

Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council

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

Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2013

UVM Extension Conference Room, Berlin

Present: Vicky Drew, Rick Hopkins, Jeff Carter, Linda Corse, Kim Komer, Larry Kasden, Michelle Gudorf, Ed Lewis, Laura DiPietro, Jill Arace, Kerry O'Brien

Meeting Opened: 1:05 Linda called the meeting to order

AOI Database (early discussion): Michelle discussed developing a common field so at a later date multiple databases can be linked. There are limitations with linking farms with geographic coordinates because of the sprawling nature of farms. Linking by farm name also has troubles because of multiple farmsteads.

Previous Meeting Minutes: Jeff moved to accept the minutes from 8-21-2013 as printed, Michelle seconded. The motion was approved.

Administrative Report: Kerry reported on FY2013 grant agreement which is due to expire on September 30th. All the deliverables are complete for the first year of the AOI program. All Districts submitted their FY2014 Work Plans and FY2013 Annuals Reports. All items were submitted to Laura for final approval with invoices.

NRCD Roles and Responsibilities: Jill summarized her effort to develop a shared vision for District roles and responsibilities. A framework of "what we do" and "how we do it" was reviewed and a discussion of the relative importance followed.

- **Assess natural resource needs and understand landowner concerns.** Districts shall articulate the resource concerns in their Districts and utilize various methods to collect this information (local workgroups, landowner contacts, research, surveys, etc). Discussion followed about local workgroups, and how the NRCS ranking process fits into this. It was recommended that District workgroups collect a broader range of concerns. Concerns specific to NRCS programs can be "wordsmithed" later by the DM and DC.
- **Represent landowner concerns** in natural resource conservation planning, and policy, rules and program development (basin planning, public hearings, VACD/NRCC meetings, legislative contacts, NACD, Act 250 process, press, document natural resource needs)
- Inform and Educate landowners (public) regarding conservation, natural resource concerns, best (good) management practices, policies, rules and programs, and opportunities to have a positive impact

(focused on adults including information clearinghouse functions of Districts, public events, workshops resulting in behavioral changes that benefit the environment)

- **Develop and implement projects and programs** to address natural resource concerns and promote conservation and best management practices. (Agriculture, Watershed Stewardship, Sustainable Forestry, Urban Conservation, Education-youth)
- **Optimize local and regional partnerships**
- **Ensure landowner compliance** with natural resources Best Management Practices and Accepted Agricultural Practices (powers in statute). District have managed permits for agricultural holding ponds. Districts ensure compliance not through regulatory roles historically, but rather through assisting landowners to become compliant.
- **Manage the District and report to NRCC** (elections, financials, annual reports, work plans, board meetings, etc)

Meeting participants “voted” on these seven items and assigned points totaling 100 and reviewed the hours that might be associated with these items.

Agricultural Outreach Initiative: Update

Laura shared that she needs to work with Melissa in her business office to strengthen the performance measurements. General feedback from VTAAF&M included a clear distinction between AOI and ARS staff to reduce duplicative efforts. Workshops shall have a partnered approach and shall be designed based on feedback from farm visits/needs assessment. Tracking and database – Districts shall develop a system of tracking farm visits. A budget framework was reviewed. Kerry will distribute for final review.

FY2015 Budget Proposal

Michelle moved to accept the FY2015 NRCC Budget Proposal of \$255,500, Ed seconded. The motion was approved (5 votes) with one abstention.

Laura recommended to call or email Chuck Ross to set up a meeting to discuss the budget.

Flood resiliency in town planning

The Legislature will require flood resiliency in town plans starting next year. Rick thought there might be a role for Districts and they should consider looking into this and potentially developing grant proposals to support the process.

Next Meeting: December 10, 2013

Meeting Adjourned: 4:20pm