

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

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

Previous minutes were reviewed and corrections were given by Lavonne Paden and were made.

Program Updates

EQIP – Laura Smith

WV NRCS received over \$11.2 million in allocations for EQIP and AMA. Currently, we have obligated 538 contracts at \$10.6 million. We are seeking an additional \$1.0 million that will be dedicated to FCA projects.

FCA – Laura Smith

The Focused Conservation Approach (FCA) has nearly completed its second year of contract funding. In FY18, NRCS has allocated EQIP general funding toward 48 FCA projects, totaling approximately \$6 million.

The schedule for FY19 FCA project submissions to the NRCS STC and State Technical Committee is as follows:

Existing FCA Projects without Edits ***June 30, 2018***

Withdrawing Existing FCA Projects ***June 30, 2018***

Existing FCA Projects with Edits ***August 3, 2018***

** New edit option for FY19: Existing projects deemed viable and sustainable may be expanded for additional years, not to exceed a total project life of 5 years.*

New FCA Projects for FY 19 ***August 3, 2018***

New FCA Projects for FY 20 ***August 3, 2018***

** New option for FY19: In an effort to gain outreach and planning time, the STC will accept project proposals one year in advance of the requested allocation fiscal year.*

NRCS continues to support the local food movement through financial assistance to High Tunnel Systems. In FY 18, we have obligated approximately \$1.66 million toward HTS. We have also obligated over \$1.1 million to Beginning, Veteran, and Socially Disadvantaged producers.

Easements – Matt Oliver

1. NRCS WV Easement Programs

Distributed FY19 ACEP Implementation and Application Guidance internally and externally

- i. Implementation Guidance covers everything from application to enrollment to monitoring and includes a tentative project management schedule for applications and enrollments.
 1. Implementation guidance has direct links to the webpage where you can download a zip file that has detailed Application Guidance on how to submit a complete application package.
 2. Application period is earlier this year than in prior years so please note that.
 - b. Upcoming joint NRCS/WVU Law Clinic Training - ALE Application and Due Diligence Q&A
 - i. We requested NHQ come visit and join us and they have agreed to come in support of this training.
 - ii. South Area – Wednesday, August 8, 10am – 3:30pm at the Beckley AO
 - iii. North Area – Thursday, August 9, 10am – 3:30pm at the Moorefield FO
 - iv. Topics include:
 1. FY19 ACEP ALE Implementation and Application Guidance (NRCS)
 2. Common title problems and how to identify them better through the application process (WVU Law)
 3. FY19 applicants are encouraged to attend
- ### 2. Easement applications
- a. FY18 ACEP ALE funding selections consisted of six properties, including one roll-over from FY17, totaling approximately 933 acres and approximately \$1,388,840 federal dollars.
 - i. Minus Bayer = 895 acres and approximately \$1,264,592 federal dollars
 1. 38.23 acres and 124,247.50 federal dollars
 - ii. Doesn't include Triple S. = 299.6 acres and \$812,500 federal dollars
 - b. FY15 and FY16 RCPP ALE funding selections combined consisted of four properties totaling approximately 692 acres and approximately \$800,573 federal dollars.
- ### 3. Easement enrollments
- a. We currently have 10 easements enrolled in the program that we are working hard to close.
 - i. One in Jefferson County is approved to close and another in Jefferson is tracking closely behind that one. We hope to close both in the coming weeks.
 - ii. One in Summers County that was an FY17 enrollment that has made great progress and we hope to close sometime this quarter.

Watershed Projects – Pam Yost

BC14 at end of planning phase; signing watershed agreement in September 2018

BC9 & BC15 will be going to public phase in Fall 2018.

NC1 & NC17 also proceeding to public phase within next few months.

WC25 public draft – October 2018

Howard Creek watershed submitted for FY2018.

All FY2017 watershed projects (6) are in the agreement phase.

North Fork Hughes River – agreement is being signed to obligate last increment of recreational funding.

MOU with National Guard is complete.

Sub Committee Updates

Easements – ALE & WRE – Matt Oliver

ACEP ALE/RCPP ALE Subcommittee

1. *The ACEP ALE/RCPP ALE Subcommittee met on Tuesday, July 3, and Friday, July 20, 2018 and recommends the following revisions to the ACEP ALE Ranking Sheet:*
 - a. 440 CPM 528.41(D)(1): “In addition to factors related to the threat of conversion, the NRCS State ranking factors should consider various environmental benefits and prioritize applications that will address multiple resource concerns.”
 - i. The Subcommittee recommendations for ACEP ALE include removing 10 points from the proximity to other easements question thereby reducing it from a maximum of 30 points to a maximum of 20 points. The following two questions worth 5 points each are recommended:
 1. Multifunctional Benefits: Do you have a current and approved conservation/farm plan that meets NRCS standards?
 2. Environmental Benefits: Do you have a watering facility that meets NRCS standards?
2. *The ACEP ALE/RCPP ALE Subcommittee recommends the following addition to the RCPP ALE Ranking Sheet:*
 - a. 440 CPM 528.41(B)(7): “The State Conservationist should establish ranking thresholds below which parcels will not be funded.”
 - i. Like the already established threshold for ACEP ALE, the Subcommittee recommendation for RCPP ALE is to establish a 200-point threshold below which applications will not be funded.

WRE Subcommittee

3. *The WRE Subcommittee met on Wednesday, July 18, 2018 and recommends the following revisions to the WRE Ranking Sheet:*
 - a. Questions in Section B (Soils) were revised to read as follows:
 - i. Does the wetland contain organic soils 8 inches or more thick or poorly drained marl? (5 points)
 - ii. Does the wetland contain organic soils less than 8 inches thick or mucky modified mineral layers? (3 points)
 - b. Question D-2 (Vegetative Communities) was revised to read as follows:
 - i. How many different wetland types will be restored?
 1. 3 or more (6 points)
 2. 2 (4 points)
 3. 1 (2 points)
 - c. CPM 440 528.111(C)(ii): “Hydrology restoration potential must comprise at least 50 percent of the potential points awarded for environmental benefit considerations.”
 - i. Section E (Hydrologic Information) was re-weighted so that points in this Section equaled 50 percent of the points in the overall Environmental Considerations Section.
 - ii. In addition, Question E-1 was revised for clarification to read as follows:
 1. Reestablishment of the natural hydrologic regime is required on:
 - a. <25% of original hydric soil or vegetative restoration only (12 points)
 - b. 25-50% of original hydric soil (10 points)
 - c. 50-75% of original hydric soil (8 points)
 - d. 75-100% of original hydric soil (6 points)
 - d. The District Conservationist signature block was updated to read Designated Conservationist
4. *The WRE Subcommittee recommends the following compensation method and GARC rate for WRE in FY19:*
 - a. Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices (USPAP) appraisals may be used to determine the Fair Market Value (FMV) of the land instead of Areawide Market Analyses (AWMA). Reasons for using individual appraisals include, but are not limited to: areas with limited enrollment within a State (440 CPM 528.122(C)(1)). Each State Conservationist, in consultation with the STC, must adopt at least one Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) for his or her State (528.122(D)(1)).
 - i. The WRE Subcommittee evaluated the GARCs for surrounding states (PA, KY, MD, OH, and VA). Since about 2013, WV has utilized individual appraisals for WRE given there is limited enrollment. The WRE Subcommittee recommends the continued use of individual appraisals and retaining the 5% GARC with a not-to-exceed (NTE) value of \$5,000 per acre from FY18 which is consistent with GARC rates in surrounding states.

Forestry – Karen Sykes

Updates for the program/practice guidance handbook have been submitted to the WV NRCS Assistant State Conservationist-Programs and State Resource Conservationist for inclusion in the next revision of the handbook.

Rules

Forms

Practice Plan Definition

Referral Procedures and Checklist

Clarifications

Training for NRCS Staff

February 2018 – West Fork Conservation District – NRCS and WVDOF

June 2018 – Upper Ohio Valley and Northern Panhandle Conservation Districts – NRCS and WVDOF

New Farm Bill – May cause changes to programs and implementation requirements

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- National Headquarters decided to include FY18 CSP Enhancements we had deemed not pertinent to WV

- Four new Forest Stand improvement (666) Enhancements are to be available in FY19

E666132Z3 Facilitating Oak Forest Regeneration

E666137Z8 Forest Songbird Habitat Maintenance

The national enhancement requirements for these above enhancements are not yet available. WV supplements will need to be created once the national enhancements become available.

Control of Invasives/Undesireable Vegetation

Japanese Spiraea (aka Japanese Meadowsweet or Korean Spiraea) has been proposed for addition to the treatment list under Brush Management (314). A control fact sheet from North Carolina State University has already been posted to the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)

Soil Health – Jared Beard

Committee did not meet. An MOU regarding the Rainfall Simulator is being shared between WVU Extension, WVACD and NRCS and we are continuing to move the MOU forward. There will be two Soil Health trainings for Conservation Planner certification in FY19.

EQIP - Laura Smith

Encouraging members for the sub-committee. We are currently doing mailings but this is not allowing for a real review by a sub-committee.

Member Reports

Lavonne Paden – WVALPA

Canaan Conference is coming up October 17,18, and 19th.

The state template was amended for the conservation easement and has to go through a review process. The state database is now closed for our closed easements. We have 214 easements that are closed which is 30,169 acres. The state local money is \$34.1 million and the federal matching money is 24.1 million.

WVU Law Clinic – Jason Walls

We are currently planning to do a couple of training sessions with the county farmland board.

We are also partnering with NRCS on a couple of watershed plannings

We will receive thirteen students this coming year and they will be able to give us 20 hours of work a year. We have hired a 6th attorney to help manage the new students.

Trout Unlimited – Dustin Wichterman

We currently have 7 excavators operating moving across public and private lands. Our public land efforts have moved over into the Potomac so the North Fork and South Fork are receiving a lot of attention in regards to conservation. Continuing to expand conservation into Thorn Creek Watershed 2.

WVFB – Mike Morris

The State Fair is coming up. Farmer's Markets are under the jurisdiction of USDA as of 1 July.

FSA – Kevin Hinkle

ACTION ITEM: Concurrence needed for Primary Nesting and Brood-rearing season dates: 3/15-7/15. Concurrence needed by 10/1/18

ACTION ITEM: Recommendation to continue with the state program for CRP/CREP to continue to offer all practices available (see list). Concurrence needed by 10/1/18.

\$12 billion has been given to programs to assist farmers in response to trade damage from unjustified retaliation, through Commodity Credit Corp.

AMS (Agricultural Marketing Service) is another program that has been added to the \$12 billion. Food Purchase and Distribution Program to purchase surplus – distributor to food banks and nutrition programs.

Emergency Conservation Program

Funds have been made available for debris removal, Grading shaping, releveling and seeding, restoring permanent fencing and conservation structures (Pendleton only)

Counties include Randolph, Pendleton, Berkeley, Morgan and Barbour.

USFS – Karen Sykes

The omnibus spending bill includes a long sought fix for federal wildfire funding. The agreement is to help the Forest Service pay for wildfire suppression without sacrificing other programs and should put an end to “fire borrowing”

Highlights include a \$2.10 billion off-budget disaster fund for wildfires, which would grow to \$2.95 billion by 2027, and more flexibility to allow forest thinning in areas the Forest Service deems at risk of wildfire.

The disaster fund wouldn't be established until 2020, but lawmakers agreed to devote an additional \$500 million a year to wildfire management in 2018 and 2019 until the new arrangement takes effect. Overall, the Forest Service would receive \$2.8 billion for wildfire management this fiscal year.

WVU Extension Service – Ronnie Helmm-dollar

WVU has hired 9 new agents:

4 in Agriculture and Natural Resources

1 in Mason/Putnum

1 in Harrison/Marion

1 in Randolph/Barbour

1 in Wayne/Cabell

5 in 4-H, one each in Berkeley, Lewis, McDowell, Pocohontas and Wyoming counties.

End of reports.

Meeting adjourned – Next meeting to be held October 24, 2018