

# State Technical Committee Meeting

NRCS/FSA State Office, Tolland, CT

January 23, 2013

## NOTES

**Participants:** Kip Kolesinskas, American Farmland Trust; Bonnie Burr, UConn Extension Systems; Joseph Borelli, UConn Extension Systems; Lisa Coverdale, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Joyce Purcell, NRCS; Arde Ramthun, NRCS; Nancy Ferlow, NRCS; Debbie Surabian, NRCS; Carol Donzella, NRCS; Diane Blais, NRCS; Mark Edmonds, NRCS; Barb Alexander, NRCS; David Askew, North Central Conservation District; John Guskowski, Eastern CT RC&D; Wayne Woodard, The Nature Conservancy; Joe Wettemann, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP); Rick Jacobson, DEEP – Wildlife Division; Judy Wilson, DEEP – Wildlife Division; Larry Rousseau, DEEP – Forestry Division; Devon Marsden, Farm Service Agency; Lance Shannon, CT Department of Agriculture; Katherine Winslow, CT Department of Agriculture; Henry Talmage, CT Farm Bureau; Don Tuller, CT Farm Bureau/Producer; Denise Savageau, CT Association of Conservation Districts; Abbie Maynard, CT Agricultural Experiment Station; Steve Winnett, Environmental Protection Agency; Rob Hust, DEEP – Water Bureau; Scott Gravatt, Eastern CT Conservation District; Suellen Kozey McCuin, CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation

### **WELCOME/REVIEW AGENDA/ INTRODUCTIONS – Joyce Purcell, NRCS**

Joyce Purcell opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Introductions followed.

### **REVIEW MINUTES FROM JULY MEETING – Joyce Purcell, NRCS**

Minutes were accepted - there were no corrections.

### **OPENING COMMENTS – Lisa Coverdale, CT NRCS State Conservationist**

Lisa welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. She spoke briefly of her background working with NRCS, and her excitement about coming to Connecticut. She is still settling in, and looking for a horse-friendly home.

### **FARM BILL PROGRAM UPDATES**

#### CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS/PAYMENT SCHEDULE – Nancy Ferlow

Nancy announced that there is \$176,000 in CIG grants for FY-13. There has been no federal or state release yet – possibly February. CIG grants are available to all, except federal agencies. A minimum of \$75,000 per grant, with a 50/50 match, for innovative technology that addressed resource concerns, will be accepted. The NRCS Payment Schedule is available on the CT NRCS website for review. The FY-13 costs are regionally set; however, comments for FY-14 are welcomed. Email suggestions/changes, with justification and approximate costs to Nancy at [nancy.ferlow@ct.usda.gov](mailto:nancy.ferlow@ct.usda.gov).

#### NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT 590 & COMPOSTING – Arde Ramthun

Arde provided a Power Point presentation and handouts on “Composting Revisited – An old solution to a continuing problem”. The purpose of the presentation was to show that farms with excess nutrients have options.

#### FARM BILL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES UPDATES – Joyce Purcell

Joyce announced that CT’s FY-13 allocation is \$3.5M; \$1.6M for EQIP which includes organic, energy, seasonal high tunnels, forestry, LIS and water quality, with \$1.9M for CIG, beginning farmers, limited resource farmers, AFO-

CAFO, aquaculture, cropland, pasture/hayland, wildlife, planning and local concerns, i.e. soil health and equine. Currently ranking first round of applications; batching for second round ends February 15, 2013 with a ranking date of March 1, 2013. A new AGI form CCC-933 is now available and being sent out to program participants - once returned funds will be obligated. New irrigation systems will be signed up under AMA.

#### SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT – Debbie Surabian

Debbie reported that training will be forthcoming regarding bone preservation for shellfish management plans; a new *Apps* has been developed for the web soil survey (An App, or application, is a piece of software that can run on the Internet, on your computer, or on your phone or other electronic device); the development of the Coastal and Marine Ecological classification system (CMECS) which classifies shallow marine and coastal ecosystems for use and management; and the *Map Coast* underwater mapping.

#### **ROUND ROBIN PARTNER UPDATES**

**Denise Savageau – CT Association of Conservation Districts** reported that they are continuing their work on the new Farm Bill; utilizing the technical assistance funds to provide more assistance in the field; working within the new guidelines for the 319 grants, and appreciated the opportunity to talk with the NRCS Chief.

**Kip Kolesinskas – American Farmland Trust** reported that the Working Lands Alliance is hiring a new Director to fill Leah's position; milk-shed studies are available on their website; working on a SARE grant for *Farmer Access* (webinar/rent/lease farmland); received another grant to work on improving the knowledge of agriculture in CT (risk management); and the new Planning Guide for Municipalities will be released on February 23, 2013. He also reported on the livestock guide/regulation guide; planning for another Practitioner's retreat in April, and continuing work with the Conte Refuge.

**Suellen Kozey McCuin – CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation** reported on the status of the \$300k CTA grant from NRCS which provided training opportunities (CNMPs and Irrigation), and visits to local farms. They also were able to attend national meetings, and build capacity. Visits to the Capital have been ongoing to help restore funding to the Council and Districts.

**David Askew - North Central Conservation District** reported that they service 30 towns and provide active assistance to municipalities; are the wetland agent for two towns, and have been working on the CTA grant from NRCS. They have been able to hire another staff member and have completed several CNMPs and water management plans. They are currently working on a compost tumbler project and have completed several storm water projects.

**Wayne Woodward – The Nature Conservancy** reported that they are working on a new strategic plan and are in the process of aligning the CT Chapter with the national plan; emergency watershed protection program (floodplain easements); large scale forested floodplains; removal of small dams, and mitigation of sea changes.

**Judy Wilson – CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection - Wildlife Division** reported that they have had a long history working with NRCS; they own 30k acres of forested land; 1200 acres are rented to farmers; they utilize the WHIP program to manage wildlife habitat; they have 10 active projects under their *Landowner Incentive*

Program; they work with NRCS and USFWS on the *New England Cottontail Initiative*, and are producing a new newsletter.

**Steve Winnett – Environmental Protection Agency** reported that they are working with DEEP and NRCS through their 319 grant program; the rules of the program are changing for 2013; monitoring may or may not be included.

**Don Tuller – CT Farm Bureau/Producer** reported that the Bureau has had to defend itself at the state level for funding; revising pesticide regulations; working on the Farm Bill especially section that focuses on agricultural labor and immigration issues; member on the Governor's council on Agriculture Development.

**Henry Talmage – CT Farm Bureau** reported on the National Farm Bureau meeting in Nashville; Community Investment Grant; the importance of Farmland Preservation, and the work that the CT Department of Agriculture and NRCS is doing to save farmland.

**Bonnie Burr – UConn Cooperative Extension System** reported on the re-aligning of their structure by implementing a team perspective; expanding their resource base; getting back on the radar with the Farm Bill for funding; hill visits; grants; adding a new Economist with horticulture expertise to their staff, and a new Environmental Economist to be joining the staff this spring.

**Joseph Borelli – UCONN Cooperative Extension System** reported that the Risk Management program was funded for 2013; working with American Farmland Trust, Farm Bureau to help farmers with business planning and applying for grants and loans - the *Scaling Up* program is a 2 year (10 week) program for farmers.

**Rob Hust – CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection -Water Bureau** reported on the 319 non-point source programs, its new guidelines, implementation and water management plans; forthcoming LIS TMDL revisions; Water Quality Initiative funds; statewide NPS plans to be re-done; report to Congress on impaired waters and plans to fix them; nutrient management strategies; classification of stream flow regulations; remediation programs; upcoming *green* planning conference, and looking to host a meeting with new STC on water related programs.

**Katherine Winslow – CT Department of Agriculture** reported on the Farmland Preservation Program; the new Community Farm Preservation pilot program for small farms has \$2M in funding and received 10 applications which are going through the appraisal stage now.

**John Guskowski– Eastern CT RC&D** reported on the Advocate Program – proving assistance in developing local agricultural commissions; CT Farm Energy Program funded by Rural Development; 2<sup>nd</sup> annual CT Agriculture Commission Conference on Feb. 23, 2013, and the April soil health conference.

**Scott Gravatt – Eastern CT Conservation District** reported on being a non-profit and struggling to meet payroll; benefits of the NRCS CTA grant; relying on grant income, especially 319 grants; water quality focus on agricultural and urban sectors; stream gauge monitoring; promotion of horse manure management; installation of a fish way utilizing WHIP funds, and a tree filter project.

**Joe Wettemann – CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection – Water Permitting** reported on water permitting issues and the draft general permit for CAFOs.

**Lance Shannon – CT Department of Agriculture** reported on the Farmland Preservation Program to date has preserved 34 farms/4200 acres/costing \$20M; an ag waste program to piggy-back with EQIP; more than 50 applications have been received, second round in 2013.

**Larry Rosseau – CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection – Forestry Division** reported on the benefits of utilizing the EQIP program; new SMART software program being implemented; ongoing Emerald Ash Borer research and the need to cut down trees to see how wide spread the problem is.

**Devon Marsden – Farm Service Agency** reported that Marsha Jette retired; waiting for the Farm Bill to be rolled out; the milk program extension; micro loans up to \$35k with less paperwork available to farmers, and new staff in the state office.

**OTHER ITEMS:** None

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** April 17, 2013

**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Lisa thanked everyone for attending and looks forward to working with everyone.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 PM

Submitted by Carol Donzella, NRCS, Hamden