

# Minutes

## New Jersey State Technical Committee

### Tuesday December 1, 2009

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The meeting opened at 10:00 am.

Those in attendance:

Liz Thompson	NJ FB	Audrey Moore	USEPA Region 2
Marie Banasiak	NJ FB	Howard Henderson	USDA – RD
David Glenn	NOFA – NJ	Nancy Coles	USDA – FSA
Anne Heasley	RPWHP – CRI	Maria Collazo	USDA – NRCS
Ken Klipstein	NJWSA	Christine Hall	USDA – NRCS
Amy Hansen	NJCF	Fran Grasso	USDA – NRCS
Zane Hesel	RCE	Barb Phillips	USDA – NRCS
Charles Roohr	NJ – SADC	Janice Reid	USDA – NRCS
Tim Fekete	NJDA – SSCC	Tom Drewes	USDA – NRCS
Kathleen Hitchner	NJDEP – DWM		

The meeting opened at 10:00 am. Tom welcomed everyone and noted that NRCS has received their allocation stating that the budget was approved in October. Not all funds have been received. Everyone introduced themselves.

Tom passed out the 2010 program allocations. Janice explained each program allocation and noted that there will not be an allocation that will address air quality under EQIP. Half of the WHIP funds have been held back but may be coming.

#### Committee Reports

**Outreach** - Christine Hall gave a presentation on using Google Calendar to keep partners informed of individual and joint activities, meetings, etc. At this point the calendar would be for partner use only. Barb would like to have a teleconference training session for anyone interested in using the calendar and sent around a sign-up sheet. If all goes well, at some point in the future the calendar may be opened to public viewing. It was suggested that program deadlines for sign-up could be added to the calendar.

**Programs** - Janice handed out the EQIP and WHIP allocations broke out by funding pools as determined by the Program Sub-Committee. Janice explained that the Chief of NRCS has made it mandatory that each of the pools must be divided by local areas. NJ will be requesting a waiver for WHIP & EQIP because the total allocations do not justify further subdivisions after being separated by the fund pools NJ has already established. The procedure to submit those waivers must be received before it can be submitted.

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AMA – Agricultural Management Assistance Program  
AWEF – Agricultural Water Enhancement Program  
CAP – Conservation Activity Plan  
CCPI – Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative  
CIG – Conservation Innovation Grant  
CRP – Conservation Reserve Program  
CREP - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentive Program  
FRPP – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program  
GRP – Grassland Reserve Program  
HFRP – Healthy Forest Reserve Program  
SAFE – State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement  
WHIP – Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program  
WRP – Wetland Reserve Program

## Old Business

**CREP** - Nancy handed out a report on CREP and noted that the amount of CREP applications have declined since 2008 and a meeting will be scheduled to try to peak the interest in CREP.

**SAFE** - Nancy reported that there are 9 SAFE contracts totaling 135.0 acres, with one contract in the NJ Ag Heritage area and the remaining 8 contracts are in the NJ Grassland area.

**BCAP** - Nancy supplied the group with a handout that details the components available for the Biomass Crop Assistance Program. Nancy also reported that there is a north Jersey facility that will start pelletizing in January, and local growers can utilize this program to supply the materials to be pelletized for the facility. Nancy also stated the FSA website gives complete details for the program and also supplied a fact sheet for the program.

**GRP Geographic Area Rate Cap** - Janice reported that NJ has to set a geographic area rate cap for GRP. Janice is proposing that cap be raised to \$12,000 per acre for established grassland and \$9,000 per acre for areas needing restoration of grass. This new rate may increase an interest in the program which has been very limited in prior years. Janice also took the ag census into consideration when recommending the new rate. Everyone concurred that the new rate should be submitted for approval.

## New Business

**FRPP Deadlines update** - Janice reported that the obligation deadline for all programs is April 1, 2010. In the past FRPP had an obligation deadline later in the year but with the change the deadline to apply for FRPP is now January 31, 2010. Janice reported that more applications are needed to use the current funds available.

**WRP Action Plan** - Janice reported that under the current farm bill there was a substantial increase in the acreage for WRP. The 2010 acreage allocation for NJ-WRP is 1500, with another 2000 acres for FY 2011 and 1500 acres for 2012. NJ has established easements on a total of 3,691 acres to date. The new allocation is a huge increase over the past years. A WRP Action Plan has been established to help us meet these goals.

## Open Discussion

Janice reported that an Organic workgroup is being organized.

Liz Thompson reported that their annual meeting was held last month. Waiting for the governor-elect to make the committee and secretary appointments.

Ken Klipstein is holding a kick-off meeting tomorrow for the new ag mini-grant program that will provide the matching dollars for AWEP contracts as well as help fund a regional composting facility.

Zane reported that the 2009 CIG on feed management has started. He also stated that CNMP's contracted under 2008 and 2009 contracts have been started, and some are finished. On December 15<sup>th</sup>, RCE is hosting an in-service basic ag energy meeting. FB will host a meeting for the public in the spring on the same topic.

Audrey reported that their regional administrator has been named. Judith Enek from NY is already on the job and meeting with her regional staff. EPA may also be getting a new ag coordinator; but there is no official announcement yet.

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Ann reported that the RPWHP received some additional funding for regional conservation planning. It is hoped that one result might be identification of eligible landowners for WRP and other programs.

Glenn stated that the NOFA winter conference is to be held 1/30/10 at Douglas. A full-day workshop and hands-on in greenhouse is being held the day before at Cook. NJ-NOFA is also working on a potential regional NOFA CIG grant idea for submittal to the national competition.

Nancy reported that Paul is out of town on business but would have been here.

Tim Fekete reported that the governor is requiring cuts and the Ag department has to cut \$850,000 from their budget. Also reported that the SADC has \$475,000 for conservation work remaining. NJ envirothon will take place on May 8<sup>th</sup> in Gloucester County.

Kathleen Hitchner reported that the DEP also has to cut their budget.

Charles Roohr reported that the bond referendum passed allowing SADC to fund about two more years of preservation easements. SADC has proposed to develop a standardized process to monitoring permanently deed restricted land that would be used by all entities. Janice volunteered to assist in that effort.

Howard Henderson wants to promote REAP (Rural Energy Assistance Program), which provides loans and grants to farmers. They are working on simplifying the application process for small loans. He also reported that the Value Added Program closed yesterday, that program targets farmers who want to add value to their crops but is a national competition for the funds. Howard supplied a handout on loans available for farmers markets through the Community Facilities Program.

Christine Hall of RC&D reported that work continues with the River Friendly Farm program under the ag mini-grants program. That program will also fund a feasibility study for a regional manure composting facility; and they are meeting with a Hunterdon County farmer interested in developing such a facility. RC&D also has a new program called SOS - Stewardship of Open Space - to work with municipalities on open space issues including community food, biofuels, and conservation of resources.

### Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 2, 2010 @ 10:00 am.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

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