

STATE COMMITTEE MEETING
December 20, 2004
NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets, Albany NY 12235

PRESENT: D. Hill, B. Aman, J. Dickinson, G. Proios—Voting Members; N. Rudgers—Commissioner NYS DA&M; R. Kaplewicz—Executive Director; M. Latham—Assistant Director; R. Lewis, L. Miller, M. Moore, R. Rausch, B. Steinmuller—SWCC Staff; J. Rusnica, R. Zimmerman—NYS DA&M; J. DeVecchio—NRCS; G. Bell—NYACD; J. Tauzel—NYFB; G. Chartier—NYSDEC; P. Kaczmarczyk—NYSDOH; B. Schmelz—NYS DOS; P. Black—SUNY ESF.

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS:

D. Hill called the meeting to order at 10.15 a.m.

REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES:

B. Aman moved to approve the minutes of the November meeting; seconded by G. Proios. Motion passed; carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Letters & Memos

1. Letter to Ron Kaplewicz from Brayton P. Foster, Seneca SWCD regarding the drafting of a MOU between the State Committee and NYSNLA – Districts' Tree Programs. **Letter dated November 23, 2004.**
2. Fax from Randy A. Daniels, Secretary of State, Department of State, designating Bernard Schmelz as his representative to the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee. **Fax dated December 7, 2004.**
3. Letter to Ron Kaplewicz from Mark Gaston, Erie County SWCD regarding CEM draft guide. Website to house CEM materials: www.ecswcd.org/html/cem.html. **Letter dated November 23, 2004.**

Reports & News Letters

1. **Agricultural News:** October Egg Production up 12 Percent; October Prices Received Lower; October Milk Production Down 2 Percent; NY Grain Corn, Soybean Production Up, Potato Down; Floriculture Survey to be Conducted.
2. **Conservation Today** – Cattaraugus County SWCD, Conservation Today, Fall 2004 Issue.
3. **Partners Magazine**, Sept./Oct. 2004, Vol. 22, No. 5.
4. **CFA News**, The Newsletter of the Catskill Forest Association, Inc., Volume 22, Number 4, Fall 2004.
5. **New York Poultry Association, October 2004.** RE: Changes in their Board and Officers.
6. **NYS Integrated Pest Management Program**, The year in review, 2003-2004. Cornell Cooperative Extension.
7. **National Association of Conservation Districts – Conservation Briefs**, November 19, 2004.
8. **Bay Journal Newspaper** – Vol. 14, No. 8, November 2004.
9. **MMWR (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report)** – October 15, October 22, and November 19, 2004 issues.
10. **NYS Conservation District Employees' Association Executive Board Meeting** – Minutes of October 26, 2004 meeting.
11. **NRCS** – Minutes of the State Technical Committee Meeting of Nov. 9, 2004.
12. **ERS Research Brief, Markets and Trade, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture**, October 2004.
13. **ERS Research Brief, Markets and Trade, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture**, November 2004.
14. **FYI** – NYACD, October 2004.
15. **Coastlines, Fall '04.** A Publication of New York Sea Grant, Vol. 33, No. 3.
16. **CDEA News** – October and November, 2004.
17. **Inside Pride** – The Newsletter of the Pride of New York Program. Winter 2004.
18. **News & Views** – Newsletter published by the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, Oct/Nov/Dec, 2004.
19. **Susquehanna River Basin Commission** – Meeting on December 15, 2004. To consider release of proposed revisions to project review fee schedule for a 60-day public comment period.

Conferences & Seminars

1. **Roadway Issues in Urban Development in New York**-One day seminar, February 11, 2005, Desmond Hotel, Albany, NY. Lorman Education Services: 888-678-5565 to register or for general questions; or www.lorman.com

Comments

- Commissioner Rudgers welcomed Committee members to the Department and gave an open invitation for groups to utilize the meeting space in the new Ag and Markets building.

Commissioner Rudgers also announced that he has been elected President of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) at the organization's annual meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Commissioner went on to describe the interesting and unique opportunities this position provides not only to him, but to the entire agricultural industry in New York State to see how agricultural policy is developed around the nation. The Commissioner went on to say that there is a struggle to get the attention of landowners and to connect to the people who are really on the ground in the industry. He commended the voluntary, incentive based approach developed in the AEM program, and said that the Committee has discovered an effective way to reach out to the agricultural community. The Commissioner noted that he takes every opportunity to promote this approach as an effective model that the rest of the country should be looking to for guidance.

The Commissioner also remarked that preliminary discussions have already begun for the next Farm Bill, which will be up for renewal in 2007. As policy begins to develop for this next Farm Bill, it is important for the agricultural industry to work on strengthening its energy message, to strengthen and redefine the economic value of agriculture in the overall economy, and to strengthen the message that farmers really are stewards of the land.

The Commissioner urged the Committee to keep up the good work by continuing to provide excellent examples. Discussion ensued regarding the economic importance of the agricultural industry on the local, state, national, and international levels. In particular, discussion focused on the impact that the emerging agricultural industry in China may have on US agriculture.

- R. Kaplewicz took the opportunity to welcome B. Schmelz to the Committee. B. Schmelz will be representing the New York State Department of State (DOS) Secretary of State Randy Daniels on the Committee. B. Schmelz commented that he is looking forward to his tenure with the State Committee and sees many opportunities for the State Committee and DOS to be key partners in delivering environmental programs for the citizens of New York State.

R. Kaplewicz introduced R. Rausch who has joined the staff as an Associate Environmental Analyst. R. Kaplewicz thanked the Department of Ag & Markets for their support by providing staff resources for the soil and water conservation program.

- G. Proios welcomed G. Bell to the State Committee. G. Bell is now serving as Executive Director for NYACD. G. Proios commented that NYACD has a lot of work to be done, and G. Bell will have a lot on his agenda in the coming months.

- R. Kaplewicz read the letter from the Seneca County SWCD regarding the MOU with the New York State Nursery and Landscape Association (NYSNLA). He has spoken with several Districts regarding this issue and found that there is a general lack of understanding of what the Committee is trying to do. The Committee is looking to coordinate activities and collaborate with the NYSNLA and is not trying to limit District tree programs. Rather, the Committee is trying to gain momentum for Districts in this area while recognizing the role of native species and understanding the consequences of invasive species.

The Committee will work through its members, especially NYCDEA and NYACD, in order to provide the opportunity for Districts to comment on the content of the draft MOU.

- R. Kaplewicz read a letter from the Erie County SWCD transmitting a draft guide to Community Environmental Management (CEM). Erie County has also developed a website with downloadable materials, including the draft guide.

G. Chartier suggested that the Committee make an effort to promote these materials by making Districts aware that they are now available.

AEM REPORT:

R. Lewis reported on the success of the November AEM Strategic Planning Training. Committee members each received a copy of the AEM training manual and R. Lewis briefly went through its contents. Committee members also received a summary report of the feedback received from the training participants. The feedback indicates that the training was well received, and many other types and forms of continued training were requested by participants. R. Lewis also reported that J. Ten Eyck is currently responding to questions and comments received from the training and is working to help clarify key points that came out in the training. He also noted that, largely due to the feedback received from participants, the deadline to submit the County AEM Strategic Plans has been extended to March 1, 2005.

It was also reported that the AEM Tier 2 worksheets are currently being reviewed and updated and are unavailable on the AEM website at this time. Some of the worksheets are being updated in order to better coordinate information with the NRCS, Conservation Security Program. A priority order for the worksheet updates has been identified, and worksheets will be posted back on the website as they are finished.

The Technical Advisory Committee will now be focusing on the Round XII Ag. NPS Grant Program RFP and will be making recommendations so that AEM and the Ag. NPS Grant program are more in line with one another.

R. Lewis reminded the Committee that they have committed only 1 year of funding to the non-competitive AEM program. However, counties are being encouraged to develop 5 year strategic plans, and the Committee may wish to think about making another commitment to the AEM Base Funding once the County Strategic Plans have been reviewed.

R. Zimmerman asked, from the training feedback, what the most poignant comment or concern was. R. Lewis replied that many identified the fact that Technical Service Providers (TSPs) were not included in the training activities. R. Kaplewicz found it noteworthy that an entire page of future training was suggested by the participants, and suggested that the Committee consider more regular training sessions to keep Districts, partners, and technical service providers up to date with information.

R. Zimmerman also asked about the comments received from Cornell Cooperative Extension participants indicating that if only SWCDs receive funding, there is no incentive for outside agencies to participate. R. Kaplewicz replied that he thought CCE had legitimate concerns and the Committee should be exploring other possible ways to distribute funding for certain activities and also encourage Districts to pass funding to partner agencies through the Ag. NPS Grants and Mini-Grants programs where appropriate.

REVIEW OF STATE COMMITTEE ANNUAL WORK PLAN:

Status of 2004-2005 Work Plan:

R. Kaplewicz distributed copies of the NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee Annual Work Plan to members. The Work Plan tries to identify those areas where the Committee and staff have completed or are in the process of accomplishing goals set forth by the Committee for 2004. R. Kaplewicz noted that there are few areas that did not see any progress, and that many have made significant progress. R. Kaplewicz pointed out that the Committee is engaged in a number of program areas but still the Committee and Staff are able to make consistent and measurable headway in critical program areas, largely due to cooperation and collaboration of key partners such as NRCS, NYFB and DEC just to name a few.

Actions for Next Year's Plan:

R. Kaplewicz asked the Committee for guidance on administrative issues and to identify particular needs that should be incorporated into the annual plan for 2005. Suggestions are as follows:

- AEM Base Funding principles and needs identified from the training should be addressed.
- R. Rausch has begun work on energy issues that need to be integrated into the work plan.
- Ag NPS grant administration; making sure work is being completed on the farms in a timely manner.
- CSP's integration with AEM.
- In regard to the Commissioner's proposal; find new ways to look at farmland use and preservation...the "CIG" proposal
- Integrate planning for agriculture into the scope of work.

- Participate in the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) meeting in September 2005.
- Conduct a 2005 SWCC Principles tour. R. Kaplewicz remarked that there might be a unique opportunity to meld a Principles tour together with the NASDA meeting in Cooperstown.
- Participate in the national Soil & Water Conservation Society annual meeting in Rochester, NY; July 30 – August 4, 2005.
- Getting digitized soil maps should be a significant issue so that NYS watersheds are eligible for CSP. R. Kaplewicz noted that the NRCS State Soil Scientist will be making a presentation to the Committee in January or February regarding digitized soils progress in NY.
- Prepare a listing of local, state, and federal funding sources for producers, which would indicate the significant differences in programs. It was noted that this project could build off of the “New York Agricultural Landowner Guide,” published by American Farmland Trust, and/or the funding matrix created by the Chesapeake Bay Program. G. Chartier pointed out that DEC does have a guide to nonpoint source programs through DEC as well. R. Kaplewicz also suggested that this could be tied into the Tier 2 summary report sent to producers.
- Conduct a study on CAFO compliance. The Committee should be able to have some sort of data to substantiate all the work being done.
- Evaluate the costs of implementation. What were the real versus the projected costs of a project and be able to evaluate what went wrong and why more realistic estimates were not achieved and make this information available to Districts when they are completing project proposals.
- Evaluate whether the goals of the work plan are driven by the mission statement and make sure that funding is being used to achieve the mission.
- Add Planning for Agriculture as another dimension to the mission statement.
- Bring the website up to date and make it so that it is easily updated in the future. Utilize the technologies available to make the website a critical tool for District use. Provide training calendars through the website.
- Non-point abatement GIS component should be under the administrative portion of the work plan. There are many different ways to utilize GIS instead of just using it for the Nonpoint Source program.
- Two key potential partners that the Committee should cultivate a relationship with are the Association of Counties and the Association of Towns. R. Zimmerman suggested that they reach out to these associations and ask for representation/participation at a State Committee Meeting. B. Schmelz also suggested reaching out to the Planning Association.
- Become more involved in the Quality Communities initiative.
- Attend trainings dealing with land use issues.
- Take into consideration comprehensive planning in communities. Develop and utilize educational materials focused specifically on open space and agriculture in master plan/comprehensive plan development.
- Look beyond small zoning authorities in terms of CEM and look beyond municipal lines and see communities on a regional level.
- Create a general awareness regarding air quality issues.

FARM VIABILITY INSTITUTE:

R. Zimmerman introduced the concept behind the Farm Viability Institute. The Institute is a new initiative to deliver business assistance to farm enterprises in New York to help increase the value of farm products. The Institute is a collaboration among New York’s academic and farming communities and state agricultural agencies. Dr. Dave Smith has been serving as interim Director, and the Institute receives program direction and guidance from a board of directors, which includes Robert Smith, Chair of the New York Council of Agricultural Organizations; John Lincoln, President of the New York Farm Bureau; Larry Eckhardt, President of the New York State Vegetable Growers Association; Mark Rupprecht, Executive Director of the New York State Nursery and Landscape Association; Jim Bittner, President of the New York State Horticultural Society; David Wood, Chair of the New York Milk Marketing Advisory Council; and Nathan L. Rudgers, New York State Agriculture Commissioner.

Currently, the Department of Agriculture and Markets and CCE will provide logistic and staffing support to the Farm Viability Institute during its start-up phase. The Institute will seek to supplement the USDA grant with funds from other sources in order to expand its program of services to farm sector entrepreneurs. In its inaugural year, the Institute's board has been able to establish bylaws, and obtain 501C-3 status from the federal government. Other initial activities include formalizing a strategic vision, developing processes for interaction with partners and stakeholders, solidifying funding streams, and identifying a permanent director.

R. Zimmerman said that the Commissioner strongly supports this initiative both financially and legislatively. The Institute may be a clearinghouse of new opportunity for the interests of the State Committee as well. Updated information on the activities of the Institute will be provided to the Committee in a few months.

A brief discussion ensued regarding activities and future funding sources for the Institute.

FOLLOW-UP TO MEETING AT CORNELL:

R. Kaplewicz shared with the Committee that the representatives from Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension thought that the November meeting went very well and they appreciated the opportunity to meet with the Committee. A follow up meeting is being planned for February or March to address issues that came up during the meeting. G. Proios will serve as State Committee representative at these follow up meetings. R. Kaplewicz pointed out that changes have already been made on the CALS website to identify the State Committee as a partner agency. The partnership is also working to identify grant opportunities that may provide support to fill the vacancy left by P. Wright in the methane digestion and manure management program. Meetings like the one held with Cornell and CCE provide an opportunity to look creatively at the partnerships the Committee has in the State.

G. Chartier suggested that the Committee engage the State University of New York School of Environmental Science and Forestry in this type of outreach as well. The Committee agreed and R. Kaplewicz and P. Black will work to schedule a meeting at SUNY ESF this coming spring/summer.

AG NONPOINT SOURCE ABATEMENT AND CONTROL PROGRAM:

Status of Rounds I-X:

Of 354 projects, 134 are active, 21 are pending, and 199 are complete.

Round XI:

A total of 51 proposals were received by October 25th, 2004. Out of those 51, three were deemed ineligible because they were determined to be incomplete. Two proposals did not attach the most recent Priority Waterbodies List (PWL) segment sheets and one proposal did not attach the most recent PWL segment sheets and did not include all of the topographic maps of each project site. Out of the eligible proposals a total of \$8,193,156.43 of state funds was requested for a total project cost of \$13,963,328.15. The final ranked list will be made available at the meeting

Resolution 04-1 – That subject to the availability of funds, the Committee shall award funding for projects 1-48 in order ranked and in the amounts recommended by the advisory members of the Committee, 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.

G. Proios moved to accept Resolution 04-1 as stated above; seconded by J. Dickinson. Motion passed; carried. (It should be noted that R. Aman recused himself for this discussion and vote)

Discussion ensued regarding the amount of EPF monies the department will receive for the Ag NPS Grant Program. The Committee was reminded that the \$600,000, which has been committed to the AEM Base funding component on a non-competitive basis, will be deducted from the EPF funding received. Discussions will begin with the NYSDEC on the split of these monies.

Amendments for State Committee Approval:

1. Yates SWCD – Central Lowlands Till Plain CNMP Grant – Round X – 58-2
Request: change of landowners resulting in a loss of 3
Reason: many of the farms agreed to the concept of developing a CNMP, but when they were asked to sign a letter of commitment many decided to withdraw.
Previous Amendments: None
Note: Tom Brace, Region 1 Water Quality Specialist recommends approval
R. Aman moved to approve this amendment; seconded by G. Proios. Motion passed; carried.

2. Orleans SWCD – Johnson Creek Watershed Protection: Phase II – Round VII – C700646
Request: time extension from 3/31/04 to 3/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete project due to illness, financial constraints, and extremely poor weather conditions
Previous Amendments: 2 time extensions
Note: Tom Brace, Region 1 Water Quality Specialist recommends approval.
R. Aman moved to approve this time extension; seconded by J. Dickinson. Motion passed; carried.

3. Wyoming SWCD – Buffalo River Agricultural BMP Implementation Project – Round VII – C700660
Request: time extension from 2/28/05 to 2/28/06
Reason: additional time needed to complete project due to continuing changes in project Participants from both Erie and Wyoming Counties
Previous Amendments: 2 time extensions, 2 changes to scope, 1 change of budget
Note: Tom Brace, Region 1 Water Quality Specialist recommends approval.
G. Proios moved to approve this time extension; seconded by R. Aman. Motion passed; carried.

4. Niagara SWCD – Twelvemile Creek Agricultural Assessment and Pollution Abatement Project – Round VI – C700614
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 2/10/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete deliverables due to various details
Previous Amendments: 2 time extensions
Note: Tom Brace, Region 1 Water Quality Specialist recommends approval.
R. Aman moved to approve this time extension; seconded by J. Dickinson. Motion passed; carried.

5. Washington SWCD – Halfway Creek AEM Implementation – Round VII – C700056
Request 1: time extension from 12/30/04 to 12/31/05
Reason 1: additional time needed to complete CNMPs and a needed BMP change on one farm
Request 2: change of BMP
Reason 2: the CNMP stated that a Milk Center Waste Treatment and Disposal System is needed
BMP Change Approved by S. Lanthier 12/6/04
Previous Amendment: 1 time extension
Note: S. Lanthier supports the time extension request as it should provide adequate time to complete CNMPs and BMPs
G. Proios moved to approve the time extension; seconded by R. Aman. Motion passed; carried.

Staff Approved Amendments:

1. Broome SWCD – Eastern Broome and Southern Chenango CNMP Project – Round VIII – C700671
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete project due to private contractor's reluctance to work with non-CAFO farms
Approved by J. Schumacher 11/20/04

2. Steuben SWCD – Chemung River Basin Grazing Project – Phase 2 – Round VIII – C700695
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05

Reason: additional time needed to complete project due to abnormally wet weather conditions and other unforeseen circumstances

Approved by T. Brace/B. Steinmuller 11/29/04

3. Seneca SWCD – Seneca Lake W.S. Prescribed Grazing – Round VIII – C700694
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete project due to abnormally wet weather conditions and other unforeseen circumstances
Approved by T. Brace/B. Steinmuller 11/29/04
4. Allegany SWCD – Rushford Lake Ag NPS Abatement Project – Round IX – C700701
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete construction due to delays in contract development, And inclement weather conditions
Approved by T. Brace/B. Steinmuller 11/29/04
5. Cayuga SWCD – Patterson Farms., Anaerobic Digestion System – Round VIII – C700674
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete project due to time spent on design
Approved by L. Travis 11/22/04
6. Cayuga SWCD – Cayuga/Seneca Counties BMP Implementation Cayuga Lake Watershed – Round VIII – C700058
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete project due to financial constraints
Approved by L. Travis 11/22/04
7. Madison SWCD – Oneida Lake Watershed Grazing Initiative Grant – Round IX – C700713
Request: change of landowners
Reason: original landowner has voluntarily withdrew from the project
Approved by L. Travis 11/15/04
8. Chenango SWCD – Otselic River Corridor Reach No.1 Implementation Project – Round X – C700746
Request: change of BMPs from a manure storage system to a silage leachate system
Reason: further assessment identified that the current silage management system presented a greater threat to water quality than the manure management system
Approved by J. Schumacher 12/7/04
9. Washington SWCD – Halfway Creek Nutrient Management Implementation – Round VIII – C700696
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete planning projects
Approved by S. Lanthier 12/6/04
10. Saratoga SWCD – Bacon Hill Agricultural Project Phase I – Round VIII – C700692
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete designs and construction activities
Approved by S. Lanthier 12/13/04
11. Sullivan SWCD – Callicoon Creek Watershed Ag. Implementation Program – Round IX – C700729
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete construction due to inclement weather conditions
Approved by J. Schumacher 12/17/04
12. St. Lawrence SWCD – St. Regis River Implementation – Round IX – C700724
Request 1: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason 1: additional time needed to complete BMPs on new farm
Request 2: change of landowner
Reason 2: original landowner sold operation to new landowner

Both requests approved by S. Lanthier 12/14/04

13. St. Lawrence SWCD – AEM for the Oswegatchie River – Round IX – C700723
Request: time extension from 2/28/05 to 2/28/06
Reason: additional time needed to complete planning projects due to staff resource changes
Approved by S. Lanthier 12/14/04
14. Onondaga SWCD – Development and Implementation of WFP in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed – Phase V – C700685
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete planning projects
Approved by L. Travis 12/13/04
15. Herkimer SWCD – North Winfield Creek and Upper Unadilla River Ag. Planning Project – Round VIII – C700679
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete planning projects
Approved by L. Travis 12/13/04
16. Washington SWCD – Wood Creek AEM & Nutrient Management Implementation – Round VIII – C700697
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete CNMPs
Approved by S. Lanthier 12/6/04
17. Broome SWCD – Susquehanna River Corridor Agricultural Implementation Project Phase II – C700670
Request: time extension from 12/31/04 to 12/31/05
Reason: additional time needed to complete construction projects
Approved by J. Schumacher 12/14/04

STORMWATER UPDATE:

Guidance Document to Districts regarding Stormwater Inspections:

Following up on the request of the Committee, L. Miller presented a draft guidance document addressing primary issues regarding Districts performing construction site inspections and developing Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans for the private sector. J. Rusnica provided legal assistance to help the Committee address the questions. The following key points were noted:

- Districts may legally perform these services under Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law and in accordance with the definition of “qualified” staff by the NYS DEC.
- The guidance includes a recommendation that SWCD staff performing these services be a Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC). L. Miller noted that 30% of CPESCs across the State are District employees.
- The document does not include references to a Certified Professional in Stormwater Quality (CPSWQ) because these individuals have not yet been recognized in the NYSDEC permit information.

J. Rusnica explained that whether SWCDs would be entitled to State defense and indemnification for private sector inspections and plan development is a question to be answered by the Attorney General’s (AG) Office since the AG administers this provision of the Public Officers Law.

Discussion ensued and it was decided that further review was needed by DEC before the guidance document is sent out to Districts.

Motion by G. Proios, second by J. Dickinson to table this discussion until the next meeting.

Stormwater Specialists Update

L. Miller reported that discussions have been taking place to fill the Region 3 Stormwater Specialist position. The new contract will be run through the Schenectady County SWCD office. The Region 3 office has restructured their existing staff and now feels that they are better prepared to handle

the construction permit workload. They are requesting that the position description be changed to focus primarily on the MS4 permit and are hoping to hire for the position by March 1, 2005.

OTHER REPORTS:

- EFARM – The application package for the EFARM program is being finalized by Committee Staff and the Environmental Facilities Corp (EFC), and is scheduled to roll out in early January.

R. Zimmerman reported that he has met with T. Kelly from EFC and they are looking at other ways in which the Department, EFC, and the State Committee can collaborate further to better serve the agricultural industry of New York State. Renewable energy and environmental challenges on the farm are high on the list for opportunity. They are also looking at a beginner farmer program that would provide low interest loans through private banks to individuals looking to start an agricultural enterprise. A taskforce has been established to collaborate and identify opportunities. R. Zimmerman has asked B. Aman and State Committee Staff members to be a part of this taskforce.

- P. Black distributed a newsletter for the New York State Section of the American Water Resources Association.

- B. Steinmuller informed the Committee of the 2005 Envirothon raffle. Tickets are on sale now for the cash prize raffle, which helps support the State Envirothon competition.

- R. Zimmerman reported on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Coalition meeting he attended along with J. Curatolo and Ron Entringer in Beltsville, Maryland. R. Zimmerman expressed that it was refreshing to see that leaders in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed are looking at manure management as a resource rather than just a waste product. They are looking at ways to make manure a renewable resource that will provide returns for the farms in the watershed. They are also working on precision feeding as a management tool in a voluntary incentive based approach. He distributed the *Interpretation Document – Managing Animal Manure and Poultry Litter in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed* and asked that the Committee review it and give any feedback and recommendations to him. This directive will be provided to the Governors in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed for their approval. Further discussion will be held at a future Committee meeting.

- B. Schmelz informed the Committee that Lt. Governor Donahue will be announcing the next round of Quality Communities grant funding soon.

- G. Chartier reported that the most recent version of D. Lake's Stormwater Training Schedule has been posted.

G. Chartier also told the Committee that the DEC's complementary program to the Ag. NPS Grant Program has not yet been released. It is, pending executive approval, on target to be released soon after January 1, 2005 with applications due back to DEC around March 31, 2005.

G. Chartier also noted that a significant cut has been made in the federal budget for EPA funding. New York will receive an approximate 16.3% reduction in funding. It was noted that certain key players in Washington are not convinced of the usefulness of 319 funding and feels that it overlaps and duplicates federal Farm Bill funding. G. Chartier suggested that the Committee work to show Congressional representatives the benefit that has been made through 319 funding in New York and show that there is no duplication in programs. Discussion ensued about the Committees ability to quantify the water quality improvements made possible by 319 funding. R. Kaplewicz noted that this cut has been looming for more than a year and that Soil and Water Conservation Districts nationally have been trying to work with federal decision-makers on the importance of 319 funding. He asked that Farm Bureau look into the funding cuts. R. Zimmerman suggested that the Committee work to cultivate relationships with Congressional delegates that can become champions for 319 funding. R. Lewis suggested that NYACD be prepared to participate in the Washington legislative visits and have a prepared document illustrating how 319 funding complements the work of AEM, the State Committee and nonpoint programs.

- J. DelVecchio notified the Committee that NRCS has been instructed to limit all discretionary spending and that effective immediately there is an agency wide hiring freeze. However, this will not effect the new AEM engineer position.

NRCS is also looking at a spring 2005 sign up period for the Conservation Security Program (CSP). They are currently looking for help in disseminating information through partners to producers about CSP. NRCS has hired a public affairs specialist working on CSP outreach activities. Even though there are only 5 watersheds in NY this year it will be important to get the message out across the State so that producers will know it is coming and have time to prepare for their own participation.

The 2005 Request for Proposals for the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) has been released. Proposals are due to the NRCS State Conservationist by April 5, 2005.

Congratulations to J. DelVecchio for completing the Senior Executive Training Program.

- G. Proios noted the passing of N.G. Kaul, L. Grady Moore and David J. Allee in 2004. They were strong partners and supporters of the Committee on the state and federal levels. The Committee expresses sincere condolences to their families and respective agencies for their losses.

- L. Miller reported that the AEM horse farm worksheets will officially be rolled out at the March 12 & 13, Hudson Valley Equi-fest.

- R. Kaplewicz distributed the November 2004 CREP Summary. There are currently 1948 acres enrolled.

R. Kaplewicz also distributed a copy of the 2005 State Committee Calendar and asked Committee members to contact C. Johnson at the State Office with any additions or changes to the calendar.

R. Kaplewicz asked G. Chartier about the status of the letter from Chemung County regarding stream issues that is being reviewed by DEC's legal department and asked to have some acknowledgement from DEC that they have received the letter. G. Chartier said that he will follow up on this issue.

R. Kaplewicz also congratulated J. Ten Eyck for receiving the Special Achievement Award given by the Soil & Water Conservation Society.

R. Kaplewicz also informed the Committee that State Committee Staff is currently in the process of completing the annual report to Districts. He shared the Department's 2003 Annual Report. The Report makes reference to the signing of the CREP agreement, and he noted that the SWCC received recognition by the Governor.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

The next meeting date has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 1, 2005 in the Utica area.