

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235 -- Telephone (518) 457-3738

STATE COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 18, 2012
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235

Present:

G. Proios, Chair; D. Stein, C. Colby, J. Dickinson, Voting Members; M. Latham, Director; B. Steinmuller, Assistant Director; D. Pettit, E. Henry NRCS; R. Rausch, DAM; E. Cruden, DEC; L/ Prezorski, J. Clifford, Dutchess SWCD; P. Kaczmarczyk, DOH; K. Smith, DOS; J. Lieberum, CDEA.

Call to Order

G. Proios called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Review/Approval of Minutes

D. Stein moved to approve the November 13, 2012 minutes as presented; seconded by J. Dickinson. Motion passed; carried.

Correspondence

B. Steinmuller made the correspondence available. Correspondence included a variety of Soil and Water Conservation periodicals, reports and District Newsletters and Reports.

Ag Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program - Brian Steinmuller

STATUS OF ROUNDS 1-18

Of 661 contracts, 163 are active, and 450 are complete. 22 contracts have been cancelled during the life of the program. There are 26 Round 18 NPS projects pending. There have been 36 contracts closed out in 2012.

Amendment for State Committee Consideration

Cayuga SWCD – Prescribed Grazing – Round 14 – C700884

Request: time extension from 12/31/12 to 4/8/13

Reason: extension needed for five landowners due to financial and health issues

Note: Jeff Ten Eyck, Region 3 AEA, supports the time extension with modification

Previous amendments: one time extension

D. Stein moved to approve the time extension; seconded by J. Dickinson. Motion passed; carried.

Jefferson SWCD – Central Jefferson County Barnyard Mgt Project – Round 14 – C700928

Request: time extension from 10/31/12 to 10/31/13

Reason: extension needed due to financial issues

*Note: Bob Brower, Region 4 AEA, supports the time extension
Previous amendments: one change in landowners; one change in BMPs*

J. Dickinson moved to approve the time extension; seconded by D. Stein. Motion passed; carried.

Sullivan SWCD – Callicoon Creek WS Ag Improvement Program – Round 14 – C700925
Request: time extension from 12/31/11 to 12/31/13
Reason: no work completed in summer or fall due to flooding issues which took precedence

*Note: Brian Steinmuller, Region 6 AEA, supports the time extension
Previous amendments: none*

D. Stein moved to approve the time extension; seconded by C. Colby. Motion passed; carried.

Staff Approved Amendment

Madison SWCD – Oriskany Creek Watershed Ag NPS Elimination Project WS – Round 15 – C700943
Request: change in landowner
Reason: The farm was sold. New landowner, same property, same BMPs

*Note: Cliff Frasier, Region 5 AEA, supports the change in landowner
Previous amendments: none*

Round 19 Update

Pursuant to the Round 19 RFP, 76 proposals were received. State funds requested totaled \$21,578,281.68. 296 farms were included. Proposals were due on December 10th. Proposal scores are due January 28, 2013. The post review meeting will be held on February 4, 2013.

B. Steinmuller provided an update on the work that Lauren Lyon-Swift is doing to collect, coordinate, and manage AEM and AgNPS Program Data. The work she is doing complements the project that was started by the Division Intern, Rachel Murphy during the summer of 2012. The SWCC is reviewing and analyzing AEM Strategic Plan information together with program data to determine how the strategic planning approach utilized through the AEM Base Program is resulting in a consistent level of high quality proposals and ultimately conservation projects being completed and maintained on the landscape. B. Steinmuller advised the group that Lauren is currently at the Cortland County SWCD office at a staff meeting, and wanted to be here herself to present to the Committee. B. Steinmuller showed a draft report and a series of maps and datasets that are currently being developed.

M. Latham told the Committee that we are very pleased with Lauren’s services by way of the Cortland County SWCD and noted that what we are now able to analyze and present the abundance of program data collected over the years in ways not possible before these services were obtained.

NRCS Field Office of the Future, Farm Bill, Federal Budget Discussion – Don Pettit

D. Pettit State Conservationist for New York gave the Committee a presentation on the status and future budget outlook for the USDA-NRCS in the state. The presentation included a discussion on the field office reorganization. The following is a summary of the slides presented by D. Pettit.

The Driving Force:

- Expected decreases in funding
- Need to be more efficient and sustainable (Field Office of the Future)
- Increase staff providing technical assistance (90% Solution)
- Support deployment of Conservation Delivery Streamlined Initiative (CDSI)
- Expand and strengthen partnerships

Guiding Principles:

- Develop an organizational structure that will position us to deliver our mission in the future (5 years out)
- Maximize technical assistance in the field
- Make changes with minimal cost and least impact on employees

Leadership Team Decisions

- Reduce from 4 to 3 Administrative Areas (will need USDA approval)
 - Batavia
 - Marcy
 - Walton
- Strengthen technical and program support at the Area level
- Group 2-3 Field Offices together into Management Units

Strengthen technical and program support at the Area level

- Core Staffing Plan
 - ASTC-FO
 - Admin. Mgt. Spec
 - Area Resource Conservationist (2)
 - Area Engineer
 - Area Biologist
 - Area Resource Soil Scientist
 - Program Specialists (CDSI)
 - Accomplished through re-assignment of State, Area, and Field Staff and advertised vacancies

Benefits of re-alignment and strengthening technical and program support at the Area level:

- Reducing from 4 to 3 will allow full staffing at the Area level
- Save one GS-13 position
- Improves supervisory span of control for ASTC-FO
- More technical and program support closer to the field level

Combine Field Offices into Management Units

- "Senior" District Conservationist will retain title and provide overall administration and supervision for all staff in the Management Unit
- Other DCs will use the title of Soil Conservationist, focus on technical role

Benefits of forming Management Units

- Less staff performing administrative functions

- More time for technical assistance
- Makes more technical staff available to support each field office
- Supports a "team" approach
- More consistency in technical and program delivery

Timeline

- Entire re-structuring plan will require USDA approval (Departmental Regulation 1010)
 - Submission early 2013
- Some changes can be implemented prior to approval of the re-structuring plan
 - Area office staffing
 - Forming Management Units
 - Changes in supervisors

NRCS 590 Update

D. Pettit and E. Henry provided an update on the revisions to the NRCS-NY 590 Standard. Pettit and Henry provided the background on the need to revise the 590 Standard for NY. It was noted that if the NY Standard is not adopted by 1/1/13, the national standard will be in effect. The national standard includes a ban on winter spreading with no exceptions. The revised NY Standard strives to improve water quality beyond the current standard while also preserving a farm's ability to maintain spreading schedules, rates, and methods of placement through the winter months when conditions allow.

Pettit told the Committee that the Standard will be ready for release by 1/1/13. The standard's application will be evaluated and it will be brought back to the table for adjustments if needed.

State Aid to Districts Part A Eligible Expense List Approval – J. Clifford

J. Clifford distributed a list of items proposed for State Aid Part A expense eligibility. It was noted that the SWCC is taking the opportunity to clarify positions on the eligibility of certain expenses under Part A reimbursement now that the cap is set at \$60,000.

New Eligible Expenditures for Part A:

(8730.23) Motor Vehicle

Car Leasing – prepaid leasing of motor vehicle for technical or conservation applications

(8730.416) Miscellaneous Supplies for Use in Conservation Practices

Software – purchase of software for technical or conservation applications

Website – hosting & domain name fees

(8730.431) Travel/Training Expenses

Certifications – for employees with technical conservation application responsibilities

(8730.442) Telephone/Internet

Cell Phone – for employees with technical conservation application responsibilities

(8730.451, 8730.452, 8730.453, 8730.454, 8730.455, 8730.456) Insurance

Professional Liability Insurance

Surety Bonds

Other - Consultant Liability Insurance

D. Stein moved to approve the list as presented; seconded by J. Dickinson. Motion passed; carried.

Advisory Member / Partnership Reports / Public Comments - ALL

NYS Ag&Mkts – R. Rausch updated the Committee on the pending new CAFO rule. He noted that the rule is out for public comment. Rausch provided an update on the NYSEDA/PSC joint program that increases the cap from for funding from \$1 million to \$2 million and establishes a new funding methodology.

Rausch noted that the Regional Economic Councils meet tomorrow to discuss funding for various initiatives across the state. Rausch noted that \$3 million may be made available to the Department to be awarded through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA).

NYS DOS – K. Smith provided a handout to the Committee that provides a snapshot of District involvement in DOS programming areas, specifically Watershed Management Planning. This list is impressive showing the extent of DOS's commitment to District's engagement on local and regional watershed planning. Discussion ensued regarding the need to push for District eligibility under the law that authorizes the Waterfront Revitalization Program that includes watershed management planning support.

NYS CDEA – J. Lieberum advised the Committee that NACD's 2013 Annual Meeting will be held at the Marriott Rivercenter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. The meeting will be based on theme, "Conservation: Proud Past, Positive Future", the 67th Annual Meeting will showcase the conservation work of districts and partners over the years as well as what can be done in the future.

Lieberum also told the Committee that the 2013 Annual Water Quality Symposium will be held March 12 – 15th at the Auburn Holiday Inn.

NYS DEC – E. Cruden provided an update to the Committee on the proposed changes to the CAFO Permit. She noted that the comment period ends on 1/21/13. Cruden also noted that Public Hearings are scheduled in Regional offices. Cruden discussed the challenges that environmental groups are having toward the pending lift in the animal number cap. Cruden also told the Committee that the state's AEM Framework has been touted by both government and the environmental advocacy groups as an effective program and mitigative strategy.

NRCS-NY – D. Pettit spoke about the potential for floodplain easements to be a tool through the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) to provide for Sandy relief. It was noted that floodplain easements through EWP have never been used in coastal settings.

Pettit advised the Committee that NRCS-NY will be actively promoting Soil Health in 2013 and looking into how to tie this important conservation strategy into existing programs.

Next Meeting – February 12, 2013 at the State Office Building in Utica, NY.

The Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Audiocast available at: <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/webcasting.html>