

APPROVED

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

State Committee Meeting
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive, Albany 12235

November 21, 2017

Meeting at a Glance:

- SWCC Approves Funding of Precision Conservation Tools to be piloted in the Owasco and Skaneateles Lake Watersheds.
- Lauren Prezorski presents a comprehensive status of Ecosystems Based Funding Projects

Present:

State Committee Voting Members: D. Stein, State Committee Chair; R. Montesi, D. Hickling, D. Brass, E. Goodman.

Also present were B. Steinmuller, Assistant Director; B. Bzduch, J. Clifford, M. Irish, G. Albrecht, T. Clark, SWCC Staff; A. Kumar, DEC; S. Wojtowicz, DOS; P. Kaczmarczyk, DOH; D. Howard, National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC); T. Sweeny, DAM; L. Williams, NYFB.

D. Stein called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Review/Approval of Minutes

Ron Montesi made a motion to approve the October 24, 2017 minutes; seconded by D. Brass. Motion passed; carried.

Correspondence and Staff Update, B. Steinmuller

B. Steinmuller gave an update on the SWCC/Division of Land and Water Resources staffing status. Steinmuller indicated that the Northern NY Regional AEA waiver to backfill has not been approved but it was recently resubmitted for consideration. Steinmuller also noted that the Climate Resilient Farming (CRF) Program backfill has not been approved. Currently B. Steinmuller, Assistant Director, is acting in both capacities and is struggling to provide adequate services to Region 4 and to move the CRF Program forward. However, all staff are doing an incredible job stepping into different roles and supporting Districts and Programs beyond their regular duties.

The Senior Environmental Analyst position to support statewide programs through data management and analysis will be backfilled by the next meeting. A waiver to backfill this position was approved by Division of Budget. This is the position that was held by Lauren Lyons-Swift prior to her retirement.

Steinmuller noted that there was no correspondence to cover.

Climate Resilient Farming Program Report, B. Steinmuller, G. Albrecht

Please note, Dale Stein recused himself from this portion of the meeting and left the meeting room.

B. Steinmuller provided a status of the pending release of the Round 3 CRF RFP. Steinmuller noted that workload within the Division has impacted the timeliness of the release. However, since the RFP release has been delayed, Steinmuller presented the Committee with an opportunity to support the cost of

bringing precision conservation software to a pilot effort in the Owasco and Skaneateles Lake Watersheds. Steinmuller gave a brief overview of the software products and costs associated with the set up and deployment in the two pilot watersheds. G. Albrecht provided more details about the software company, Agren, that was developed by retired NRCS staffers in the mid-west. Albrecht discussed the tools' effectiveness and use in NYS.

All regulated farms, those receiving cost share funds and those in government programs are required to have a soil conservation plan. A soil conservation plan helps manage nutrient and sediment losses from runoff. However, as rainfall duration, intensity and quantity continue to change, new erosion challenges, including gully formation, continue to crop up within the watershed and across central NYS.

There are new software tools that can help reduce the time needed to evaluate options and create designs for certain conservation practices. The tools streamline the process of calculating soil erosion and related nutrient loss and also quickly create designs and estimates for gully erosion control practices. The same tools create maps of erosion hot spots and estimate the economic cost of soil loss to the farm across various management scenarios, providing conservation staff with new tools to make the case for enhanced soil conservation to producers. One module allows scenario comparison and estimates the value of savings in nutrients and avoided yield loss by improving soil conservation beyond the minimum requirement. Two additional modules allow for rapid planning and design of gully erosion treatment practices called grass waterways and water and sediment control basins.

Pricing for five tools: SoilCalculator, PondBuilder, BasinBuilder, WetlandBuilder, and WaterwayBuilder.

***\$25,000** set up fee including uploading of LIDAR data and tool set-up for Cayuga, Tompkins, and Onondaga Counties plus ensuring coverage of Skaneateles Lake watershed*

***\$23,600** for 1-3 users per county + 1-3 users at Cornell across all three counties*

*Total price = **\$48,600.***

D. Hickling moved to approve the suballocation of \$50,000 from the SFY 2017-2018 CRF budget to support the set up and workstation fees as outlined above; seconded by R. Montesi. Motion passed; carried.

Steinmuller thanked the Committee and noted that the Round 3 RFP will be published soon with an amount of \$2 million. He further noted that with a thorough accounting of what has been spent thus far and available, additional funding may be assigned later if needed to cover this additional investment.

Please note, D. Stein returned to the meeting at this point.

Ecosystems Based Management Program (EBM) Report, L. Prezorski

L. Prezorski presented on the NYS EBM program and the projects administered by the SWCC/DAM and implemented by Conservation Districts. The presentation was very comprehensive, covering the full suite of projects completed since the beginning of the program as well as those ongoing projects being completed now. Prezorski noted that EBM funding has been a great source of projects that otherwise would not be a good fit for other SWCC program and has been successful in piloting a number of initiatives that are becoming a regular function of District programming in various regions of the state. For more details, please preview the presentation appended to the minutes below.

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program, B. Bzduch

Amendments for State Committee Consideration

Region 5

Albany County SWCD – Prescribed Grazing & Riparian Buffer Implementation Two Rock Ranch – Round 22 – C701238

Request: Budget Change

Reason: Requesting to move funds from engineering to personnel services. Private engineer funds are no longer needed, so the extra funds will help to cover additional SWCD time.

Note: Jennifer Clifford, Region 5 AEA, approves the Budget change

Previous Amendments: None

Orange County SWCD – Walkkill River Watershed Runoff Control – Round 19 – C701137

Contract Start: 3/5/2013

Contract End: 12/31/17

Request: Time Extension to 12/31/2018

Reason: There are seven open projects in this Round 19 contract all with various stages of implementation. Issues with a barn fire, staff changes, poor weather conditions, and landowner commitment have resulted in the need for a time extension to complete implementation of the BMP systems. All landowners have committed to the new time frame.

Note: Jennifer Clifford, Region 5 AEA, supports the Time Extension and refers to the State Committee

Previous Amendments: None

D. Brass motioned to approve the amendment, seconded by D. Hickling. Motion passed; carried.

Bzduch did not have a Program Status dashboard for this meeting but will have an end of year report for the December meeting.

Please note, D. Stein recused himself from this portion of the meeting and left the meeting room.

TAC Report – Round 24

Round 24 Preference Points: An analysis was conducted of the preference points and how scoring of AgNPS proposals was impacted. B. Bzduch looked at data from the past three rounds. It was found that at least 90% of the funded proposals received preference points. It was discussed that the preference points were put in place to incentivize projects that address certain goals and priorities defined by NYS. The committee discussed revising the points to promote other projects with equal water quality benefits. B. Bzduch proposed a revision to the preference points which would reduce the weight of the TMDL/SWAP points to 25% of the overall preference points and increase the weight of Access Control/Buffer points to 75%. Essentially, 1 point could be earned for TMDL/SWAP and a maximum of 3 points could be earned for Access/Control. The maximum available preference points would be reduced from 8 to 4. The committee discussed another option that would reduce the total available preference points which would ultimately place a greater emphasis on the proposal score. This option would maintain the weight of each preference point option, but reduce the maximum available preference points to 4. ***The TAC supports the second option and B. Bzduch will revise the preference point accordingly.***

Proposal Rating Sheet: B. Bzduch discussed that a criterion was added to the Identified Need category to give preference to those proposals that address goals listed in the Methane Reduction Plan. The Methane Reduction Plan identifies that Round 24 of the AGNPS program will give preference to waste storage projects that can be easily retrofit with a methane capture system. The action from the plan will be highlighted in the Round 24 Highlights document.

Bzduch reported that the full RFP and Rating Sheet will be brought to the Committee for review and approval in December. The State Committee appeared to reach a consensus in support of the TAC's recommendation noted above and will reconsider and vote on this along with other proposed elements of the Round 24 RFP.

Please note, D. Stein returned to the meeting at this point.

Conservation Easements for Source Water Protection: Finally, Bzduch advised the Committee that she has been working hard developing a companion program to support conservation easement funding for source water protection. The Committee was reminded that this new funding was approved within the SFY 2017-2018 \$2.5 billion Water Infrastructure Program but the exact amount of what will be available to support agricultural source water protection is unknown at this time. Bzduch has met with Dave Behm, Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program Manager and other technical topic experts and is researching similar programs in other states. Bzduch anticipates bringing more information to the Committee on a regular basis as the program is being developed.

CAFO Manure Storage Program Report, B. Steinmuller and B. Bzduch

B. Steinmuller advised the Committee that yesterday, November 20th was the deadline for the first phase of the CAFO Agricultural Waste Storage and Transfer Program. B. Bzduch told the Committee that over 90 proposals were received and are currently being reviewed for eligibility/completeness and score as we speak. More information will be made available at a later meeting. It is anticipated that the awards will go out by December 18th.

Part C, Vehicle Request, J. Clifford

J. Clifford presented a State Aid to Districts Part C, Vehicle Purchase Request Form from the Chenango County SWCD. The District made the purchase and is asking the SWCC to consider allowing them to use \$20,000 from Part C funding to support the cost. The vehicle has allowed the District to develop a hydroseeding program for municipal road ditch seeding and seeding streambanks to arrest erosion. The purchase of the truck was necessary in order to tow the hydroseeder and to haul hydroseeding supplies to and from job sites. The truck was purchased before the State Committee decided that Part C funds can be allowed to purchase trucks. With the increase in Part C funding and the rules for spending the money, the District had to use money saved to purchase the truck and a storage unit to hold supplies at their office. If this request is approved, it will help the District recuperate some of the saved funds more quickly so they can further expand the program in the future.

R. Montesi moved to approve the request; seconded by E. Goodman. Motion passed; carried.

Partnership Reports / Advisory Member Reports / Public Comments, All

J. Clifford, SWCC Staff – advised the Committee that a Municipal Subcommittee meeting was held on November 8th. Clifford gave a briefing on what was discussed. It was a very comprehensive meeting covering a variety of different topics. The notes for this meeting are appended below.

T. Clark, SWCC Staff – told the Committee that the 2018 Water Quality Symposium planning is going very well.

E. Goodman, SWCC Voting Member – let the Committee know that she has accepted a position with the American Farmland Trust as the New York State Deputy Director. The Committee congratulated E. Goodman and inquired about when she starts and where she will be based. Goodman said she will be transitioning soon and will eventually be based out of Saratoga.

S. Wojtowicz, NYS DOS – gave a report on staffing changes in her DOS Division. Wojtowicz also briefed the Committee that the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) recently closed and she hopes that Watershed Management Planning proposals will receive funding.

L. Williams, NYFB – noted that the NYFB Statewide Meeting is being held on December 5th and 6th. Williams also noted on behalf of the NYFB that they are looking forward to learning more about the CAFO Storage Program, Phase 1 results.

P. Kaczmarczyk, DOH – gave a report on DOH activities including staff changes. He advised the Committee that L. Wilson is the new Bureau of Water Supply Protection Director. Kaczmarczyk advised the Committee that the DOH is very focused on Harmful Algal Blooms impacts to public drinking water supplies. Finally, Kaczmarczyk gave a briefing on the Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) in the NYC Water Supply.

D. Brass, SWCC Voting Member – apologized to the group for missing last month’s meeting. He let the Committee know that he attended the NY Grange meeting for five days in November and that all agricultural related resolutions passed.

Conservation District Annual Plan of Work Approval, B. Steinmuller

B. Steinmuller read the list of Districts who have submitted their 2018 Annual Plans of Work for approval. The following list of Annual Plans of Work have been recommended for approval by their respective Regional Associate Environmental Analyst:

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|-------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| Allegany | Madison | Otsego | Tompkins |
| Cattaraugus | Montgomery | Rensselaer | Washington |
| Chautauqua | New York City | Saratoga | |
| Cortland | Niagara | Schoharie | |
| Delaware | Onondaga | Schuyler | |
| Livingston | Ontario | Tioga | |

Next Meeting Date and Locations

December 19, 2017 – Videoconference, Locations: Albany, Syracuse, Brooklyn

Adjourned: 12:16

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.

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