

Kentucky USDA State Technical Committee
Thursday, February 14, 2013

Meeting Summary

The attachments referenced in this Meeting Summary may be found on the [State Technical Committee page](#) of the Kentucky NRCS webpage under "[Presentation Materials](#)" for the February 14, 2013 meeting.

The attachments are also hyperlinked in the electronic version of this Meeting Summary document, however they may open quicker directly from the webpage.

The Kentucky USDA State Technical Committee met on Thursday, February 14, 2013, in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conference Room, located at 771 Corporate Drive, Lexington, Kentucky. The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. and 40 persons were in attendance. NRCS State Conservationist Karen Woodrich chaired the meeting. A copy of the [agenda](#) is attached.

Mrs. Woodrich welcomed the group and gave brief updates on the Farm Bill. She said that although there is no new information to report, that NRCS's programs authorized under the last Farm Bill were on track with sign-ups as usual. She briefly discussed sequestration and said NRCS was operating under a Continuing Resolution through March 28th. She mentioned that Kentucky NRCS recently had two staff members leave: State Conservation Engineer Billy Hartsell retired on January 3rd, and Assistant State Conservationist for Operations Tim Hafner accepted a promotion and has transferred to the Beltsville, Maryland, division of the NRCS National Office. Coleman Gusler has been named acting State Conservation Engineer, and because of a hiring freeze, both positions will be vacant in the short term. She then introduced Kentucky NRCS's new State Resource Conservationist, Mark Ferguson, noting that he comes to Kentucky from North Carolina NRCS.

She mentioned that the NRCS "Field Office of the Future" effort is now being called "Field Delivery of the Future" to put more emphasis on the delivery of conservation services instead of the offices themselves. She said that NRCS is actively promoting a new Soil Health Project. She offered attendees a copy of the 2013 Soil Planner which is entitled "Unlock the Secrets of the Soil".

Mrs. Woodrich then introduced Joel Neaveill, Chief of Staff for the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy (GOAP). Mr. Neaveill presented on the GOAP purpose, staffing, and programming. He provided details of the various grant and loan programs offered through the GOAP and reviewed various changes to the programs for 2013. He concluded by providing an overview of the various pressures that may impact future Kentucky Agricultural Development funding availability. More details may be found in Mr. Neaveill's PowerPoint Presentation "[Governor's Office of Ag Policy Updates](#)".

Next, Tom Fern, USDA – Rural Development (RD) State Director, gave an update of RD's programs and activities. He said that RD has many programs including ones that helped the farmers as well as communities. He briefly discussed several available loan programs, RD's Farm Value Added program, Renewable Energy for America program, Rural Housing, and programs for Water Districts, citing several success stories across the state. He said if anyone desired additional information or more details that they should contact the RD state office or any of the RD regional offices across the state.

Tibor Horvath, nutrient management specialist for Kentucky NRCS presented the new Nutrient Management conservation practice standard 590, (generally referred to simply as "590") and outlined

the changes from the old standard. Tibor explained the reason why the Kentucky Water Quality Authority decided to detach NRCS's 590 standard from their Ag Water Quality Plans as the new 590 standard would be overly complicated for all Kentucky farms to get in compliance. Additionally, the Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) and Kentucky Division of Conservation (DOC) decided to update the UK Ag Water Quality Planning Tool and train extension agents, conservation district employees, interested farmers, and others to develop those Ag Water Quality Plans.

The national new 590 standard required all states to update their Phosphorus indices and develop a Nitrogen leaching tool if the state has resource concerns related to groundwater NO₃ contamination. He said Kentucky definitely has concerns because of its unique Karst topography and high groundwater sensitivity regions. Tibor gave a demonstration on the new combined N & P Index and pointed out that this tool will not adversely affect Kentucky producers if implemented, but will reduce the amount of N and P runoff into Kentucky creeks and rivers. A copy of the new [Kentucky 590 standard](#) may be found on the State Technical Committee webpage.

A nutrient management planning flowchart was developed to explain when a farmer would need an NRCS 590 Nutrient Management Plan or Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, or a Kentucky Ag Water Quality Plan or Kentucky Nutrient Management Plan. The flowchart may be found in the attachments "[CNMP Flow Chart](#)". More details on Tibor's presentation may be found in his PowerPoint presentation "[New KY 590 Update](#)".

Dr. Steve Higgins from University of Kentucky discussed the Kentucky Agricultural Water Quality Act (AWQA) and the state requirement for persons who have 10 or more acres devoted to agriculture or forestry to have a water quality plan. He said that there is a web tool for developing the plan at www.ca.uky.edu/awqa and also a hard copy available. He said if in Kentucky one has a crop or an animal, you most likely need a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP). He discussed the two versions of the plan available – one is based on NRCS's new (January 2013) Nutrient Management Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 590 and the other is based on the 2001 version of CPS 590. Either is acceptable for the AWQA plan. There is another version being worked on, which will be called the "KY NMP" which is being created specifically for the AWQA need. He discussed minimum requirements and "who needs what" concerning a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) vs. NMP. More details may be found in Dr. Higgins' PowerPoint Presentation "[Nutrient Management 590](#)".

The following questions and answers followed Dr. Higgins' presentation:

Q: Will the Kentucky NMP suffice for MILC payments? A: Yes

Q: Are the NRCS NMP requirements more rigorous? A: Yes

Q: Can the NRCS NMP be used for AWQA requirements? A: Yes

Q: What is the timeline for the KY NMP? A: A draft has been submitted to Kentucky Division of Water and they have asked for additional information to be included (a step-by-step outlining of the process one needs to take to develop the plan) and to make the reading level at a grade 8 level. Trainings will also need to be conducted after the Kentucky NMP is finalized.

Q: Will Cooperative Extension be able to write these plans? A: Yes, but it is hoped that others including fee for service providers and Conservation District staff will be able to write them.

Q: How many Technical Service Providers (TSPs) are there currently certified in Kentucky and will there be funding for them this year? A: Tibor Horvath responded that Kentucky has three residents certified to write CNMPs and 4 non-residents (but who are willing to work in Kentucky.) NRCS is working to increase the number of certified TSPs by providing training and information about becoming a TSP. There is a higher payment rate for CNMPs this year (vs. last

year) and CNMPs are included in this year's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for funding.

Comment: To become a TSP, there is required training that is only held once a year and out of state. Response: NRCS in Kentucky is planning on conducting a training session this year in conjunction with Purdue University and the NRCS East National Technical Center for TSPs and those that are interested in becoming TSPs. CCAs, as well as others, will be invited to attend. Also, after the Kentucky NMP is finalized, there will be trainings held for it.

Q: For small, limited resource producers – 50 head of cattle or less or pastured poultry producers that may or may not have a heavy use area – do they need a plan? A: If on grass, probably are fine. If in a confined place with no grass, then they'll need an NMP. Many people are probably already implementing parts of a plan, but need to have the plan to meet state law.

John Graham, Kentucky NRCS State Soil Health Specialist, gave updates regarding Soil Health activities that NRCS has conducted. These included identification of staff assigned to soil health, field day opportunities, visits from soil health experts to Kentucky, presentations and meetings conducted and planned, work with Kentucky State University and Morehead State University, and other information. Please see the document entitled "[Soil Health Update](#)" for details regarding these updates.

Assistant State Conservationist for Program Deena Wheby gave updates for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). She discussed the changes in the Kentucky geographical pooling areas for fiscal year 2013, and the recent Local Working Group (LWG) meetings. She encouraged State Technical Committee members or their local representatives to participate in these local meetings. Many attendees were unaware of the meetings and Deena said NRCS would do a better job getting the information out to the State Technical Committee the next time LWG meetings were scheduled. They are generally held no more than once a year. She also covered the fiscal year 2013 funding opportunities (general, state and national initiatives, historically underserved categories, Conservation Activity Plans, etc.) and the Kentucky funding allocations. She reminded the group that payment schedules are now regionalized with Kentucky sharing the same payment rates as four other states in the Appalachian region.

She said that although EQIP has a continuous application period, that ranking cut-offs are identified so applications may be evaluated and contracts entered. The first cut-off has passed (January 18, 2013) and the second period is scheduled to end on April 19, 2013. All applications taken since the first cut-off will be considered for funding in the second sign-up as well as all applications not funded under the first ranking period. NRCS staff will work with unfunded applications before April 19 to try to improve their competitiveness for the second round of funding. She said that 1,611 applications were received before the first cut-off date and that staff is evaluating these now with plans to have contracts in place by March 22, 2013. She added that part of the funding will be held to ensure some applications from the second sign-up are funded.

Deena provided information regarding the fiscal year 2013 guidance that was recently received for the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). NWQI was a new initiative in fiscal year 2012 and included three small (12-digit hydrologic unit areas) across the state. The national guidance encouraged states to keep the same three projects for fiscal year 2013 to build on the groundwork laid last year and to continue the success in those watersheds. The committee was supportive of this approach. A map of the project areas and number/dollars of contracts may be found in Deena's PowerPoint "[EQIP Updates](#)".

A question was asked about Conservation Innovation Grants (CIGs). Deena responded that CIG was part of EQIP funding to provide grants to help develop and demonstrate cutting-edge ideas to improve conservation on private lands. At least 50 percent of the total cost of CIG projects must come from non-federal matching funds, including cash and in-kind contributions provided by the grant recipient. The national CIG announcement is expected to be published very soon, and states who wish to have a state level CIG will be able to announce their grant opportunities after the national one is announced. Kentucky offered a state CIG last year and will likely do so again in fiscal year 2013.

Christy Morgan, NRCS Acting Public Affairs Specialist, discussed GovDelivery, which is the newest tool that NRCS has to communicate with the public and our partners. Subscribers can select the topics they choose to receive information on via email, text, or RSS feed. Currently over 500 government agencies (local, state, federal) are part of the GovDelivery network.

To subscribe, visit the Kentucky website (www.ky.nrcs.usda.gov) and click on the red envelope. There is a State Technical Committee topic that is available for subscribers. Subscribers to the State Technical Committee topic will receive meeting notices, State Technical Committee website updates, announcements for sub-committee meetings, and other important program related announcements. More detailed information may be found in Christy's PowerPoint "[GovDelivery](#)".

Jack Kuhn, Assistant State Conservationist for Natural Resources Planning, provided Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) updates focusing on the revised WRP Environmental Site Evaluation worksheet. For fiscal year 2013, the only significant change from last year is to part VII, question 1, regarding the management of timber quality. With a goal to give higher WRP consideration to parcels where no timber has been harvested in the last three years, those parcels will receive a significant number of ranking points (40) while those where timber has been harvested from the offered acres within the last three years will receive zero points. The ranking question pertaining to 30-year easements and cost-share agreements was moved to the screening section to free up the points. This will result in these easement offers having a low priority for funding consideration and is in line with program policy. A copy of the [2013 WRP Environmental Site Evaluation worksheet](#) may be found as an attachment to this meeting summary.

Mrs. Woodrich asked if there were any questions, discussion, or announcements from the group. Dawn Riley announced that the Kentucky Ag Council is presenting the New Strategic Plan for Kentucky Agriculture to the Governor at the Capitol at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 19th. A copy of the plan, executive summary and other materials regarding this effort may be found on the Kentucky Ag Council's webpage at kyagcouncil.net.

The next State Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2013, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:12 p.m.