

**PR STATE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
JUNE 26, 2013, 9:00 A.M.  
SALON VILLA PESQUERA  
CAMUY, PR**

**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

**Edwin Almodóvar, NRCS  
José A. Castro, NRCS  
Fernando Arroyo, NRCS  
Ismael Matos, NRCS  
Magaly Figueroa, FS  
Marisol Morales, NRCS  
José Gilberto Martínez, FWS  
Iván Llerandi, FWS  
José A. Sustache, DRNA  
José B. Ramírez, SCD Suroeste**

**Ramón L. Rivera, DNER  
Juan Rodríguez, FCPR  
Ana M. Román, FWS  
Norberto Gabriel, (representing  
APHIS-PPQ)  
Nilda González, NRCS  
Winston Martínez, FSA  
Mariana León Pérez, SUNIA, FWS  
María Cristina López, SUNIA, FWS**

**The moderator, Fernando Arroyo, announced that the attendance list was passed around. Minutes and agenda were distributed by email previously. He provided information about possible places to lunch and the facilities for ladies and men rooms.**

**Welcome and Introduction:**

**Edwin Almodóvar, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and began by thanking the group for their attendance to the meeting. The attendees introduced themselves.**

**Edwin Almodóvar moves on to briefly discuss with the group budget status. Informed that José A. Castro and Fernando Arroyo will be providing detailed information about NRCS programs.**

**The mayor of Camuy, Hon. Edwin García, quickly made a presentation and welcomed the group to their facilities in the Municipality of Camuy. Expressed his desire the attendees feel comfortable at Villa Parguera Conference Room.**

**NRCS Programs Status - José A. Castro and Fernando Arroyo, Assistants Director:**

- Arroyo and Castro spent considerable time discussing programs status.**
- This year we have received approximately 680 applications for EQIP.**
- Informed that by July 1, 2013 all what we have in Preapproved and Approved status will be obligated.**
- During FY-2013, we haven't had a Watershed project giving us the opportunity to promote other projects such as on-farm energy and seasonal high tunnel national initiatives. Ismael Matos, Leader of the Organic and High Tunnel National Initiative will provide information about this initiative.**
- A preliminary design of Coloso Project was prepared.**

- **Recommended to constitute a new Sub-committee for the new initiatives High Tunnel and Organic. Ismael Matos was appointed to be the Chairman of the Subcommittee.**

**Ecological Science - Marisol Morales, Biologist - (represented Jaime Valentín, SRC)**

- **CIG - Eleven (11) proposals were received, nine (9) qualified for evaluation. The State will make the announcement after the National announcement.**
- **Payment Schedule – we have 63 Conservation Practices for financial assistance. Payment schedule template was prepared for each of the conservation practices. We were affected because there were many practices with lower cost. We received a fair treatment only in 6 practices.**
- **Nutrients - The State had the opportunity to request local components and of 79 requested only 31 was approved. There are some in the evaluation process.**

**Ismael Matos, Agronomist:**

- **Seasonal High Tunnel Practice(SHT) - is a polyethylene-covered structure called a “Hoop House” and National Organic Program (NOP) reduces or eliminates chemical pesticides and fertilizer. These are two EQIP initiatives that provide technical and financial assistance to farmers.**
- **Seasonal high tunnel Practice – 23 applications were accepted and ranked of which 10 were approved. New Payment Schedule needs to address cost of transportation and irrigation for these “Hoops.”**
- **NOP and SHT Initiatives - Have been visiting farmers across the Island encouraging participation in the organic and seasonal high tunnel initiatives gathering farm inventory information to develop a conservation plan. Also, assisting them in completing the application and digitalizing the farm.**
  - ✓ **Three (3) applications out of 8 were approved for cost sharing. Need to contact a pest control specialist for organic IPM. Will find out if the payment schedule provides payment for that service or the new payment schedule could incorporate this item.**
  - ✓ **Norberto Gabriel from APHIS PPQ recommended contacting Carlos Rodríguez, Specialist in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) from el Bosque Seco (FWS), to help in certifying organic farmers.**
  - ✓ **Mentioned that farmers generating \$5,000 or less in products by year are exempt from certification but should comply with the requirements of the National Organic Program.**
  - ✓ **Brought up that NRCS 2014 Cost List should be adjusted to organic needs since pest control, weed control and farm management is more expensive than conventional farming.**
- **People Garden - Have received requests for technical assistance and among others, assisted:**
  - ✓ **Labra School in Santurce with their school garden. Made recommendations on areas where garden could improve and on soil analysis and nutrient management.**

- ✓ *People's Garden in Capetillo, Río Piedras – Summer Camp - Prepared a workshop on General Ecology and Food Security. Each camper student planted two pots—one for the garden and the other to bring it to their home.*
- ✓ *Community garden at Sector Las Monjas in Santurce. Established a water catchment system for garden irrigation and assisted in compost provider—UPR, Río Piedras Campus.*
- ✓ *Was invited by the Superior High School, Carlos González, in Aguada to talk about food security. Made the presentation and established a school garden in their backyard.*

**SUNIA Internship 2013:**

- *Ana Román (FWS) introduced the two students participating in the SUNIA Internship 2013 Program, supervised by her—Mariana León Pérez and María Cristina López Peña.*
- *The Program is a FWS and El Fideicomiso initiative, Jovaner Division.*
- *There is an Agreement between FWS and NRCS.*
- *Sidmarie Padrón leads this Program.*
- *In addition to Mariana and María Cristina; José Martínez, agronomist from the RUM, is working in the Jovaner Biologist Program. Last year they worked with the trees production (17 species to be provided to the farmers. They can incorporate those species in their farms.*
- *This year the students are working with two important sectors.*
  - ✓ *María Cristina is assisting the farmers in obtaining the trees. She will be the link with the farmers for NRCS and FWS. She will be also in charge for the arrangement to deliver the trees.*
  - ✓ *Mariana is collecting information of all activities at El Río Loco Watershed to be entered in the PR Map. Everyone will know what is being doing in the Watershed. All Agencies will be integrated with the same purpose.*
  - ✓ *Juan Rodríguez from El Fideicomiso thanked the FWS for the invitation to collaborate with SUNIA initiative. He mentioned that it was an excellent selection of students.*
  - ✓ *Fernando Arroyo from NRCS extended his appreciation on behalf of the NRCS for the work these students are doing.*
  - ✓ *Edwin Almodóvar, NRCS Director, will find out the possibility to cover travel expenses for these students to attend the FWS Regional Meeting in Atlanta and make a presentation there on what they are doing in the program.*

**Subcommittee Report (Wildlife/Forestry/Wetland):**

- *MOU PRDNER, NRCS and USFWS (Tree Production), MOU status.*

*There is a commitment from DNER appointed to finish with this process as soon as possible. Document was sent to Forestry Bureau Director for revision. This MOU should be finalized and signed soon.*

*Ernesto Diaz mentioned the possibility to propagate trees in PR and deliver them to Haiti. The first step is to identify groups interested to be the point of contact for this initiative.*

✓ *USFWS Habitat Restoration Programs Monitoring Initiative*

*The Subcommittee collaborates with two graduate students (UPR-Utuado, University of Michigan) in their research projects, introducing them to landowners with active or inactive shade coffee plantations that were converted or restored under FWS/NRCS Initiative.*

*SOPI EWW Monitoring Effort at properties under agreement with FWS and NRCS. Three properties will be monitor in collaboration with Fideicomiso.*

*Río Loco Monitoring Initiative- SUNIA Internship (Story Map) will give us info regarding the potential monitoring efforts necessary for this initiative.*

*Ana Román mentioned Surf riders could help us with the water quality monitoring because they have previous knowledge on this.*

*PRDNER is dividing the areas to monitor the coral reefs. Guánica may be a target for this monitoring.*

✓ *Inadequate Habitat Fish and Wildlife – Habitat Degradation*

*Resource Concern: Loss of habitat*

*Causes: Insufficient shelter/cover, insufficient food, insufficient water quality or quantity, fragmented habitat.*

*Solutions: Next boxes or platforms, brush piles, rock piles, food plots and/or leave portions of crop fields unharvest, buffer, windbreaks, among others.*

*Note: We evaluated the planning criteria for conservation planning. We were looking a tool useful for Puerto Rico reality.*

*Stream Visual Assessment (tool utilize to measure habitat degradation).*

✓ *Stream Visual Assessment (National vs. Hawaii)*

*We evaluated both assessments and we believe the one for Hawaii better describe the conditions on the Island. The subcommittee believes parameters from both assessments could be used for Puerto Rico. This still pending of further discussions.*

✓ *Wildlife Habitat Index (We evaluate the following 3 indexes):*

- *Pasture*
- *Cropland*
- *Forestland*

✓ *Payment Schedule 2014- We are evaluating the payment schedule to recommend new practices. We are identifying management needs on properties.*

- *Trees Treatment at Nurseries*

*Alex Segarra from Servicio de Extensión Agrícola provided technical assistance and advice regarding the step by step process that we should follow to “clean” the nursery trees before move them out of the Island.*

*Fernando Arroyo suggested David Ramírez y Aixa Ramirez from Sanidad Vegetal as POC for this process.*

- ✓ *Trees delivery to Culebra, Vieques, Virgin Islands*
  - *This is a real possibility but we have to create a protocol to include the Servicio de Extension Agrícola in the process. They will provide the certification after the “cleaning” is done.*
  - *During the STC, they mentioned that we should recommend the propagation of plant material in Vieques and Culebra. NRCS should promote more programs such as CIG in these municipalities)*
    - *Focus Areas 2014-2015*
  - *The areas will be discussed later in the next subcommittee meeting.*

*WRAP UP & Adjourn (Edwin Almodóvar)*

*The Chairman closed the meeting by lauding Ana Román for her support to the SUNIA Interns and special recognition was articulated to Maria Cristina and Mariana for their excellent job.*

*In closing, Edwin expressed his appreciation to the group for their good presentations and informed that the next State Technical Committee meeting will be on September 11, 2013. Details of the meeting will be provided by Nilda González.*

*There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.*

*Recorded and transcribed by Nilda González*