

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

December 19, 2017

Meeting at a Glance:

- The State Committee Approved the Round 24 RFP and Rating Sheet.
- Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions gave a presentation on Climate Smart Farming and associated efforts.

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. Berlinski, J. Clifford, G. Albrecht, J. Littrell, Ron Busch, PJ Emerick, V. DiGiacomo, R. Cunningham, SWCC Staff; A. Kumar, DEC; S. Wojtowicz, DOS; L. Williams, NYFB, Nick Halford, Rensselaer SWCD employee, C. Davis, DEC; Beth Claypoole, CCE; Steve Lorraine, CDEA; Greg Kist, NRCS; D. Grantham and A. Chatrchyan, Cornell; D. Schmidt and T. Tesman, Rensselaer SWCD Directors.

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

Review/Approval of Minutes

R. Montesi made a motion to approve the November 21, 2017 minutes; seconded by D. Brass. Motion passed; carried.

Correspondence and Staff Update, Brian Steinmuller introduced Julie Berlinski as the new Senior Environmental Analyst who will be managing program data and creating GIS based tools, and welcomed her to SWCC staff. Julie came to State Committee from Plant Industry Division and her duties include GIS storyboard concept, data management and analysis. Steinmuller also reported waiting for backfill authority on the vacant Regional AEA position. There is strong support from the Department to backfill, however, the State Division of Budget has not approved the waiver at this time. Brian noted staff has stepped up to assist in covering counties, and asks Districts to be patient in light of the vacancy. Brian noted they will hire off new Civil Service list. Dale questioned how often Brian is able to get to Districts, due to extra workload as he is concerned about staff being stretched too thin. Brian also noted that the Climate Resilient Farming Program Manager's position is still waiting for authority to fill, and noted that all staff have stepped up to assist in moving the program forward.

Steinmuller noted that there was no correspondence to cover, however, periodicals were available in the Albany location.

State Aid to Districts: Vehicle purchase request from Madison County for a 4-wheeler was discussed.

The 4-wheeler has already been purchased at a cost of \$6300, the District is looking to be reimbursed for the purchase. It is considered a vehicle since it can be registered. The District has used the vehicle to cover more than 8,000 acres for nutrient management purposes.

D. Brass made a motion to approve the purchase, E. Goodman seconded the motion. Motion passed; carried.

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program: Bethany Bzduch distributed a dashboard handout of the current status of the NPS program. There are currently 176 active contracts which includes Round 23, and dating back to Round 17. Bethany also reported that Round 21 closeouts are starting to take place, and she expects that 2018 will be an active year for closeouts. *Please see the dashboard, which also includes the CRF Program, appended to the minutes for more information.*

Aq NPS Amendment:

Region 1

Niagara County SWCD – Central Canal Corridor Watershed Phase 3 Lower Ganargua Creek – Round 19 – C701139

Contract Start: 3/5/2013

Contract End: 12/31/17

Request: Time Extension to 12/31/2018

Reason: The remaining farm in the project has been unable to complete their project due to financial reasons. The District would like to request a time extension to allow the farm to become eligible to qualify for USDA EQIP funding. This funding could help to offset some of the project costs.

Note: Victor DiGiacomo, Region 1 AEA, supports the Time Extension and refers to the State Committee

Previous Amendments: None

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

Dale Stein and representatives of the Rensselaer SWCD recused themselves from this portion of the meeting.

The proposed Round 24 RFP was distributed for discussion. The most notable change to Round 24 is the proposed changes to the Preference Points. In previous Rounds, there have been a maximum of 8 preference points available. To place more emphasis on identified needs through points awarded by the proposal reviewers, the TAC has recommended to reduce the preference points to a total of 4, with 2 points being awarded for a project located within a watershed, and 2 points awarded for access control of livestock in waterways, or buffers.

Bethany also noted that the Round 24 Rating Sheet will also give preference to farms building storages that can be covered and flared, or retrofitted to be covered and flared, so that projects can assist in meeting the goals and objectives identified in the Methane Reduction Plan.

R. Montesi made a motion to approve the Round 24 RFP; seconded by D. Hickling. Motion approved; carried.

Dale Stein and the Rensselaer County representatives re-joined the meeting at this time.

CAFO Manure Storage Program: Bethany reported \$50 million in project requests, 56 projects funded for a total of 61 storages to be built for a total of approximately \$20 million.

Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions (CICSS) Presentation: Allison M. Chatrchyan, Director.

Allison gave an informative presentation on Climate Change in the Northeast. It was noted that the Northeast feels the greatest impact from Climate Change, throughout the entire US. It was also noted that Districts can utilize the Climate Smart Farming (CSF) website, particularly, the various tools and calculators. <http://climatesmartfarming.org/tools/>. Some of the tools include winter cover crop planting scheduler, water deficit calculator, growing degree day calculator, plus others. CICSS is looking to build stronger partnership with Districts, which includes future joint program development initiatives.

Dale Stein noted that climate smart farming is becoming more of a reality as farmers are challenged by weather extremes, and that farmers need greater awareness as to the CSF website and the information and tools available.

Annual Plans of Work: Steinmuller reported on the list of Districts that need to be approved.

Dave made a motion to approve the remaining Annual Plans of Work, seconded by Erica. All approved.

Partnership Reports / Advisory Member Reports / Public Comments

PJ Emerick: PJ noted that he is working on closeouts and attending board meetings. He also noted that there is a finalized plan of work for cover crop program in the Finger Lakes Hub. There is \$300,000 for eastern Finger Lakes - Cayuga, Owasco, Skaneateles watersheds, which will also will fund interseeders, and some staff time. Same rates as Ag NPS, and is a 3 year program. Also working with Districts on statewide septic program. Encouraging Districts to attend septic program at Symposium.

Jennifer Clifford, SWCC Staff: 31 Districts asked to be in septic program, \$75 million over next 5 years for the program. Homeowners must apply to county to have improvements done on septic systems, with reimbursement going directly to homeowners. County governments to administer the funds. Nassau and Suffolk getting bulk of funding. Jennifer also noted that she has been working on trainings for Districts.

Stephanie Wojtowicz, NYS DOS: Stephanie reported on the recent announcement regarding LWRP and the CFA project awards. Funding requests totaled \$56.7 million, and able to fund 41 grant application totally around \$15.7 million. That is about 31% of the applications and about 27% of the requested funds. Water quality projects compete with economic development programs.

Lauren Williams, NYFB: looking ahead to legislative session, esp budget.

Bethany Buzdich: Bethany reported on Source water protection program/conservation easements. A stakeholder meeting is being planned to discuss the program. In the meantime, Bethany is talking with counterparts in Minnesota who already have a program, a good resource.

Greg Kist, NRCS: Greg reported on the new group FSA and NRCS will function under called FPAC. Administrative functions combining. Leadership is void as positions haven't been filled. Budget: numbers looking positive. EQIP increased million dollars for NYS. Continuing resolution thru Friday – potential for federal gov't shutdown on December 26: 4 hours to get out, if resolution not passed. NRCS must work with co-located Districts if shutdown. Staffing: 30 vacancies that will probably not get filled. Partners have worked to express need to fill positions with administration. Conservation planning – NACD heading this up with conservation partners, redefining conservation planning.

Greg Albrecht: Greg reported on the 4 R Nutrient Management System which strives to help producers apply manure. Fertilizer Institute partnering with NY Ag Business Association to form a group of stakeholders to certify fertilizer dealers based on 4 R's that will assist farmers. SWCC to stay on same page with this group.

Ryan Cunningham: Ryan reported that there are usually about 6 planners in the hopper to get trained as AEM planners. He noted that he and Ron Busch just completed a training in Franklin County.

Steve Lorraine: Registration for Symposium is out. There are 42 classes being offered. Erosion and Sediment Control program will be a focus.

Vic Digacomo: Vic reported completing closeouts and attending Board meetings. He noted that Districts have already contacted him about septic program.

Darrin Hickling: Darrin reported that the NYFB Annual meeting just held.

Ron Montessi: Ron reported that NYACD Legislative Day is March 6th. Warren Co awarded Conservationist of the Year at annual year end event.

Brian Steinmuller: Brian noted that Districts critical to statewide programs in terms of county officials seeking info about the programs.

Next Meeting Date and Locations: February 6, 2018 – Videoconference, Locations: Albany, Syracuse
Adjourned: 11:56 AM

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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