

# State Technical Committee Meeting

5/20/2014  
9:30am – 11:30pm  
The Nature Conservancy  
22 Bridge Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Concord, NH 03301

Meeting Called By: **Rick Ellsmore, STC, NH NRCS** Type of meeting: **State Technical Committee**  
Facilitator: **Rick Ellsmore, STC, NH NRCS** Note taker: **Shari Cohen, NRCS**

## Attendees:

Rick Ellsmore, Shari Cohen, John Hodsdon, Eric Williams, Joe Short, John Greene, Edna Feighner, Roger Simmons, Steve Walker, Kira Jacobs, Matt Strassberg, Julie Larrabee, Pam Gilbert, Vickie Smith, Cara Cargill, Simon Thomson, Tim Fleury, Peg Merrens, Artie McCollum, Carolyn Chute-Festervan, Robert Johnson, Karl Honkonen, Matt Leahy, Peter Steckler, Deb Weymouth, Sue Knight

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## Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: **Welcome, Introductions, and Partner Updates**

**Rick Ellsmore, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service**

*Began the meeting at 9:30 am.*

### Members Updates

**Joe Short, The Northern Forest Center:** Model neighborhood project to pellet heating was successful; economic impacts show huge fuel cost savings & fueled economy by keeping it local – We partner w forest land owners & NRCS

**Matt Strassberg, NH Agriculture Mediation Program** (Environmental Mediation Center (EMC): Working w USDA to broaden services for AG & environmental issues free of charge

**Eric Williams, DES, Water Management:** Projects under way w Cooperative Extension to address phosphorus - also w NHACD to certify NHACD staff

**Steven Walker, NH Office of Energy Planning:** Monitoring land easements for entities & Fish & Game - some new properties have been conserved

**Edna Feighner, NH Division of Historical Resources:** Section 106 for historic resources / archeological - we revived Hurricane Sandy grant allowing us to digitize all of our records

**John Hodsdon, Belknap County Conservation District:** Our building is up for sale and our lease ends in a few months

**John Greene, Representative from Congresswoman Kuster's Office:** Unveiling Farm Bill & working w Commissioner Merrill to be sure that FSA office closures don't negatively affect NH as we are operating efficiently

**Cara Cargill, EMC:** Outreach for NH AG mediation program - here to learn



- This partnership will allow us to join public/private lands to reduce sedimentation in the headwaters that flow to drinking water supplies.
- The challenge and opportunity is with landowners who abut the national forest; we would like to find ways to engage these landowners. Please send them to us or NRCS!
- We have participated in several outreach events and are working w NH Dept. of Forests & Lands.
- We researched clean water act BMPs, and will have a draft for forest owners by end of summer.
- We are working w state foresters on Farm Bill results for designation of insect treatment areas (announcements to be made today); this allows us to be proactive in addressing insect & disease threats like emerald ash borer (other insects on the horizon as well).

**Rick** proposed a subcommittee for water quality - Eric Williams will discuss the watershed designations

Agenda Item: **National Water Quality Initiative Watershed Selection**

Presenter: **Eric Williams, DES**

*\*PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

We will choose up to 5 new impaired watersheds for NWQI - we will be monitoring data for these water bodies to choose improvements for water quality - we want to focus funds on priority areas

**General discussion re:** watershed areas to choose - how to reach farmers and landowners in target areas; NH DAMF, NE Farmers Union & Conservation Districts

Maybe add the Sugar River & Clark Brook & keep the 3 existing watersheds

**Eric Williams to send PowerPoint & PDF to State Technical Committee**

**Rick:** NHACD has appointed a new Executive Director, Roger Noonan

Agenda Item: **Farm Bill Updates**

Presenters: **Rick Ellsmore, Deb Weymouth, Sue Knight**

*\*Rick's PRESENTATION - posted to webpage*

RCCP will be funded using 7% of EQIP & other programs for these projects (2014/2015 funds). End of May to announce 8 projects in Critical Conservation Areas. We need to submit our priority resource concerns by the end of this week. Do we want to focus on the resource concerns we identified in 2012? RCCP will be listed on grants.gov at the end of May for submissions of pre-proposals.

**Artie:** The CT River and LI Sound have been submitted as a Critical Conservation Area. VT is looking at Lake Champlain as well.

### **Deb Weymouth: Financial Assistance Programs Updates**

**Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP):** WHIP has merged into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). A minimum of 5% of EQIP funds will be allocated to wildlife habitat practices.

**Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA):** AMA is unchanged.

**Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** CSP is relatively unchanged

**Payment Limitations:** (Increased from \$300,000 to \$450,000). Maximum amount a participant can receive is \$450,000 for contracts written under the 2014 Farm Bill (from February 7, 2014 through 2018). Organic producer payment limits may not exceed \$80,000 over a 6 year period.

**Adjusted Gross Income (AGI):** (Decreased from \$1,000,000 and had an exemption if 2/3 of the total AGI is farm related income). The new AGI limit for NRCS programs is \$900,000. This includes farm income and non-farm income with no exemption. AGI limits apply to AMA only in FY14 and will apply to all programs in FY15.

**Historically Underserved (HU):** Farm Bill 2014 added Veterans to the category of historically underserved producers; Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged and Veterans. If the applicant is a Veteran and also a Beginning Farmer they will receive high priority in the Beginning Farmer category and receive a higher payment rate. If the applicant is a Veteran, a Beginning Farmer and Socially Disadvantaged they will receive a higher priority in the Socially Disadvantaged category and a higher payment rate. Veteran status alone does not qualify for higher HU rates.

**DUNS # and Active SAM Registration:** Any contract obligated to an entity with an EIN tax ID requires a DUNS # and an active registration in SAM. NRCS will not obligate funds to a contract with an entity that uses an EIN without Active SAM registration at the time of contract obligation.

**Application Batching Dates:** NH NRCS may hold multiple application batching dates. Those who satisfy the program requirements, and are land and person eligible would be considered in that batching date. The benefits would be:

1. Place emphasis on “conservation planning”
2. Increase customer service
3. Prioritize and more evenly distribute the workload
4. Position ourselves for funding earlier in the fiscal year

**Sue Knight: Easement Programs Authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (attachment)**

- FRPP, WRP & GRP are now ACEP , ALE & WRE. Final rules are not published yet – we are using prior rules until they come out.
- It is critical that SAM & DUNS registrations are active throughout process.
- Easements accepts applications year round.

**Peg Merrens:** We want to apply to LCHIP but they're not our partner (cooperative agreement).

**Sue:** You can amend the agreement to add them at a later date.

**Rick:** Next meeting will be in September 2014, TBA.

***Adjourned 11:30***

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