Turtle Initiative (Working Lands for Wildlife):

Nancy noted that work continues on developing BMPs and WHEG for the wood, spotted and Blanding's turtles, improving and developing habitat and below grade studies. They are looking at wetland easements (WRE) and establishing turtle nest sites at the side of the road to deter them from crossing the road.

Proposed Initiative for Rusty Patch Bumble Bee/Yellow Banded Bumble Bee:

A New England pollinator proposal to protect these endangered and considered for listing bee species and monarch butterflies. The Partnership has developed a tentative list of practices including the best times of year to install them using mid-west information. They are also looking at how to protect the fly-way to Mexico and back for trapped butterfly species.

Conservation Innovation Grants:

Deadline for applications is June 1, 2018. Go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for more information, or the CT NRCS webpage.

Bats:

Nancy reported that they are working closely with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, there's been a rumor circulating of a vaccine for white nose syndrome.

David noted that there are regulatory insurances for pollinators, monarchs are not listed as T&E species and Region 3 is conducting a status review to determine them for next year, there are no updates on the vaccine, tri-color bats are being looked at for listing, nothing to report on the Indiana bats.

**Habitat Suitability Index – Javier Cruz**

A planning tool used by field staff to determine wildlife habitat suitability is being revised. This tool will help provide assistance to the landowner on how to improve/create wildlife habitat. Originally developed for the Wildlife Habitat Initiative, the ranking questions were reviewed and revised to focus solely on wildlife. STAC members are encouraged to review and comment on the questions by June 30, 2018.

### **Forestry Update – Chris Martin**

Chris reviewed the free *About My Woods* smart phone app which is a tool designed to help woodland landowners make better decisions. It geo-locates the user and helps them to identify the trees on their land, has maps of New England that show terrain, soils, watersheds, land cover, etc., and offers a number of education videos, i.e. what is a forest management plan and managing for wildlife. It can also be accessed via Google.

### **RCPP Updates- Partners**

Last Green Valley – Lois discussed the \$4.6m, 5-year, tristate RCPP agreement. They are moving forward with HFRP setting a deadline for applications of July 20, 2018. The funding is divided between three states for easement acquisitions, transition costs and technical assistance. They currently have four landowners interested in preserving 700 acres of land and are hoping to obligate all funds this fiscal year.

### **Engineering Updates – Arde Ramthun**

Arde was happy to report that his staff was intact and they are getting a Pathways summer intern. Members of this staff are assisting NY with their heavy workload, they are getting caught up on the 167 conservation practice standards and send special thanks to the sub-committee who reviewed/submitted comments. If anyone else wants to join the group, contact him. His staff is focusing on better job sheets with more site specific information. He also noted that their contract with the State of CT for dam/watershed rehab plans does not reflect the language in the 1968 National Flood Insurance Act so a supplemental contract is being discussed. Contracting for the demolition of houses through the EWP-Floodplain Easement program is underway with a site showing on June 5, 2018. Other states are using EWP-Recovery funds to address debris caused by the recent tornado.

### **Open Discussion - All**

- Watertown is moving forward with the removal of Hemmingway Pond
- NRCS offered to provide before/after photos of practices installed at future STAC meetings.
- An announcement for the *Highstead* annual competitive grants will be coming out in early June.
- The 2018 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture annual meeting will be held in Hartford, CT on September 9-12, 2018.
- Kudos to all partners who participated in EPA's Source Water Protection Workshop held in New Haven, CT.

**Next Meeting:** TBD

Adjourned at 11:45 AM.