

New Jersey State Technical Committee Minutes of June 19, 2013

Those in attendance:

Audrey Moore, US EPA Region 2
Bernard Isaacson, North Jersey RC&D
Brian Mclendon, NJDEP
Charles Roohr, NJ SADC
Dave Clapp, NJDA
Eric Olsen, TNC
Eric Schradung, USFWS
Fran Grasso, NRCS
Gail Bartok, NRCS
Jeff Draper, Growmark FS
Jim Murphy, NJDEP

John Parke, NJ Audubon
Justine Cook, NOFA-NJ
Kathleen Hitchner, NJDEP
Kathy Hale, NJWSA,
Kim Korth, NJ DEP, Division of F&W
Lauren Lapczynski, NRCS
Maria Collazo, NRCS
Marie Banasiak, NJFB
Nancy Coles, FSA
Steve Gould, US EPA Region 2

Carrie opened the meeting at 1:30 pm and thanked Duke Farms for the tour and having us on their property to view the wetland and floodplain restoration sites where NRCS purchased permanent easements.

1:30 PM Fiscal Year 2013 Budget - Carrie Mosley

The Federal government is managing the impacts of sequestration. NRCS took a significant cut of around 8 or 9 percent with more cuts anticipated in 2014. We are looking to continue partnering with other groups to get the work accomplished. In addition to the uncertainty with sequestration, we are also dealing with a new Farm Bill. Most of our conservation dollars come from the Farm Bill. So far the proposed changes are not major, but we will not know for sure until the Farm Bill is passed.

March meeting minutes review and acceptance – Christine Hall

Christine Hall requested comments, corrections and acceptance on the March meeting minutes. The minutes were approved and accepted with no corrections.

Old Business

Programs Update – Gail Bartok

Obligations for FY 13 are almost done. At this time, we have obligated 196 contracts. For the Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA), we obligated 6 contracts and requested additional money to fund one more. There are two Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) contracts with one pending application that we hope to fund. In the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), we funded 9 contracts. We were allocated \$212,000. Due to the priority of this initiative, we have the authority to and moved additional money from regular Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to fund additional applications. We funded 7 Energy applications, mostly Agricultural Energy Management Plans (farm energy audits) that will hopefully result in more implementation applications in following years. Twenty seasonal high

tunnel applications were funded and eight organic applications. Of the remaining, regular EQIP applications, we had 25 livestock applications funded totaling \$565,000.

CRP, CREP, SAFE Activity – Nancy Coles

Nancy Coles reported on the CRP, CREP, and SAFE Activity updates. The general sign-up ended. We had one general application in New Jersey. Due to the SAFE areas, we have limited general sign-up applications. We have one expiring CRP contract.

We have 295 CRP Contracts on 204 farms with annual payments of \$168,290.

One 2013 CREP contract was added to bring the total to 703.8 acres. These are typically small acres with an average of 3.7 acres.

There was no change to the Ag Heritage area in SAFE. We lost acres in the Grassland Safe area. New pending offers were added to the Raritan - Piedmont area.

Total CRP payments to date are \$352,928. ECP is mostly finalized for 2013. These ECP contracts do not include Sandy and are mostly damage related to Irene.

A question was posed asking what ECP is. ECP stands for the Emergency Conservation Program. This program is in place to help get farmland back into a farmable state after a disaster. For example, debris removal and restoring failed conservation practices are eligible payments.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program has over 200 contracts. This does not include homesteads. This program is for woodlots to re-establish and remove debris. In order to qualify, the applicant needs to have a management plan. It can be as little as one acre if the property is managed through a plan.

GRP is administered jointly through FSA and NRCS. The contract side is through FSA and the easement side is through NRCS. For FY 2013, there are potentially 3 applications. One is an easement application and two for contracts.

Farmland of Local Importance Committee - Rich Shaw

Christine Hall reported on the Farmland of Local Importance committee in Rich Shaw's absence. No new requests for consideration to have a soil labeled as "locally important" have come in from counties about 20 years. No formal criteria exist to establish these labels. Christine asked for volunteers to work on the committee to develop criteria.

Geographic Priority Areas - Carrie Mosley

We would like to identify geographic priority areas within the state to help prioritize and target funding. The goal is to find overlapping priority areas so that we can leverage funds through partner collaboration. Carrie asked that each group bring their priority areas to the next meeting.

Some other areas that we have overlapping water quality priorities are in the Raritan Basin and the Cohansey and Salem Watersheds.

Action: Send pdf of NRCS map to STC; Send email requesting shape files, layer maps on top of each other to find where partners overlap

NJ NRCS submitted a funding request to NRCS headquarters for the *New Jersey Highlands Delaware River* priority area. We requested money to focus on three main resource concerns: water quality, soil quality, and soil erosion. A total of 4.1 million was requested for this project area, which would include targeted funds for that area through our traditional programs such as: Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA), Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), and Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

New Business

2013 State Resource Assessment – Maria Collazo / Christine Hall

Two years ago, each state in NRCS was tasked with developing a state resource assessment to determine the resource concerns and how much money and acres are needed to address those concerns in the state. It was a very GIS intensive project.

This year, we were tasked with using national datasets to compare *apples to apples* across state lines. We had to look at the number of practices scheduled for each fiscal year and determine how much Technical Assistance (TA) money would be needed to implement those practices. We also then had to estimate the amount of Financial Assistance (FA) money we would need to get the work accomplished next year. Each state had the ability to submit a proposal for additional funding. We submitted the *New Jersey Highlands Delaware River* priority area proposal. This area has a lot of partner interest and significant agricultural land for potential projects. It is a three year proposal. We do not know if the project will be selected and how much money we would receive if selected. However, keep in mind that we can still use this area as a focal area even if the proposal is not selected.

National Water Quality Initiative - Gail Bartok / Christine Hall

For 2012 and 2013 contracts, we had scheduled 564 acres of cover crop in 2012 and 1263.8 acres in 2013. These could be the same field for up to 3 years, on land that has not had cover crop before. This includes all three watersheds. This project area was selected due to documented water quality impairments. For 2013, we had 5 contracts in the Upper Salem for cover crop. The Upper Cohansey included contracts for improved efficiency irrigation systems.

Partners can potentially help fill in the gaps. We may see increased improvements if we work together from different angles. For example, work on agricultural land vs. public/private land.

NRCS Practice Standard Revisions - Christine Hall

NRCS practice standards are the go to guides for implementing conservation practices. The practice standards are developed at the national level. They can then be tweaked at the state level. We follow a 5 year review cycle. They can be reviewed more often than 5 years, but the goal is to review each practice standard at least every 5 years.

The following NJ practice standards have recently been reviewed, updated and are available online at the [Electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#) (eFOTG) :

1. Deep Tillage (324)
2. Vegetative Barrier (601)
3. Filter Strip (393)
4. Residue and Tillage Management – Mulch Till (345)
5. Field Border (386)

Open Discussion

Audrey Moore – EPA has worker protection standards that are going to be revised. They are reviewed by USDA and will be posted in the Federal Register

Kathy Hale – The Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) should come out soon for the Raritan. The TMDL calls for 60-80% reductions from agriculture for total phosphorus and total suspended solids. The TMDL does not have an implementation plan or funding to implement these reductions. Point sources have a requirement for implementation, but non-point source pollution has a different requirement with no current implementation plan. This is the first TMDL that would impact agriculture in New Jersey.

Fran Grasso – NRCS is undertaking a Sub-Aqueous Soil Survey in the Barnegat Bay. This project could use your help! If anyone is interested in spending a day on the boat in Barnegat Bay, NRCS could use some volunteers. To safely operate the boat, they need 3-4 people each day. Contact Rob Tunstead (rob.tunstead@nj.usda.gov or 609-561-3223 x 107) if you are interested in volunteering or would like more information.

Christine Hall (for Andrew Burnett) – Reminded everyone that he sent an email out with a report. Included in his email was a partner directory that includes what type of resources each partner organization can provide.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on September 11, 2013. Carrie Mosley thanked everyone for coming.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.