



New Jersey State Technical Committee Agenda 10:00 AM – Noon, Tuesday December 7, 2010 NRCS State Office, Somerset NJ

Those in attendance:

Michael Catania	Cons Resources Inc.	Justine Cook	NOFA
Kim Korth	DFW-ENSP	Tom Drewes	NRCS
Jess Niederer	Farmer	Janice Reid	NRCS
Sam Conard	Farmer	Barb Phillips	NRCS
Paul Hlubik	FSA	Fran Grasso	NRCS
Nancy Coles	FSA	Fred Kelly	NRCS
Brad Smith	Nature Conservancy	Betsy Clarke	NRCS
Troy Joshua	NASS	Howard Henderson	RD
Amy Hansen	NJCF	Charles Roohr	SADC
Kathleen Hitchner	NJDEP	Audrey Moore	USEPA – Reg 2
Marie Banasiak	NJFB	Kristina Heinemann	USEPA – Reg 2
Liz Thompson	NJFB	Eric Schradling	USFWS
Ken Klipstein	NJWSA	Beth Ciuzio	USFWS
David Glenn	NOFA		

Tom welcomed everyone at 10 AM. Introductions were made.

September Meeting Minutes were reviewed and accepted with one unfinished sentence on page three corrected.

Committee Reports

Program Committee Update

Janice informed the group that ranking for WHIP and EQIP are in the process of being completed. Tom mentioned that allocations for the programs have been received but final determinations have not been completed.

Outreach Committee Update

Barb reported that the Outreach Committee met on November 29th. Beth Ciuzio joined the meeting to discuss WRP outreach. Marie Thompson, NJFB, will be helping to write success stories about people that have worked with NRCS and are good conservationists. Other topics discussed include GRP outreach and the energy CAP. Christine Hall requested that everyone start using the Google calendar.

AMA – Agricultural Management Assistance Program
AWEP – 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 – Wetlands Reserve Program

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Old Business

CRP, CREP, SAFE

Nancy handed out information on the most recent numbers for CRP, CREP, and SAFE. There are 263 CRP contracts with 287 practices on these contracts, and a total annual payment of \$162,969.00. There are 156 CREP contracts totaling 361.0 acres with an average annual rate per contract of \$137.90. There are 22 approved SAFE contracts with 247.3 acres enrolled and 8 pending contracts with 147.8 acres offered. Since October 1st there has been \$318,543.51 in CRP payments made.

There is a continuous signup and the application closing for FY 2011 funding will end January 28, 2011. Available funding will be \$207,595.

FY2011 GRP payments were issued for \$26,497.

Janice mentioned that a geographic rate cap must be established. Janice is waiting for the rates from surrounding states to be released. Hopefully, NHQ will let us use that information. It will be very expensive to complete our own market survey.

WRP Easement Status

Janice reported that we are working on three WRP easements. There are still applications being received for FY 2011. Tom mentioned that we established an agreement with USFW and a position was filled to work on WRP. Also, a similar position was filled with NOFA and with the Cape May Plants Material Center.

WRP Geographic Area Rate Cap

There is a contract for market analysis completed for the Geographic Area Rate Cap. Those numbers will be available next week. A decision will have to be made once those numbers are received.

New Business

EQIP Organic Initiative

Janice reported that NRCS is having a workshop at Duke Farms with NOFA on Thursday, December 9th. Janice mentioned the pros and cons of deer fencing under the organic initiative. The DCs requested that fencing be limited to those areas that are already organic certified as they are having problems with applicants claiming to be transitioning and then not following through, since the NJDA does not want any OSPs until after the 3-year transition period. NRCS is hoping to get TSP's on the list that can begin to write plans for those wanting to transition to organic and become certified, and then we can require a plan through our CAP program.

EQIP person eligibility

"What is an agriculture producer"? It states that \$1,000 minimum in agricultural commodities must be produced or eligible to produce from the land. A substitution of 2 of the last 5 years of production may also be used. NJ had been using a more liberal definition but it is causing more problems, so we are going to start following national guidance more closely.

Special Session

NRCS "How're We Doing?"

NRCS needs input from our partners on how well we accomplished our mission and goals in the past year, and suggestions for improvement. After a brief discussion and review of the data collected from agricultural groups, it was decided that a questionnaire will be e-mailed to the group for their immediate responses.

Open Discussion

Liz reported that the annual conference was a good turnout. 2011 policies are available online. Right to farm, farmland assessment, tax issues are the three top priorities.

Kim reported that the bear hunt is on and gearing up for matching grant for license plate renewal fees.

Ken mentioned the River Friendly Farm and they continue to promote AWEP and other opportunities.

Janice mentioned that national CIG is out for projects over \$75,000 projects and multi-state projects.

Michael announced that Duke Farms has been recognized by both the NJ Water Supply Authority and the state for the work done on the WRP and ARRA sites. Raritan Piedmont has been invited to submit an application to the Duke Foundation to continue their work. Conservation Resources Inc is expanding their efforts with a carbon grant research project, and is considering this and other ideas for possible new CIG applications.

Howard mentioned that the department will have a continuous effort on renewable energy. Howard mentioned that the work RC&D has completed is unique and there are many opportunities for further work to be completed for this effort.

Chuck mentioned that renewable energy has been the charge of the SADC. Farms will be able to supply energy to the farm and send back to the grid. SADC is writing the regulations for the preserved farms to have solar, wind, and biomass opportunities. The solar regs are out for public comment. Wind is being written and may be a little more complicated. Biomass requires SADC is work with department and DEP.

Kristina mentioned that they are continuing to use brown fields for agricultural production. Also, the compliance date for the SPCC rule has been extended. They are trying to get the word out since it applies to farmers if they store oil.

Dave mentioned that NOFA-NJ is preparing for their annual conference in January. There will be a round table discussion during that meeting. Also, they are continuing with classes for those interested in organic farming; the "exploring the small farm dream" class will be expanding to both north and south locations.

Paul mentioned that the disaster declaration was issued on November 23rd. All sixteen counties will qualify. Paul handed out fact sheets on the biomass crop assistance program and the emergency forest restoration program. Paul mentioned the conservation loan program and the effort between NRCS and FSA has been outstanding and NJ is leading in the country.

Audrey reported that a grant was awarded to Cornell and Rutgers for development of portable retro fit for traditional air blast sprayers.

Jess is a beginning farmer and was asked by Tom to attend the meeting. Jess mentioned that she enjoys working with NRCS and will encourage more farmers to contact NRCS for help.

Eric is working on prioritizing habitat areas and the species; it's an internal process but the results will be posted on their web site. He hopes to continue with the shared employee. The agency is still committed to the Deepwater Horizon restoration effort, and 20% of employees will be working at the spill site throughout the year.

Brad is currently working with a grant from the William Penn Foundation to develop a private lands program. Target area is small farmers in Cumberland and Cape May counties to improve fresh water and forest health. He also hopes to become certified to write forest stewardship plans.

Kathleen is in process of making funding decisions for this year's 319 grants. Proposals were received from a couple of the SCDs. They are also working with the NJ Water Supply Authority on the Ag mini grants that supplement AWEPP contracts.

Troy mentioned that their annual November publication is out. The published data on renewable energy will be released in February 2011.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2011 @ 10:00 am in the NRCS state office

The meeting was adjourned at noon.