

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 25, 2018
NRCS STATE OFFICE
1550 Earl Core Rd. Suite 200
Morgantown, WV
10:00 AM

The State Technical Committee meeting was held on April 25, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the NRCS State Office in Sabraton.

Jared Beard demonstrated the rainfall simulator for the committee members before the meeting was called to order.

The rainfall simulator shows the effect rainfall and raindrop impact has on the soil under different management scenarios. The interpretation of these impacts was discussed to raise awareness of the effects erosion has on soil health, vegetative productivity, and water quality.

The rainfall simulator is a cooperatively acquired tool by WVU Extension and the WV Association of Conservation Districts. NRCS has partnered for the use and maintenance of the tool. The rainfall simulator is available for meetings, field days, conferences, and other events around the state for audiences of every age and discipline. The simulator can be scheduled by contacting Jared Beard at jared.beard@wv.usda.gov or Tom Basden at tom.basden@mail.wvu.edu.

Once the rainfall simulator demonstration was over the meeting was called to order by Laura Smith

Previous minutes were reviewed and approved.

Program Updates

EQIP – Laura Smith

WV NRCS received \$10,190,000 for FY 18 including general funds and special initiatives. We have requested an additional \$1.5 million.

Our first round obligation deadline is Friday, April 27th. Currently, we are ranked 8th nationally for obligation status, which puts us in a good position to receive additional monies. It also means our FO staff can be done writing contracts earlier in the year. The round 2 contract obligation deadline is June 1st.

We have had an excellent year for our Cerulean Warbler initiative as well, and hope to continue to improve.

The DUNS/SAM requirements for entities participating in Financial Assistance Programs has been repealed beginning immediately.

The Conservation Districts should be scheduling and holding their Local Work Group meetings. This is an integral part of locally-led conservation and what makes EQIP unique. It also sets the stage for FCA projects. I would encourage forestry and wildlife participation.

FCA – Laura Smith

NRCS approved 48 FCA projects for funding for FY18. To date, 45 have received a funding allocation to contract eligible applications. We project to allocate over \$6,000,000 to FCA Projects.

Easements – Matt Oliver

NRCS WV Easement Programs

According to our most recent spatial layer, NRCS easement programs has a total of 354 closed easements (ACEP ALE, FRPP, WRP, GRP, and FPE). These closed easements have protected approximately 20,000 acres across the state. We conducted two internal ACEP trainings followed by round table discussions with our local partners. These sessions were helpful to both our staff internally and a great opportunity for field staff, area office staff, state office staff and our local partners to sit down to discuss program implementation.

Easement applications

FY18 ACEP ALE applications are still being determined for eligibility and no tentative funding selections have been made yet, but we expect to be able to make those funding selections soon.

RCPP ALE applications have been aligned with ACEP ALE application timelines, and we are looking to have funding selections for some of those agreements soon.

Two (2) potential substitute parcels from FY13 have been sent to NHQ for initial review. We also have two potential substitute parcels from FY16 that are still being evaluated for program eligibility and determinations will be made for those as soon as possible.

Easement enrollments

We currently have 13 easements enrolled in the program and are diligently working to close each of those.

Easement Maintenance

We are currently working on a list of about 18 easements with maintenance and monitoring items to address. This is a continuous work item.

We had an internal audit last summer and are still working to resolve the finding of that evaluation. We also had a second internal audit a few weeks ago that should provide us with additional findings to address in the coming months.

Subcommittees

Watershed Projects – Pam Yost

Seven (7) Watershed Rehabilitation Projects are in progress:

Brush Creek 15	Public Review stage next
Brush Creek 9	In process of NWMC review
New Creek 17	In process of NWMC review
New Creek 1	In planning, awaiting additional funds to finish plan
Brush Creek 14	FONSI next, authorization in process
Wheeling Creek 25	WV is addressing comments from NWMC
UDC1	Currently under construction

One (1) State RCPP pre-proposal invited back for full proposal.

Six (6) new watershed projects were approved for FY2017 funding. All are in various stages of agreements with Sponsors. Planning will begin once agreements are finalized.

Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) – Patrick Sisneros

The response to the June 2016 flood event is complete. Total expenditures were approximately \$4.5M (62 sites and 115 homes)

Forestry – Barb McWhorter

Barb McWhorter reported for Barb Breshock, Chair of the Forestry Subcommittee:

There is a national effort underway to ensure all Forest Stewardship plans qualify landowners for NRCS financial assistance and to provide outstanding customer service that includes the seamless delivery of USDA programs. Other states are very interested in trying to copy what we have developed in WV.

Conservation Practice Standard updates: Note the standards below were updated nationally only changing format and verbiage edits to comply with the Plain Language Act, no technical changes

Access Control (Code 472)

Alley Cropping (Code 311)

Forest Trail and Landings (Code 655)

Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment (Code 654)

Woody Residue Treatment (Code 384)

Training regarding Farm Bill Programs was conducted in October for all new Service Foresters – Barb McWhorter, Kyle Aldinger, and Rosey Santerre participated

Additional information was presented at Regional WVDOF Trainings in January. NRCS staff helped explain Farm Bill programs. A checklist for Farm Bill referrals and Practice Plans was developed for use by both WVDOF and NRCS staff

Barb McWhorter worked with members of the subcommittee to develop Forest Stand Improvement (666) and Brush Management (314) Deadening/Felling Technique Supplement for the existing job sheet. This supplement is now available on the WV FOTG.

Subcommittee member, Dave McGill, of WVU Forestry Extension is working with Barb McWhorter on a kudzu control fact sheet.

Member Reports

Joe Hatton – WVDA

In nutrient management we are currently developing plans predominantly in the Chesapeake Bay drainage areas. There is currently an announcement out for another planner.

We are currently working on rules for Hemp certifications as well as a Farmers Market Cottage food bill.

A bill was passed on Agrotourism and was directed towards releasing farmers from liability.

The legislature requested WVDA form a milk study committee to evaluate the impacts of moving inspections from DHHR to Dept. Agriculture.

WVDA has an agreement with NRCS to work on promoting high tunnels. Staff are coordinating on a tool to assist cooperators with budgets, production planning, and marketing.

Jason Walls – WV Law Clinic

We are participating sponsors in 2 of the watershed planning projects for NRCS and we are moving forward as soon as the agreements are finalized. We also hope to be able to assist Trout Unlimited on the Cherry River project.

We are hoping to work with Matt Oliver to schedule some training and provide legal assistance to NRCS to review easement applications and help to streamline the process.

Mark Schiavone – Berkely County Farmland Protection Board

We closed our 51st easement last week. We have 3 more closings coming up and that will bring us to 5,200 acres under easement within the next month.

For this fiscal year we set aside \$1M for local funding and the top 3 properties were selected. We currently have 7 applications for FY18 ALE.

Liz Wheeler – Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board

We have 2 FY16 NRCS easements under review. We have 5 properties; 3 in ALE and 2 in RCPP that total approximately 1,300 acres that are in some stage of application and we have approximately 200 acres that we are trying to find local funding for.

Lavonne Paden – WV Agricultural Land Protection Authority

The State of WV is doing better economically and there was no bill that was introduced to the legislature that would cause our budgets to be cut. We introduced a bill to fix the post mortem WV code for easements which is done after an applicant has passed. It has not made it out of the Senate Judiciary however, we will introduce it again next year. This provision was determined to be outside the jurisdiction of House Agriculture and was removed.

HR2 eliminates the ALE Plan requirement and requires only a Conservation Plan for Highly Erodible Land. It reverses the entity liability under easement on behalf of the Federal government to only gross negligence or fraud. It also clarifies that the Right of Enforcement by the NRCS does not give it a right to inspection/monitoring unless the local entity does not submit monitoring reports.

Roger Dahmer – FSA

New State Committee members are as follows:

Andrea Lambert (Chair) – Taylor Co.

Lois Alt – Hardy Co.

Russell (Rusty) Linger III – Randolph Co.

Rocky Peck – Wood Co.

Sara Wayne – Braxton Co.

Kevin Hinkle – FSA

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

-2016 Flood clean-up is almost complete.

-Last week's flooding in Randolph County has resulted in a request for \$100,000 for debris removal for fields and fence restoration.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

9,160 acres available for original CREP, near 7,000 acres enrolled.

Cheapeake Bay special funds and special initiatives have been approved and available as of March 30, 2018. Partner meetings are occurring and training meetings have been planned.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

Due to the harsh winter weather there were several deaths of lambs and calves. A 30 day notice is required to report loss to FSA county office which is critical to eligibility.

FSA also has an Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) which covers hive and colony losses for bees due to the adverse weather and/or Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD)

John Schmidt – USFWS

WVFO (West Virginia Field Office) has dominated staff time. Moving forward is a listing of the Candy Darder which is in Pocohontas and Greenbrier and is considered endangered. White nose syndrome has become a big problem with cave dwelling bats. Our crew is closing in on 2M feet of conservation fence.

Mike Morris – WVFB

We have gained some rights for mineral owners.

We are trying to get the rules changed for people who sell goods at Farmer's Markets so that if they sell goods in one county they should be able to sell in other counties as well.

Beehives are not making it through the cold weather. Kevin stated that the LIP program also covers the loss of bees due to weather. Mike stated that the hives had to be registered with the Department of Agriculture.

Tom Basden – WVU Extension

WVU extension and the Davis College are moving to modernize the soil testing lab which includes new recommendations that are considered broad for many of the local food issues. We will also have environmental indicators in soil tests and will collect individual iron, aluminum, and phosphorus numbers. We will be able to tell the farmer how far phosphorus saturation has increased.

Theresa Koon – WVDEP

We have over \$1M in the Chesapeake Bay area that we have not been able to obligate. Working consistently with partners to determine ways to utilize these funds. We are facing a cut in FY19

to programs in WV based on our new planning targets and also due to the fact that we have a lot of unobligated money. Partner feedback is requested.

We have an initiative in McDowell County to address water, waste water, abandoned buildings, and trash.

Meeting Adjourned

Next meeting will be held July 25th.