

APPROVED

New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235 -- Telephone (518) 457-3738
State Committee Meeting
10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY
581 State Fair Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13209

September 19, 2017

Meeting at a Glance:

- Approval of CRF Round 3 RFP to be released Fall 2017.
- Manure Storage and Transfer Program RFP released along with FAQ re: Frequently Asked Questions About Manure Storages.
- AEM Base Funding for Year 14 approved at \$3.1 million.

Present:

State Committee Voting Members: D. Stein, State Committee Chair (Syracuse); D. Brass (Syracuse), R. Montesi (Albany), D. Hickling (Albany).

Albany location: B. Steinmuller, Assistant Director; B. Bzduch, J. Clifford, S. Fickbohm, T. Clark, R. Bush Paul Kaczmarczyk, DOH, J. Littrell, Kate Ziehm, Washington Co SWCD, David Howard, National Young Farmers Coalition.

Syracuse location: P.J. Emerick, G. Albrecht, V. DiGiacomo, SWCC; G. Kist, USDA-NRCS; Steve Lorraine, representing CDEA. Beth Claypool, CCE, Lindsey Gerstenslager, Wayne SWCD

Call to Order

D. Stein called the meeting to order.

Review/Approval of Minutes

Ron Montessi made a motion to approve the July 18, 2017 minutes; seconded by Dave Brass. Motion passed; carried.

SWCC Staffing: Brian Steinmuller

Steinmuller reported that the waiver to backfill the Climate Resilient Farming Program Manager position is still pending. Working toward getting a new item number. A waiver to backfill Lauren Lyons-Swift's position has been approved.

Request to backfill Bob's AEA position was denied by DOB. Dale emphasized need to prioritize getting the AEA field positions filled.

Correspondence: Brian Steinmuller

The usual mailings and periodicals were made available at the Albany location.

Steinmuller reviewed a request from Sullivan SWCD for Part C funding for vehicle purchase to tow the District's hydroseeder and no-till drill. **A motion was made by D. Brass, seconded by D. Hickling, to approve the request. Motion passed; carried.**

SWCD/AEM Outreach Efforts: Judy Littrell

Judy reported on outreach activities. She reported on a successful AEM Outreach Committee meeting that included District Technicians, Managers and State Committee Staff. Several ideas and projects were discussed, to meet the needs of Districts, and to communicate with District partners. Judy reported that she had updated the current website, thus began discussion on revamping the entire site so that it has a modern look and is user friendly for both Districts and nonfarm public. Judy also reported that she has worked with the staff from the NY Grown and Certified program, to increase their awareness of Districts and the AEM program.

Climate Resilient Farming: Brian Steinmuller

At this time, Dale Stein recused himself from discussion along with Lindsey Gerstenslager.

Brian reported on the August TAC meeting in regards to the RFP, with few major changes to Round 3 being proposed. One recommendation made by the TAC was to make eligible manure separation eligible for cost-share as long as it is needed as a part of a manure storage cover and methane capture system. Track systems and allocations were highlighted, along with updates to recommended reimbursement rates, and procedural items in RFP.

Steinmuller noted that goal is to release the RFP in October 2017 and present ranked list for State Committee in March 2018.

D. Hickling moved to approve the Round 3 RFP and Proposal Rating Sheet as presented; seconded R. Montesi. The motion passed; carried.

Stein and Gerstenslager returned to meeting.

AEM Base Funding: Greg Albrecht. Greg discussed highlights of AEM Base Year 12 (*please see full report below*). 50 SWCDs participating in AEM Base 12. 35 participate were reimbursed at the \$50,000 level. 14 Districts have AEM planners on staff and were reimbursed at the \$85,000 level. Total reimbursement was \$2.39 million, which is the highest amount reimbursed.

- Albrecht noted that progress through the AEM Tiers continued to advance in Year 12, with increases relative to the prior year in Tier 1 Inventories (up 8%), Tier 3 Planning (up 32%), and Tier 5B Plan Updates/BMP System Evaluations (up 27%). These increases in more complex and higher level Tier work indicates that Districts continue to work with farms to advance through the Tiers to plan, implement, and evaluate BMP systems in a prioritized manner.
- Evaluation of conservation plans and existing BMP systems (Tier 5B) continues to be a strong and growing element of District AEM Tier work. This activity helps protect taxpayer investment in conservation; helps the farmer maintain, adjust, revise, and enhance conservation activity; and helps maximize the economic return of conservation practices.

Dale Stein, Lindsey Gerstenslager and Kate Ziehm recused themselves from their respective meeting rooms.

AEM Base Year 14/AgNPS Round 24 Funding Split: Greg Albrecht

The following provides background on the estimated need for AEM Base Funding for Year 14 (2018-2019)

The current year (Year 13) budget requests are \$2.64M and \$3.2M was requested to be set aside for Year 13. An upper estimate for Year 14 requests based on prior participation and maximum use of eligible funds

for AEM Base Options A, B, and C amounts to \$3.2M. A realistic attempt to estimate the actual projected need for Year 14 based on prior participation and anticipated requests settles around \$3.0M.

Since unused AEM Base funds are returned to fund ranked AgNPS projects on an on-going basis and in order to conservatively assure an adequate budget for Year 14 while making the most of the R24 AgNPS program, a value of \$3.1M is requested as the optimal split for AEM Base Year 14. This represents a \$100K decrease relative to Year 13. Since Districts that annually participate in AEM Base are earning a higher percentage of their requested funds and continue to seek and achieve planner certification to access Options B and C, the decrease can be explained by the following: the scenario removes two Districts that have not participated in AEM Base in recent years (from 53 Districts to 51 Districts) and one District shifted from Option B to Option A after a recent staffing change. As a note, the maximum hourly rate is estimated to be the same for Year 14 as in Year 13 (\$42/hour).

Projected Year 14 Scenario

Anticipate 51 Districts will participate	
Anticipate 15 Districts to request Option B funding (\$85K):	\$1,275,000
Anticipate 6 Districts to request Option C funding (\$65K):	\$390,000
Anticipate 23 Districts to request Option A funding (\$50K):	\$1,150,000
Anticipate 3 Districts to participate between \$50K and \$30K:	\$125,000
Anticipate 4 remaining Districts to request a total of:	\$75,000
Estimated total anticipated need for Year 14:	\$3,015,000
Total requested for AEM Base Year 14:	\$3,100,000

R. Montesi moved to approve sub-allocating \$3.1 million for AEM Base Program; seconded by Darin Hickling. Motion passed; carried.

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program, B. Bzduch

Bethany began with revisions to Round 24 application, and passed out a proposed timeline for the upcoming RFP.

NYS law authorizes the AgNPS Program to fund conservation easements on buffers. Bzduch noted that discussions with technical easement staff are being held and no recommendations on how to handle this new authority are being made at this time. Conservation buffer points as per TAC was discussed. Bethany noted that revision of bonus point allocation is being considered by the TAC to include conservation buffer zones, TMDLs, and SWAP, which would allow more opportunity for most Districts to earn bonus points on proposals.

Bethany also noted changes on rating sheets for Round 24. Priority being considered for manure management systems that can be retrofitted with cover and methane capture systems.

Dale, Lindsey and Kate returned to meeting.

B. Bzduch provided a program status dashboard (*attached below*). Two closeouts have been completed since July. It was noted that it is a slow year for closeouts with six overdue from Round 17, three overdue from Round 18. It was noted that projects need to be closed out to prove need in upcoming budget process, therefore, should have as many closeouts as pending projects.

There are currently 177 active contracts.

Plan of work: 32 plans of work have been submitted for Round 23 so far. Twenty-three plans have been sent to Fiscal for contract development.

CAFO Manure Storage Program/Manure Storage FAQ Report: Brian Steinmuller

Districts have the RFP for the program, the Governor's press release has not yet been released. Districts have been asked to keep program info to themselves until Governor's office makes announcement. Brian noted some of the highlights of the program.

Partnership Reports / Advisory Member Reports / Additional Public Comments:

Paul Kaczmarczyk, DOH: Paul told the Committee that public comment period will be opening soon regarding the NYC Watershed Filtration Avoidance Determination.

Greg Kist, NRCS: Kist gave an update on the status of USDA-NRCS which included reorganization of USDA/NRCS. NRCS will continue to stand alone, not merged with other USDA offices.

Steve Lorraine, CDEA: Steve reported on the upcoming Conservation Skills Workshop. Planning for 2018 Symposium has begun. RFP has been released for Erosion Sediment Control certification.

Beth Claypoole, Cornell: Noted the Pro-Dairy response to the Riverkeeper lawsuit.

Darin Hickling, New York Farm Bureau: reported that it is county Farm Bureau annual meeting season.

Scott Fickbohm: Scott reported that CREP payments are going out and reported on the CREP Pilot Project in the Susquehanna River Watershed.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 in Oneida County for half day meeting, half day tour.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:12. Please contact Brian Steinmuller, Assistant Director of the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee if you have questions or would like to propose agenda items for the Committee to address.

Brian.steinmuller@agriculture.ny.gov

518-457-0562

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