

Kentucky State Technical Committee Minutes  
May 3, 2012  
Lexington, Kentucky

The meeting was convened by Karen Woodrich, State Conservationist, at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Woodrich thanked the attendees for coming. She briefed the group on the Nutrient Management Specialist position that is open and directed them to the USAJob site. Ms. Woodrich spoke on how to utilize technology and her plans to promote the Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative. She introduced Leonard Jordan, Regional Conservationist, visiting from the NRCS National Headquarters in Washington, DC

Mr. Jordan addressed the group saying how happy he was to be in Kentucky and what a beautiful state it is. He discussed NRCS's challenge to deliver quality services with a decreasing workforce. He briefly discussed the new Farm Bill and said that NRCS would likely continue to focus their program efforts through initiatives and streamlining. He spoke highly of the partnership NRCS enjoys with so many groups including those present at the meeting and said that these partnerships result in positive impacts for the agency.

Bob Finch, Executive Officer for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), discussed the USDA's Farm Service Agency's Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) which provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest land in order to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster. To be eligible for EFRP, nonindustrial private forest land must:

- Have existing tree cover (or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster occurred and is suitable for growing trees).
- Be owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation, or other private legal entity, that has definitive decision-making authority over the land.

Participants may receive financial assistance up to 75 percent of the cost to implement approved emergency forest restoration practices. See the attached "Kentucky Implements Emergency Forest Restoration Program" for additional information.

Tom Fern, State Director for Rural Development (RD), addressed the challenges the agency is facing due to the budget cut-backs. RD processed twenty-four employee retirements this year and is now on a hiring freeze.

Leah MacSwords, State Forester and Director of the Kentucky Division of Forestry, gave a presentation on the damage to the Division's Morgan County tree nursery from the March 2012 tornado that hit the West Liberty area. Ms. MacSwords showed a power point of the destruction to the Morgan County Nursery and expressed the urgency of the nursery's repair. For more information and to see photographs of the damage, please see the PowerPoint entitled "Tornado

Damage to Morgan County Nursery” which is posted on the State Technical Committee website (address below).

Deena Wheby, assistant state conservationist for programs, discussed two new NRCS efforts: Working Lands for Wildlife and the National Water Quality Initiative. **Working Lands for Wildlife** (WLFW) is a joint effort between the USFWS and NRCS. Technical and financial assistance will be made available for the WLFW through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP.) Nationwide, NRCS usually gets about \$85 million for WHIP. In FY 2012, only \$50 million was received (a 41% decrease.) It was decided that the limited funds would be focused on seven at-risk species across the nation. Persons in Kentucky, who applied for regular WHIP in FY 2012, will have their concerns addressed through EQIP. In Kentucky, the Golden Winged Warbler (GWWA) will be the WLFW species. The effort will be available to landusers in parts of Harlan, Bell, and Letcher Counties at elevations above 2,500 (habitat for the GWWA). A workgroup met in Harlan on March 15, 2012, to kick off the effort. Core and supporting practices have been identified. The primary Core practice in Kentucky will be Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 645). A WLFW Subcommittee meeting was held on April 10, 2012 to discuss the effort, and to develop screening and local ranking questions. Contracts must be entered by July 2, 2012. The **National Water Quality Initiative** (NWQI) is a new nationwide initiative to address water quality in small watersheds that have an impaired, threatened, TMDL, or other critical stream or waterbody. NRCS State Conservationists were instructed to hold five percent of their general EQIP allocation for this initiative. For Kentucky, this amount is \$582,000. States were instructed to select up to three 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC-12) watersheds for this initiative. Kentucky started out with 550 HUC-12 watersheds that met basic criteria. Those watersheds were narrowed down using a number of factors, and great input from the Kentucky Division of Water, and then later from a state technical committee subcommittee (which met on April 10, 2012). After all the input was considered, as well as available NRCS and partner resources, the following three HUC-12s were selected: **Bennettstown-Little River** (Christian County, with a little in Trigg; 234 farms; 24,600 total acres with 15,500 acres in farms); **Clarks Run** (Boyle County; 258 farms; 18,000 total acres with 11,000 acres in farms); and **Headwaters Hinkston Creek** (Montgomery County, with a little in Bath; 298 farms; 24,000 total acres with 15,700 acres in farms). Contracts must be entered by July 2, 2012. For more details on the WLFW and the NWQI including maps, please see the PowerPoint entitled “**WLFW and NWQI State Tech Co May\_3\_2012.pptx**” which is posted on the State Technical Committee website.

Kate Little, resource conservationist for programs, presented an update on the Environmental Quality Incentives Programs (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). Kentucky received \$13.5M in Financial Assistance for FY2012 to administer EQIP. \$2.8M of that was earmarked for use in the National Initiatives. Kentucky held two application periods for General EQIP applications. The first period ended November 15, 2012 and the second

application period ended February 29, 2012. All High and Medium priority applications from those two application periods were funded.

The National Initiatives had three application periods in FY2012. The first application period ended February 3, 2012. Kentucky funded 3 On-Farm Energy applications for \$6,088, 131 Seasonal High Tunnel applications for \$733,546 and 1 Organic application for \$15,276. The second application period ended March 30, 2012. Kentucky funded 4 On-Farm Energy applications for \$7,505, 80 Seasonal High Tunnel applications for \$456,263, and 7 Organic applications for \$88,045. The third National Initiatives application period ends June 1, 2012.

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) has had two application periods this FY. The first one ended November 15, 2012. The second one ended February 29, 2012. 35 applications were funded for \$784,877. A third application period is underway and will end on May 31, 2012. Kentucky would like to utilize the remaining \$500,000 in MRBI funds that we have available in the Kentucky MRBI project areas before the end of the FY.

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) is new for FY2012. Kentucky was mandated to set aside \$582,000 of our General EQIP funds to work on water quality projects within three designated impaired watersheds in Kentucky. The first application period for NWQI ends May 18, 2012. The second application period ends June 15, 2012.

Kentucky did not receive any funds for WHIP applications this year. At the end of the application period which ended November 15, 2012, Kentucky had 65 eligible WHIP applications with requests of over \$400,000. When we found out we would not receive any Financial Assistance to fund those applications we were given the option to fund them through EQIP using our General EQIP funds. We created a Wildlife Account and with the help of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Farm Bill Staff we were able to transfer the 65 applications to EQIP. We ended up funding a total of 62 requests for \$347,589.

For more information please see the PowerPoint entitled **“EQIP and WHIP State Tech Co May\_3\_2012.pptx”** which is posted on the State Technical Committee website.

Randy Smallwood, state agronomist, discussed the progress of the KY 590 standard. The initial meeting of the KY 590 committee was held on March 21<sup>st</sup>. This meeting covered the National 590 standard and presented a timeframe to complete the new KY 590 standard. This meeting also covered the particular tasks that each entity was responsible for completing.

The standard specifies working with KY Division of Water, KY Division of Conservation, and the University of KY to develop a standard that meets Federal and State objectives. Those partners were at the first meeting and will continue to meet until we have agreement on what the Draft KY 590 Standard will look like.

A teleconference with State Agronomists from other states surrounding KY is scheduled for May 9th. Randy will compare our P index and P thresholds to theirs and report back to the group.

The second meeting of the group is scheduled for May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

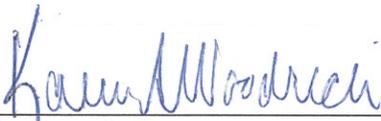
We hope to Draft the new KY 590 in August and at that point we would be ready to present the Draft for comments.

Regarding Food Security Act Compliance, there will probably be more people out of compliance this upcoming crop year, which will create a huge workload for NRCS. This will be associated with more land being brought in to production and farmers cropping without following approved conservation systems. FSA is now training their employees. NRCS has already received compliance training.

Jack Kuhn, assistant state conservationist for natural resources conservation planning, presented WRP updates. He covered the WRP application cut-offs for ranking (November 30, February 15, May 2, and July 6) as well as the financial assistance and acreage allocations. He also discussed the WRP Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC) for 2012. Jack discussed the various forces driving land prices in Kentucky and surrounding States and how this is factored into the GARC. He mentioned that May is Wetlands Month and noted that 150 Kentucky landowners have enrolled more than 18,000 acres into WRP since 1996. He informed the group of a new Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) effort in the Mayfield area of the state. Financial assistance for WREP is being provided through the MRBI as a result of a proposal submitted by The Nature Conservancy. For more information and to view the maps, please see the WRP PowerPoint and other documents posted on the State Technical Committee website.

The next State Technical Committee Meeting is scheduled to be held on September 6, 2012.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.



Karen A. Woodrich  
State Conservationist



Date

Attachments may be found on the Kentucky State Technical Committee webpage, which is located at [http://www.ky.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/StTechComm/StTechComm\\_MAY2012.html](http://www.ky.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/StTechComm/StTechComm_MAY2012.html):

- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting sign-in sheets
- Emergency Forest Restoration Program fact sheet (Finch)
- WLFW and NWQI PowerPoint (Wheby)
- EQIP and WHIP Updates PowerPoint (Little)
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Updates PowerPoint (Kuhn)
  - WRP Ranking Region Map for Kentucky (Kuhn)
  - WRP Landowner Letter (Kuhn)
- Tornado Damage to Morgan County Nursery PowerPoint (MacSwords)