

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

STATE COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 15, 2010

**Cayuga County SWCD
7413 County House Road
Auburn, NY**

Present: D. Stein, D. Brass, C. Colby, J. Dickinson, Voting Members; M. Latham, Director; B. Steinmuller, N. Lawler, C. Frasier, L. Travis, J. TenEyck, SWCC Staff; B. Hopkins, NRCS; L. Telega, Cornell; J. Rusnica, Ag & Markets; S. Lorraine, President CDEA; B. Wohnsiedler, Jefferson Co. SWCD; H. Kelsey, Wayne Co. SWCD; J. Littrell, NYACD; P. Black, SUNY ESF

Call to Order:

D. Stein, Vice Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Introductions made.

Review and Approval of Minutes

J. Dickinson moved to approve the May minutes; seconded by D. Brass. Motion passed; carried.

Correspondence

Letters & Memos

Letter to Mike Latham from Caitlin Stewart, Hamilton SWCD, dated 5/11/10 letting him know she found the Working with the Media workshop to be valuable.

Reports & Newsletters

County SWCD Newsletters from Franklin and Wyoming
Oklahoma Conservation – May 2010
LEAD New York Newsletter – Summer 2010
The Lake Reporter – May 2010
ERS USDA Report - May 2010
Catskill Forest Association Newsletter

NYS Budget and EPF Update

M. Latham mentioned the monthly SWCC meetings are no longer video webcasted. The meetings are available on the webcasting site in audio form. The savings are approximately \$20,000-\$30,000 a year.

He discussed that there are currently two retirement incentives available to State employees. He stated in the initial canvass of our staff, the majority are interested; nine out of twelve. Next, the Department will target which employees, positions and titles would be receiving the potential option(s). We are currently in a holding pattern; every agency has to have a plan by the end of June. He expects better information on the potential outcome at next month's meeting. He mentioned over 270 employees within the Department are eligible. All targeted employees will be required to depart by September 28, 2010.

M. Latham reported on the EPF status. The Agricultural Nonpoint Source program was one of the few programs to experience an increase in funding. The aid to Conservation Districts remains at \$3 million. B. Steinmuller stated a tour of a farm in Saratoga County highlighting

implementation projects was conducted for State Budget Analysts. He stated that the District was present and did an outstanding job expressing the value of the EPF in meeting AEM goals. Budget analysts attended and learned how EPF funding is spent. Subsequent to the tour, the Division of Budget released EPF for District programs for the first time since April 1, 2010.

M. Latham stated there are currently two open, competitive RFPs for contractual services; one for eco-based management and technical training and the other is outreach, education and communication. The RFPs are due June 21, 2010 at 4:30 pm. We will report next month on the response and outcome.

B. Steinmuller spoke about the NPS amendment policies and in particular, landowner changes. He mentioned previous concerns and discussions.

J. Dickinson moved to approve an amendment policy change which would allow limited landowner changes up until the time that a plan of work is submitted to the Albany office; seconded by D. Brass. Motion passed and carried.

B. Steinmuller stated he would email material regarding the new amendment policy reflecting landowner changes, and procedures/guidelines relative to payment and compliance for evaluation of undesigned manure storages.

Agricultural NPS Abatement & Control Grant Program June 15, 2010 State Committee Meeting

STATUS OF ROUNDS 1-15

Of 541 contracts, 144 are active, 26 are pending and 356 are complete. 15 contracts have been cancelled during the life of the program.

Amendments for State Committee Consideration

Columbia SWCD – Barnyard Runoff Management Systems 3 Farms – Round 11 – C700774
Request: time extension from 12/31/09 to 12/31/10

Reason: the time extension is requested due to the absence of bidders for this project, project did not get started until November 2009. Additional time needed to purchase and install fencing.

Note: Rich Lewis, Region 6 AEA, supports the time extension

Previous amendments: 4 changes to scope, 2 time extensions

J. Dickinson moved to approve the no-cost time extension; seconded by D. Brass. Motion passed and carried.

B. Steinmuller asked all District personnel and/or farmers in the room to step outside before the Ranked List is distributed and considered. After all District personnel and/or farmers left the room, B. Steinmuller distributed the Round 16 ranked list. Some discussion about fencing as it relates to rotational grazing/perimeter fencing occurred. B. Hopkins stated NRCS has similar questions and issues and conducted more quality assurance under the Graze NY program and found many gaps in technical knowhow and planning.

D. Stein moved to approve the Round 16 ranked list and the following resolution; seconded by J. Dickinson. Motion passed and carried.

Resolution 10-2

MOTION:

That subject to the availability of funds, the Committee shall award funding, pursuant to Round 16 of the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Grant Program, for projects 1-82 in order ranked and in the amounts recommended by the advisory members of the Committee until funds available for this purpose are exhausted or the scoring threshold is reached, consistent with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law, the RFP, and any other law applicable to funding of such projects. Consistent with the RFP, the Committee authorizes the Department of Agriculture and Markets to negotiate the terms of the contract with the project sponsors and to make minor adjustments to the project description and budget as necessary to achieve project goals, conform to applicable laws and regulations, and to serve the best interests of the State.

2009 Performance Measures Review

M. Latham reported some highlights of Part C 2009 Performance Measures (PM). Fifty-seven counties received Part C District aid, all with the exception of NYC who has voluntarily declined to participate. Most Districts received between \$14,000-\$15,000 with a total of \$799,055 awarded. Forty-two Districts qualified for PM1, 56 Districts qualified for both PM2 and PM3, and 57 qualified for PM4. Conservation Districts averaged 11-12 board meetings per District. Director training plans totaled 263 this year compared to 240 last year. All 58 District Directors attended the NACD meeting. Second highest attendance was regional and State RC & D meetings followed by the Division Director Meetings sponsored by NYACD. There was \$187,000 in 2009 budgets spent on District training and 246 District staff has training plans which is an increase from 223 last year. The number one training for District staff is held at the Water Quality Symposium.

Jefferson County SWCD Presentation

Brian Wohnsiedler, Executive Director of the Jefferson County SWCD, delivered a PowerPoint presentation in which he outlined the diversity of the District.

Highlights include:

- Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District was established May 7, 1956.
- Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District has a Board of Directors consisting of seven members and a nine member staff.
- The District has many programs including, stormwater, tree planting, timber sales, water quality, hydroseeding and installation of dry hydrants.
- Jefferson County manages 6,000 acres of county forest for the county as well as private land forestry providing woods walks and timber marking.
- Jefferson County employs a trail coordinator who maintains and manages extensive ATV trail systems and all trail-based recreation; snowmobiling, hiking, biking, snowshoeing, horseback riding, etc. Jefferson County recently received a \$107,000 grant from the New York State Department of Parks and Recreation to repair and construct new trails on county property. The trail coordinator works with the Jefferson County Planning

Department overseeing snowmobile grants. This is the 4th year for the trail coordinator. The trail coordinator works with area trail clubs on grooming and maintenance.

- The District has completed three urban forestry management plans and hopes to obtain Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding to continue the service. These plans evaluate trees lining urban streets conducting inventories based on health and condition analysis, maintenance and replacement plans.
- The District has a Mine Land Reclamation Permitting and Planning program for both municipalities and private individuals.
- The District publishes CAFO Conversations quarterly and Jefferson County Newsletter is also published quarterly.

Jefferson County SWCD Ecosystems-Based Management – Sandy Creeks

- Year 1 - \$250,000 to implement conservation buffers in the Sandy Creeks watershed. The Tug Hill Commission through working with the Department of State developed a watershed plan for the entire Sandy Creeks area. Jefferson County SWCD worked with the Department of Environmental Conservation on restoration work based on the plan. The county worked with five farms. The District was able to combine the \$250,000 with \$80,000 from CREP. They provided stream bank restoration first, and then established buffers. They used root propagation method (RPM) trees versus bare root. The RPM trees were initially more expensive, but grew three times faster, and they have a much greater survivability rate as well. They plan to assess the mortality rate over the next few years.
- Year 2 – EBM will receive \$172,000 to establish a cover crop program in Jefferson County. The County, under EBM, will supply farms in the Sandy Creeks watershed with a no till drill and supply seed. This program will begin this season. They plan to establish 450 acres of cover crop. The farmer will provide a 100 hp tractor to tow the drill through ground. The County hopes to establish a sustainable program. They purchased a \$50,000 drill which is 15 ft. wide. Additionally, EBM Year 2 will provide educational and training opportunities on cover cropping. In addition, the District will work with 12 CAFOs and implement petroleum bulk storage upgrades. Jefferson County has implemented about \$400,000 in EBM programming to date.

Flood Control

Peter Black gave a PowerPoint presentation which he submitted to the Association of American Geographers. He spoke about hydrology of the stream and how floods create/control the riverine environment. His message, “we don’t control floods, they control us”.

Strategic Planning/Annual Action Plan

B. Steinmuller distributed a draft of the State Fiscal Year 2010-2011 Annual Action Plan developed from the summary of 2009-2014 Strategic Planning goals, tasks, objectives, desired results and target strategies recently completed by the staff. D. Stein requested additional time to review the draft 2010-2011 Annual Action Plan. J. Dickinson agreed. The Plan will be discussed at next month’s meeting.

AEM Update

B. Steinmuller mentioned that the SWCC was fortunate to receive a small grant from the Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center to hire a summer intern. Wanjun Peng is a graduate student at SUNY-ESF and is working on AEM data management and GIS based reporting. She will present her work at the July meeting.

Jeff TenEyck briefed the Committee that funding has been received through an EBM grant to integrate EBM principles into AEM program at the farm level. He stated this would involve how soil, water, animals, plants, air, and humans (SWAPA+H) affect conservation planning and directly it will involve the updating of the Tier 2 worksheets. J. TenEyck discussed the AEM Tier 2 Worksheet updates. He distributed a draft timeline for updating these worksheets. Working with NRCS, air quality, climate change, soil health, energy, greenhouse gases will all be considered in the updates. The AEM Technical Committee kickoff meeting has been held. Decisions will occur on updating, level of detail, formatting, combining worksheets and adding new worksheets.

In addition to the redevelopment of the worksheets, the following items will be addressed:

- Training/develop skills of work staff at Water Quality Symposium & Conservation Skills Workshop
- Development of new tools
- Conduct specialized training
- Enhancing data management
- Field test worksheets
- Establish work groups for each worksheet that needs to be updated
- Listening sessions for District employees

J. TenEyck stated he planned to hold an AEM Stakeholders one-day meeting to discuss accomplishments over the last 16 years. M. Latham suggested training as materials are developed probably over a two-year period. In reinvigorating the AEM program, input from the Departments of Environmental Conservation, Health and State in updating these tools would be beneficial.

J. TenEyck stated training continues. Cropland Planning Workshop training is scheduled for June 17, 2010 in Cayuga. A repeat session will be held June 23. J. TenEyck stated 53 Districts are participating in AEM Year 6 which is the highest since AEM Year 1. Fourteen Districts were qualified to earn up to \$75,000 11 of which were eligible to receive the enhanced level. Of the \$2 million available in AEM Year 5, 75-80% was earned with 20% returned to the competitive grants program.

Partnership / Advisory Reports

M. Latham stated DEC released the Question & Answers relative to the SPEDES ECL Permit. EPA is reviewing nutrient management standards nationally. Jefferson County was successful in obtaining funding (\$600,000) under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The proposal submitted by the Department of Agriculture and Markets failed to obtain funding as the cost was too big and no specific farms were identified. Niagara County also received approximately \$120,000 in funding under GLRI for watershed education. He mentioned that the AEM Stakeholder Meeting will be held during the week of September 21, 2010.

L. Telega announced the new Dean of CALS is Kathryn Boor. He stated Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) will form six regional business service centers for administration services; finance, human resources and information technology. There are no locations named yet. Sixty percent of cooperative extensions will receive less money from county appropriations in the coming years.

H. Kelsey stated Wayne County received a grant with the Department of Environmental Conservation, Fish & Wildlife, for aquatic invasive species water chestnut control.

S. Lorraine stated the annual Conservation Skills Workshop will be held September 27 – October 1, 2010 in Cortland.

J. Littrell announced the annual meeting of NYACD will be held at the Radisson in Utica, New York, October 17-19, 2010. The **SWCC meeting** will be held on **Tuesday, October 19, 2010** in Utica. She mentioned the annual Northeast Regional NACD meeting will be held in Maine, August 8-11, 2010.

C. Frasier mentioned the Stormwater meeting to be held in Albany on Thursday, June 17, 2010.

L. Travis stated a questionnaire listing topics to cover at the 2010 Administrative/Management Conference and 2011 Water Quality Symposium has been emailed to Districts. He has asked the Districts to prioritize the topics they would like covered.

B. Hopkins indicated NRCS is in Round 2 of the Conservation Stewardship Program with the 2008 Farm Bill final rule in place. Sign up was extended two weeks and ends June 25, 2010. Programs are finally winding down since last fall. NRCS has GLRI funding for four programs. Signups are until July 1. NRCS has over \$20 million in projects to implement in fiscal year 2010. Discussions for 2012 Farm Bill are taking place. He stated there are a lot of congressional earmarks. They are considering if they are mission critical. NRCS recently signed two large agreements; one with SUNY Brockport for \$500,000 research grant Genesee River Watershed. The other agreement is a Graze NY agreement with 13 counties – 3 new counties, Ontario, Otsego and Chenango. This will be one agreement with Oneida County for \$360,000 covering 13 counties.

Next Meeting – Tuesday, July 20, 2010, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Albany, New York.

Meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

To access the audio-cast for this meeting please visit:
<http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/webcasting.html>