

APPROVED

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

State Committee Meeting
Utica State Office Building, Conference Room B
205 Genesee Street, Utica, NY 13501

July 17, 2018

Meeting at a Glance

- AgNPS Abatement and Control Program Update
- Engineering, Training, Conservation Approval Authority Update
- Source Water Protection Program (Riparian Buffer – Easement Program) Update

Present:

State Committee Voting Members: Dale Stein, Chair; Dave Brass, Vice-Chair; Erica Goodman, Ron Montesi, D. Hickling, Voting Members; Brian Steinmuller, Assistant Director; Jennifer Clifford, Bethany Bzduch, Julie Berlinski, Tim Clark, AJ Battaglia, Victor DiGiacomo, PJ Emerick, Ron Bush, Ryan Cunningham, SWCC Staff; Steve Lorraine, CDEA; Lorri Dandignac, USDA-FSA; D. DeWeese, USDA-NRCS.

Call to Order

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

Review/Approval of Minutes

D. Brass made a motion to approve the June 19, 2018 minutes with submitted corrections; seconded by Ron Montesi. Motion passed; carried.

Correspondence, Brian Steinmuller

Brian noted that there are District Annual Reports as well various periodicals available.

The Albany office received one letter regarding Riparian Buffer Systems from Delaware County SWCD. He read the letter which was c.c.'d to Mike Latham, Dale Stein and Brian Steinmuller. The letter can be found in the appendix. Brian Steinmuller asked if Lorri from FSA could provide the Committee with more background on the matter.

Dale Stein noted that there was very little participation in the program before the incentives were removed but strongly believes that these incentives need to be strengthened rather than weakened for removed to encourage future participation. He believes that we must correspond with Senator Gillibrand and let her know that these incentives must remain in place.

D. Hickling moved to have the State Committee write a letter supporting Delaware County SWCD's position to Senator Gillibrand's office as a ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee; seconded by D. Brass; motion passed; carried.

SWCC Staffing, Brian Steinmuller

Steinmuller reported that a high number of candidates applied for the Northern NY AEA Position and he currently working with Human Resources now to schedule interviews.

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

Program Status

There are currently 201 active contracts in Rounds 18-23. Since the last State Committee Meeting in June, 8 closeouts have been completed, a total of 33 contracts have been completed this year. There are 52 additional contracts that are set to expire by the end of 2018.

Going forward, Bethany will be sending letters to Districts giving them notice that their contracts will expire in 60 days. This will allow the projects to completed on time or allow for Districts to request a time extension. Bethany noted that the last Round 17 contract is about to come off the books.

Round 24 Update

There is not much to update because the RFP is still open. A Q&A was posted on June 20th, clarifying previously submitted questions and some policy changes. The deadline for questions to be submitted for Round 24 is August 6th. The deadline for proposals to be submitted is August 20th and the goal is to have a ranked list for the State Committee in October.

Riparian Buffer Evaluation Project, Julie Berlinski

Julie developed the final version of the Riparian Buffer Evaluation guidelines. The evaluation protocol identifies the type of BMP, the land use, the functionality, continuity of the buffer and reporting if there are invasive species. She currently has 10-12 visits planned over the next few weeks. The SWCC thanked all Districts in advance for their cooperation.

Bethany noted that there is a Technical Advisory Committee meeting in Washington County on August 2nd. We will be visiting four stops including a riparian buffer system.

Engineering, Training, Conservation Approval Authority Update, Tim Clark

Tim stated that the State Board of Education governs professional engineering (PE) certification and they have the power to determine what practice systems require PE design and what does not. It is important to understand which of our standard practices are Professional Engineering or designated as "conservation practices."

Job Approval Authority is an NRCS program which allows unlicensed professional to design engineering practices, however they have been approved to do so by the approval system provided by the USDA-NRCS. The USDA State Engineer oversees this process. The State Committee has developed its own authority system. However, we were unable to approve any technical PE standards (i.e. manure storage). The state process is designed only for "conservation practices."

Through this practice, students take coursework that culminates in a design project. Tim reviews the project and if it is deemed acceptable, that person is granted conservation approval authority. Tim currently has roughly 12 students in various levels of the program. Once they complete the course, Tim mentors the students and certifies their projects at the end. Brian added that this opportunity is made known every year to new employees at the Conservation Skills Workshop.

Tim has 11,000 total students worldwide. He displayed the course portal and noted that he has students in India and Pakistan. The international students are not submitting plans for review but Tim does

answer questions if he is able. To measure traffic on Tim's site, he signed up for Google Analytics to monitor the hydrology course site and the tools and references wiki site he runs. The information provides number of users as well as number of new users.

Tim also sits on the State Technical Guide Committee, an NRCS committee. They meet once a month to oversee the operation of the State Technical Guide (FOTG). Some states have different FOTGs per region, however NYS is covered by the same FOTG. The FOTG is where the standards are housed. There are five sections: General References, Natural Resources Information, Conservation Management Systems, Practice Standards and Specifications and Conservation Effects. States can adjust these standards to address state specific issues. They are then posted to site and become standard practice within the state. Old material is currently being deleted and new material is being updated on a regular basis.

Source Water Protection Program (Riparian Buffer – Easement Program), Bethany Bzduch

Bethany hopes that the program is nearing its final stages of development. She is hopeful that the program will be approved by the end of July and rolled out in August. In April, there was a webinar (attached) for Districts who would be eligible for the program. The webinar laid out key elements and Bethany is presenting the program as it is today. She is also seeking out direction from the committee on certain aspects:

The first: Should the program consider both long-term 50-year easements in addition to perpetual easements?

The second: Should the program require a 3-year establishment and maintenance plan for all planted forested buffers and should the program allow reimbursement of those costs?

Discussion ensued. The Committee passed the following motions:

R. Montesi moved to approve the addition of a 50-year term easement in addition to perpetual easements for the program; seconded by E. Goodman. Motion passed; carried.

E. Goodman moved to approve the recommendation to require a 3-year establishment and maintenance plan for all planted forest buffers and to allow reimbursement of those costs for the Source Water Protection Program; seconded by D. Brass. Motion passed; carried.

Partnership Reports / Advisory Member Reports / Public Comments

PJ Emerick, SWCC – PJ reported that it is business as usual in Central New York and hopes that project closeouts continue to roll in.

Victor DiGiacomo, SWCC – Victor reported that project construction has been taking place in many Districts of Western New York.

Jennifer Clifford, SWCC – Jennifer has been working on project closeouts and State Aid Program matters.

Ryan Cunningham, SWCC – Reported that CNMP and AEM Base work has been very steady and he and Ron have been working on planner certification and District Tier 3A trainings across the state.

Steve Lorraine, CDEA – Finalizing schedule for Conservation Skills Workshop, the schedule will be out in early August. Steve has also been working on Water Quality Symposium planning for 2019.

Bethany Bzduch, SWCC – Noted that she is working with Dave Behm on a conservation easement source water protection class for the Conservation Workshop. It will be a four-day class with time in the field. CAFO Round 2 Q & A documents have been posted to SharePoint.

Julie Berlinski, SWCC – Working on Story Maps and Buffer Evaluations.

Tim Clark, SWCC – Noted that the NYS Erosion Sediment and Control Certificate Program Exam is coming up at the CSW. For more information, contact Tim.

AJ Battaglia, SWCC – Working on CRF Round 3 Plans of Work. There are a total of 28 projects and contracts will be rolled out soon.

Judy Littrell, SWCC – Ordered AEM hats and shirts. Has been working to get reading materials ready for the NYS Fair in August. Judy has also been working on the AEM state award and slideshow for Empire Farm Days.

Darrin Hickling, SWCC Voting Member, NY FB – Reporting that the NYFB is hosting a Commodity Committee Summit webinar next week. Committee meetings will also take place soon. Noted that legislative session was fairly successful as the ten-year property tax exemption was renewed.

Lori Dandignac, USDA-FSA – Working on rolling out CRP Grassland. Due to the recent weather systems, be aware of severe damage to local farms. Federal assistance cost-share funds may be available for land damage.

Brian Steinmuller, SWCC – The NY Soil Health Summit will take place on July 18 in Albany. The Source Water Protection effort has been renewed with DOH and DEC. DEC has taken the lead on hosting interagency meetings. Brian did not report on the Strategic Plan today, however he noted that we are in the final months of our previous five-year plan. There will be a District survey coming out soon and will send out meeting requests to look at our strategic direction going forward. The committee will not meet in August.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 18th videoconference (Albany and Syracuse physical locations)

Meeting Adjourned at 12:46 pm.

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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