State Technical Committee Meeting
February 11, 2021

Kasey Taylor, NRCS State Conservationist
Kasey opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the virtual meeting. There were approximately 40 attendees. She reviewed the agenda and started the meeting.

- State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Purpose
  - State Technical Committees are a vital part of Farm Bill implementation. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) depends on their knowledge and expertise to implement Farm Bill programs with a locally led focus.
  - The Food Security Act of 1985 required the formation of the Committee for advice on a variety of issues, to provide information, analysis, and recommendations to the State Conservationist.
  - The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 amended the 1985 statute to include identifying additional mandatory members and making sure the areas of expertise where the Committee would provide additional input on the locally led focus effort.
  - The Delaware State Technical Committee serves in an advisory capacity within the agency as well as other agencies within the Department of Agriculture on the implementation of the natural resources, our conservation provisions, and Farm Bill legislation.
  - The Committee is intended to include members from a wide variety of natural resource and agricultural interests. It will be chaired by the NRCS State Conservationist and composed of representatives from our Federal, State, and local levels for mission delivery in our State.

- State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Roles and Responsibilities
  - To ensure that the mission delivery has been achieved, we will be able to collaborate with the committee to make sure that our state program management for our policies and procedures has been achieved. This will be outlined in the strategic plan for technical assessments and implementation for our conservation practices.
  - Your feedback and input that we receive through the committee will help shape our technical programmatic recommendations, identify our prioritized areas for statewide natural resource concerns, developing out our ranking criteria, as well as looking at our technical guidance for conservation practices and standards.
  - We will also be looking at our financial assistance rates and levels to make sure they are equitable, timely, and impactful.
  - As we continue going forward, the coordination within the membership is going to be a key focus for our committee to ensure a greater expansion of discussion across the state going into our sub-committee discussions.

- State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Sub-Committees
  - In some situations, specialized subcommittees composed of State Technical Committee members may be needed to analyze and refine specific issues. The State

Conservationist may assemble certain committee members, including members of local working groups and other experts to discuss, examine, and focus on a particular technical or programmatic topic, or combination of such.

- Delaware has focused on two STAC sub-committees to provide for a continuity of services for our funding and education.
  - State Soil Health Sub-Committee
  - State Wildlife Sub-Committee
- We started looking at the need for an Urban Agriculture committee. We have been working with this through competitive and non-competitive agreements.
- We have also worked across the federal spheres from Farm Services Agency, Rural Development, and our state partnerships; DDA, DNREC, and our conservation districts to make sure we're working within urban ag for collaboration and establishment of a uniformed statewide approach
- Subcommittees will meet on a quarterly basis facilitated by a subcommittee chairperson.
  - If you would like to participate on a sub-committee, please contact Kasey.
  - We will not have a standing ad-hoc committee, we will appoint these committees as the need arises and we need to move forward.

- Chesapeake Bay Project
  - NRCS, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and United States Geological Survey (USGS) have been working to establish a federally coordinated effort to review and assess our programs, efficiencies, funding, and making sure that within the Chesapeake Bay, we have a coordinated approach.
  - In August 2020, NRCS and EPA launched a team effort to continue enhancing coordination for NRCS, EPA, and ultimately USGS to assess funding in the bay focusing on agriculture conservation practice implementation as well as water quality monitoring.
    - It was decided to establish sub-teams to focus on ag conservation funding, water quality monitoring and our local workshop teams.
    - The ag conservation funding team and the water monitoring team met and have developed reports and recommendations that will form the work for the local workgroup teams in early spring 2021.
  - With our ag conservation funding, we want to review, identify, and assess the current funding levels available for our producers within the watershed to meet our quarterly goals.
    - We have a goal set in 2025 to meet our TMDL levels
    - The federal funding allocation allows us a first step to ensure we are meeting the thresholds and achieving sustainability.
    - Many federal funding programs that support agricultural conservation practice implementation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
    - EPA and NRCS have a productive history of coordinating programs that focus on the Ag Producers

    - Ag producers play important role in restoring local streams and Bay through "voluntary conservation."
    - States heavily rely on ag to meet 2025 Bay TMDL goals.
    - New federal funding/focus: EPA Most Effective Basin funding, 2018 Farm Bill focus on source water protection areas. Changes to RCPP.
  - As a result of the important conservation work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and additional federal resources to support conservation measures, EPA and NRCS developed recommendations for enhancing federal coordination to get the most out of federal resources to support the agricultural community in their conservation efforts. The funding team has broken out into two sub-groups to develop recommendations related to grants administration and source water protection. They also developed a spreadsheet to compare key components for each of the funding programs, an inventory of the last three years of agriculture conservation projects that were funded by EPA and NRCS, as well as an analysis of grant program safeguards against payment duplications.
  - The following recommendations were provided:
    - Coordinated meeting structure - look at timelines and results.
    - RCPP - the NFWF projects are on path to assist with leveraging funding with a match through EPA.
    - Source water protection program - identified opportunities to coordinate on our underserved areas.
    - Data Sharing: inform source water protection priority area selections, priority conservation practices, and project ranking criteria. Explore opportunities to assist economically challenged communities where agriculture is the primary source of nitrogen to source water.
    - Planning: EPA to assist with area-wide planning (involve source water collaboratives)
    - NRCS and EPA will explore opportunities where EPA has already conducted areawide plans to see if they meet the criteria needed to establish an NWQI source water area.
    - Education and Outreach: EPA and NRCS will develop consistent educational materials for agricultural partners on funding opportunities and eligibilities for implementing agricultural conservation practices in source water protection areas (Clean Water State Revolving Funds and EQIP will be featured to highlight successful approaches, NRCS Local Working Groups).
    - Duplicate Payments: Ensure measures are in place and, where necessary, institute additional best practices to safeguard against duplicate payments going to the same entity for the same work.
    - Diversity in Ag Conservation Grants: EPA and NRCS will assess opportunities to support historically under-served farmers and ranchers through outreach, ranking, match adjustment options, and the selection process associated with agricultural conservation practice grants in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

        - Annual Evaluations: These opportunities for collaboration are contingent upon the current goals, directions, resources, and abilities of NRCS and EPA. These goals will be re-evaluated and refined as necessary annually.
- The Water Quality Monitoring Team focuses on identifying activities and developing recommendations on how NRCS, EPA, and USGS could further coordinate our water-quality monitoring interpretation and funding to assess the impact for agricultural conservation practice implementation on the quality of local streams and rivers within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
    - They identified the short and long-term recommendations that will enhance coordination of water quality monitoring, interpretation, and engaging stakeholders to apply results.
    - They conducted a review of the programs pertaining to monitoring water quality of rivers and streams within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Tools for consolidating water quality monitoring data for use by partners.
    - They looked at data analysis and interpretation activities to link the ag conservation practice implementation to trends in water quality and making sure that in the agriculture watersheds and the initiatives effectiveness on agricultural conservation practices.
    - They organized the recommendations based on three objectives:
        1. Identifying watersheds and the greatest needs and the opportunities for monitoring the impacts of conservation work on the water quality of local streams and rivers.
        2. Identifying opportunities to further coordinate the federal and state water quality monitoring programs and interpretation of results to better assess the impacts of ag conservation practices on the water quality within the Chesapeake Watershed.
        3. Identifying the approaches to improve communication of our findings and engaging policy makers and stakeholders for implementation decisions.
    - To make sure we can deliver that, we looked at the existing federal and state monitoring programs in the bay watershed to monitor nutrient and sediment.
    - Most of the long-term monitoring did not relate to the effects of conservation actions in reducing nutrient and sediment contributions to water quality conditions in streams and rivers.
    - The Chesapeake Bay Program partners want to enhance monitoring and data interpretation to better understand the water quality response, as well as additional ecosystem benefits from our ag conservation efforts.
    - The information we will be looking at will be critical since the Chesapeake jurisdictions are focusing the majority of these efforts over the next five (5) years of employing ag practices to reduce nutrients and sediment delivered to the Chesapeake Bay to meet the water quality standards.

- A major challenge identified by the team, was the need for enhanced monitoring of a final skills to better connect the implementation of management practices with water quality as well as sediment changes.
    - Existing monitoring programs were developed to answer technical questions across spatial skills that do not address water quality response to ag conservation practices. We established three (3) goals:
        1. Identifying watersheds with the greatest needs and opportunities for monitoring the impacts of conservation work on water quality for local streams and rivers.
            - Look at criteria to consider watershed with existing long-term monitoring and implementation of the practices planned.
            - We also need to identify watersheds in each state to meet the above criteria.
        2. Coordinate water quality monitoring programs and interpretation of the results to assess the impacts of ag conservation practices on water quality.
            - Determine if/how the existing data could be utilized, assessed, and address water quality responses to ag conservation practices.
            - Summarize our current interpretation of the effort and how it aligns with the watershed identified in the first objective.
            - Develop a multi-partner coordinated effort to enhance monitoring interpretation. The results will be identified and options for funding provided.
        3. Identify opportunities to improve communication for the findings and to engage policy makers and stakeholders to inform them of implementation decisions.
            - Taking stock of information and tools and they will be used to communicate the findings.
            - Looking at coordinating agencies for information sharing to audiences and stakeholders.
            - Develop communication materials to engage the strategies based on provided recommendations.

- Proposed next steps – bring in Agency senior leadership to provide the findings.
    - On January 13, we provided a briefing with our regional conservationists and our point of contact at USGS. We provided a walkthrough of the recommendations received.
    - A timeline will be established and coordinated with the local workshops.
    - Local workgroups are being held. In the spring, we will regroup for a discussion to move these efforts forward.
    - A report has been developed and will be forwarded to the committee.

Jayme Arthurs, State Resource Conservationist

- Hydrology Indicators for Identification of Farmed Wetlands (FW)
    - In August, the final rule was issued for highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions security act.

- We needed to identify indicators that would be used at the local level to identify farm wetland. A list of common indicators was provided for identification in our local area.
  - For the determination process, we have to determine what a wetland is, what type of wetland and, the size of the wetland.
  - This process will not change the labels on current farm wetlands.
  - Once the applicable FW indicators are determined, the State Technical Committee needs to be consulted for consideration of selected indicators comments.
  - Jayme Arthurs and Phil King, Delaware NRCS and Steve Strano, Maryland NRCS are working together to determine what indicators would be best used for our state for review by the state technical committees prior to submitting to NHQ.
  - Jayme provided the list of proposed FW Hydrology indicators for determinations in Delaware and will forward to the committee for review after the meeting. If you have any questions or comments, reach out to Jayme. If there are no concerns, they will move forward with the proposed indicators for use in the State. They will also be published in our field office technical guide to be used for making farm farmed wetland determinations going forward.
  - Richard Wilkins – there is a considerable amount of farmland in Delaware. The drainage infrastructure system in place is old and has not had adequate maintenance. Will determinations be made on these private lands?
    - Jayme responded that, the amount of water is taken into consideration. There are certain criteria that must be followed specific to hydrology during a specific timeframe. If necessary, they can delay the determine until there are better weather conditions.
    - Determinations can be made based on two of the three hydrology indicators when needed.
  - Richard - for the hydrology, the farmed wetland classification and the prior converted, anything already classified as prior converted farmed wetland would remain as that or would they be reclassified?
    - Jayme responded, if there has already been a determination done on a piece of land and it's been certified, it will remain that way. This is specifically for looking at any new determinations that come in.

- Working Lands for Wildlife: Northern Bobwhite Quail
  - Recently, there has been a focus on Bobwhite Quail in the Mid-Atlantic Region with a targeted approach for certain species.
  - Currently we have a Working Land for Wildlife initiative for Black Duck. We are working with Chase Colmorgen, biologist with the Ducks Unlimited on identifying habitat for black duck in the State.
  - There is a national initiative for Bobwhite Quail with funds specifically provided to the State. There is also a State initiative using our funding.

- We will be using our program dollars through several programs to focus on improving habitat for the Bobwhite Quail in Delaware.
- We will start looking at a framework to improve the habitat for the Bobwhite Quail with a focus on using all of our programs.
- Over the next few months, there will be a concerted effort on moving this conversation throughout the State. There have been discussions with Chris Brosch at DDA and Justyn Foth at DNREC on Bobwhite Quail as well as support from others within the State. Delaware has opted in and communicated to NHQ our intent to participate in this initiative.
- Over the next few months, we will work on the framework at the local level for what they would like to see and the practices for rollout in the State. We will be required to provide our feedback at the national level.
- Brian Jennings stated that Bobwhite Quail at one time was supported through CRP. Maybe getting this initiative through the CP-33 practice through CREP with a continuous sign up would provide another tool to discuss with farmers to get more habitat on the ground.
  - Jayme replied that he has noted this and will include as a discussion item with the sub-committee.

Karri Honaker, Assistant State Conservationist, Programs/Field Operations
FY21 Farm Bill Program Updates

- FY21 Program Implementation
  - we have national mandates that we must abide by, 5% of our funds must be allocated to beginning farmers/limited resource farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers. Also, 50% must be spent on livestock practices and 10% on wildlife practices.
  - The 2018 farm bill for FY21, we have a new EQIP incentive program, EQIP Incentive Contracts (EQIP-CIC). We will be required to implement this new program and mandated to spend 5% of our general EQIP funds for EQIP incentives.
  - The FY21 spending plan broke down the general EQIP allotments. For FY21, we received $5.8M.
    - This year we have 15 ranking pools which includes the EQIP-CIC fund pool.
    - Changes for this year include rotary drums and freezers combined into the poultry headquarters fund pools for the respective counties. We have combined the high tunnel and cropland irrigation fund pools under the cropland funding pool.
    - All practices are available under beginning farmer and socially disadvantaged fund pools.
    - The financial assistance (FA) funding for FY21 is about $1M less than what was allocated from NHQ last year.
    - We ran numbers from FY20, and we had $7M in unfunded applications. Many of these will be deferred to FY21.

        - The spending plan for the Agriculture Management Assistance (AMA) program, we initially allocated $92,000 and have broken it down into two funding pools: high tunnel and general.
            - We have requested $400,000 additional funds for RMA-AMA but have not received the approved amount yet.
    - We are currently in the process of ranking our EQIP and AMA applications; 286 for the State.

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
    - We have received one proposal that is now at national headquarters waiting on approval. The approval announcement will hopefully be released in April.

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
    - The FY21 renewals were processed and we are working on obligations.
    - Last Friday was the deadline for making CSP payments.
    - We are looking at wrapping up CSP renewals and look forward to releasing the FY21 CSP Classic once policy manuals have been updated with statutory requirements.

- Agriculture Conservation Easement Program – John Bushey, Program Manager
    - FY20 Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) Area Wide Market Analysis (AWMA) is currently under review for FY21 Geographic Area Rate Caps. Once the proposals are released, they will be provided to the State Technical Committee (STAC) for input.
    - The Wetland Restoration Criteria Guidelines for FY21 is complete and is currently available on the Delaware NRCS website.
    - ALE and WRE - the FY21 ranking pools have been created and are currently under review to ensure national compliance. Once review has been completed it will be provided to the STAC for input and review.

- David Baird, Sussex Conservation District asked if anything was included in the EQIP budget on source water protection?
    - Karri replied that the practices designated in the payment schedule for source water are available under any of the fund pools.

Jayme Arthurs, State Resource Conservationist

NRCS Standards and Specifications

- We have been working with DACD to reach out to farmers over the last few months to keep the conservation conversations going especially during this pandemic. There has been a series of videos put out to keep the conversation going. Jayme conducted a video series discussing conservation practices standards, Soil Testing and Soil Carbon Amendment. He is working on getting them posted to the field office tech guide.
    - Soil Testing – specifically designed for soil health testing. The implementation requirements (IR) sheet for the design of soil testing has also been developed. There are several payment rates set up for soil testing focusing on soil health indicators.

- Soil Carbon Amendment – interim conservation practice standard that has been adopted by 12 states around the country, including Delaware. This standard is being tested to see if it should be adopted nationally as a full practice standard throughout the entire country
  - We are required to report back to national headquarters on an annual basis as to if the practice has been used, the results, and the benefits. Based on the reports submitted, they will decide whether to keep it as a regular conservation practice or not.
  - This standard has four options for using amendments: composts, biochar, other carbon amendments, and whole orchard recycling.
  - The implementation requirements (IR) sheet has also been included for specific requirements.
  - One of the additional requirements to be applied is, a soil health card will need to be completed for the current conditions on the field. This can also be used to document improvements made on the field.
  - Jayme showed an excerpt from the eligible practice guide showing payment rate options for carbon amendments.
  - This is taking off slowly, we've only had a few small farmers interested this year but there is potential for larger farms.
  - Jen Nelson asked if there are specific criteria for selecting eligible labs for testing soil amendments and how would the payment rates work.
    - Jayme relied that there is a list of approved labs that can currently do the soils test. He will share that information.
    - For the payment rates will depend on how many indicators are being tested and if an agronomic soil test will be included.
  - Richard Wilkins asked, on the new (and existing) standards, what is planned to interface outreach and available EQIP practices with producers?
    - Jayme replied that unfortunately, COVID has limited farmer interaction and that's one of the reasons they have worked with DACD to provide videos, Facebook, etc. for continued conversation. We also make sure everyone has a place at the table on any upcoming meetings to include the Ag (Week) Month meeting that was held online. They do want to continue making efforts to continue the planning processes with farmers. We have been working with the District on whole farm plans. We post information to our website, the Delmarva Farmer, and other news outlets.
    - Jen posted the link to the video in the meeting chat box: DACD link : https://dacdnet.org/connected-through-conservation/
    - Karri highlighted one of the agreements we've been working on with "Our Growers" is a push for increased outreach and assistance for our producers related to pollinators to increase our efforts for wildlife and wildlife habitat. We will be working with our colleagues under this agreement to do more outreach on a local level.

Ann Baldwin, State Engineer

Nanticoke Watershed Plan Updates

- In the 2018 Farm Bill, funding was authorized for the watershed program (PL-566). Our Districts requested funds for improvements to tax ditch systems beyond normal maintenance.
  - We submitted two proposals and one was accepted for the Upper Nanticoke Watershed.
  - We worked with Sussex Conservation District, Kent Conservation District, DNREC's drainage section, as well as tax ditch organizations to prepare the project proposal.
  - There are three phases: the planning phase (about 18 months long), the design phase, and construction phase. There are a lot of steps to this project and therefore, it will take years to complete.
  - The planning phase follows the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and has various processes that need to be followed:
    Conduct Resource Inventories and Watershed Assessment
    Conduct Social Assessment
    Conduct Economic Assessment
    Formulate Alternatives
    Evaluate Alternatives
    Hold Public Meetings
  - With funding received, we are able to consult with DDK Engineering, they are very experienced with this type of project. They will be doing a bulk of the engineering work, analyses, economic evaluations, social resource, as well as prepare the final document for our review.
  - To date, we have had two public meetings that were used as opportunities to bring our partners into the process and allow them to make comments. We also made sure the public in the watershed knew about the project and could provide any input/feedback they have about concerns in the watershed.
  - We also sent a survey to all the tax ditch managers asking if there are any areas of concern in the tax ditches. We are in the process of collecting information from tax ditch managers that consult with consultants to gather information on background data.
- Improvement Recommendations
  - Channel stability/capacity concerns
    - Bank stabilization repair
    - Reduce erosion
    - Downstream sedimentation
    - Structural vegetation practices
    - Restore ditch capacity/channel capacity
  - Drainage Improvements
    - Culverts/bridges

        - Structure repair/replacement
        - Expanded for capacity
        - Hydrology/hydrologic analysis
    - Ecosystem Restoration
        - Restore wetlands
        - Two stage ditches
    - Water Quality Improvements
        - Construct nitrifying bioreactor
        - Treat nutrients
- Next Steps
    - Complete Field Studies and Investigations
    - Identify and Evaluate Alternatives
    - Coordinate with Various Governing Agencies
    - Finalize Supplemental Watershed Plan and Environmental Document
        - David Baird stated that this will create a lot of opportunities for the tax ditch association as well as the adjacent landowners for conservation opportunities.
        - Brian Jennings, Fish and Wildlife Service stated that he has not seen any emails, etc. stating that they were involved. They were part of the main project on the Nanticoke for channel restoration. He did not see the portion of the work they completed on Ann's presentation and is not if they were aware of this work being completed.
            - Ann replied that she will look on the point of contact list and see about getting him added. She will also speak with him off-line on his project processes.
        - Richard Wilkins asked if there is a contractor doing the assessments and, is there plans to communicate to the landowners to make them aware of when the contractor will be looking at their land? He feels the landowner will be the most familiar with the inadequacies that may exist and bringing them into the process would be advantageous to this project.
            - Ann replied that they will get a copy of the schedule from the contractor and make sure it is shared with the tax ditch managers and in turn, they can inform the landowners.
            - David also stated that the outreach to the tax ditch managers has already started. There was a public meeting at the end of January that they were all invited to. Also, the Kent and Sussex Districts have been reaching out to the managers on the impacted tax ditches asking for input and letting them know about the project. The outreach will continue to take place.
            - Richard reiterated to make sure that the tax ditch managers are communicating with the landowners.
            - David said they will try to engage as much as possible.

Karri Honaker, Assistant State Conservationist Programs/Field Operations
State Technical Advisory Committee Input

- State Resource Assessment (SRA)
  - Our target goals submitted for FY21
    EQIP $8 million
    CSP $1.7 million, includes classic and renewals
    ACEP (ALE: $2.6 million, WRE: $384,000)
    AMA $150,000
  - FY21 Funds Received:
    EQIP $5,821,000
    CSP $300,000 Classic and 980,000 Renewals
    ACEP (ALE: $1.89 million, WRE: $438,000)
    AMA $92,000
  - For FY21 financial assistance (FA) funding, we received $9.5 million compared to $10.4 in FY20.

- Ranking Input for programs
  - The ranking applications are used for allocating funds.
  - This year, there is a new requirement Conservation Reserve Program - Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP). This program is administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to assist with expiring CRP land from owner or operator to a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher to return land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production.
  - We will be allowing points under the ACEP, EQIP, and CSP programs to provide priority points to those involved in the CRP-TIP program.
  - We are proposing in our ranking questions, is the applicant a covered producer participating in the CRP-TIP and NRCS evaluating the assessment during the two-year period covered by CRP-1R. We worked with FSA and have determined that since 2014 we have not had any producers involved in the CRP-TIP program. Due to our limited amount of points, we are looking at allocating five (5) points to this question.
    - Points were reviewed and committee agreed to allowing 5 points for CRP-TIP participants
  - If there are questions specific to this program, you can reach out to FSA or the NRCS programs staff. If there are questions for ranking, reach out to the NRCS programs staff.

- EQIP Incentives CIC referred to as "Mash Up"
  - The CIC Mash Up is a mix up or hybrid between EQIP and CSP.
  - The contracts under CIC will allow both practices and enhancements.
  - The payments will be the same rates under the current CSP enhancements.
  - We have the option to request new enhancements for future years.

- For this year, we would like to propose to set the high priority area as the whole State, as well as designate land uses for priority resource concerns.
  - Priority area was reviewed, and committee confirmed setting the whole state as high priority for FY21 is most beneficial

- FY21 Goals and Timelines
  - We are still working on finalizing ranking pools.
  - The sign-up application period ended in December and we are working through those applications. The field offices are working through the assessments and they are due on February 26th.
  - The ranking deadline is March 19 and our goal to complete contract obligations is June 4th.

- FY22 and FY23 Payment Schedules
  - The process for payment schedules always starts early. We have already had several training sessions/meetings to prepare for the FY22 payment schedules. Input is taken from the STAC, local work groups, requests for practices and enhancements along with payment percentages
  - Local Work Groups are key and should be included in the process for recommendations and input for this process.
  - David asked if you will be sharing the payment schedules during the 1st quarter of this year with the Districts and other groups so they can review it and provide feedback?
    - Karri replied that the payment schedules are available on our website. The FY21 payment schedule is posted and will provide the link. She suggested they look at the FY21 payment schedule practices listed to make sure they are meeting our needs.
    - Link to payment schedule: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?cid=nrcseprd1328231

- EQIP High Priority Practices
  - Every State can select up to 10 high priority practices that may receive an increased incentive rate.
  - Karri shared the list of FY21 High Priority Practices
    329- Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till
    390- Riparian Herbaceous Cover
    391- Riparian Forest Buffer
    393- Filter Strip
    605- Denitrifying Bioreactor
    604- Saturated Buffer
    620- Underground Outlet, Blind Inlet
    - If you have any recommendations/concerns/comments please contact her.

- A few of these practices have additional requirements that must be met in order to be designated, they have to:
  - Address specific causes of impairment relating to excessive nutrients in ground or surface water.
  - Address the conservation of water to advance drought mitigation and declining aquifers.
  - Meet other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans.
  - Geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.
  - Be under-utilized in the State.

- Local Work Groups (LWG)
  - It is important to start these conversations early and drive the decisions made in the State such as the following:
    Do we need additional practices or scenarios for our resource concerns?
    Are those conservation needs being met?
    Do you have input on High Priority Practices or Priority Resource Concerns?

- The next STAC meetings are scheduled as follows:
  May 13, 2021
  July 22, 2021

- For the local work groups, to prepare for FY22 if possible, Karri would like to have them convene and establish meeting dates so we can receive their minutes by July 1, 2021.
  - If needed, Karri can provide information to talk about, i.e. practices, cost list, etc.
  - Debbie stated that having the LWGs in May or June to have the minutes in by July will be hard on farmers to participate during that time
    - Karri said they understand, and it can possibly be pushed to August 1st.
    - David replied that historically, meetings were held in February/March timeframe. Going forward, that may work. Karri replied that timeframe is better for us, it gives us more time to bring back to the STAC.

Committee Reports

Chris Brosch, Delaware Department of Agriculture

- Nutrient Management – the governor's budget does include funding for cover crop restoration. Last year we took a cut from the ongoing financial issues.
  - The $2.9M was established in FY20 will return in the next fiscal year according to the governor's budget.
- Environmental questionnaires are being returned from farmers annual report activities at about a 50% rate. We think this will help with the goals set for producers in our State that have taken on voluntary environmental actions.

- Jimmy Kroon, Agland Program – they are currently working on closing seven easements from the last two years of announcements and are getting ready to announce Round 25.
- They have received $5M in State funding for Round 25 for FY21. The governors budget includes $10M in FY22.

Jenn Volk, Cooperative Extension, University of Delaware

- Ag Month (previously Ag Week) was provided through Zoom this year and some of the sessions were live streamed. It was highly attended as some sessions had record attendance.
  - If there are any thoughts or feedback, please share them with her.
  - All sessions were recorded and can be made available. After videos have been refined, they will be available via YouTube or you can go to the 2021 Delaware Ag Month website and contact the session coordinator.
- Tomorrow is the virtual Women in Agriculture conference. There is still time to register. Jenn included the link in the chat group: https://extension.umd.edu/womeninag/annual-conference/2021-conference
- Dean Reager from the College of Ag and Natural Resources has stepped down at the end of the year, so we have an interim Dean, Calvin Keeler.
- Dr. Michelle Rogers, Director of Cooperative Extension will be working on a national campaign from the CDC about immunization outreach and cooperative extension will be helping out so you'll be hearing more from them about that; trying to make sure that the population, especially in rural areas understand the information and science behind immunizations and how they can get access.