

# State Natural Resources Conservation Council

An Agency of Vermont State Government, Serving Vermont's 14 Conservation Districts

## **NRCC Meeting Minutes May 1, 2017**

### **The Annex Conference Room, Montpelier**

**Present:** Marli Rupe (VT DEC), Alan Shelvey (South Central Union Rep), Kerry O'Brien (NRCC Administrator, Caledonia County NRCD), Mike Middleman (VTAAFM); , Jill Arace (VACD); Stephanie Mason (Northeast Union Rep); Bill Manner (Southeast Union Rep); Richard Noel (Northwest Union Rep); Rick Hopkins (Central Union Rep); John Thurgood (NRCS)

**Meeting Opened:** 1:05 Alan called the meeting to order.

**Previous Meeting Minutes:** Date changed to 2017. Bill moved and Marli seconded to approve the previous meeting minutes. The motion was approved with two abstentions (Rick and Richard were not present for the meeting).

### **Finance Committee Update:**

Finance committee met today and have met by conference call since the last meeting. Alan provided an update on the VTAAFM Block Grant, similar opportunity getting discussed with DEC and the opportunities this provides to NRCC.

The Finance Committee presented an adjusted budget. Richard moved and Rick seconded to approve the budget adjustment for FY17. The motion was approved.

Bill moved and Richard seconded to approve the contractual amendment for NRCC Administrator. NRCC discussed amending the amount in order to include activities associated with VTAAFM Clean Water Fund (CWF) hiring and subagreements (which are not currently in the contractual amendment). It was agreed to delegate this to Finance Committee. The motion was approved as presented.

NRCC discussed delegating authority to Finance Committee to manage the allocation of Administrative Funds associated with NRCD subagreements and hiring process without full board approval. Marli made this motion, Rick seconded. The motion was approved.

### **VTAAFM CWF Block Grant:**

Mike summarized the prepared agreement to NRCC. He indicated that the \$75,000 will be included as an amendment to our existing FY17 \$112,000 agreement. This agreement just includes funding for District grant awards.

VTAAFM is providing train the trainer event on May 17th. It was requested that we have a training with VTAAFM just for Districts. Mike will follow up to ensure that NRCC and VACD are included in the email listserve for these events (they were just going to Districts who received Outreach & Education funding).

#### Comments on contractual language:

- The contract includes language/deliverables for Administrative activities but does not provide funds in this agreement for these activities. Mike will correct this and remove language and reference the other agreement which has the funds for these activities.
- It was asked if there is flexibility in the payment schedule. Districts will be queried about their anticipated cash flows needs and anticipated timeline for completion based on biannual payments and prepare a payment schedule based on this information. Kerry will pull this together and present back to VTAAAFM.
- Conflicting language regarding ability to shift funds among Districts or not shift funds was pointed out in the agreement
- P.10 #6 clarification on who the grant manager is.
- P. 4 paragraph 2. Outreach and Education reporting references BATT but this reporting tool has to do with implementation. It would more likely be an N-form.
- The requirement to conduct a survey after outreach and education – this is expected to be consistent, not be duplicative. More than one District had surveys included, so it is asked that these be shared so everyone has the same survey dataset.
- It was discussed to pull out the RBA section of the contract since its anticipated that this will change
- P. 4 included language on tracking practice implementation activities in Partners Database, suggested some clarification on this as a planning activity so there is no confusion about obligation
- P. 4 referencing RBA section may need edits if RBA is removed.

It was suggested the full board approve the VTAAAFM CWF agreement subject to Alan and Kerry doing a final review after the suggested modifications are made. Bill made the motion, Rick seconded. The motion was approved.

#### **VT DEC Block Grant**

DEC is interested in preparing a similar concept of a block grant to Districts. The framework and timeline for this is still up in the air. It would be focused solely on project implementation based on DEC's go-list of basin planning projects. It would not include ag projects, but there would be an opportunity to discuss ways to integrate more agriculturally focused districts into the basin planning process. As far as go-list agricultural projects, we would need to work with VTAAAFM on that. District should be prepared to consolidate a proposal for a block grant with go-list project implementation through NRCC, rather than individual ERP proposals. Kerry asked if the block grant would include personnel expenses for activities related to implementation, or if it's expected to have those expenses included in the 10% suggested admin. Marli will look into this.

#### **NRCC Staffing needs**

NRCC will be seeking an Ag Programs Manager that would coordinate the VTAAAFM CWF grant and be the liaison for VTAAAFM on behalf of Districts. This position may be cost-shared with VACD and include other ag programs/grants. This could be a full time position. The other staffing need is for a Business or Finance Director for NRCC, also potential to share with VACD. The Finance Committee will help prepare a budget and framework for this and start the process.

Richard said he would help if needed. Mike has limited capacity but will keep him in the loop.

**NRCS Report:**

John Thurgood reported for NRCS. Bob Sylvester has just retired, Toby Alexander will be acting in his place. Justin Tudhill has been hired for Business and Strategy. Corey Brink is leaving his position for another in Iowa. NRCS will be looking to replace his position. They interviewed for three Pathways positions. Strategic Watershed work is continuing in key watersheds, adding Hungerford Brook and East Creek to the mix this year. EQIP has pre-approved all but \$500,000 of their monies, most including farmstead work which requires multiple planning documents as prerequisites (VACD providing support).

**Next Steps:** June 29<sup>th</sup> next full board meeting to review NRCC FY18 budget and staffing updates.

**Meeting Adjourned: 3:45pm**