

PR STATE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 17, 2013, 9:30 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM
TARS, MAYAGUEZ, PR

MINUTES

Attendees:

José A. Castro, USDA NRCS
Fernando Arroyo, USDA NRCS
Jaime Valentín, USDA NRCS
Ricardo Goenaga, USDA ARS
Edwin Muñiz, US FWS
Ana M. Román, US FWS
Iván Llerandi, US FWS
Evelyn Huertas, US EPA
Bernice Pérez, USDA FSA
Carlos Cabán, SEA
Gloria M. Torres Agrait, JCA

Magaly Figueroa, USDA FS
José L. Rivera, USDA NRCS
Edgardo González, DRNA
Isela Ortiz Toro, SCD Suroeste
Juan Rodríguez, FCPR
Ramón Rivera Lebrón, DNER
Lisette Fas, Cofiesencia
Javier Rivera, CPR
Jackeline Pérez, CPR

Excused:

The following members were excused: *Edwin Almodóvar, USDA NRCS; Nilda González, USDA NRCS; Víctor Trinidad, EPA; Leyinska Wiscovitch, APHIS*

Welcome and Introduction:

José A. Castro called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. thanking the group for their attendance. He excused the Director, as he is travelling for an official meeting. Castro will preside the meeting. He also indicated that the Moderator Fernando Arroyo is on the way to the meeting. Announced that the attendance list was passed around and the agenda and minutes were sent by Nilda, previously.

Following the introduction and announcements, Ricardo Goenaga welcomed the audience to TARS facilities.

Following the agenda, Castro asked the group to introduce themselves.

Castro went on and provided detailed information about NRCS programs, such as:

- **Organic Farming** – *Additional funds were assigned.*
- *Talked about budget constraints.*
- **Water Quality** *Río Grande Añasco and CIG - were selected for funds assignment.*
 - ✓ *Match funds.*
 - ✓ *Cooperative agreements*
- *Funds for energy saving by equipment replacement.*
- *Dairy industry is installing energy saving equipment.*

- **Organic agriculture** – welcomed to join forces. Funds should be obligated by July 1, 2013. The CTA program has an assignment of 91% for technical assistance. **Carlos Cabán (SEA)** recommended to talk with **Dr. Monroig and Eng. Eric Irizarry** from the Agriculture Department, excellent resources to develop the technology. **Ricardo Goenaga** has a concern about the erosion control. Castro clarified that the erosion is in the farm road not in the cropland area. The NRCS is applying a new practice this year to reduce the erosion energy. Informed that Agricultural machinery employees need to be trained. **Magaly Figueroa** indicated that she handed to **Marisol Morales** a list of interested people in the establishment of practices in the forest area.
- **Carlos Cabán** asked on what NRCS is doing to improve pasture. Castro indicated that there are practices such as pasture planting, nutrients management and weed control. Also it will be possible to use legumes in pasture as an alternative. **Ricardo Goenaga** indicated that practices are missing for the erosion control in the farm roads and it will be prudent to educate the developers. Castro explained that the gutter practice count with a standard to provide engineering services and design of small structures (road of 10 ft. wide). **Magaly Figueroa (FS)** indicated that \$30,000 Forestry was assigned to DNER for vegetative material. Also there are Stewardship funds to create Management Plans. **Vieques - Culebra** – There is the need to work with the invasive aspect and pests. FWS should take the necessary steps. **Enrique Santiago** informed that St Croix has management plans prepared by **Marilyn Chacro** through the Partnership Program. Interested people should coordinate with her. Castro informed that there are WHIP funds to be used with the invasive species.

Fenando Arroyo (NRCS)

- **Bahía de Guánica-Río Loco Watershed Project**
 - ✓ **Bahía de Guánica-Río Loco Watershed Project** - The project is going on successfully. The implementation of the irrigation reservoirs, sediment basins and water conveyances are over 50% completed. We have to monitor the implementation and look for results. He recommended hiring master or doctoral students interested in work with that. It is recommended to convene a meeting to work with the monitoring of this project. Mentioned that the students Ramirez and Chaparro are prepared to evaluate that work. He also suggested using the “Microempresas” mechanism for the evaluation of the project.
- **Valle de Lajas**
 - ✓ Informed about the interest of the Suroeste Soil Conservation District and the Department of Agriculture (PR) to work with this project. The Conservation District will start the initiative with a proposal to the Department of Agriculture of Puerto Rico.

Jaime Valentín (NRCS)

- **CIG Funds** – At National Level closed. State Level closes on April 22, 2013. These funds are to be used with innovative ideas to be implemented. Actually we expect about 100

applications. The procedure is that the interested person submits all required documentation then, these applications are evaluated by a task force who recommends the best innovative idea.

- **People's Garden** – The first people garden was established in TARS, Mayaguez. To participate on this initiative, the interested person should be registered at National level and NRCS provides technical assistance.

José L. Rivera (NRCS)

- **Energy**
 - ✓ Provided a briefing on EQIP Program 2011-12 and 2013. Sixty four (64) contracts in 2011-12.
 - ✓ Talked about the Practice 374, Energetic Improvement in Agricultural Enterprises, building with energy saving equipment for year 2013.

Wildlife, Wetland and Forestry Subcommittee:

- Considerable discussion on the conversion from sun to shade coffee.
- **Tree planting** – In FY 2012, 15,000 for Río Loco area. Future actions are to provide technical assistance to 36 active projects in 2013 and 30 projects for FY-2014.
- FWS delivered 119,445 trees in FY-2012 and 260,000 trees from 2010-2012.
- Alexis Martinez, Director de Cazeria (DNER), interested to restore abandoned areas to attract wildlife and with mixed use – hunting and agricultural. NRCS and FWS could provide assistance.
- Promote new initiatives – “Coquí Guajón” and Arlequin butterflies.
- Agreement was signed between FWS, PRDA, DNER and NRCS to increase trees production.
- Evaluation of Plan “Bonita”.
- Will meet to determine the focus areas for 2014-15.
- SUNIA Grant–(Fideicomiso and FWS) - There are fourteen applications for PR and USA.

Bernice Pérez (FSA)

- Much discussion centered on programming changes. There will be training for employees on May 13-14, 2013.
- Briefed on farmers with natural disaster losses and the procedure for claims.
- FSA took out from the system inactive farmers from 2008 and below. Farmers should update their information yearly or when their agricultural operation change.
- Presented new program to manage conservation program eligibility process called MIDAS.

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

Recorder: José L. Rivera

Translated and transcribed by: Nilda González