

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

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
581 State Fair Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13209

February 6, 2018

Meeting at a Glance

- Review of NYS EPF Budget Proposal.
- Approval to increase available funds and caps for AEM Base Year 14 by roughly 30% for all funding options.
- Round 24 will be released in March 2018, available funds increased from \$12.4 million to \$17 million.
- Harmful Algal Blooms Initiative Overview.
- Climate Resilient Farming update.

Present

State Committee Voting Members: D. Hickling, D. Brass, E. Goodman

Albany location: B. Steinmuller Assistant Director, B. Bzduch, J. Berlinski, J. Clifford, A. Battaglia, T. Clark, SWCC; T. Sweeney, DAM; S. Latessa DEC, R. Gorney DEC, P. Kaczmarczyk, DOH.

Syracuse location: P. Emerick, G. Albrecht, V. DiGiacomo, R. Cunningham, R. Bush, SWCC; S. Lorraine, CDEA; G. Kist NRCS, B. Claypoole, CCE; Aimee Clinkhammer, DEC.

Call to Order

D. Brass called the meeting to order at 10:10 am.

Review/Approval of Minutes

D. Hickling made a motion to approve the December 19, 2017 minutes; seconded by E. Goodman. Motion passed; carried.

SWCC Staffing, Brian Steinmuller

Steinmuller reported that AJ Battaglia has joined the Land and Water Resources staff on January 16th, 2018. Battaglia will be assisting the staff on new and ongoing projects; Specifically, Climate Resilient Farming and developing a new five year strategic plan.

Steinmuller reported that the Division of Budget has not approved the waiver to backfill the Region 4 AEA position. Steinmuller also noted that the AEA position to become the Climate Resilient Farming Program Manager is pending review by Civil Service and approval by the DOB.

Correspondence and Budget, Brian Steinmuller

The usual periodicals were made available at the Albany location.

Steinmuller noted that the Governor released his budget proposal in mid-January and stated that EPF was proposed at \$300 million in overall funding, noting several line items of interest including:

- \$17M for Ag Nonpoint Source funding including some carve outs that will be funded by other mechanisms
- \$20M for The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Initiative
- \$2.3M for FLOWPA
- \$250K for Lake Erie Protection Alliance
- \$18.6M for Great Lakes and Ocean Ecosystem Based Management Systems
- \$10M for Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 - This number represents a \$1M proposed increase from 2017 and will help districts build capacity to address ongoing and increasing needs across NYS
- \$2.5M for Climate Resilient Farming

AgNPS Abatement and Control Program and Source Water Protection, Bethany Bzduch

Program Status: Bzduch reported that the program approved 39 closeouts in 2017. In 2018, there have been 4 closeouts approved already and 64 contracts will expire this year. *For more information, please see the AgNPS Program Status Dashboard for more details.*

Region 1

Chautauqua County SWCD – Bournes Creek Watershed Protection – Round 19 – C701109

Contract Start: 06/1/2013

Contract End: 03/1/2018

Request: Time Extension to 3/1/2019

Reason: Two of the three farms in the grant have completed their projects. The remaining farm needs additional time to complete their 3rd year of nutrient and pest management. Other financial obligations impacted the start of the AGNPS funded project. The landowner is re-committed to the new timeline.

Note: Victor DiGiacomo, Region 1 AEA, refers to the State Committee

Previous Amendments: None

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

Region 3

Otsego County SWCD – Oaks Creek Covered Barnyard – Round 19 – C701111

Contract Start: 06/01/2013

Contract End: 03/01/2018

Request: Time Extension to 3/1/2019

Reason: The landowner needed to obtain a loan in order to cover payment required by the Contractor. The landowner experienced some difficulty securing a loan which delayed the project. Construction has begun on the project and only a few components remain to be installed. The landowner is committed to complete the project in the new timeframe.

Note: Scott Fickbohm, Region 2 AEA, refers to the State Committee

Previous Amendments: None

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

Round 24 Timeline: Bzduch stated the RFP date has been pushed back to March 2018 with proposals due by June 2018. This delay will cause a slight overlap with the second round of CAFO Waste Storage RFP but does not conflict with the CRF Round 3 RFP or the required District Aid and Annual Report deadlines. This new timeline will also help those Districts within the Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Initiative priority areas to utilize newly minted action plans to further justify proposal funding.

Steve Lorraine stated that districts will meet the deadlines despite the delay.

Update on Source Water Protection: On February 5, 2018 at the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Building in Albany, NY, a land trust stakeholder meeting was held regarding source water protection. Soil and Water Conservation Districts will be the only applicants and have the choice to hold easements or work with land trusts/municipalities to hold easements on agricultural lands with a conservation buffer for the purposes of drinking water source protection.

The stakeholder meeting reviewed key concepts of the new source water protection program opportunity. Land trust stakeholders were very interested in the program and liked the concept for the non-competitive applications and a longer time frame. Brian thanked Dave Behm for his wealth of knowledge on conservation easements.

Steve Lorraine, CDEA, voiced many concerns from a district's standpoint, stating that:

- Easements are forever projects
- Not enough funding
- Stewardship costs must be considered
- Money coming in is "soft" and challenging regarding building staff resources.

Discussion ensued with B. Steinmuller responding that many of these concerns can be addressed with further conversation with interested Districts.

AEM Base Funding Program Report, Greg Albrecht

Request that a total of \$4,000,000 (\$4M) be set aside for the 2018/19 AEM Base Program (Year 14). The current year (Year 13) budget requests are \$2.64M and \$3.2M was requested to be set aside for Year 13. A request of \$3.1M for AEM Base Year 14 was approved at the September 19, 2017, NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee meeting, as an extension of the current AEM reimbursement caps for Options A (\$50K), B (\$85K), and C (\$65K). Since that decision, the Governor has prioritized further emphasis on watershed protection to mitigate harmful algal blooms (HABs) in many lakes across the State. During recent regional conference calls and meetings, Districts have identified higher AEM Base Program caps as a priority to help further reduce non-point source losses from agriculture. Higher caps would allow Districts more funds to increase and retain skilled staff to work with farms through Tiers 1 – 5 of AEM, which is central to continuing to improve water quality in watersheds with agricultural land uses. As a result of the HABs priorities and feedback from Districts, the AEM Base Year 14 recommendation and request has been updated to \$4M to fund an approximate 30% increase in AEM Base reimbursement caps across Options A, B, and C. The updated caps are proposed as follows.

- Option A: \$65K (currently \$50K)
- Option B: \$110K (AEM Certified Planner on staff required; currently \$85K)
- Option C: \$85K (NRCS Certified Planner on staff required; currently \$65K)

Analyzing the increased caps across all Districts yields 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 of \$4.2M. A realistic attempt to estimate the actual projected need for Year 14 based on prior participation and anticipated requests settles around \$3.8M. 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 \$4M is requested as the optimal split for AEM Base Year 14.

The increase in caps is considered balanced with AgNPS, sustainable, and supportive of improving District capacity to increase planning and implementation of BMP systems on farms. A cap increase was also scheduled to be taken into consideration for AEM Base Year 15, as the last cap increased occurred in AEM Base Year 10 (2014/15) and for AEM Base Year 12, 21 out of 50 Districts reported exceeding their AEM Base cap (at both A and B Options). Two additional Districts are also indicating their participation in AEM Base Year 14, raising the total to 52 Districts.

Projected Year 14 Scenario with Updated Caps

Anticipate 52 Districts will participate	
Anticipate 16 Districts to request Option B funding (\$110K):	\$1,745,000
Anticipate 6 Districts to request Option C funding (\$85K):	\$510,000
Anticipate 13 Districts to request Option A funding (\$65K):	\$845,000
Anticipate 8 Districts to participate between \$65K and \$50K:	\$435,000
Anticipate 9 remaining Districts to request a total of:	\$267,000
Estimated total anticipated need for Year 14:	\$3,802,000
Total requested for AEM Base Year 14:	\$4,000,000

D. Hickling made a motion to approve the request to increase the AEM Base Funding caps for Year 14; seconded by E. Goodman. Motion passed; carried.

Harmful Algal Blooms Initiative Overview, Rebecca Gorney, Research Scientist, Department of Environmental Conservation

Steinmuller introduced Rebecca Gorney, a Research Scientist in the Division of Water for NYS DEC. R. Gorney provided a report on the harmful algal bloom (HAB) Initiative that was announced by Governor Cuomo at the 2018 State of the State address. Gorney started out with a brief overview of HABs and outlined the 4-point strategy to “attack” the HAB problem in NYS.

What are HABs?

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in freshwater generally consist of cyanobacteria (also referred to as blue-green algae). Cyanobacteria are naturally present in low numbers in most marine and freshwater systems but under certain conditions, particularly high nutrients and warm temperatures, the organisms can begin to multiply rapidly and form blooms. Several types have the potential to produce toxins and other harmful compounds that can pose a public health risk to people and animals through ingestion, skin contact, or inhalation. DEC suggests avoiding contact with any water that is discolored or has algal scums on the surface.

What is the Initiative?

New York has launched an aggressive campaign to address the threat of harmful algal blooms (HABs). In recent years, the extent, duration, impacts, and awareness of HABs have increased, threatening the recreational use of lakes that are essential to tourism, as well as sources of drinking water. This year, the state will implement a \$65 million 4-point initiative to aggressively combat HABs in Upstate New York. Twelve priority lakes that are vulnerable to HABs and are critical sources of drinking water and vital tourism drivers were chosen as priority waterbodies because they represent a wide range of conditions and vulnerabilities and the lessons learned will be applied to other impacted waterbodies moving forward.

4 – Points

- Convene regional summits with local, state and national experts
- Convene steering committees to work with a consultant to develop action plans for each lake
- Implement new advanced monitoring techniques including real time monitoring buoys
- Undertake HABs treatment pilots using mitigation strategies such as nutrient inactivants

Priority Lakes

- Western Group: Conesus Lake; Honeoye Lake; Chautauqua Lake
- Central Group: Owasco Lake; Skaneateles Lake; Cayuga Lake
- North Country Group: Lake Champlain at Port Henry; New York portion of Lake Champlain at Isle La Motte watershed; Lake George
- Greater Hudson Valley Group: Lake Carmel; Palmer Lake; Putnam Lake; Monhagen Brook watershed, including the reservoirs serving Middletown

Regional Summits

- A combination of national, state level and regional experts will be convened to address HABs issues on a statewide and local level.
- All summits will include a closed working group that will spend a day in discussions together.
- Agendas will include an overview of HABs and local waterbodies, progress that has been made by NY and identification and discussion of gaps in current knowledge.
- At each there will be a public two-hour evening program with a summary of the day’s summit, talks and discussion with a panel featuring by visiting experts and local stakeholders.

Discussion ensued. The SWCC thanked R. Gorney for delivering this report.

Climate Resilient Farming Program, Brian Steinmuller

Steinmuller reported that there are RFP eligibility questions regarding equipment for soil health. SWCDs are considering new interseeders, no till drills and other equipment which can be purchased by the district and rented out to local farms. However, each farm has specific needs for equipment and tools. Answers to these questions will be posted as soon as they approved by the Department. The deadline for Q&A is February 12, 2018 and the final Q&A material will be posted by February 16, 2018. Proposals are due by 4:30 local time, February 26, 2018. Awards will be announced in late spring 2018.

The Governor's office has shown interest in Climate Resilient Farming, as the project has funded 22 projects over the first two rounds and helped 36 total farms to date. Most projects are track 1, dealing with manure storage covers and flares, leading to methane reduction.

NYS is also working with the national Climate Change Alliance, regularly meeting with California, Oregon, Delaware and Colorado to share initiatives and plans. California's soil health program is especially interesting and innovative.

Part C Vehicle Purchase Request, Jennifer Clifford

Yates County will be awarded funds in March 2018. They are requesting to use the funds to purchase a vehicle to tow a hydroseeder. Their current vehicle is no longer in working order.

E. Goodman made a motion to approve the request from Yates SWCD for use of Part C funding to purchase a vehicle integral to the function of the District's hydroseeding program; seconded by D. Hickling. Motion passed; carried.

Partnership Reports / Advisory Member Reports / Public Comments

Greg Kist, NRCS: Kist spoke about the EQIP funding, which is currently set at \$12M. He also spoke about announcements going out for easement programs. He believes the budget looks good this year and there are many excess funds that need to be spent.

Steve Lorraine, CDEA: Lorraine reported that there is great interest and expected great turnout for the 2018 Water Quality Symposium.

Victor DiGiacomo, SWCC Staff: DiGiacomo mentioned that producers are interested in getting on a list to use the new interseeder farm equipment in the Genesee River Basin. He also said that districts are considering using Part C funding for to purchase additional seeders to expand the program.

P.J. Emerick, SWCC Staff: Emerick is reviewing CAFO plans of work and grant closeouts. He is also scheduling board meetings for reports on districts and has been working on ongoing HABS initiatives.

Judy Littrell, SWCC Staff: Littrell showed the group the new AEM display materials, which have been very well received. She is currently in the process of ordering panels for trifold displays for AEM, designing new program brochures, and redesigning the outdated website. Littrell stated that new Ag NPS brochures will be sent out to Districts next week. Regarding NY Grown and Certified, there will be

statewide meetings presenting how AEM works with the program, how it brings in new business for Districts and how agriculture in eastern NY is changing.

Julie Berlinski, SWCC Staff: Berlinski is currently working on crunching lake specific data for the HABs initiative, continuing the GIS Story Board concept, and looking at new ways to report program accomplishments.

Paul Kaczmarczyk, DOH: Kaczmarczyk is working on collaboration water projects with DEC and DOH which deal with HABs and PFOAs in drinking water. He stated that new source water assessments will not solve the issue alone and they are beta testing new carbon filtration units. Regarding HABs in Skaneateles Lake, home construction, lawn fertilizers, and overall higher intensive development and water use could all be contributor to growing HABs. Lake friendly living in the Finger Lakes is something to focus on for homeowners.

Sara Latessa, DEC: Latessa stated that agriculture waste management engineering reimbursements will likely increase by the spring 2018.

Tim Clark, SWCC Staff: The NYS Erosion and Sediment Control certificate has launched and steering committee will be chaired by Tim Clark. The documents will be sent out via email as there is no website set up yet.

Darren Hickling, Voting Member representing New York Farm Bureau: Hickling stated that Kelly Young has left the NY Farm Bureau, that Lauren Williams will be moving to National Affairs and Elizabeth Walters is moving back to State Affairs. He let the group know that the regional meetings are coming up and the legislative days are March 5th and 6th. Taste NY is on March 5th, folks will be coming to Albany from counties all over the state with agricultural products to share.

Brian Steinmuller, SWCC Staff: Steinmuller reminded the group that the SWCC Strategic Plan is in its final year and that it is vital that we start 2019 with a new strategic plan and direction. He asked the group to stay tuned for meeting announcements and a survey for districts regarding an evaluation of the current plan and future needs.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 3rd in Albany and Syracuse locations

Meeting Adjourned at 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. Brian.steinmuller@agriculture.ny.gov, 518-457-0562

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

ADDENDUM

Monthly Report Program Dashboard

Approved

Round	Number of Contracts	Total Of Contract Amount	Active Contracts	Active Funds	Cancelled Contracts	Cancelled Funds	Completed Contracts	Completed Funds	Pending Contracts	Pending Funds
17	51	\$9,204,491.15	3	\$455,256.70	1	\$0.00	47	\$8,749,234.45	0	\$0.00
18	45	\$9,486,855.29	6	\$2,074,723.15	1	\$0.00	38	\$7,412,132.14	0	\$0.00
19	45	\$12,256,418.40	30	\$9,063,267.14	2	\$0.00	12	\$2,805,111.26	0	\$0.00
20	56	\$13,461,731.04	48	\$11,888,793.11	0	\$0.00	7	\$1,058,324.13	0	\$0.00
21	40	\$13,281,398.99	35	\$12,134,774.67	1	\$0.00	4	\$1,146,624.32	0	\$0.00
22	49	\$15,877,828.69	49	\$15,877,828.69	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00
23	57	\$20,061,644.70	4	\$1,155,215.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	53	\$18,906,429.70
Totals	343	\$93,630,368.26	175	\$52,649,858.46	5	\$0.00	108	\$21,171,426.30	53	\$18,906,429.70



