

The Georgia Civil Rights Committee (GA-CRAC) quarterly meeting was held at the Walton County Ag Center, Monroe, GA on Thursday, September 13, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. Those in attendance were:

Committee Members and Advisors

**Amy Bell**, Area 4 Representative  
**Jason Gatch**, Disability and Veterans' Emphasis Program Manager  
(DEP/VEP)  
**Sharon Gipson**, State Administrative Officer, CRAC Advisor  
**Chris Groskreutz**, Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager  
(HEPM)  
**Cindy Haygood**, Chairperson  
**Dianna Hodge**, Area 1 Representative  
**Amos Jones**, Area 2 Representative  
**Ray Jones**, Area 3 Representative  
**Dee Pederson**, Federal Women's Program Manager (FWPM)  
and Secretary  
**James Tillman**, Deputy Equal Employment Opportunity Officer,  
State Conservationist (STC)  
**Daniel Westcot**, Outreach Coordinator  
**Katrina White**, Asian/Pacific Islander Program Manager

Visitors

Karim Batchily  
Joanne Borders  
Elvinia Butler  
Doug Cabe  
Greg Clark  
Shaun Ford  
Mike Henderson  
Rich Hosmer  
Chan Ly  
Curt Marshall  
Shemekia Moseley  
José Pagan  
Tim Powell  
Angela Upshaw  
Dan Wallace

District Supervisors David Bennett and Sonny Turner welcomed attendees to the Walton County Agriculture Center. Chairperson Cindy Haygood called the meeting to order and welcomed members and visitors. Introductions were made by all those present.

The minutes from the July 2, 2012 teleconference were approved.

Activity Highlights

**Review of 6-part folder organization for Civil Rights**, Daniel Westcot, Outreach Coordinator

- All 230 folders are to be maintained electronically. Hard copies will no longer be acceptable. Field offices will maintain six sections on their office servers. A full 20-part folder system will be housed on the SharePoint site. This system will be approved by Mr. Tillman.

**Chairperson Report**, Cindy Haygood

- Civil Rights award nominees are being solicited; any employee can nominate a recipient, and nominations should be submitted to Cindy Haygood or Sharon Gipson. They will compile the list and forward to Mr. Tillman.
- Committee vacancies: Black Employee Program Manager, American Indian/Alaskan Native Program Manager, Vice Chair
  - Would like to have vacancies filled by next meeting

- Georgia Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) tenure has been increased to five years
  - Katrina White pointed out that the General Manual has 3 years with option to renew for an additional 3 years. Mr. Tillman responded that a longer tenure is needed given the amount of training Special Emphasis Program Managers undergo.
- Plan of Work was briefly reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the plan.

**Professional, Administrative, Technical, Clerical, and Other (PATCO) Report, Katrina White**

- Demographics of NRCS employees was presented
- This data was broken down for Southeastern United States
- Georgia black male, white male, and black female groups are over-represented based on 2000 Civilian Labor Force (CLF) numbers
- Encouraged the use of this data to identify barriers for under-represented groups

**Women's Update, Dee Pederson**

- WiN, Women in NRCS, is a newly approved professional organization; membership is open to any interested employee; membership application forms were available
- Attended the kick-off meeting for the GA Chapter of the National Women in Agriculture Association (NWIAA) in Atlanta; flyers and membership forms were available
- Women and Hispanic farmer claims process is ongoing
  - Ron Morton is spearheading this effort and is requesting weekly updates on outreach to these groups
  - Question: Are all Field Offices are required to file reports, or just those offices that have high numbers of Hispanic and female producers; Reply: All Field Offices need to be aware and submit reports.

**State Conservationist's Report, James Tillman**

- He has enjoyed establishing a good working relationship with the current chair.
- Encouraged Special Emphasis Program Managers to work with Leadership Team members, determine if there are employees in their areas who would be good candidates for positions in and out of state
- Georgia selected for a Outreach pilot – to put together a process for outreach effort accountability
- Emphasized importance of Jackson-Lewis Report; encouraged members to be familiar with it
- Georgia set aside 18-19% of its funds for underserved producers, while National Headquarters only requires 5%
- 90% solution grades for the nation were assigned: Georgia's grade is 62%
- Annual meetings will be set up with Special Emphasis Program Managers
- State Conservationist will meet with each committee member
- Encouraged employees to contact State Conservationist when issues arise
- Contracts to underserved groups have almost doubled in dollar amount this Fiscal Year
- Georgia has the authority to hire veterans without issuing a vacancy for positions below GS-11
- State Conservationist opened the floor for questions

- Question: Telework policy: Is there clear guidance on this policy for the state?
  - >20 new agreements in the last few days have been approved
  - Telework is open to all employees; however, eligibility is not a right
  - Discussion of core and ad hoc agreements
    - Employees with agreements must work even if their official duty station closes due to inclement weather
- What will happen to Field Offices that have experienced other agency closures (like Madison, where Farm Service Agency closed)?
  - Georgia is closing the Metter office.
  - The intent is to provide service to landowners; this will require doing some things differently.

#### **Advisor and Human Resources Report, Sharon Gipson**

- Encouraged visitors to let other employees in their offices know about meeting content
- The Pathways Program will replace Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), and Career Intern
- GA vacancies
  - Soil Conservationist, 5/7/9 positions in Greensboro, Valdosta, and Cordele closed.
    - These positions had a mobility statement and relocation expenses authorization.
    - The mobility statements are also to be included for Pathways Program participants.
    - Question from audience: How do grade levels get determined for multiple-grade positions? Answer: The selecting official has input on GS range.
  - District Conservationist, GS-11
    - Three positions: Louisville (Area 2), Quitman (Area 3), Statesboro (Area 4)
      - Only open 5-6 days
      - Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requires at least 3 days, NRCS posting ranges from 5 to 14 days
  - District Conservationist, GS-12
    - Three positions: Newnan (Area 1), Greensboro (Area 2), Albany (Area 3)
    - Blakely will probably be advertised as GS-12 at a later date
  - Grants and Agreements Specialist vacancy just closed; this is a one-year term position.
  - Contracting Officer will report this week.
  - Working to get Human Resources Specialist position approved
- County Agreements (County employees)
  - Trying to put together one agreement that will work for the entire state, not just individual counties
  - When Actually Employed (WAE) positions: restricted to 180 days per year, with a one year extension
    - After 2 years, these positions have to stop, and NRCS will reevaluated the need for the position
    - Will work with Georgia Department of Labor on this; it may be a good idea to publicly announce these positions, which can help veterans and increase transparency
    - Question: Do these limits apply to the position or the individual?
      - The answer was uncertain, but these employees should be encouraged to apply for permanent positions.

- Temporary Soil Conservation Technician positions will end September 30; question asked if there is more information about possibly extending these.
  - Encourage these employee to apply for open vacancies
- Agriculture Conservation Experienced Service (ACES): An agreement has been funded through FY 2013.
- Georgia is up for a National Civil Rights Compliance review in FY 2013.

### Old Business

#### **Multi-Cultural Workshop, Jerome Brown, District Conservationist**

- Upwards of 150 producers are expected to attend the event on July 12, 2012 in Norcross
- Main objective is to expose multi-cultural landowners to agricultural programs on national, state, and local levels
  - Representatives from federal, state, and local agencies will be present
- Irrigation was a major topic of interest
- Major changes in products: High increase in goat operations

### New Business

- Civil Rights performance element
  - Options besides CRAC meeting attendance will be discussed and a list of suggestions for fulfilling and exceeding the element will be provided.
- New Mentoring Program
  - All new supervisors are required to participate.
  - Participation is “highly encouraged” for new employees.
- Workplace bullying will show up as AgLearn training.

**The business meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.**

**The next meeting will be held November 1, 2012 at the Federal Building in Perry, GA at 10:00 a.m.**

Two presentations were made during lunch.

Katrina White, Asian American/Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager, presented facts about Hmong history and culture.

José Pagan, District Conservationist, Monroe, discussed his area and the landowners his office serves.

After lunch, the group visited a biodiesel plant that is almost totally solar-powered. Christa Carroll served as our guide. Subsequently, the committee toured a small farm operated by a Hmong family. They grow a variety of products, ranging from cut flowers to lemongrass to eggplant and peppers.

Submitted by: Dee Pederson