

## **NRCS SC STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

*July 7, 2011, 9:30 a.m.*

*South Carolina Farm Bureau Building*

*Cayce, SC*

Present: Ann English (STC NRCS), Evelyn Whitesides (SRC, NRCS), Amy Overstreet Maxwell (SC NRCS) Kellee Melton (SC NRCS), Don Atkinson (Cattlemen's Association); Bill Chaplin (SCDHEC); Sara Clow (GrowFood Carolina); Carl Coleman (SWCD Row Crop Farmers); Joe Cockrell (USFW); Harry Crissy (Clemson University); Cam Crawford (SCFA); Marc Cribb (SC Rural Water); Dr. Tamara Cushing (Clemson University); Robert Drew (SWCD); Billy Dukes (SCDNR); Phillip Elliott (FSA); Linda Floyd (USDA FSA); Frances Gibson (United Farmers, USA - Landowner); Hezekiah Gibson (United Farmers USA - Landowner); Marcy Hayden (SC Commission for Minority Affairs); Stephen Henry (SC NRCS); Dr. Patrick Hunt (USDA ARS); Yvonne King (Aiken SWCD); Gene Kodama (SC Forestry Commission); Kenneth McCaskill (FSA); William O. McMeekin, PE (NRS, LLC); Walt McPhail (Landowner); Karen McSwain (Carolina Farm Stewardship Association); Patrice Moses (NRCS); Meredith B. Murphy (SC DHEC); Noel Myers (USDA-APHIS); Gordon Mikell (SC NRCS); Jill Miller (SC Rural Water Association); Gary Peters (NWTF); Mike Prevatte (Aiken SWCD); Scott Philips (SC Forestry Commission); Anthony Savereno (Clemson University); Nikki Seibert (Lowcountry Local First); Fred Taylor (SCDHEC); Sudie D. Thomas (NRCS); Lisa Turansky (Coastal Conservation League); Greg Yarrow (Clemson University); Angela Yarborough (NRCS); Jozette Young (SC State University, 1890 extension).

### **Opening remarks from Ann English, State Tech Committee Chair/SC NRCS - State Conservationist:**

- Welcomed all participants & initiated a roundtable by introducing new members of her staff (Evelyn Whitesides – State Resource Conservationist & Patrice Moses – Executive Administrative Assistant)
- Asked all attendees to introduce themselves and where they worked.
- Informed all that minutes will be recorded and posted on SC NRCS website.
- Discussed info in each packet.
- Federation for Southern Cooperatives sponsored workshops were (June 25<sup>th</sup> and July 9) hosted in SC in cooperation with USDA NRCS, FSA, RD, and NASS to help landowners better understand eligibility requirements for USDA programs and services.

### **Comments from Kellee Melton, SC NRCS - Assistant State Conservationist for Progr<sup>am</sup>s**

- Priority cutoff date was changed to 1 August 2011 as the deadline to submit applications for EQIP and WHIP.
  - Money Update (2d allocation for EQIP & WHIP):
    1. EQIP we received an additional \$1M.
    2. General WHIP account a little over \$800,000.
    3. \$550,000 in the Longleaf Pine Initiative.
    4. Requested additional EQIP funds (always carry backlog).
    5. The additional \$1M that we received in EQIP went toward our Animal Waste Funding Pool.
    6. Submitted a request to receive additional CTA Funds for technical assistance to

Implement practices in the amount NTE \$500,000.00; eight (8) proposals submitted; awaiting response from NHQ.

- State Issue Ranking for FY12 (EQIP)
  1. 4 Phases (Cost Efficiency; National Questions; State Issue Questions & Local Questions – local working groups put together).
  2. Each level of ranking questions has checklist for field offices to use as a guide. The State Technical Com. gets to provide input on the state questions. Please review those from 2010 and give suggestions of any changes.
  3. Any additional questions or thoughts regarding programs can be directed to Kellee Melton, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, [Kellee.melton@sc.usda.gov](mailto:Kellee.melton@sc.usda.gov)

*Floor was opened for questions & or recommendations pertaining to EQIP/WHIP & FY2012 State Issue Ranking questions for EQIP:*

- ~ would like to see more crop rotation practices (Nikki Seibert – Low country)*
- ~ would like a list of practices being listed for Forestry (Scott Phillips – Forestry Commission)*

*Kellee responded that both topics were covered inside of packet.*

#### **Comments from Evelyn Whitesides, SC NRCS – State Resource Conservationist**

- Thanked individuals that reviewed and responded to the State Resource assessment sent out. Passed around sign up sheet for State Subcommittees.
- Presented slide presentation on Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
  1. CIG is a voluntary program.
  2. Money from EQIP funds CIG.
  3. CIG funds are used to award competitive grants (State or local; non-governmental Organizations; federally-recognized Indian Tribes; Private Business & Individuals).
  4. Applications accepted from all 50 states.
  5. CIG is intended to stimulate, develop & adopt innovative Conservation approaches & new technologies.
  6. CIG will benefit agricultural produces by provide more options for environmental enhancement & compliance w/Federal, State, and local regulations.
  7. CIG Components:
    - a. **National** – MAX award NTE \$1M; set aside 10% applications from Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers etc.; 2 phase proposal, usually announced in Fall; Projects 1-3 years in duration; EQIP eligibility component. Selected applicants may receive up to 50% of the total project cost.
    - b. **State** – Intent to provide flexibility to NRCS State Conservationist to target CIG funds to individual producers & smaller organizations within state; State Conservationist will determine the funding level for state competitions w/individual grants not to exceed \$75,000.
  8. Address questions or comments to Evelyn Whitesides [evelyn.whitesides@sc.usda.gov](mailto:evelyn.whitesides@sc.usda.gov) or Angela Yarborough [angela.yarborough@sc.usda.gov](mailto:angela.yarborough@sc.usda.gov)

*Floor was opened for comments, questions & or recommendations pertaining to State Technical Committee:*

**Recommendations/proposals:**

- *A motion by Evelyn Whitesides ~ Do we want to offer a SC component of CIG?*
- *Greg Yarrow (Clemson University): Proposed we put together a subcommittee to test trap doors for feral hogs?*
- *Scott Phillips ~ Proposed that SC test out the use of the CIG grant & that we go for the MAX.*
- *Landowner ~ Proposed to offer statewide CIG for maximum allowable amount & accept general to pics for proposals.*
- *Ms. English, SC State Con motioned that we consider a State CIG program for South Carolina; none opposed; majority accepted; motion went forward that we will look at South Carolina for a CIG program.*

**Comments from Dick Yetter, SC NRCS – State Wildlife Biologist**

- CP36 Longleaf Pines – CRP Continuous sign – up practice
- Addresses inconsistencies concerning plan development.
- A shared technical responsibility between the NRCS and South Carolina Forestry Commission.
- The final draft is in everyone's packet; packet gives guidance & examples.
- Draft suspense date 1 Aug 11.

Send feedback NLT 1 Aug 11 to Dick Yetter [dick.yetter@sc.usda.gov](mailto:dick.yetter@sc.usda.gov)

**Comments from Sudie Daves-Thomas, SC NRCS - Wildlife Biologist**

- A tree (Chinese Tallow Tree (*Triadica sebifera*)) introduced to South Carolina in 1976 for ornamental purposes & seed oil production.
- Invades wet areas such as stream banks, marsh/bottomland forest edges, and ditches but can also invade drier upland sites.
- Once infestation matures (10 years to a closed canopy), little else grows underneath, so soil is vulnerable to erosion.
- The Tallow Tree is spreading fast, especially in the last 5 years and causing an immediate threat and landowners are requesting assistance.
- This species has infested several Wetland Reserve Program Easement sites. NRCS plans to work with WRP easement landowners to restore sites by reducing and controlling Chinese Tallow Tree. Adjacent lands are also infested and need to be addressed as well in order to protect NRCS restored wetlands on WRP easement sites.
- Educational workshop on how to prevent new infestations & how to keep tallow tree in check after initial treatments, to be conducted on 27 Sep 11 at Nemours Plantation.

- Potential project can be modeled after other similar projects addressing invasive plants on multiple adjacent lands that have been successful. These include efforts to remove Water Hyacinth, Beach Vitex, and Phragmites on multiple adjacent lands in the Georgetown County area.
- Address questions or comments to [sudie.thomas@sc.usda.gov](mailto:sudie.thomas@sc.usda.gov)

**Recommendations/Questions:**

*Hezekiah Gibson (Landowner) recommends getting the Forestry Commission involved; asked if the environmental factors limit the range of this tree? What about the assistance for the loggers.*

*Anthony Savereno (Clemson University) – Inquired the reasoning for taking a stand on this particular tree?*

*Scott Phillips - Is this funding to be used as an educational tool for this invasive plant or are you going to use the EQIP/WHIP funding against these plants? Kellee - There are no monies directly available for invasive species.*

**Comments from Stephen Henry, SC NRCS – Assistant State Conservation Engineer**

- Energy Policy: Why is NRCS concerned? Policy decision was made Dec 10 to fully implement energy resource concerns by FY2012.
- Twenty-nine (29) Energy Practice Standards have been developed or revised to contain one or more energy purposes
- Two (2) new “Energy” Practice Standards
  1. Practice Code 374
  2. Interim Practice Code 716
- New FY12 CPS 374 “Farmstead Energy Improvement” replacing FY11 CPS 374 “On-Farm Equipment Efficiency Improvements”
- GM policy requires that all practice standards have a purpose.
- Not all practices may be eligible for EQIP financial assistance.
- NRCS can provide technical assistance for renewable energy.
- Address questions or comments to Stephen Henry (803) 765-5350 [stephen.henry@sc.usda.gov](mailto:stephen.henry@sc.usda.gov) or Shaun Worley (803) 253-3512 [shaun.worley@sc.usda.gov](mailto:shaun.worley@sc.usda.gov)

**Comments from Karen McSwain, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA)– EQIP Organic Initiative Coordinator**

- Discussed program & CFSA.
  1. Advocate to expand access to healthy, local food through different programs & work w/governments to preserve farms & natural resources.
  2. Build programs that connect grower’s w/consumers.
  3. Educate & Train farmers on how to grow food, support beginning farms w/an inter referral service etc.

- Currently focusing on assisting w/implementation of EQIP-Organic Initiatives Program.
- Training District Conservationists about organic production
- Reviewing current job scenarios and payment schedules for conservation practices.
- Making recommendation for modifications making practices & payments more applicable to organic production.
- Providing outreach to organic and transitioning farmers about the EQIP-OI program and how it can help address resource concerns on farms.
- Continue to provide outreach to organic and transitioning farmers to continue to contract out all monies allocated for the EQIP-OI.

**Comments from Don Atkinson, Marion SWCD – Cattlemen’s Association, President of Pee Dee Area**

- Hay is the most expensive cost in food for the cow herd.
- Most loss comes from out 6” of bale = 38% of a 5’ diameter bale
- Loss comes from rain penetrating outer layer of bale and from moisture absorption from ground thru bottom of bale.
- Deterioration of hay also reduces the digestibility of the remaining hay by about 20%.
- Cows will not eat the rotted, moldy mildewed hay – they will push it aside to get to the better protected center of the bale.
- Hay processing requires a minimum of 4 trips across the field each cutting and as many as 7 trips-cutter, rake tedder, baler, forks.
- Using a barn to store hay would allow me to be more efficient in managing as well as being a better steward of the land.

**Comments from Robert Drew, Cattlemen’s Association**

- 2010 good year for forage production baled hay fields as well as some unneeded pastures (due to use of shed).
- Losses in shed are essentially 0%.
- Will use most of stored hay in fall/winter. Planning for next year.
- Workable due to shed used to store hay. Storing outside would not make sense because they dry matter loss would be even greater.
- Will still bale some hay fields in summer but will use less acres for those and more for grazing.

**Comments from Nikki Siebert, Lowcountry Local First**

- Distributed “Eat Local” A Guide to what’s in Season brochure, geared to Lowcountry.

**Closing Comments from Ann English, State Conservationist:**

- Issues brought to our attention will be investigated.
- Thank you all for taking time out of your schedules to be here.
- Have great week!

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

The next SC State Technical Committee meeting will held on , 2011, at 9:30 a.m., at SC Farm Bureau.