

DRAFT

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

STATE COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 17, 2011
Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation District
7413 County House Road
Auburn, NY 13021

Present: D. Stein, D. Brass, C. Colby, Voting Members; M. Latham, Director; J. Ten Eyck, C. Frasier, SWCC Staff; D. Fisher, Onondaga SWCD; C. Nellis, Montgomery SWCD; D. Howard, St. Lawrence Co. SWCD; S. Lorraine, Madison Co. SWCD & NYS CDEA; D. Tuxill, NYS DEC; J. Littrell, NYACD; V. Green, NYS FSA.

Call to Order: D. Stein Vice-Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:38 am.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Chuck Colby moved to approve the January minutes as presented; seconded by David Brass. Motion passed; carried.

Correspondence:

M. Latham paraphrased a letter from Steve Mahoney, Clinton County SWCD. The letter expressed support for continuing Communication Skills Workshops for farmers and Conservation Districts, and urged the Committee to continue funding these opportunities. M. Latham reported that the workshops haven't had designated funding per se for the past three years, but they have managed to continue through partnerships. The schedules are very limited for this training now and are expected to be further reduced. He also explained that the next phase of this activity is more or less one of support for District Communications and that Barb, as time allows, continues to advance many important communication pieces for Districts. The bottom line is that the funding for aggressive communication skills workshops is gone.

A Letter was also received thanking Barb Silvestri and the Committee for their participation in the 2011 New York Farm Bureau "Taste of New York" Legislative Reception.

Agricultural NPS Abatement & Control Grant Program
March 17, 2011 State Committee Meeting

STATUS OF ROUNDS 1-16

Of 547 contracts, 157 are active, 17 are pending (16 Round 16 projects, 1 Round 15 project) and 354 are complete. 19 contracts have been cancelled during the life of the program. Since January 2010 to date, 51 projects have closed out. An additional 5 projects have been completed since the February SWCC meeting.

There is no change in status regarding the pending award of Round 17 Agricultural NPS Abatement and Control Grants.

AEM Base Program Payment Policy Alternatives

J. Ten Eyck presented a new procedure which outlined conditions for a “Conservation District to Maintain Enhanced AEM Base Status following the resignation of a CNMP planner.” A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the policy specifics including: the capacity of our existing program; concerns over staff retention; CDEA supporting resolution; the ambitious nature of the policy; timeframes; and potential need to review the success of the policy in the future.

David Brass moved to approve Alternative AEM Base Program as presented; seconded by Chuck Colby. Motion passed; carried.

Annual Plans of Work

M. Latham announced the following Annual Plans of Work for approval: Annual Plans of Work are to be approved by AEA’s prior to April 1, 2011.

Albany	Allegany	Cattaraugus	Cayuga	Chemung	Clinton
Cortland	Delaware	Dutchess	Erie	Essex	Franklin
Greene	Herkimer	Jefferson	Livingston	Madison	Montgomery
Nassau	Orleans	Oswego	Putnam	Rensselaer	St. Lawrence
Saratoga	Schoharie	Steuben	Suffolk	Ulster	Warren
Yates					

David Brass moved to approve the Annual Plans of Work; seconded by Chuck Colby. Motion passed; carried.

Environmental Protection Fund and Budget

M. Latham reported that both the Senate and Assembly have passed budget bills. The EPF regarding District programming is solid and unchanged. Several Aid to Localities line items including the IPM and Pro-Dairy program were restored in both bills. Conference Committees are being scheduled and the process looks to be headed in the direction of an on-time budget. The first leader’s meeting to negotiate a final budget is scheduled for today.

District Aid payments are scheduled to be released the week of March 21st. M. Latham praised the efforts of staff and the Districts working under tight deadlines. He also reported that PM 1 of the Performance Measures were still under prescribed and will be a topic of discussion for this summer.

Preliminary work continues on MOU development with DEC, DOT and USDA NRCS. The DEC agreement would advance efforts in non-point source pollution abatement, the DOT agreement would protect and enhance the state soil and water resources on and off of highway right-of-ways, and the USDA NRCS agreement would advance engineering assistance and job approval authority options.

Rich Lewis has announced his retirement plans. His last official work date will be March 31, 2011. Les Travis has also announced that he will be retiring in July. The replacement of Committee Staff remains a priority for the Department of Agriculture and Markets. DOB is currently holding most waivers.

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Departmental Bill # 15 has been introduced to the Legislature and is awaiting a sponsor. The bill is an Omnibus type, addressing multiple aspects of the law pertinent to SWCDL. This bill would streamline and enhance the operations of the county agricultural and farmland protection boards and soil and water conservation districts. Specifically, the bill would: (1) allow retired farmers to be members of a county agricultural and farmland protection board (AFPB); (2) authorize the chairperson of a county soil and water conservation district (SWCD) to designate an employee of the district to serve on a county AFPB in lieu of the chairperson; (3) authorize any county SWCD to hold conservation easements; (4) authorize the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets (Commissioner) and the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee (Committee) to set aside monies appropriated for Nonpoint Source Projects for projects that exhibit special regional or statewide significance; and (5) clarify the match requirements for the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.

Manager meetings will be held the first week in April 4-7, 2011. Year 7 AEM Base will be discussed in detail.

Partnership and Advisory Reports – All

V. Green reported that there is an open sign-up for CRP through April 15, 2011. Presently a lot of CRP lands are coming off of contract. It was also reported that based on additional conversation with FSA CREP program staff, a proposal outlining potential expansion of the CREP program to the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed will need to be drafted. Upon reviewing the proposal, FSA will have a more definitive stance as to whether or not a new environmental impact statement will need to be generated. Presently the feeling is that a new EIS will need to happen.

David Brass moved to prepare the draft proposal for submittal to FSA regarding expansion of CREP to all watersheds in the Chesapeake; seconded by Chuck Colby. Motion passed; carried.

J. Littrell reported that 30 Conservation Districts participated in February's Legislative Conference. NYACD is also working closely with the "Friends of the EPF" group in support of continued and increased appropriations for environmental work. In addition, the Association has supplied testimony at the DEC and AGMKT Joint budget hearing. A lot of emphasis this year has been placed on educating the legislature about Districts and their important roles. Presently the Association is supporting 3 pieces of legislation specific to Conservation Districts. The legislation has received support from the NY State Association of Counties (NYSAC). NYACD has also provided comment on the USDA NRCS Draft 590 standard.

NYACD will also be hosting the 2012 Northeast NACD Meeting. A committee to develop the program will be developed shortly.

Next Meeting – *Tuesday*, April 19, 2011 at the Department of Agriculture and Markets, Albany.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 PM.

Due to an equipment failure the audio-cast for this meeting is not available.