



Natural Resources Conservation Service
359 East Park Drive, Suite 2
Harrisburg, PA 17111



State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

REVISED AGENDA

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

This meeting will be conducted both in-person at the PA NRCS state office and remotely via Microsoft Teams internet conferencing. The office address, meeting link and a call-in telephone number are provided at the end of this document.

- 1:00 pm** Welcome – Denise Coleman, NRCS State Conservationist
- 1:10 pm** Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) Project Presentation: “Seeking to Connect Capital with Pennsylvania Farmers using Regenerative Farming Practices to Drawdown Carbon;” John Williamson and Eric Sauder, TeamAg Inc.
- 1:50 pm** **Technical Reports**
- Engineering – Heather Smeltz, ASTC, PA Water Resources
(for Tim Peters, State Conservation Engineer)
 - Ecological Sciences – Beth Sassaman, Acting State Resource Conservationist
 - PA Grazing Coalition Report, Dave Hartman
- 2:15 pm** **Partnership and Easement Programs Report**
- Partnerships and Outreach Updates- Susan Parry ASTC for Partnerships
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Melissa Hanner, Easement Program Manager
 - Compatible Use Authorization (CUA) updates- Mick Albert, Stewardship
- 2:30 pm** **Financial Program Reports**
- Updates – Ryan Cornelius, Acting ASTC for Programs

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- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Ryan Cornelius, EQIP
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) – Ashley Lenig, Conservation Program Manager
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Adam Dellinger, Regional Conservation Partnership Program Coordinator

3:00 pm Committee Input & Adjourn

Open Forum for State Technical Committee members- ideas for topics or agenda items for future meetings.

***2024 Dates for State Technical Committee Meetings:**

Wednesday, July 17, 2024

Thursday, October 24, 2024

April 16, 2024; Microsoft Teams meeting link:

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.

Click here to join the meeting

Meeting ID: 267 044 151 901

Passcode: 2J7TRH

Download Teams | Join on the web

Or call in (audio only)

+1 202-650-0123,657303009# United States, Washington DC

Phone Conference ID: 657 303 009#

State Office Address and STC Webpage Link:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-state/pennsylvania/technical-committee>

STAC Handout Web Page Link:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/pennsylvania/pennsylvania-state-technical-committee-0>

Helping People Help the Land

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Pennsylvania State Technical Committee Meeting

April 16, 2024

Denise Coleman, PA State Conservationist, NRCS, opened the meeting at 1pm and welcomed all participating online and those attending in person. She announced that Mr. Robert Bonnie, USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, would be visiting later on in the meeting. Mr. Bonnie holds a master's degree in forestry and environmental management from Duke University, and a bachelor's from Harvard College. On April 16, 2021, Bonnie was nominated by President Joe Biden to be the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation. He will be discussing the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and some opportunities that we have available on the floor through that program. She then turned the meeting over to Susan Parry, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships in Pennsylvania.

Susan Parry, NRCS, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships, was introduced and proceeded to introduce all persons in the room and those participating by Teams Meeting and by telephone. There was a total of 61 participants in attendance, as shown on the attached list. Susan continued by introducing the featured speakers from TeamAg, Inc. TeamAg, Inc Main office is located in Ephrata, Pennsylvania with remote offices in Centre and York Counties. They are a Consulting Team who provides free individualized technical guidance for producers and processors in Engineering, Crop Consulting, Nutrient Management, Regenerative Agriculture and Organic Transition.

John Williamson, of TeamAg began the presentation intitled “Seeking to Connect Capital with Pennsylvania Farmers using Regenerative Farming Practices to Drawdown Carbon” by discussing the services provided by TeamAg, Inc. (See attached hand-out) He then turned the presentation over to Eric Sauder of TeamAg, Inc.

Eric Sauder of TeamAg, discussed details of why the Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) was initiated. He stated that TeamAg was committed to implement Regenerative Farm Business Strategy to link farmers with NRCS's Conservation practices associated with GEG and carbon sequestration. Some of the missing requirements were the lack of economic and financial tools that farmers needed to make sound decisions on whether or not to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs). In addition, there was a need to establish a cooperative mechanism to enable small farms to aggregate contributions from the Ecosystem Service Marketplace. He explained how TeamAg adapted to changing situations. He defined “Regeneration” as the ability and hope that we could bring new life to ecosystems. He continued to explain the contents of the Regenerative Farm Business Plan by comparing the conventional Annual mechanisms and metrics to the Regenerative Multi-Year mechanisms and metrics and combining them. John Williamson added to the presentation by discussing the contents of the Regenerative Farm Business Plan citing options for regenerative economic and environmental benefits. He discussed Pennsylvania's changing weather and climate, noting the extreme rainfall risk through 2050 and water stress (drought) risks through 2050. He discussed Greenhouse Gas emissions and carbon storage and defined Carbon Footprint and Net Zero emissions and how both are measured. He discussed Farm Sources of GHG and farm actions to replace GHG emissions as well as Farm Actions to enhance Carbon Storage. Eric continued to briefly discuss the contents of the Regenerative Business Plan and whole farm GHG Assessments, Regenerative Water Quality, habitats and biodiversity, regenerative field systems assessment, regenerative actions such as: HERD Management, manure management Energy. The completed business plan is set up and

evaluated for long-term impacts covering 5/10/15 years. He discussed specific regenerative ideas for dairy farmers that included: liquid manure storage covers, expanding existing riparian field buffers, cornstalk nitrogen testing, Interseeding legumes and diversification of annual field cropping system with canola as SVO or Bio-diesel. Lessons learned included: Dairies were very interested in learning and understanding their "Carbon Footprint", and ways to improve; making changes is a long process, especially without financial incentives; long term planning is challenging to some dairy producers; liquid manure storages are large GHG emitters, and we need to figure out a solution for this.



TeamAg

Incorporated

Agricultural Engineers and Consultants

**Building Relationships That Build
Your Business**

**120 Lake Street, Ephrata, PA 17522
717-721-6795 teamag@teamaginc.com**

Seeking to Connect Capital with Pennsylvania Farmers using Regenerative Farming Practices to drawdown Carbon

Key Team Members: Eric Sauder, Dr. Sue Ellen
Johnson

Program Contact: John Williamson

Project start date: September 28, 2020

Project end date: August 1, 2023

Award Identifying Number:
NR202D37XXXXG005

NRCS Contact: Mark Goodson
TeamAg Contact: Eric Sauder

Presentation Outline

- Situation 2020 – why the CIG grant
- How the situation changed, and how TeamAg adapted to changing situation
- Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan
- What we learned

Situation 2020 – why the CIG grant

- 2019: Lots of discussion in Financial/Agricultural Community for paying farmers for their Regenerative Agriculture efforts for Climate Change Mitigation.
- Our farm clients and other partners requested TeamAg to give them the science
- Pennsylvania farms applied for \$7500 grants from Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture for Farm Vitality Planning Grants to explore connecting these farms with Capital from “Carbon Credits”
- TeamAg was also awarded other grants from PDA for identifying Carbon Investors both nationally and in Pennsylvania

Situation 2020 – why the CIg grant

- TeamAg was committed to implement Regenerative Farm Business strategy to link farmers with NRCS's 35 Conservation practices associated with GHG and carbon sequestration.
- Missing pieces in 2020:
 - economic/financial tools so that farmers can make sound decisions whether to implement BMPs.
 - Establish cooperative mechanism to enable small farms to aggregate contributions from the Ecosystem Service Marketplace.
 - Promotion

How the situation changed, and how TeamAg adapted to changing situation

- Capital Investors only interested in additive BMPs that sequester carbon.
- PA farms already have high rates of No-till/Conservation till and cover crop.
- 2020 US Dairy Net Zero Initiative by 2050
- TeamAg received requests from Dairy Coops for working with groups of farms for soil health plans, assessments.

Regenerative Time Frame: 5 years - 15 years - 50 years (5-15-50)

“Regenerative” DEFINED

MERRIAM WEBSTER

re·gen·er·a·tive | \ ri-'je-nə-,rā-tiv , -'je-nə-rə-, -
'jen-rə- \

Definition of regenerative

1: of, relating to, or marked by regeneration

2: tending to regenerate

re·gen·er·ate | \ ri-'je-nə-rət , -'jen-rət \

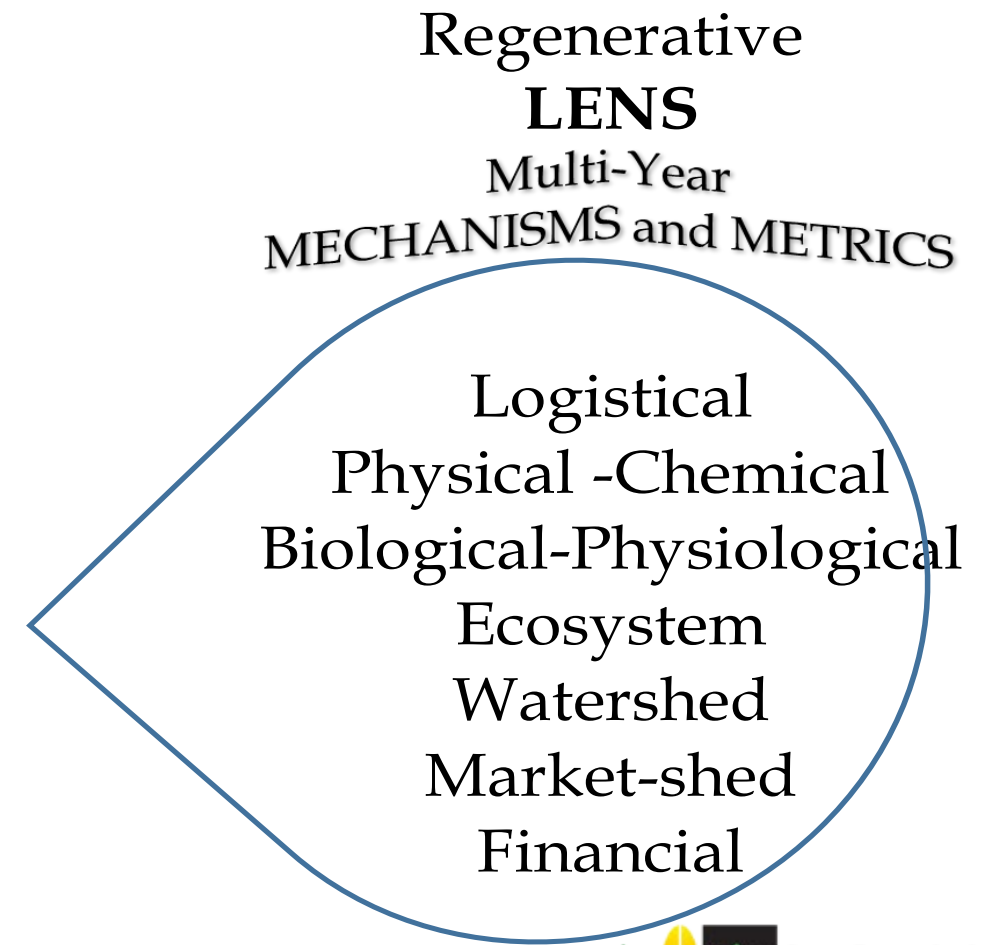
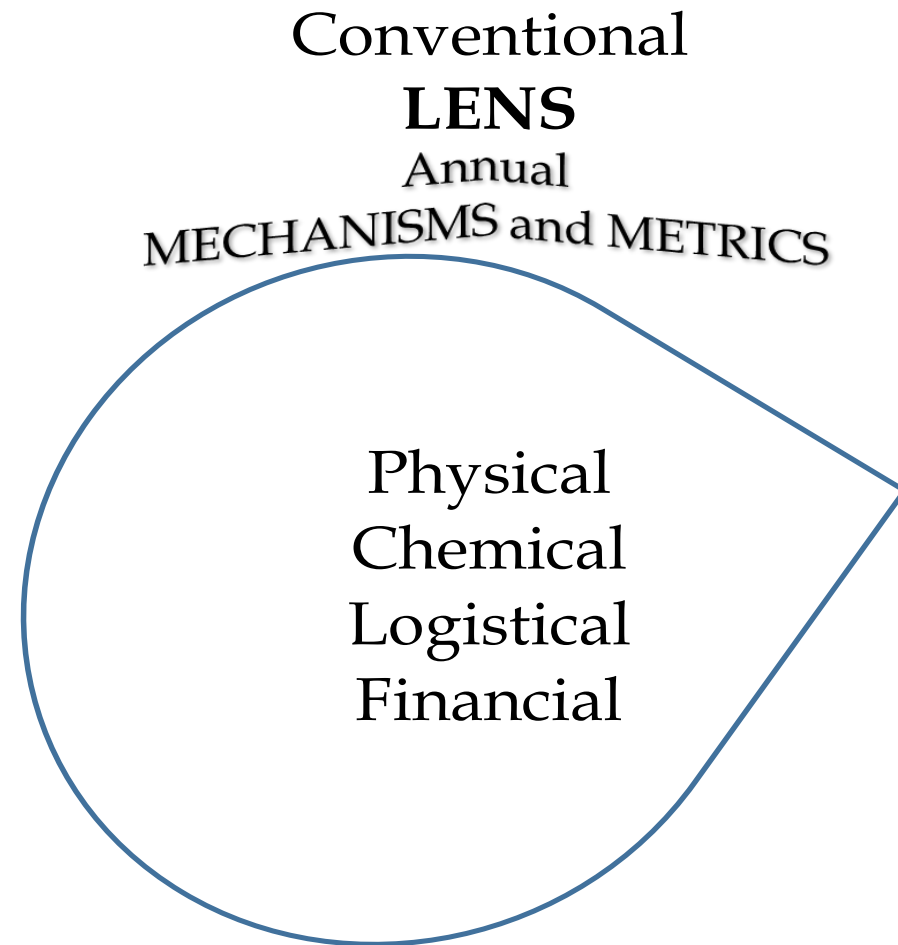
1: re-formed or created again

2: spiritually reborn or converted

3: restored to a better, higher, or more worthy
state

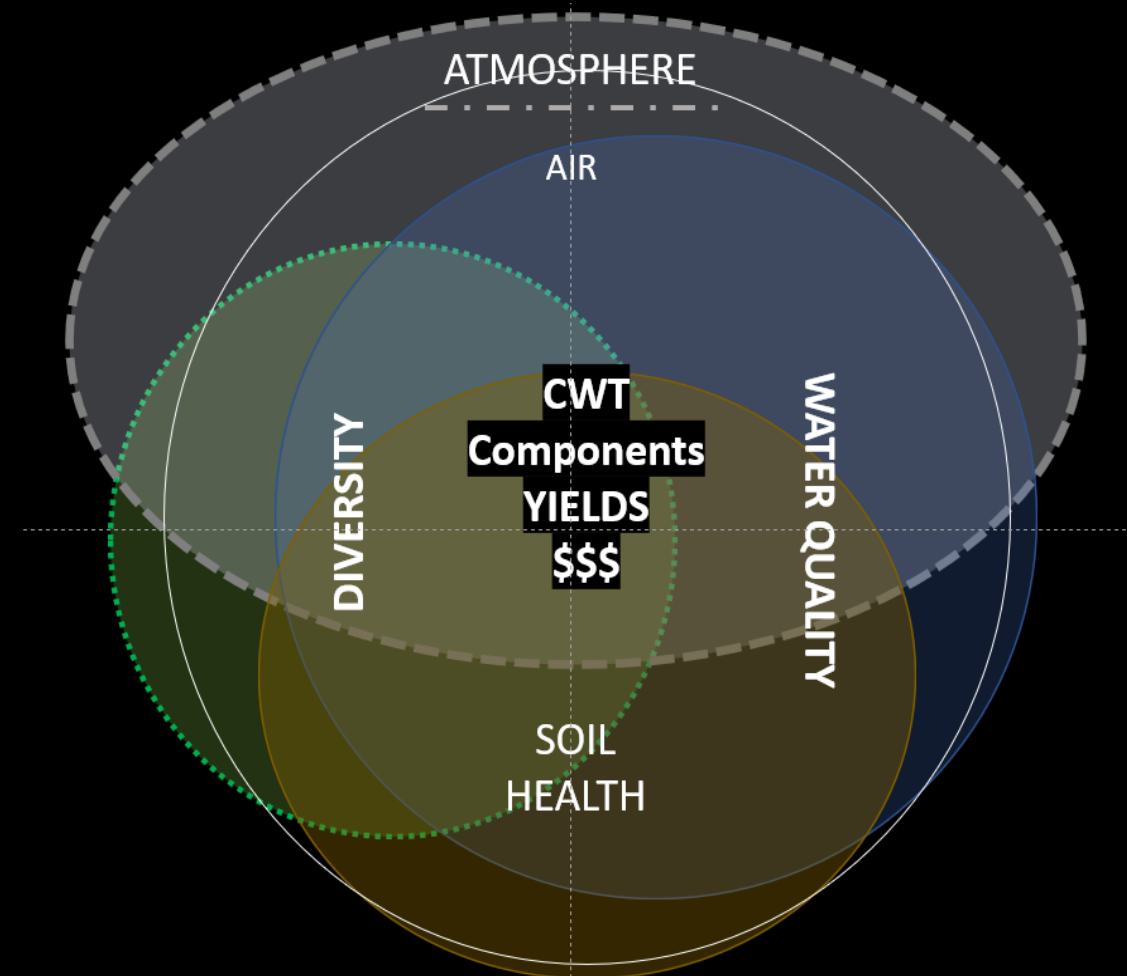
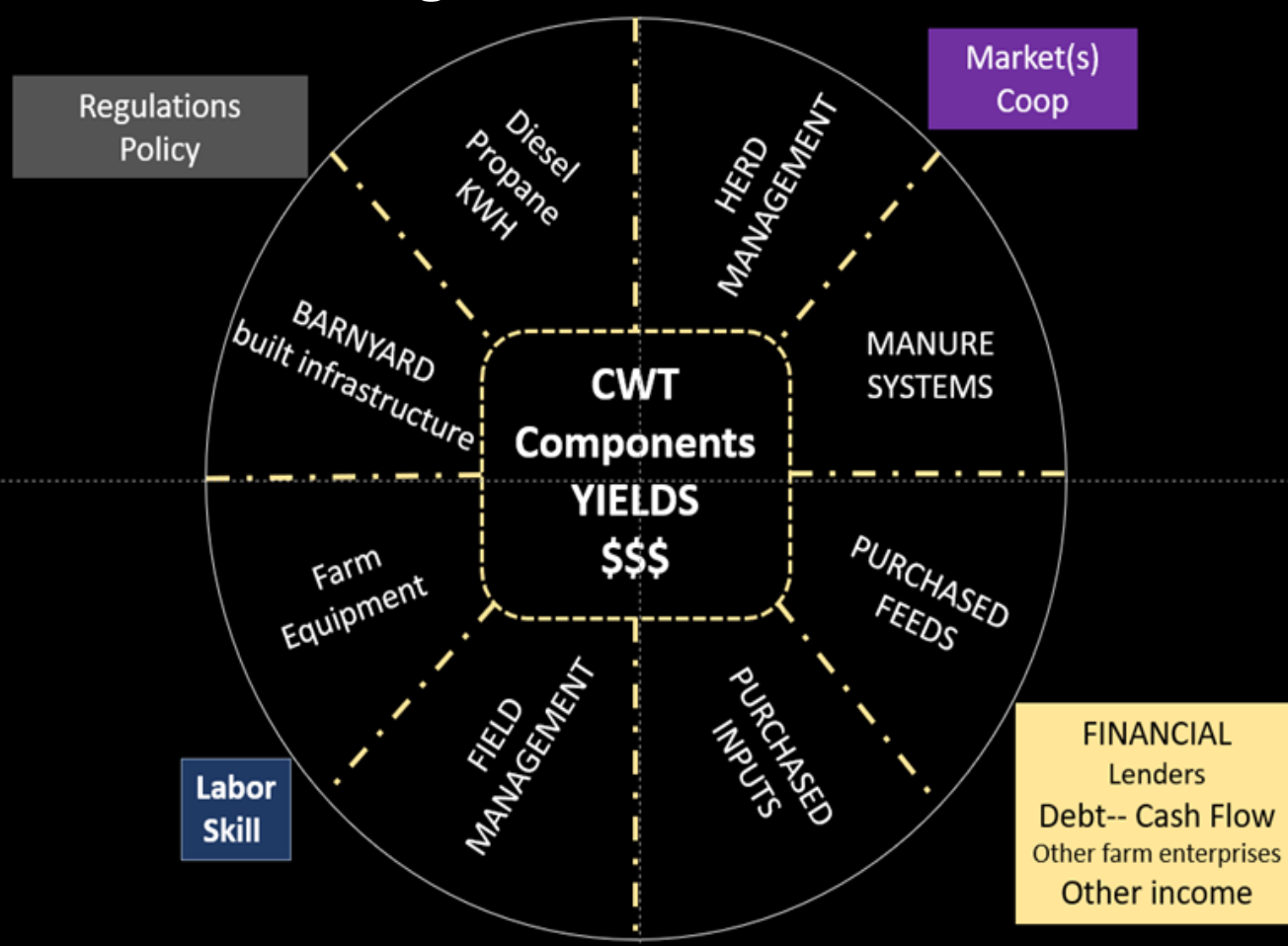
Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-New Regenerative Lenses



Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-New Regenerative Lenses



Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Current Regenerative Practices

Current Practice/Enterprise

	Operation Economic Value	Environmental Value	Farm Economic Value
No -till across most acres	+	++	?
Precision N fertilization including sidedress	+?	+++	?
High milk production per cow	+++	+	+
Cow longevity and high lifetime milk production	+++	++	++
Riparian buffers	?	+++	++
Importing carbon that will be added to fields as compost	++	+++	++

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

–Options for regenerative economic and environmental benefits

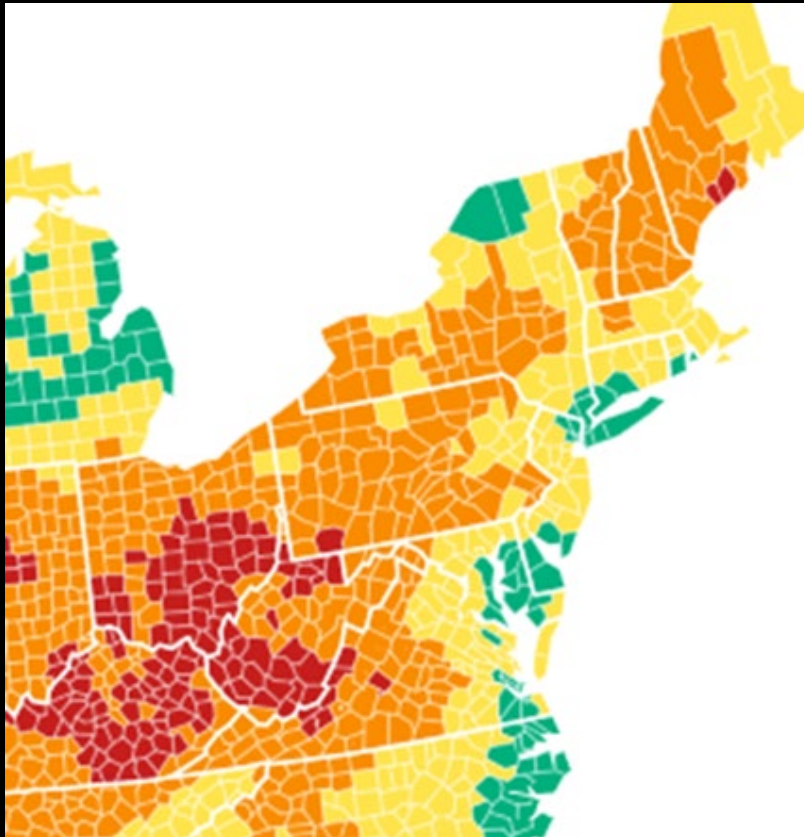
Possible Additional Practice/Enterprise

	Operation Economic Value	Environmental Value	Funding or incentive payments
Cover open liquid manure storages – capture methane	+	+++	Y
Use any biogas or waste heat from flare	+	++	Y
Manage double crop silage (DCS) system to leave more surface residues	+	++	?
Interseed or overseed double crop silage crops with legumes	+	++	Y
Rooftop - barnyard solar	+++	++	Y
Monitor well-water quality	+	+	?
Diversify cropping system with SVO-biodiesel crop	++	++	?Y
Continue to monitor manure injection impact on GHG	+	?+	?
Use compost across all fields	++	++	Y
Consider compost aeration	+	++	?
Additional riparian buffers or tall grass swales/field edges	+	+++	Y?
Cautiously evaluate cow diet and feed additives	+?	+?+	?Y

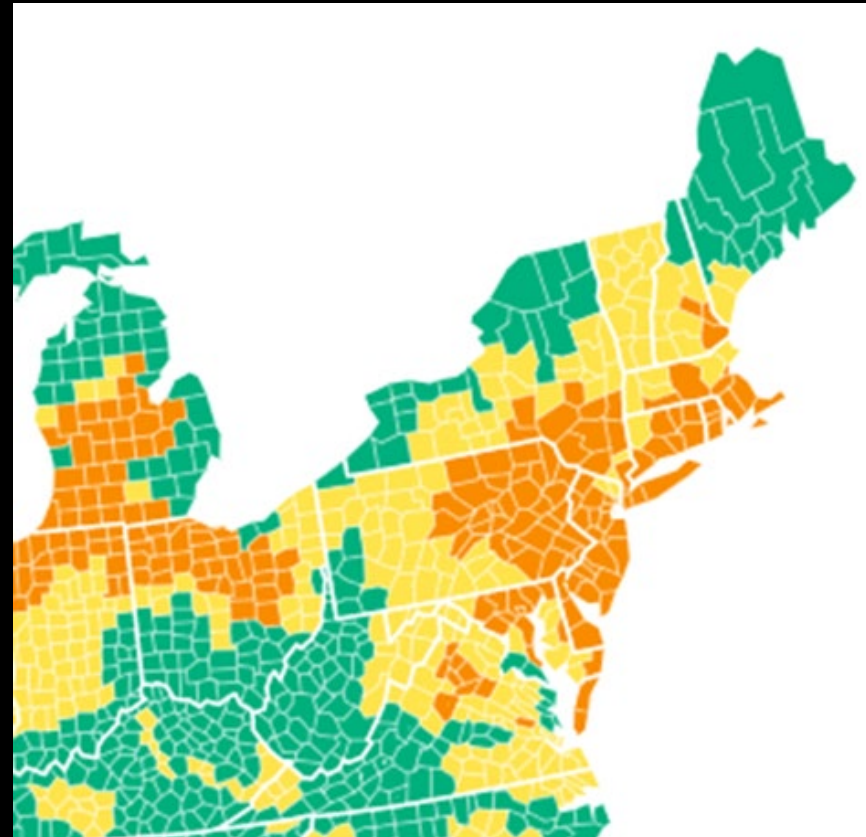
Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

–Pennsylvania's Changing Weather and Climate

Extreme Rainfall Risk through 2050



Water Stress (Drought) Risk through 2050

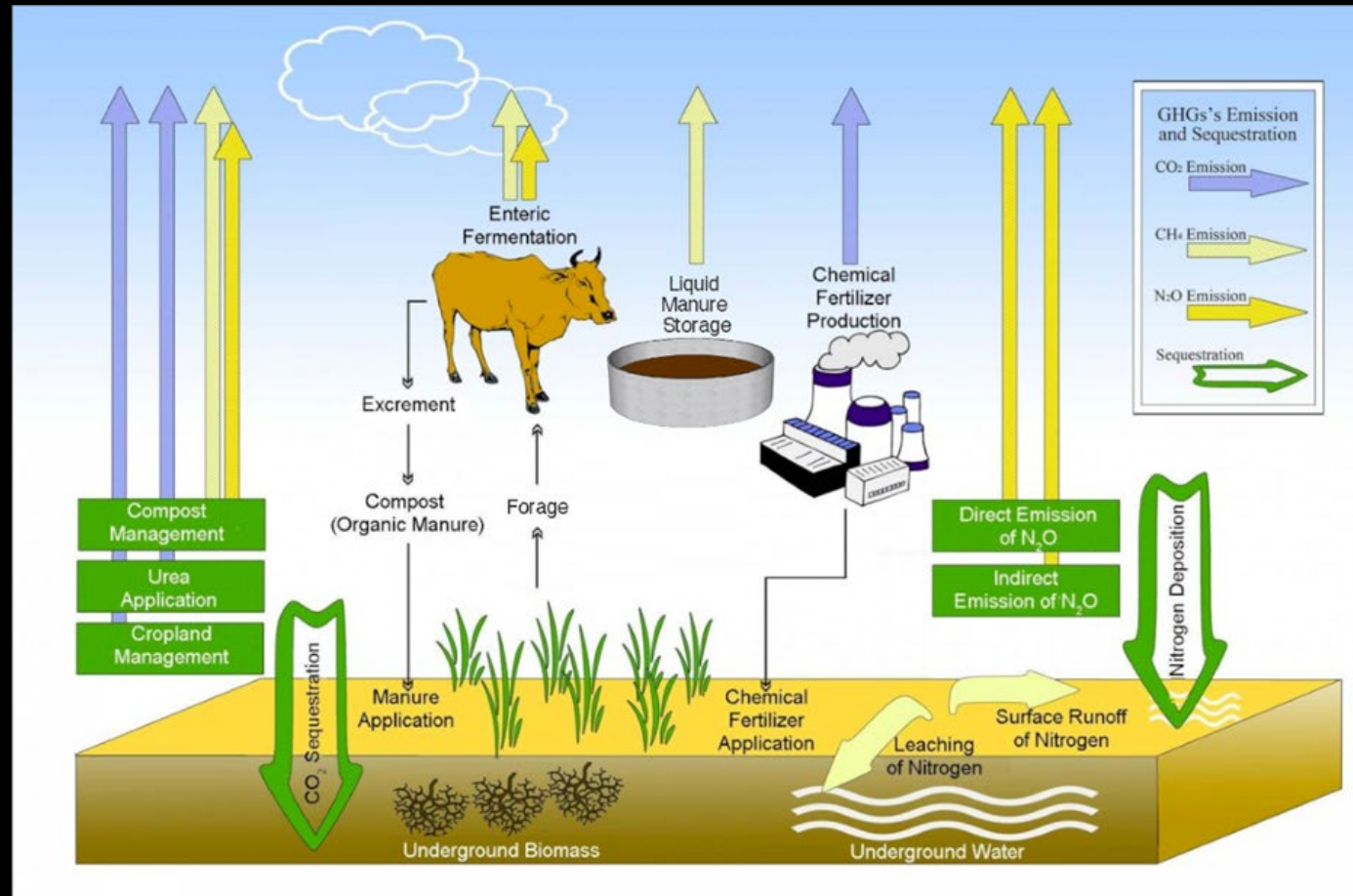


Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

–GreenHouse Gas) Emissions and Carbon Storage

Units: Whatever the actual form of GHG gas: Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) or methane (CH_4) or nitrous oxide (N_2O) or soil organic carbon (SOC) or vegetative carbon, the accounting and financial world converts all of these “metric tonne” of carbon dioxide equivalents or “ CO_2e ”. . A metric tonne is 0.90718474 of a US ton.

Defining “Carbon footprint” and “Net Zero” Emissions



Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Farm GHG Solutions

Farm Sources of GHG

- Fossil fuel use emissions: CO₂ and CH₄ from farm energy purchases and on-farm use
- Cattle Rumen emissions: CH₄ from natural rumen function
- Soil disturbance: CO₂ due to tillage or chemicals
- Cycling and breakdown of N- fertilizer and organic N applications to crops: at soil surface and 0-2 inches (N₂O)
- Land use emissions: CO₂ and N₂O due to conversion of perennials to annuals; lack of field surface residues/cover
- Wet, saturated, flooded soil emissions (CH₄)
- Farm-**created** methane emissions (CH₄ generated in liquid manure systems - or very wet manure packs)
- Limited soil carbon and high soil nitrogen

Farm Actions to Reduce GHG Emissions

- Conserve/avert fossil fuel use – be efficient
- Use alternative energy sources (solar; electric motors; biofuels;)
- Capture methane from liquid storage and flare Capture methane from liquid storage and use as energy source
- If you have one: Optimize digester efficiency
- Manage manure as a passively aerated solid
- Use more bedding
- Avoid over-application of N/ use precision ag/SOM
- Optimize timing/method of N fertilization
- Choose N fertility system/sources for stable, slow release and low emissions (urea/urease fertilizers)
- Limit soil disturbance and maximize soil cover
- Maximize cow longevity and *lifetime* milk prdn
- Manage cow diet/feed for digestibility and FUE
- Consider diet tweaks to reduce rumen methane

Farm Actions to Enhance Carbon Storage

- Minimize soil disturbance (mechanical and chemical)
- Avoid over-application of N
- Manage for year-round cover and abundant surface residues
- Add more perennials to crop system for live roots year-round
- Modify land use to increase perennial and woody vegetation on marginal lands
- Build and increase soil organic matter
- Stabilize manure carbon (as compost)
- Return manure carbon to fields and soils
- Import more carbon to the farm

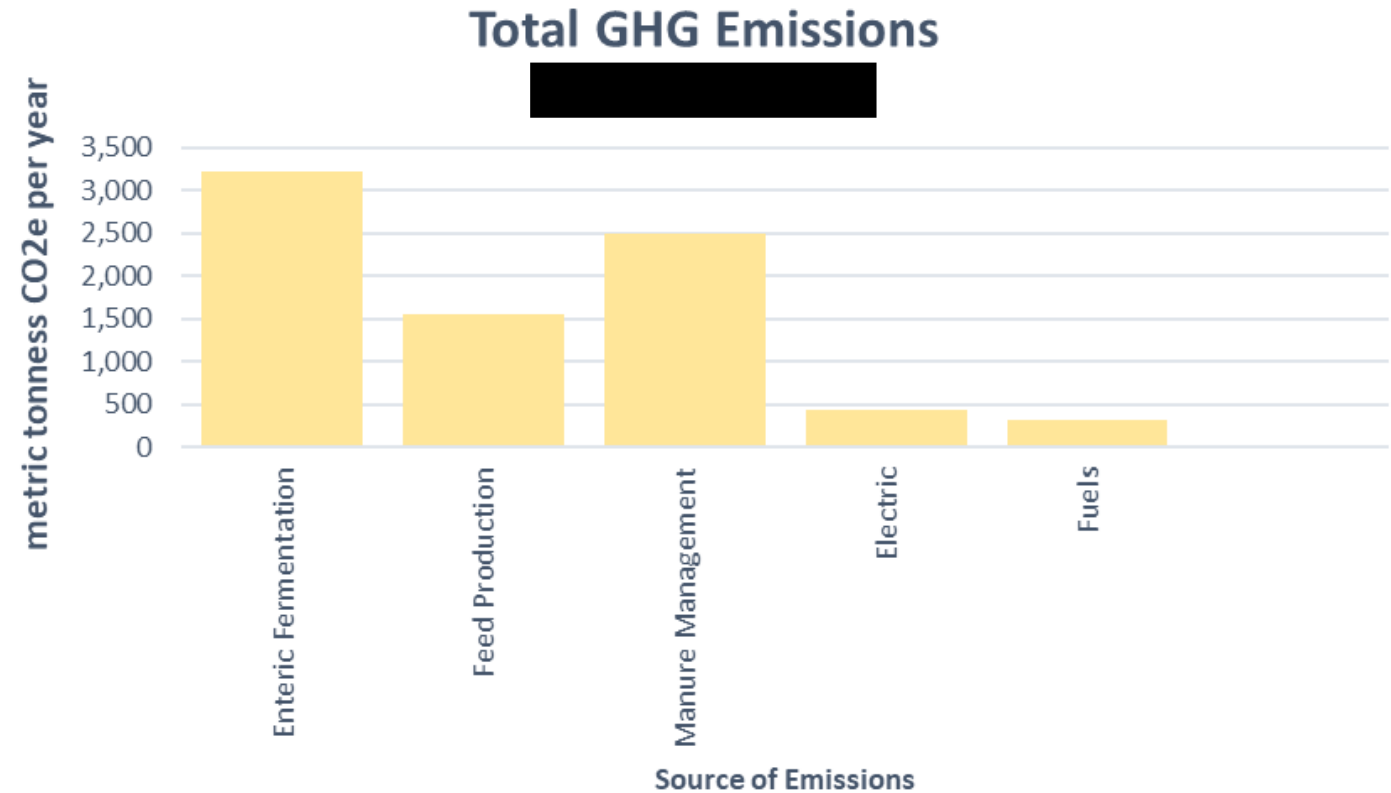
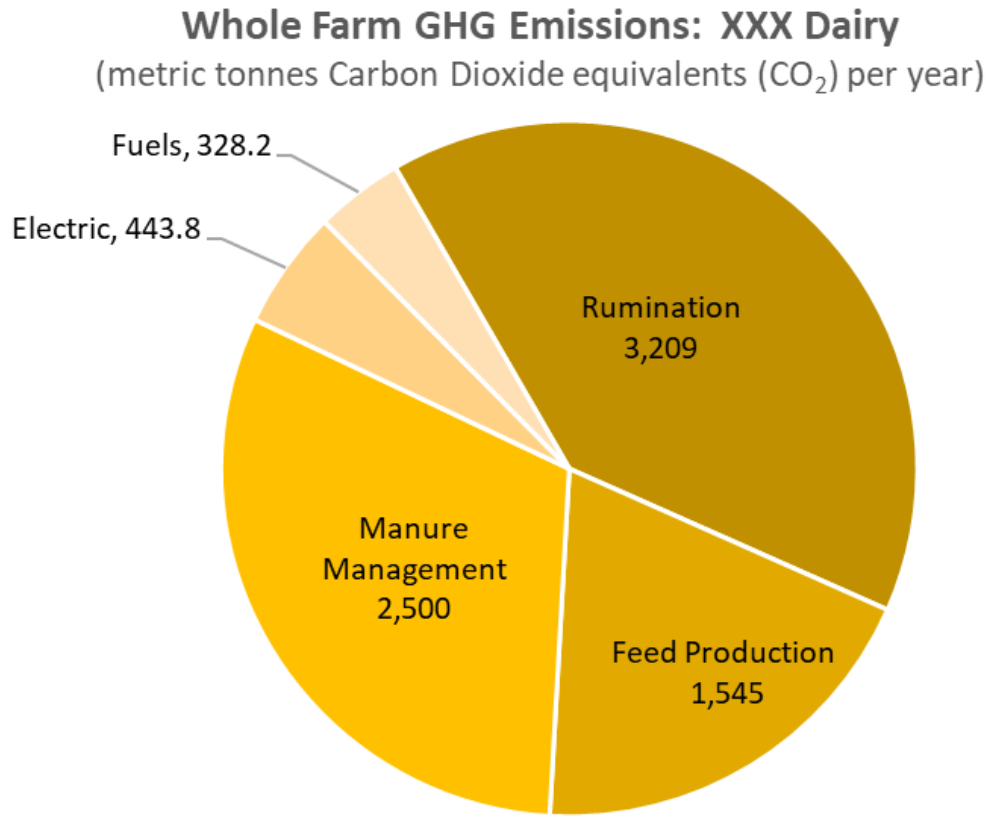
Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

–Carbon Credits, Carbon Markets, Regenerative Market Options & Enterprises

- Stored carbon credit or reduced GHG emissions markets
- Regenerative Farm Ecosystem Service Markets (ESS)
- Regenerative Farm “Premium” Product or Practice Markets
- Regenerative Farm Input Markets
- Methane Generation and use as Energy

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Whole Farm GHG Assessment (Cool Farm)



Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Results Discussion: Whole Farm GHG Emissions

- Feed additives to reduce methane production in the rumen
- Calculating emissions per hundred-weight of FCM milk (CO₂ tonnes /CWT)
- Solar Harvest: Provide Rooftop Solar Potential
- Additional Renewable Energy and Fossil Fuel Alternatives

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

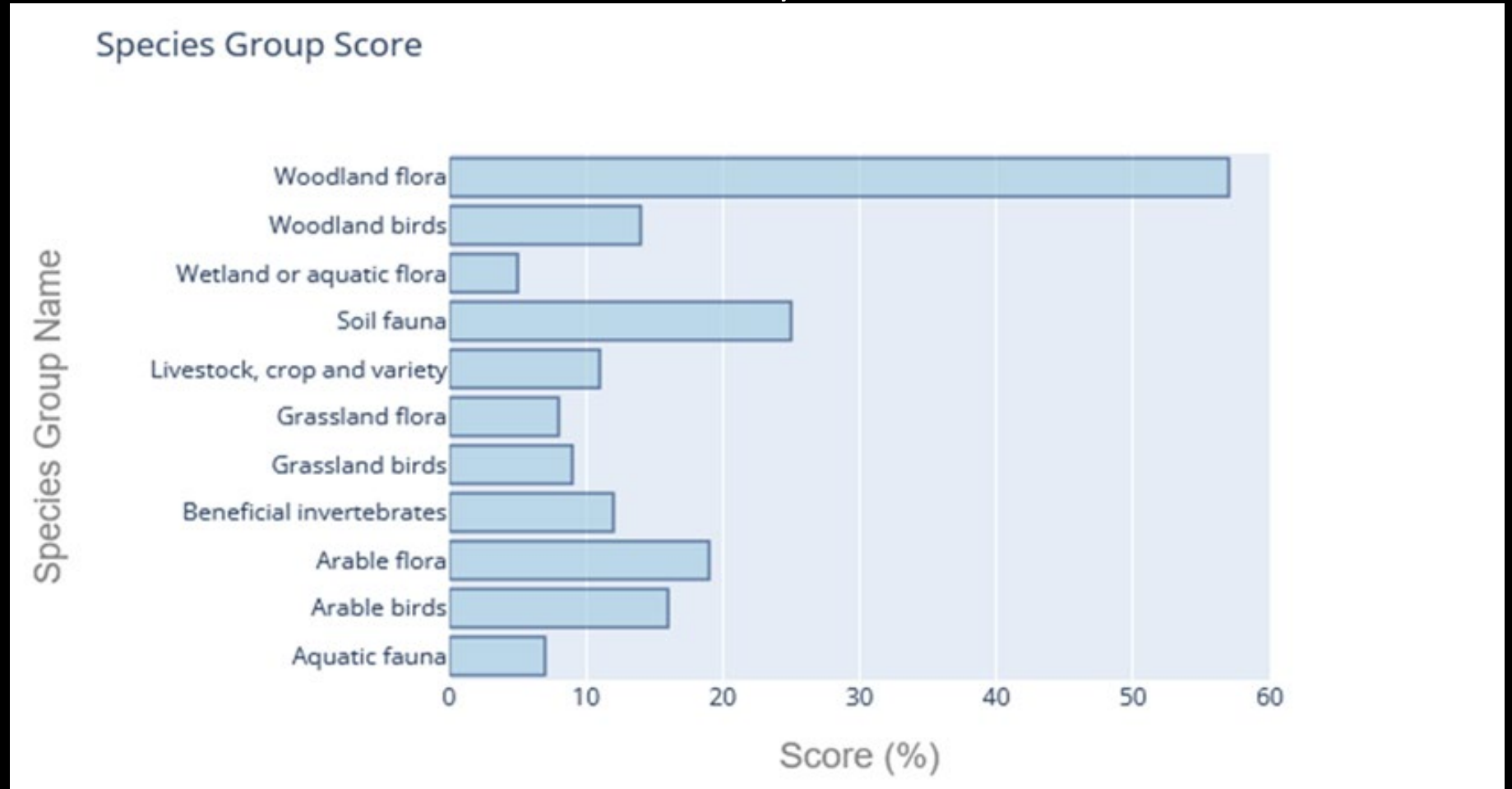
-Regenerative Water Quality

From “Model My Watershed”

Farm:		(MMW 2019 NCLD)	
WITHOUT best regenerative practices			
	Sediment	Nitrogen	Phosphorus
Total Loads (lb)/year	882656.1	10070.1	1210.4
Loading Rates (lb/ac)	1730.6	19.7	2.4
Sub-sources (lb/ac)			
Hay/Pasture	13626.2	76.8	30.0
Cropland	859462.6	3099.8	1008.3
Wooded Areas	343.7	10.7	0.9
Stream Bank Erosion	8366.5	4.4	2.2
Sub-surface Flow	0.0	6358.6	56.8
Farm:		(MMW 2019 NCLD)	
WITH BEST regenerative practices			
	Sediment	Nitrogen	Phosphorus
Total Loads (lb)/year	238608.9	6748.6	303.5
Loading Rates (lb/ac)	467.8	13.2	0.6
Sub-sources			
Hay/Pasture	13626.2	76.8	30.0
Cropland	215574.2	732.0	113.1
Wooded Areas	343.7	10.7	0.9
Stream Bank Erosion	8207.8	4.4	2.2
Sub-surface Flow	0.0	5404.9	45.0
Farm:		(MMW 2019 NCLD)	
Land Use Change (acres) 2001----->2019			
Hay/Pasture	71	67	-4.0
Cropland	317	317	no change
Woodland	82	2	-10.0
Total Acres modeled	510.0		no change

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Regenerative Land: Habitats and Biodiversity



Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Regenerative Field Systems Assessment:

Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health							
From the Cornell Soil Health Laboratory, Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, School of Integrative Plant Science, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. http://soilhealth.cals.cornell.edu							
Field ID		B12		M20		HU05 {{{H01}}}	
Field Acres:		9.0		10.0		18.0	
Given Soil Type		GgB		GdB		BuC	
Crops Grown:		Double Crop Silage		Alf-Grass-Grains		Perennial Grass rotation->silage	
Tillage:		no till		no till		no till	
Soil Texture Class:		loam		silt loam		silt loam	
		sand 32% silt 46% clay 21%		sand 31% silt 51% clay 17%		sand 23% silt 58% clay 17%	
Group	Indicator	Value	Rating	Value	Rating	Value	Rating
physical	Predicted Available Water Capacity	0.22	83	0.24	88	0.26	94
physical	Surface Hardness	208	30	133	64	175	44
physical	Subsurface Hardness	275	58	175	87	218	77
physical	Aggregate Stability	33.5	55	17.6	22	53	88
biological	Organic Matter	3.8	81	3.2	59	3.8	81
biological	Predicted Soil Protein	7.4	60	5.8	41	7.5	61
biological	Soil Respiration	0.8	76	0.6	53	0.9	80
biological	Active Carbon	699	85	550	60	557	62
chemical	Soil pH	6.7	100	6.5	100	6.2	94
chemical	Extractable Phosphorus	17.3	100	6.4	100	1.1	33
chemical	Extractable Potassium	159.2	100	38.8	56	33.4	46
chemical	Minor Elements	Mg: 283.8 Fe: 0.3 Mn: 6.8 Zn: 1.7	100	Mg: 215.0 Fe: 0.5 Mn: 7.7 Zn: 0.6	100	Mg: 160 Fe: 1.2 Mn: 9.8 Zn: 0.4	100
Overall Quality Score		77 / High		69 / High		72 / High	

- 3 representative fields
- Soil samples sent to Cornell Soil Health Laboratory measured for soil health and soil carbon
- Provides Analysis Summary

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

–Regenerative Field Systems Assessment:

- 3 representative fields
- Same fields estimate for GHG emissions and Carbon Sequestration using COMET.
- Results Discussion

- Baseline FIELD GHG Emissions in mtonnes CO ₂ e			
Field	B12 (~9 ac)	M20 (~10 ac)	Hu05 (~19 ac)
Basic Crop System	COS/SGS/COS/SGS	Annuals -Silage-Alfalfa/Grass	Perennial Grass-Leg
Carbon capture (stored)	-17.2	-10.1	-34.0
N ₂ O emissions	13.3	11.7	22.9
NET total {per acre}	-3.9 {-0.43/a}	1.7 {0.17/a}	-11.1 {-0.58/a}

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Regenerative Actions

- HERD Management
- Manure(s) Management
- Energy (Fossil fuel substitution and conservation)
- Water
- Habitat

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

DIFFERENT REGENERATIVE IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS							
	C + VCS	NO ₃	NO ₃	CH ₄ + N ₂ O	CO ₂		
Practice	SOC Storage	Surface Water	Well water	GHG Emissions	Fossil fuel emissions	Bio-diversity	Soil Health
Diversify rotation	+	=+	=+	+	?+?	+	++
Legumes	?	=+	=+	+?	+	+	+
Field Margins	++	=+	=	+	?	++	++
Cow longevity	na	na	na	+++	na	?	?
Cow diets	+	+	=	+	?+?	?	?
Alt Fuel	=+	na	na	+?+	+++	=+	=+
Rooftop Solar	na	na	na	+?	+++	na	na

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

Long term IMPACTS 5-15-50						
Practice or Action	Annual	5-year benefit	15-year benefit	50-year benefit	Funding Programs	Annual "Profit"
Diversify rotation crop annual family	-?-	+	++	++	na	?
Legumes	+?+	+	++	++	available	+
Field margins, edges convert to perennials	--	+	++	++	available	--
Cow longevity	+	+	++	+	na	++
Cow diets	++	++	++	++	na	+
Alternative energy Electric	+?+	+?+	++	++?++	available	+
Biofuel	+	++	+++	?+?	??	?+
Rooftop Solar	+?	+	++	?	available	+

Contents of Regenerative Farm Business Plan

-Specific Regenerative Ideas for the Dairy

- Liquid Manure Storage Covers
- Expand existing riparian -fields buffers by 15 feet
- Cornstalk Nitrogen Test
- Interseeding legumes
- Diversify Annual Field Cropping System with Canola as SVO or Bio-diesel

What did TeamAg Learn?

- Dairies were very interested in learning and understanding their “Carbon footprint” and ways to improve.
- Making changes is a long process, especially without financial incentives.
- We emphasized long-term planning 5-15-50 years. This long-term view is challenging to some dairy producers.
- Liquid manure storages are large GHG emitters. We need to figure this out.

Questions?

Heather Smeltz, Assistant State Conservationist for PA Water Resources, was introduced and made the Engineering Presentation. (See attached hand-out.) She started off by providing an Emergency Water Protection (EWP) update and addressed the Mid-July 2023 Storms. She noted that a total of 15 Pennsylvania sites were allocated EWP funds, 9 in Berks County, 4 in Bucks County and 2 in Chester County. County Conservation Districts (CCD) are serving as sponsors. Nine of those sites have the necessary non-federal matching funds and designs are progressing with construction to take place this summer. Funding sources include DEP, other county level funding and landowner contributions. Sponsors have until July to secure funds for the remaining 6 projects. She then provided an update on the September 9th, 2023, storm as well. That storm effected a total of 9 sites in Lackawanna, Luzerne and Wyoming Counties. Again, CCD is the sponsoring body for these counties, with DEP providing the non-federal match for these counties. Designs are underway with a summer construction timeline.

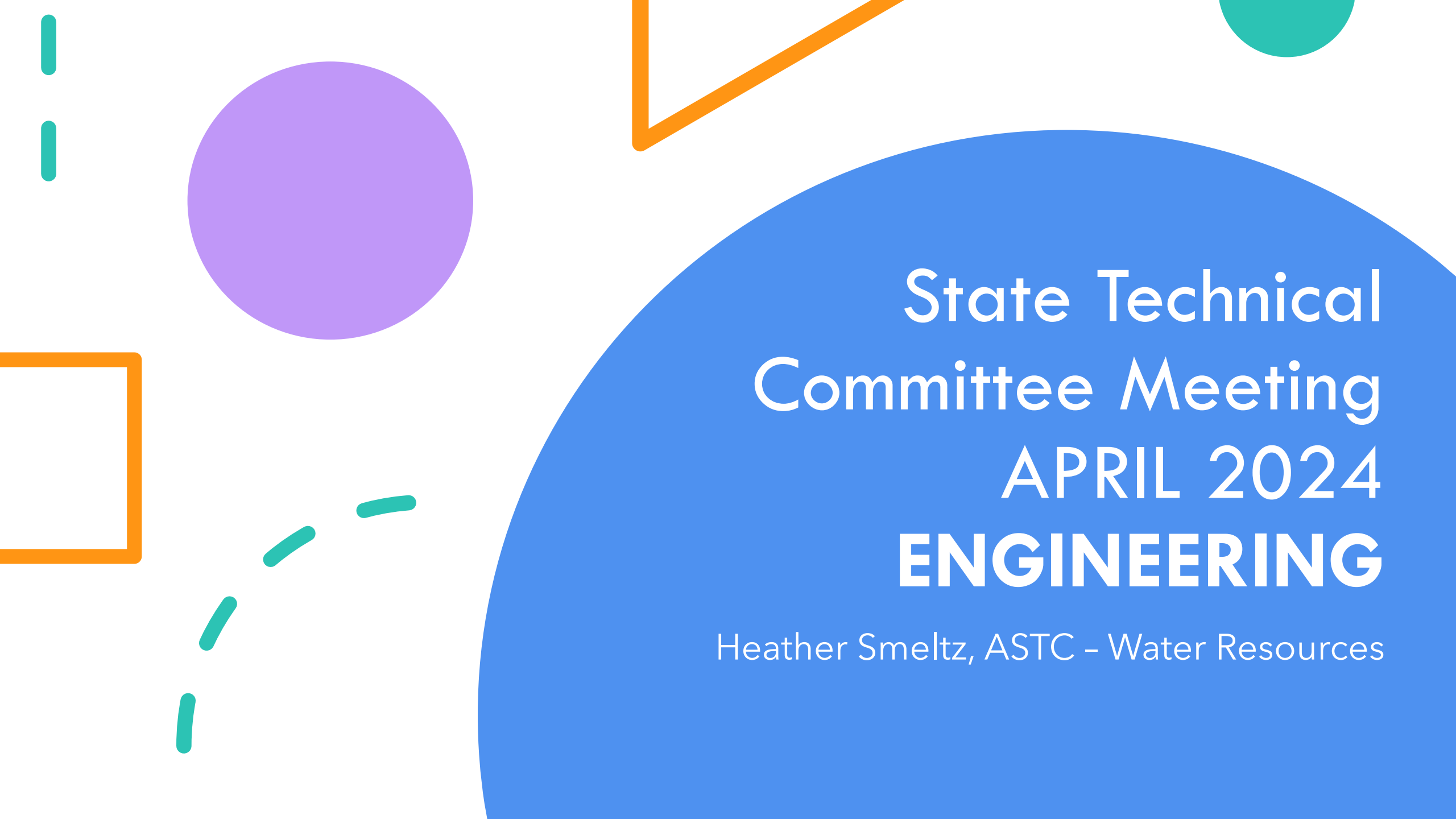
She spoke briefly concerning the highly pathogenic Avian Influenza, noting that the NRCS staff to practice good biosecurity. She stated that currently there are no quarantine zones throughout the state although it has been identified in a backyard flock in Wayne County. She said that the big news now is that it's also been identified in dairy cattle in Ohio. Pennsylvania has just implemented quarantine restrictions before cattle are moved into our state. This is to ensure that we are not bringing in contagious cattle.

She addressed upcoming Ag Conservation Technical Trainings with Boot Camp Basic this month and Boot Camp Level II that is scheduled for May of this year. In addition, trainings are scheduled in May for Concrete Fundamentals, ACA and Manure Storage (Act 38) and Civil 3D training as well.

Heather continued with a Watershed Rehabilitation Update, that being her main role a State Office. She announced that the Conneautville Dam in Crawford County will be going up for bid this year. The Kintz Creek Dam in Pike County and the Hamilton Dam in Tioga County, the permitting is almost

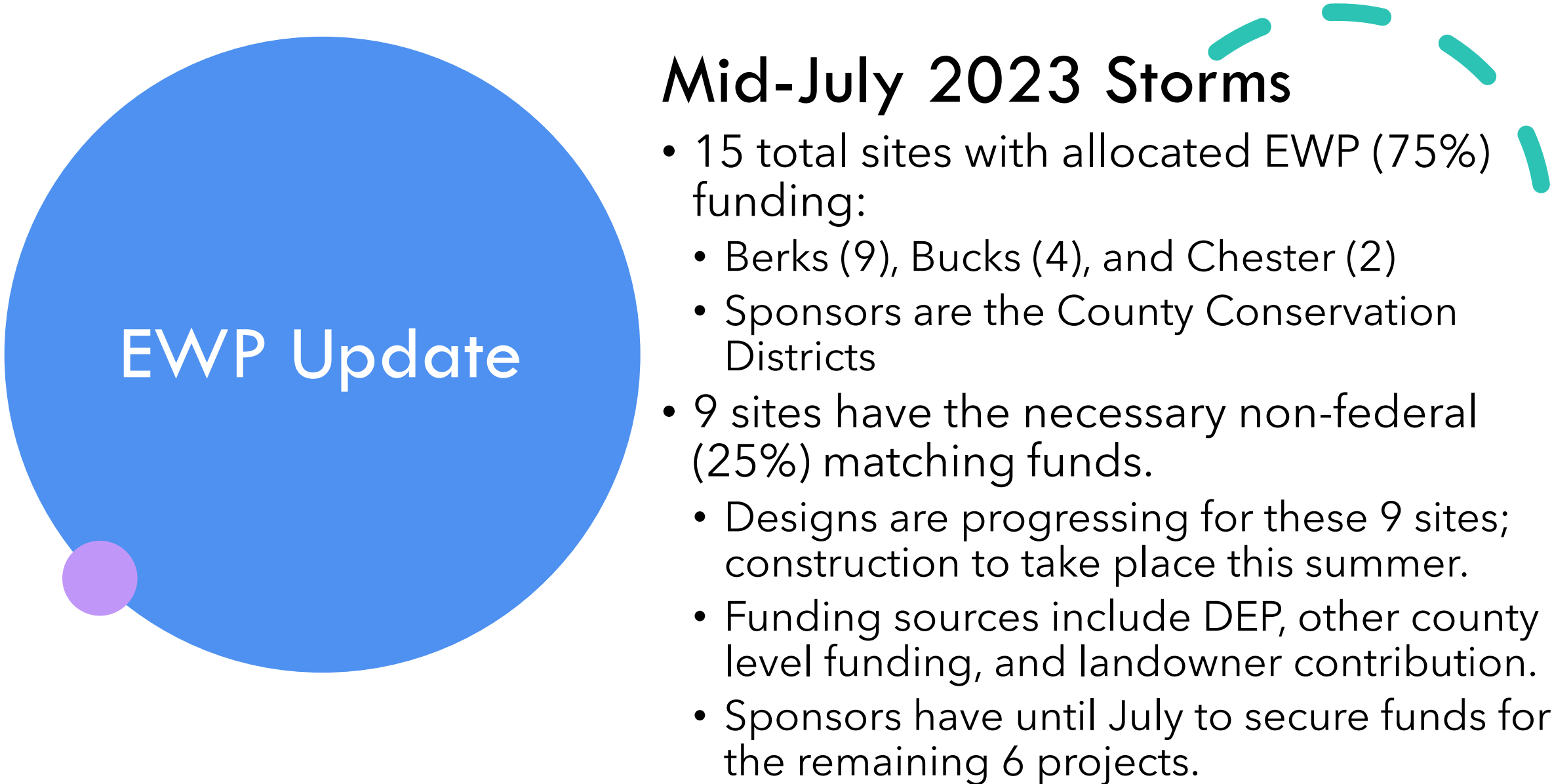
complete and are awaiting supplemental sponsor funds for construction. She explained the funding information details, requirements and responsibilities for Dam construction.

She noted that May 31st is National Dam Safety Day. It commemorates the 135th anniversary of the infamous Johnstown Flood, and the failure of the South Fork Dam which resulted in 2,208 fatalities, and 1600 homes being destroyed. I should be noted that Pennsylvania has over 90 flood control dams, and since 2005 these dams have provided over \$635 million just in flood reduction benefits.



State Technical Committee Meeting APRIL 2024 **ENGINEERING**

Heather Smeltz, ASTC – Water Resources



EWP Update

Mid-July 2023 Storms

- 15 total sites with allocated EWP (75%) funding:
 - Berks (9), Bucks (4), and Chester (2)
 - Sponsors are the County Conservation Districts
- 9 sites have the necessary non-federal (25%) matching funds.
 - Designs are progressing for these 9 sites; construction to take place this summer.
 - Funding sources include DEP, other county level funding, and landowner contribution.
 - Sponsors have until July to secure funds for the remaining 6 projects.



EWP Update



September 9, 2023 Storm

- 9 sites with allocated EWP funding:
 - Lackawanna (5), Luzerne (2) and Wyoming (2)
 - Sponsors are the County Conservation Districts and the City of Scranton.
- DEP is providing the non-federal match for all 9 sites
 - Special Chesapeake Bay-targeted funding.
- Designs are underway with a summer construction timeline.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

- Staff continue practicing good biosecurity
- No quarantine zones through the state from commercial operation positive cases
- Backyard flock in Wayne County
- HPAI in dairy operations



Agricultural Conservation Technical Trainings

- Boot Camp Basic
 - April 8-11 (Lewisburg) + three virtual days
 - 37 participants
 - Boot Camp Level II
 - April 29 – May 3 (FITG and NRCS SO) + two virtual days
 - May 13 – 17 (FITG) + two virtual days
 - 15 Engineer participants
 - 42 Agronomy participants
- 



Other Upcoming Trainings

- Concrete Fundamentals – May 20-24
 - ACA and Manure Storage (Act 38) – May 20-22
 - Civil 3D training (rescheduled for later in FY2024)
- 



Partners in Conservation

- Working with SCC and HRG
 - Providing support for their certification program
 - Partnering on future training
 - Working together to grow technical capacity
 - Working to fulfill MOU commitment (signed in October 2023)
- 



Watershed Rehabilitation Update

- Conneautville Dam, Crawford County
 - Construction is going to bid
 - Kintz Creek Dam, Pike County
 - NPDES ermitting almost complete, awaiting supplemental sponsor funds for construction
 - Hamilton Dam, Tioga County
 - Dam Safety permitting almost complete, awaiting supplemental sponsor funds for construction
 - May 31, 2024 – National Dam Safety Day
 - 135th anniversary of Johnstown Flood
- 

Johnstown Flood – 135th Anniversary

- South Fork Dam failure
- 2,208 fatalities
- 1,600 homes destroyed
- Highlighted a need for dam safety
 - May 31 is National Dam Safety Day





May 31, 2024 – National Dam Safety Day



Thank you

Beth Sassaman, NRCS Acting State Resource Conservationist, was introduced and started off announcing the different trainings that are scheduled for the next few months. (See attached hand-out.) She continued by highlighting Technical Guide Notice Number 287 that transmitted updates to the FOTG (Field Office Technical Guide) which was published in February of this year. It contained 15 practices that have been updated. She announced that there are two more practices that are being worked on and will be coming up for review in the near future. She noted that NRCS will have a new State Forester coming on board. Christopher Peters is coming to us from Virginia and will be starting in May. In addition, I (Beth) will be accepting the position of State Wildlife Biologist, starting in June.

Dave Hartman, Pennsylvania Grazing Lands Coalition Project Coordinator, was introduced and provided a presentation. (See attached hand-out.) He started off by discussing just what the role of the Grazing Coalition in Pennsylvania and a little background on himself. He described the Agreement between USDA/NRCS and PA GLC is to serve partnering organizations more effectively throughout Pennsylvania by building the capacity of PA GLC to provide technical and educational resources as well as facilitate increased collaboration all stakeholders. There are 5 different areas that major endeavors with this. One was the hiring of a part-time coordinator followed by strengthening the all-volunteer board, producing on-going training programs, to expand the grazing mentorship program, and to enable demonstration of low-cost technology on grazing farms. He continued to discuss the first project goal. He stated that two new board members have been recruited since last summer. Plans are in the works for a "Vision to Action" board development workshop to be held October 15th. Plans are to apply for another grant with the next round of funding. The second project goal is to increase availability and ensure the technical credibility of technical assistance for support of PA's graziers. Tentative plans have been initiated for a training event in October in Westmoreland County, the structure of which can be duplicated statewide. The third project goal is to make grazing educational resources more applicable to small scale, limited resource, veteran, women and Spanish-speaking farmers. A PA GLC education committee was formed and tasked with this goal. A new section of this committee was formed to provide links to pasture/grazing landing pages of legitimate sources, to include pages of specific interest to target audiences. The 4th project goal is to enhance the peer-to-peer grazing mentorship program. Five new mentors are now on board, in addition to the five already involved along with two NRCS Staff that are in the program as mentees. The resulting impact has been very positive. The fifth project goal is to develop innovative grazing technology demonstration opportunities. He discussed the use of virtual fencing technology. This innovative idea works with GPS and the

animals wear a collar similar to those used for pets. It typically emits an audible warning to the animals whenever they venture out of a pre-programmed area where they are grazing and when they cross over a certain line, they will receive a little electrical stimulation that will normally cause them to turn around and return to the designated area intended for their grazing. One partner is already committed to this new technology in Schuylkill County.

Update on the Pennsylvania Grazing Lands Coalition

David W. Hartman

PA GLC Project Coordinator



Two-year project ending 5/31/25

'The purpose of this agreement, between USDA-NRCS and PA GLC is to serve partnering organizations more effectively throughout Pennsylvania by building the capacity of PA GLC to provide technical and educational resources as well as facilitate increased collaboration among all stakeholders.'

- part-time coordinator

- strengthen all-volunteer board

- produce on-going training programs

- expand grazing mentorship program

- enable demonstration of low-cost technology on grazing farms

Project goal #1

Help PA GLC develop greater capacity and sustainability by providing a part-time coordinator to achieve that goal and the goal of helping them make the programs and activities described in this proposal a success

Two new board members recruited since last summer

Updating calendar of events

Gaining more insight into what other state GLCs do

Planning a 'vision to action' board development workshop
October 15th

Planning to apply for another grant with next round of funding

Project Goal #2

Increase availability and ensure the technical credibility of technical assistance for support of PA's graziers

Formed and currently meeting with committee to develop training session that can be duplicated statewide

Tentatively planning training event for October 23rd in Westmoreland County

Project goal #3

Make grazing educational resources more applicable to small scale, limited resource, veteran, woman and Spanish-speaking farmers

PA GLC education committee tasked with this goal

Committee recently met and decided to totally redevelop the resources section of the PA GLC website

New section will provide links to pasture/grazing landing pages of legitimate sources, including pages of specific interest to target audiences

Project goal #4

Enhance the PA GLC peer-to-peer grazing mentorship program

Five new mentors on board, in addition to five mentors already involved

Two NRCS staff included in the program as mentees

Conversations about impact of the program have been very positive

Project goal #5

Develop innovative grazing technology demonstration opportunities

Temporary fencing materials purchased for loan program

Actively working to demonstrate virtual fencing technology – one cooperator committed in Schuylkill County

Questions?

Dave Hartman

PA GLC Project Coordinator

dhartman@paglc.org

570-204-1701



Melissa Hanner, NRCS, Easement Program Manager was introduced and presented an update on Easement Acquisition. (See attached hand-out.) She started off by defining the different entities of the Federal Easement programs and funding for different projects and the partners involved. She announced the FY24 Easement Applications received: ACEP ALE has three new Applications from Schuylkill, Cumberland and Chester Counties that total \$1.4 million; three new applications from Lebanon, Blair and Juniata Counties for ACEP WRE; for RCPP, there are eight RCPP-1847 for Kittatinny Ridge (Lebanon and Dauphin Counties), one RCPP-2035 Buffalo Creek (Armstrong County) all totaling over \$2 million. She announced the cutoff dates for FY2025 Easement Applications as being November 1, 2024, January 1, 2025, and March 1, 2025. She reminded everyone that the points of contacts for new Easement applications were herself, Michael (Mick) Albert for Stewardship and Adam Dellinger for RCPP.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FY24 UPDATE EASEMENT ACQUISITION



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Federal Easement Programs

ACEP Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

- ACEP ALE (Agricultural Land Easements)
- ACEP WRE (Wetland Reserve Easements)

RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program)

- RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape
- RCPP-2035 Buffalo Creek Conservation Alliance
- RCPP-2712 Farm Preservation & Climate Change Mitigation

Entity Held Easements

ACEP ALE

- PA Department of Agriculture, County Ag Preservation Boards
- Land Conservancy of Adams County
- Lancaster Farmland Trust
- Brandywine Red Clay

RCP

- PA Department of Agriculture, County Ag Preservation Boards
- Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Berks Nature
- Manada Conservancy
- The Lebanon Valley Conservancy
- The ClearWater Conservancy

FY24 Easement Applications

ACEP ALE

- 3 New Applications (Schuylkill, Cumberland, Chester)
- \$1,439,988.00

ACEP WRE

- 3 New Applications (Lebanon, Blair, Juniata)

RCPP

- 8 RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge (Lebanon, Dauphin)
- 1 RCPP-2035 Buffalo Creek (Armstrong)
- \$2,048,598.00

Easement Applications

FY2025 Easement Cutoff Dates

- November 1, 2024
- January 1, 2025
- March 1, 2025

Points of Contact

- New Easement Applications – melissa.hanner@usda.gov
- Stewardship – michael.albert@usda.gov
- RCPP – adam.dellinger@usda.gov

Mick Albert, NRCS, Stewardship Specialist, was introduced and provided an about Compatible Use Authorizations (CUA) on Wetland Reserve program, and Wetland Reserve Easements. (See attached hand-outs) He defined CUA as a method to allow an activity (temporary) to occur on the easement which may otherwise be seen as a violation. The proposed activity must benefit the easement and the long-term protection and enhancement of habitat. It must be documented by the appropriate documents, maps and photos. He described the workings of the "Warranty Easement Deed in Perpetuity" that is used when the Easement is purchased from the landowner. He noted that nearly 95% of the rights to the land is obtained in the Easement and then discussed the rights that the landowner has retained. So, if the landowner desires to do something on the property, the CUA comes into play. He requested comments and review of five compatible use Authorization Activities. They are firewood harvest, food plots, noxious or invasive species control (herbicide), mowed walking trails and water level management.

Compatible Use Authorizations (CUA)

Program Manual- 528. 152 Compatible Uses, A-I

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

&

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program- Wetland Reserve
Easement (ACEP-WRE)



United States Department of Agriculture

Pennsylvania
Natural Resources Conservation Service

What is a Compatible Use Authorizations (CUA)

Program Manual- 528. 152 Compatible Uses, A-I

Method to allow an activity to occur on the easement which may otherwise be seen as a violation.

Temporary.

The proposed activity must benefit the easement and the long-term protection and enhancement of habitat.

Document on an AD-1160 and supported by a CPA-52, Maps, and photos



WARRANTY EASEMENT DEED IN PERPETUITY

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM – WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENT

EASEMENT NO. _____

THIS WARRANTY EASEMENT DEED is made by and between _____ of _____ (hereafter referred to as the “Landowner”), Grantor(s), and **the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA** and its assigns (hereafter referred to as the “United States”), Grantee. The Landowner and the United States are jointly referred to as the “Parties.”

The United States of America is acquiring this property by and through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the acquiring agency of the United States is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), United States Department of Agriculture.

Witnesseth:

Purposes and Intent. The purpose of this easement is to restore, protect, manage, maintain, and enhance the functional values of wetlands and other lands, and for the conservation of natural values including fish and wildlife and their habitat, water quality improvement, flood water retention, groundwater recharge, open space, aesthetic values, and environmental education. It is the intent of NRCS to give the Landowner the opportunity to participate in the restoration and management activities on the Easement Area.

Authority. This easement deed acquisition is authorized by Subtitle H of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetland Reserve Easement.

NOW THEREFORE, for and in consideration of the terms of these mutual obligations and benefits recited herein to each party and the sum of _____ Dollars (\$ _____), paid to Grantor(s) subject to commensurate reduction under 7 CFR Part 1400, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, Grantor(s) hereby grants and conveys with general warranty of title to the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and its assigns (Grantee), in perpetuity, the lands comprising the Easement Area described in Part I and appurtenant rights of access to the Easement Area, but reserving to the



Wetland Reserve Easement (WED)

Part II. Reservations in the Landowner on the Easement Area

- A. Title. Record title, along with the Landowner's right to convey, transfer, and otherwise alienate title to these reserved rights.
- B. Quiet Enjoyment. The right of the Landowner to enjoy the rights reserved on the Easement Area without interference from others.
- C. Control of Access. The right to prevent trespass and control access by the general public subject to the operation of State and Federal law.
- D. Recreational Uses. The right to undeveloped recreational uses, including undeveloped hunting and fishing and leasing of such rights for economic gain, pursuant to applicable State and Federal regulations that may be in effect at the time. Undeveloped recreational uses may include use of hunting or observation blinds that will accommodate no more than four people and are temporary, non-permanent and easily assembled, disassembled and moved without heavy equipment. Undeveloped recreational uses must be consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland and other natural values of the Easement Area.
- E. Subsurface Resources. The right to oil, gas, minerals, and geothermal resources underlying the Easement Area, provided that any drilling or mining activities are to be located outside the boundaries of the Easement Area, unless activities within the boundaries are specified in accordance with the terms and conditions of EXHIBIT C which is appended to and made a part of this easement deed, if applicable.



Wetland Reserve Easement (WED)
Part IV. Compatible Uses by the Landowner

PART IV. Compatible Uses by the Landowner.

- A. General. The United States may authorize, in writing and subject to such terms and conditions the NRCS may prescribe at its sole discretion, the temporary use of the Easement Area for compatible economic uses, including, but not limited to, managed timber harvest, periodic haying, or grazing.

- B. Limitations. Compatible use authorizations will only be made if, upon a determination by NRCS in the exercise of its sole discretion and rights, that the proposed use is consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland and other natural values of the Easement Area. The NRCS shall prescribe the amount, method, timing, intensity, and duration of the compatible use. Compatible use authorizations do not vest any rights in the Landowner and can be revoked by NRCS at any time.

Why am I presenting this to the State Technical Committee?

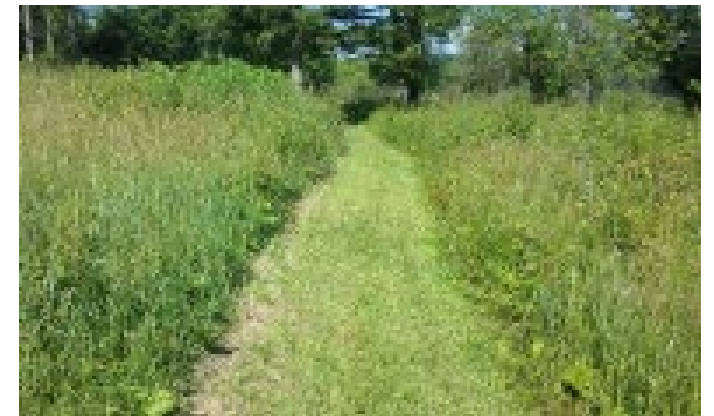
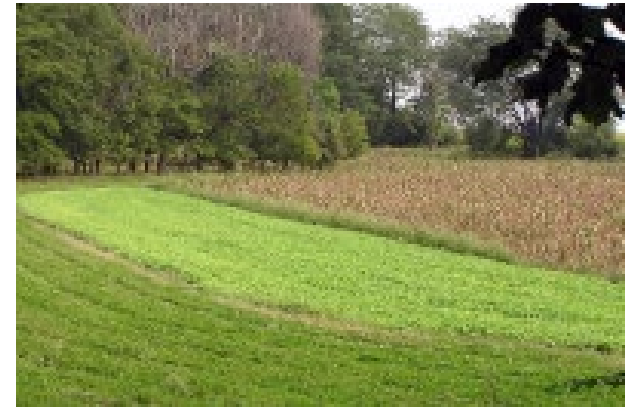
ACEP Policy 528.152, Compatible Uses

- (3) The State conservationist, with advice from the STC, will establish guidelines for compatible uses that may be authorized in their State. Approved activities must provide for the full array of wetland functions and values, including the wetland and associated habitat types for which the enrollment was established, unless changes in habitat or management objectives are identified by NRCS with input from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). CUAs must not adversely affect habitat for migratory birds, at-risk species, and threatened or endangered species.



5 Compatible Use Authorization Activities For your Comment and Review

1. Firewood Harvest
2. Food Plots
3. Noxious or Invasive Species Control (Herbicide)
4. Mowed Walking Trials
5. Water Level Management



United States Department of Agriculture

Pennsylvania
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Firewood Harvest

Purpose:

To harvest selected trees from a pre-designate area within the easement for firewood. Requests will only be evaluated after a site visit has been conducted by an NRCS Forester or DCNR Service Forester who approves/certifies that the firewood harvest and collection can be conducted in a manner consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the easement. The purpose of the easement is to restore, protect, manage, maintain, and enhance the functional values of wetlands and other lands, and for the conservation of natural values including fish and wildlife and their habitat, water quality improvement, flood water retention, groundwater recharge, open space, aesthetic values, and environmental education.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about the trees and area the firewood will be harvested.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Collecting firewood for personal use is permitted with preapproval by NRCS through this Compatible Use Authorization (CUA). Landowner must follow the prescriptions set forth in this form, and the notes from the NRCS Forester or DCNR Service Forester.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA and the notes from the NRCS Forester or DCNR Service Forester, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact is noted on PNDI completed on _____ OR note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before harvesting and collecting firewood.

To reduce and minimize impacts, the following restrictions will be adhered to by the landowner:

- Firewood harvest and collection will not occur within easement wetland areas and must be only within the upland areas as identified on the attached map.
- Firewood harvest and collection will occur only within 100 feet of the easement boundary and/or within 100 feet of existing roads to minimize disturbance.
- No more than 3 cords of firewood can be harvested per year across the entire easement. Requests exceeding 3 cords per year will only be considered as a separate Forest Management CUA request.
- A minimum of 6 snags per acre must remain within the firewood harvest area. Snags are dead or mostly dead (less than 10% live canopy) trees that are 6 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) or larger. Larger diameter snags (greater than 20 inches DBH) will not be cut because they provide optimum wildlife habitat and persist longer than smaller-diameter snags.
- Firewood harvest of down wood is preferred. Harvest of live trees is limited to the trees identified by the NRCS Forester or DCNR Service Forester.
- Woody slash resulting from firewood harvest will be scattered instead of piled.
- Firewood harvest and collection activities are only authorized for timeframes where soils are frozen or completely dry. Collection activities must not create soil compaction or rutting due to wet soil conditions.

- Road and trail construction is not authorized by this CUA.
- Activities will be limited to minimize impacts to wildlife as informed by the PNDI and/or other guidance such as USFWS rules (i.e. Northern Long-eared Bat).
- The area must be monitored for undesirable vegetation after firewood removal.

NRCS can rescind permission for firewood harvest and collection on an easement at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Food Plot

Purpose:

To further improve wetland wildlife habitat and/or human recreational use by providing an annual wildlife food source. Food plots may be planted and maintained on WRE/WRP easements for wildlife use and human recreational use through an approved Compatible Use Authorization (CUA). Food plots may not be harvested or enlarged from the approved size. PA NRCS's priority for meeting the food and cover needs of all wildlife is proper habitat management across the easement. In most cases, food plots are intended for human recreational use related to game species, which NRCS supports and allows under the "quiet enjoyment" aspect of WRE/WRP easements. However, landowners must realize that while establishment of food plots is a compromise that NRCS voluntarily makes, there is no requirement for NRCS to agree to food plot requests. The purpose of the easement is to restore, protect, manage, maintain, and enhance the functional values of wetlands and other lands, and for the conservation of natural values including fish and wildlife and their habitat, water quality improvement, flood water retention, groundwater recharge, open space, aesthetic values, and environmental education.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about conditions of the area the food plot(s) will be planted.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Food plot size, location, layout, general species composition and use will be pre-approved by NRCS. Cumulative food plot acreage is capped at 5% of total easement acreage. Any changes to these aspects of the food plot must be pre-approved by NRCS. Food plots will be established to non-noxious and non-invasive plants. Food plots cannot be harvested. Food plots will be maintained in some form of vegetation or vegetation residue throughout the year. Live vegetation must be present during all growing seasons without exception; any food plot that is abandoned or unused, even for just one year, must be reseeded to a natural vegetative cover. Due to concerns with noxious and invasive vegetation colonizing bare areas, natural regeneration is only acceptable on a site-specific basis, as approved by local NRCS staff or the NRCS State Biologist.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact is noted on PNDI completed on _____ OR note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before pursuing the food plot.

- Landowners are responsible for being aware of and in compliance with all applicable State and Federal wildlife baiting laws relating to local and migratory wildlife species.
- Food plots will be established via NRCS-approved methods. No-till or overseeding methods are preferred, with tillage ONLY allowed in locations where NRCS agrees that it is acceptable.
- Food plot size, location, layout, species composition and use will not discourage or negatively affect other wildlife, as determined by NRCS. NRCS is required by law to manage WRE/WRP easements for *all* wildlife and therefore cannot give preference to just game species. The need to manage for all wildlife on an easement may override food plot benefits.

- It is the landowner's responsibility to ensure the areas planted to food plots are replanted to an approved stand of vegetation. All noxious or invasive species in the food plot area, while the food plot is active or decommissioned, must be treated by the landowner.
- Food plots may not be fertilized

NRCS can rescind permission for food plots on an easement at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Noxious or Invasive Weed Control (Herbicide application)

Purpose:

To improve wildlife habitat maintenance through spot herbicide treatment of noxious and/or invasive species **(LIST SPECIES)**. Spot spraying is allowed on WRE/WRP easements for the express purpose of controlling the existence of or spread of undesirable vegetation—typically plants on the noxious or invasive plant lists established by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Control of other plants may be allowed on a site-specific basis, as approved by the NRCS State Biologist.

Controlling invasive and/or noxious species in the easement area will promote natural vegetation and permit the goals and intent of the program to be achieved. The purpose of the easement is to restore, protect, manage, maintain, and enhance the functional values of wetlands and other lands, and for the conservation of natural values including fish and wildlife and their habitat, water quality improvement, flood water retention, groundwater recharge, open space, aesthetic values, and environmental education.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about conditions of the area where the treatment will occur.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Controlling noxious and invasive species will promote native plant communities in the easement. Treatments must minimize damage to important plants or habitat. Treatments will not create or encourage bare soils or erosion; if total vegetation removal occurs, affected areas must be reseeded to an approved temporary or permanent cover. Other site-specific concerns are possible, as identified by NRCS.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details Including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact is noted on PNDI completed on _____ OR note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before pursuing the treatment of invasive or noxious species. Spot spraying may be done at any time of the year, as long as the timing of the treatment results in the highest chance of control. You must follow the directions as shown on the herbicide label and are responsible for knowing and following all state and local laws with regards to applying herbicides. You are responsible to remediate any damages to native or surrounding vegetation because of herbicide use.

NRCS can rescind permission for noxious or invasive weed control on an easement at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Mowed Walking Trails

Purpose:

Maintain mowed vegetative trails to allow management & maintenance of easement. Mowing of access paths will only occur between Aug 2-September 1. The trail will be no wider than 8 feet and vegetation will be mowed no shorter than 6". Path locations and use will minimize any possible negative impacts to wildlife, saturated or sensitive areas, and will avoid crossing wetland basins, water inflow/outflow channels and other drainage areas. Areas with important or locally rare vegetation will be avoided for maintained trails.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about areas the trails will go through.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Paths and their usage will not disturb or damage important features of the easement, including but not limited to wildlife or their vital habitats, water sources, soils, plants of special value or concern, and easement characteristics of special value or concern. Paths will not be used in any way that creates or encourages bare soils or erosion, such as frequent or high-speed vehicle use, horse riding at high densities or frequencies or mowing at a frequency or height that result in bare soils. Other site-specific concerns are possible, as identified by NRCS.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details Including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact noted on PNDI completed on _____ **OR note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before completing the mowing.** Mowing of the access trails has minimal impact on the easement and allows landowner access to critical areas of the easement for proper O&M. NRCS prefers trails that combine benefits. For example, paths that allow access for weed control and maintenance of easement features can also be located so that pooled areas, interesting/unique vegetation, and wildlife are visible from the trail. For example, a trail across the top of an embankment is a good compromise: it allows easier and consistent maintenance of the embankment *and* good viewing of the adjacent wetland pool, while keeping the mowing itself restricted to the introduced, shorter grasses deliberately planted on the embankment. NRCS has final approval on the layout of trails. Trails can be moved in subsequent years, with NRCS approval, if necessary to reach different parts of the easement. Berms are to remain free of woody vegetation and remain covered in dense grass to maintain integrity and therefore can be mowed as needed as maintenance.

NRCS can rescind permission for mowed walking trail on an easement at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Water Level Management

Purpose:

Deliberate adjustment of water levels in wetland impoundments can be an effective and versatile tool for managing wetlands, invasive species, and surrounding habitats. Water levels fluctuate often in natural wetlands, creating the varied soil conditions and plant communities that make wetlands extremely valuable wildlife habitat; human adjustment of water levels attempts to mimic those natural fluctuations. Altering the water levels in impounded wetlands provides many management benefits and opportunities, many of which are strongly supported by NRCS. In some cases, unwanted plants can be controlled by flooding them at specific times of the year, or dewatering wetlands can dry out the unwanted plants or allow the manager to access them for other methods of control. In other cases, changing water levels can encourage beneficial plant communities or increase diversity among existing plants.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about conditions of the impoundment(s) the landowner plans to manipulate.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Altering the water levels in impounded wetlands also creates habitat diversity that benefits many wildlife species, most notably amphibians and reptiles. But waterfowl, songbirds, raptors, mammals, and insects also rely on the changes in habitat and food sources caused by changing water levels. Changing water levels are the key reason that wetlands provide greater habitat compared to open water ponds. Some NRCS easements contain wetland impoundments that include water control structures. Those structures were included to allow the deliberate adjustment of water levels for management purposes. Shallow depressional wetlands rarely have water control structures because they undergo natural water fluctuations and only occasionally need additional management of water levels. All water level management activities must be reviewed and approved by the NRCS State Biologist.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact noted on PNDI completed on _____ **OR** note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before pursuing the water level management. (LIST SPECIES OR STRUCTURES THAT MAY BE IMPACTED, GOOD AND BAD, BY THE WATER LEVEL MANIPULATION) (Controlling spatterdock, phragmites, cattails, repairing embankments, repairing control boxes, waterfowl, insects, amphibians, etc.)

When pre-approved by NRCS, water levels in easement wetlands may be altered to accomplish or accommodate any of the following:

- increased or sustained habitat diversity
- direct or indirect control of vegetation through flooding or drying

- sustaining or encouraging specific plant communities
- restoring or maintaining soil saturation, especially near the edges of impounded wetlands
- creating the range of occasionally saturated, seasonally saturated, and consistently saturated soils that are characteristic of wetlands (note that permanently flooding an entire area is not acceptable management)
- maintenance or improvement of specific wildlife habitat(s) identified or agreed to by NRCS

High-quality habitat that supports multiple species is the primary goal of the WRP/WRE program, however, manipulation of water levels for reasons unrelated to habitat management is not a priority for NRCS.

NRCS can rescind permission for water level management at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Food Plot

Purpose:

To further improve wetland wildlife habitat and/or human recreational use by providing an annual wildlife food source. Food plots may be planted and maintained on WRE/WRP easements for wildlife use and human recreational use through an approved Compatible Use Authorization (CUA). Food plots may not be harvested or enlarged from the approved size. PA NRCS's priority for meeting the food and cover needs of all wildlife is proper habitat management across the easement. In most cases, food plots are intended for human recreational use related to game species, which NRCS supports and allows under the "quiet enjoyment" aspect of WRE/WRP easements. However, landowners must realize that while establishment of food plots is a compromise that NRCS voluntarily makes, there is no requirement for NRCS to agree to food plot requests. The purpose of the easement is to restore, protect, manage, maintain, and enhance the functional values of wetlands and other lands, and for the conservation of natural values including fish and wildlife and their habitat, water quality improvement, flood water retention, groundwater recharge, open space, aesthetic values, and environmental education.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about conditions of the area the food plot(s) will be planted.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Food plot size, location, layout, general species composition and use will be pre-approved by NRCS. Cumulative food plot acreage is capped at 5% of total easement acreage. Any changes to these aspects of the food plot must be pre-approved by NRCS. Food plots will be established to non-noxious and non-invasive plants. Food plots cannot be harvested. Food plots will be maintained in some form of vegetation or vegetation residue throughout the year. Live vegetation must be present during all growing seasons without exception; any food plot that is abandoned or unused, even for just one year, must be reseeded to a natural vegetative cover. Due to concerns with noxious and invasive vegetation colonizing bare areas, natural regeneration is only acceptable on a site-specific basis, as approved by local NRCS staff or the NRCS State Biologist.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact is noted on PNDI completed on _____ OR note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before pursuing the food plot.

- Landowners are responsible for being aware of and in compliance with all applicable State and Federal wildlife baiting laws relating to local and migratory wildlife species.
- Food plots will be established via NRCS-approved methods. No-till or overseeding methods are preferred, with tillage ONLY allowed in locations where NRCS agrees that it is acceptable.
- Food plot size, location, layout, species composition and use will not discourage or negatively affect other wildlife, as determined by NRCS. NRCS is required by law to manage WRE/WRP easements for *all* wildlife and therefore cannot give preference to just game species. The need to manage for all wildlife on an easement may override food plot benefits.

- It is the landowner's responsibility to ensure the areas planted to food plots are replanted to an approved stand of vegetation. All noxious or invasive species in the food plot area, while the food plot is active or decommissioned, must be treated by the landowner.
- Food plots may not be fertilized

NRCS can rescind permission for food plots on an easement at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Noxious or Invasive Weed Control (Herbicide application)

Purpose:

To improve wildlife habitat maintenance through spot herbicide treatment of noxious and/or invasive species **(LIST SPECIES)**. Spot spraying is allowed on WRE/WRP easements for the express purpose of controlling the existence of or spread of undesirable vegetation—typically plants on the noxious or invasive plant lists established by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Control of other plants may be allowed on a site-specific basis, as approved by the NRCS State Biologist.

Controlling invasive and/or noxious species in the easement area will promote natural vegetation and permit the goals and intent of the program to be achieved. The purpose of the easement is to restore, protect, manage, maintain, and enhance the functional values of wetlands and other lands, and for the conservation of natural values including fish and wildlife and their habitat, water quality improvement, flood water retention, groundwater recharge, open space, aesthetic values, and environmental education.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about conditions of the area where the treatment will occur.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Controlling noxious and invasive species will promote native plant communities in the easement. Treatments must minimize damage to important plants or habitat. Treatments will not create or encourage bare soils or erosion; if total vegetation removal occurs, affected areas must be reseeded to an approved temporary or permanent cover. Other site-specific concerns are possible, as identified by NRCS.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details Including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact is noted on PNDI completed on _____ OR note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before pursuing the treatment of invasive or noxious species. Spot spraying may be done at any time of the year, as long as the timing of the treatment results in the highest chance of control. You must follow the directions as shown on the herbicide label and are responsible for knowing and following all state and local laws with regards to applying herbicides. You are responsible to remediate any damages to native or surrounding vegetation because of herbicide use.

NRCS can rescind permission for noxious or invasive weed control on an easement at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Mowed Walking Trails

Purpose:

Maintain mowed vegetative trails to allow management & maintenance of easement. Mowing of access paths will only occur between Aug 2-September 1. The trail will be no wider than 8 feet and vegetation will be mowed no shorter than 6". Path locations and use will minimize any possible negative impacts to wildlife, saturated or sensitive areas, and will avoid crossing wetland basins, water inflow/outflow channels and other drainage areas. Areas with important or locally rare vegetation will be avoided for maintained trails.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about areas the trails will go through.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Paths and their usage will not disturb or damage important features of the easement, including but not limited to wildlife or their vital habitats, water sources, soils, plants of special value or concern, and easement characteristics of special value or concern. Paths will not be used in any way that creates or encourages bare soils or erosion, such as frequent or high-speed vehicle use, horse riding at high densities or frequencies or mowing at a frequency or height that result in bare soils. Other site-specific concerns are possible, as identified by NRCS.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details Including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact noted on PNDI completed on _____ **OR note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before completing the mowing.** Mowing of the access trails has minimal impact on the easement and allows landowner access to critical areas of the easement for proper O&M. NRCS prefers trails that combine benefits. For example, paths that allow access for weed control and maintenance of easement features can also be located so that pooled areas, interesting/unique vegetation, and wildlife are visible from the trail. For example, a trail across the top of an embankment is a good compromise: it allows easier and consistent maintenance of the embankment *and* good viewing of the adjacent wetland pool, while keeping the mowing itself restricted to the introduced, shorter grasses deliberately planted on the embankment. NRCS has final approval on the layout of trails. Trails can be moved in subsequent years, with NRCS approval, if necessary to reach different parts of the easement. Berms are to remain free of woody vegetation and remain covered in dense grass to maintain integrity and therefore can be mowed as needed as maintenance.

NRCS can rescind permission for mowed walking trail on an easement at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Water Level Management

Purpose:

Deliberate adjustment of water levels in wetland impoundments can be an effective and versatile tool for managing wetlands, invasive species, and surrounding habitats. Water levels fluctuate often in natural wetlands, creating the varied soil conditions and plant communities that make wetlands extremely valuable wildlife habitat; human adjustment of water levels attempts to mimic those natural fluctuations. Altering the water levels in impounded wetlands provides many management benefits and opportunities, many of which are strongly supported by NRCS. In some cases, unwanted plants can be controlled by flooding them at specific times of the year, or dewatering wetlands can dry out the unwanted plants or allow the manager to access them for other methods of control. In other cases, changing water levels can encourage beneficial plant communities or increase diversity among existing plants.

Beginning Site Condition:

Add site specific information about conditions of the impoundment(s) the landowner plans to manipulate.

Statement of Affect and Compatibility:

Altering the water levels in impounded wetlands also creates habitat diversity that benefits many wildlife species, most notably amphibians and reptiles. But waterfowl, songbirds, raptors, mammals, and insects also rely on the changes in habitat and food sources caused by changing water levels. Changing water levels are the key reason that wetlands provide greater habitat compared to open water ponds. Some NRCS easements contain wetland impoundments that include water control structures. Those structures were included to allow the deliberate adjustment of water levels for management purposes. Shallow depressional wetlands rarely have water control structures because they undergo natural water fluctuations and only occasionally need additional management of water levels. All water level management activities must be reviewed and approved by the NRCS State Biologist.

If the landowner does not comply with the rules set forth as prescribed in the CUA, the landowner will be in violation and NRCS may take enforcement actions.

Special Conditions, Specifications and other Details including Information from Consultation with FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agency:

No potential impact noted on PNDI completed on _____ **OR** note the restrictions in accordance with the PNDI the landowner must adhere to before pursuing the water level management. (LIST SPECIES OR STRUCTURES THAT MAY BE IMPACTED, GOOD AND BAD, BY THE WATER LEVEL MANIPULATION) (Controlling spatterdock, phragmites, cattails, repairing embankments, repairing control boxes, waterfowl, insects, amphibians, etc.)

When pre-approved by NRCS, water levels in easement wetlands may be altered to accomplish or accommodate any of the following:

- increased or sustained habitat diversity
- direct or indirect control of vegetation through flooding or drying

- sustaining or encouraging specific plant communities
- restoring or maintaining soil saturation, especially near the edges of impounded wetlands
- creating the range of occasionally saturated, seasonally saturated, and consistently saturated soils that are characteristic of wetlands (note that permanently flooding an entire area is not acceptable management)
- maintenance or improvement of specific wildlife habitat(s) identified or agreed to by NRCS

High-quality habitat that supports multiple species is the primary goal of the WRP/WRE program, however, manipulation of water levels for reasons unrelated to habitat management is not a priority for NRCS.

NRCS can rescind permission for water level management at any time if this guidance is not followed.

Ryan Cornelius, NRCS, Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, was introduced and provided an update on Financial Programs. (See attached hand-outs) He stated that EQIP-IRA has been allocated \$31.9 million and that over 90% of those funds have been obligated. To date 359 contracts have been obligated on 139,106 acres. The EQIP General (Farm Bill) has been allocated \$24 Million and to date 71 contracts have been obligated on 7,312 acres. The ACT Now EQIP NWQI has 17 applications selected for funding and have 5 contracts obligated totaling \$670,000 on 869 acres. We were allocated \$200,000 for Agricultural Assistance Program (AMA) this year and have two applications preapproved at this time. AMA-RMA has been allocated \$196,432 this year and the ranking deadline is set for May 3rd, 2024.



United States Department of Agriculture



Program Updates (EQIP & AMA)

USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
Pennsylvania, April 16th, 2024



Ryan Cornelius
PA ASTC-Programs (Acting)
PA EQIP/AMA-Program Manager

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FY24 EQIP Update:

EQIP-IRA:

- Allocated \$31,964,000
- 90.5% of FY24 EQIP-IRA funds have been obligated

- ACT Now EQIP-IRA Cover Crop

- To date 359 contracts obligated totaling \$28,941,823 on 139,106 acres

EQIP General (Farm Bill):

- Allocated \$24,165,897
- To date 71 contracts obligated totaling \$2,750,743 on 7,312 acres
- Just received an additional \$5.5 Million to target additional Historically Underserved (HU) applicants

ACT Now EQIP NWQI:

- 17 applications selected for funding
- To date 5 contracts obligated totaling \$670,000 on 869 acres (numbers included in EQIP General above)



FY24 AMA Update:



AMA:

- Allocated \$200,000
- 2 applications preapproved so far

AMA-RMA:

- Allocated \$196,432
- Ranking deadline is May 3rd, 2024



Ashley Lenig, NRCS Conservation Program Manager, was introduced and provided an update on Financial Assistance programs that included: Conservation Innovative Grants (CIG), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the National Water Quality Initiative (EQIP-NWQI). (See attached hand-out) Under CIG, she stated that state competition Notice of Funding Opportunity is currently being adjusted at the National level. That PA CIG NFO is still under review, and asked members to contact Molly Rose (NRCS) to get on the mailing list for newly released NFO notifications. CSP Classic currently has over \$10.3 million in funds, \$7.1 million on the original program and \$3.1 million from the Inflation Reduction Act Climate Smart. There are 144 viable applications for the Original program and 180 viable applications for the IRA Climate Smart. For the NWQI, the FY2024 allocation amounts to \$3.1 million with 17 preapproved applications. To date 5 active contracts totaling \$670,000. She discussed and described the newly created NWQI Poster (which is attached).



United States Department of Agriculture

PA NRCS Programs Team

Financial Assistance Programs Update CIG, CSP, EQIP-NWQI

***Pennsylvania State Technical Committee Meeting
Ashley Lenig, Conservation Program Manager***

April 16, 2024

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Presentation Outline

- **Conservation Innovative Grants (CIG)**
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**
- **National Water Quality Initiative (EQIP-NWQI)**



Conservation Innovation Grants



- State competition Notice of Funding Opportunity is being adjusted at the national level
- PA CIG NFO was previously sent in and is still under review
- For NFO notifications, get on our New Release mailing list.



Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP Classic

Currently have \$10,331,954 in funds

- Original program
 - \$7,145,717
- IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) Climate Smart
 - \$3,186,237



Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP Classic

Recently selected in all categories

Statewide and Area Fund Pools

- Original program
 - 144 viable applications
- IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) Climate Smart
 - 180 viable applications



National Water Quality Initiative

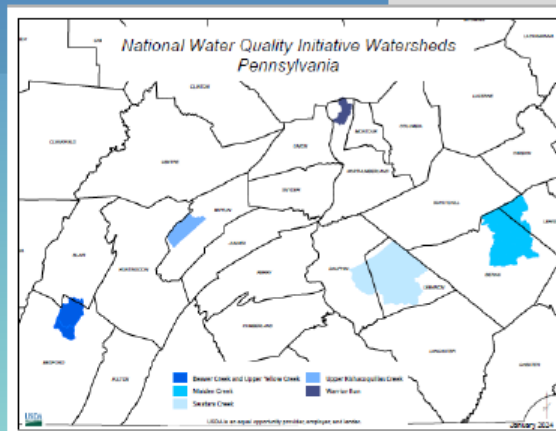
Environmental Quality Incentives Program – NWQI

- **Poster created**
- **NWQI meeting with conservationists in the watersheds**
 - **PA DEP and USGS presented**
- **FY2024 Allocation: \$3,168,383**
- **Preapproved: 17 applications**
 - **To date, 5 active contracts totalling \$670,000**





National Water Quality Initiative



Pennsylvania

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) targets agriculturally impaired watersheds and seeks to remove ag impairments through working with stakeholders in the watersheds to educate landowners and operators, provide technical assistance and funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to fund environmental improvements on farms, and monitor water quality parameters to determine trends in Pennsylvania's waterways. Our state has five established watersheds (see map, left). Watershed Assessment Plans were written in 2019 and the implementation phase began in 2020. The sections below showcase the unique aspects and progress in each NWQI watershed towards environmental improvements and meeting their individual water quality goals. In addition to this effort, USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service provides free technical assistance and opportunities for financial assistance through conservation programs in all counties in the state.



Warrior Run

- From 2020-2023, 14 plans, 9 contracts, \$951,808 obligated, 1,323 acres.
- A unique feature of the NWQI effort in this small watershed was the many different outreach activities. Some of the highlights included: an informational Pancake Breakfast, Ice Cream by the Stream with electrofishing and macroinvertebrate collection (see picture, right), and the Free Tree Giveaway.
- Goals: 5 year: reduce sediment load by 9%; long term: reduce P by 25%
DEP monitoring is now occurring 4x/yr. to show trends of reduction
- Progress: As of 2019, the upper reaches of the watershed were removed from the ag-impaired streams list. See map, top center.
- Fish habitat structures installed in partnership with USFWS. See photo, top, third from right.



Upper Yellow and Beaver Creek

- From 2020-2023, 11 contracts, \$680,081 obligated, 1,255 acres.
- Unique aspect: efforts since 2017. In 2017-2019, 29 contracts, \$1,401,617 on 3,345.6 acres.
- Goals:
 - Over 5 years, see a 3% reduction in nitrates and a 5% reduction in conductivity;
 - Over the long range (10-20 yrs.), we hope to see improvement across water chemistry parameters and macroinvertebrate IBIs.
 - N, P, and sediment runoff reduced by 7,500, 2,000, and 10,000 lbs/yr. as estimated by NRCS calculations.
 - 8,346 acres treated / 86,400 total watershed acres = 9.7% of the critical source areas.



Upper Kishacoquillas

- Since 2019, 8 contracts, \$1,470,166; Since 2012, a total of 23 contracts, \$3,336,831.
- Unique aspect: Amish farms comprise 66% of the 70% of the watershed that is in agricultural land.
- Goals:
 - Reduce non-point source sediments by 20% to 20,000 lb./day and total phosphorus by 20% to 56 lb./day by 2025.
 - Nitrogen levels should be reduced to approximately 25,000-30,000 lb/ac/year over the next 5 years.
 - Implementation Goals: treat an additional 300 acres per year by CTA or FAP
- Progress:
 - While Total Nitrogen levels has stayed about the same (see chart, right),
 - Total Phosphorus and Total Suspended Solids decreased by 76% and 62% respectively.



Year	Total N mg/l	Total P mg/l	TSS mg/l
2013	12.32	0.34	155.21
2014	12.25	0.33	127.71
2015	12.37	0.32	120.49
2016	12.50	0.31	113.49
2017	12.58	0.29	105.96
2018	12.65	0.28	98.51
2019	12.77	0.27	91.10
2020	12.88	0.26	83.97

Maiden Creek

- From 2020-2023, 25 contracts, \$2,556,000 obligated, 4,106 acres.
- This watershed stands out with long-term efforts from many partners.



- Goals:
 - 10% decrease in Nitrate levels
(3.7 ppm from 4.1 in prior 10 years) for all RAWA testing sites
 - Acres treated:
 - of the 7,000 expected, treat 3,000 in the Lower Maiden Creek Watershed with $\geq 90\%$ in a critical source area (CSA).
 - Treat 4,000 in the remaining watersheds while ensuring that 70% or more is in a critical source area.
- Progress:
 - Nitrates are currently down but have fluctuated due to storm events as evidenced by increased turbidity readings
 - 801/3,000 ac. goal in Lower Maiden Creek with 100% in a CSA; 3,305/4,000 ac. goal in the rest of the watershed.



Swatara Creek

- From 2020-2023, 90 plans 33 contracts, \$3,903,215, 4,859 acres.
- A real-time monitoring device ("super gauge") was installed in partnership with USGS.
- Goals: 3 year: 10% reduction in turbidity; 5 year: 20% reduction in turbidity; Participation rate increase to 20% of farms (was 7% in EQIP)
- Progress: Average reduction in Peak Turbidity of 4% across all years. Ave. Annual Turbidity has decreased since 2018 baseline of 71 NTU; 7%.
- Progress towards participation rate is up to 12%.
- Overall, the data shows positive trends towards meeting turbidity and participation goals in this NWQI watershed.



Year	Avg. Annual Turbidity NTU	Avg. Annual Peak Turbidity NTU	Participation Rate		Reduction in Avg. Annual Peak Turbidity
			# Peak Storm Events	Total Annual Precipitation Inches	
2018	71	71	20	57	-
2019	61	76	17	45	7%
2020	51	76	10	16	-10%
2021	53	72	14	48	-13%
2022	52	62	11	42	-15%
2023	53	60	10	38	-18%
Avg	58	68	13	38	-15%

Questions?

Comments?

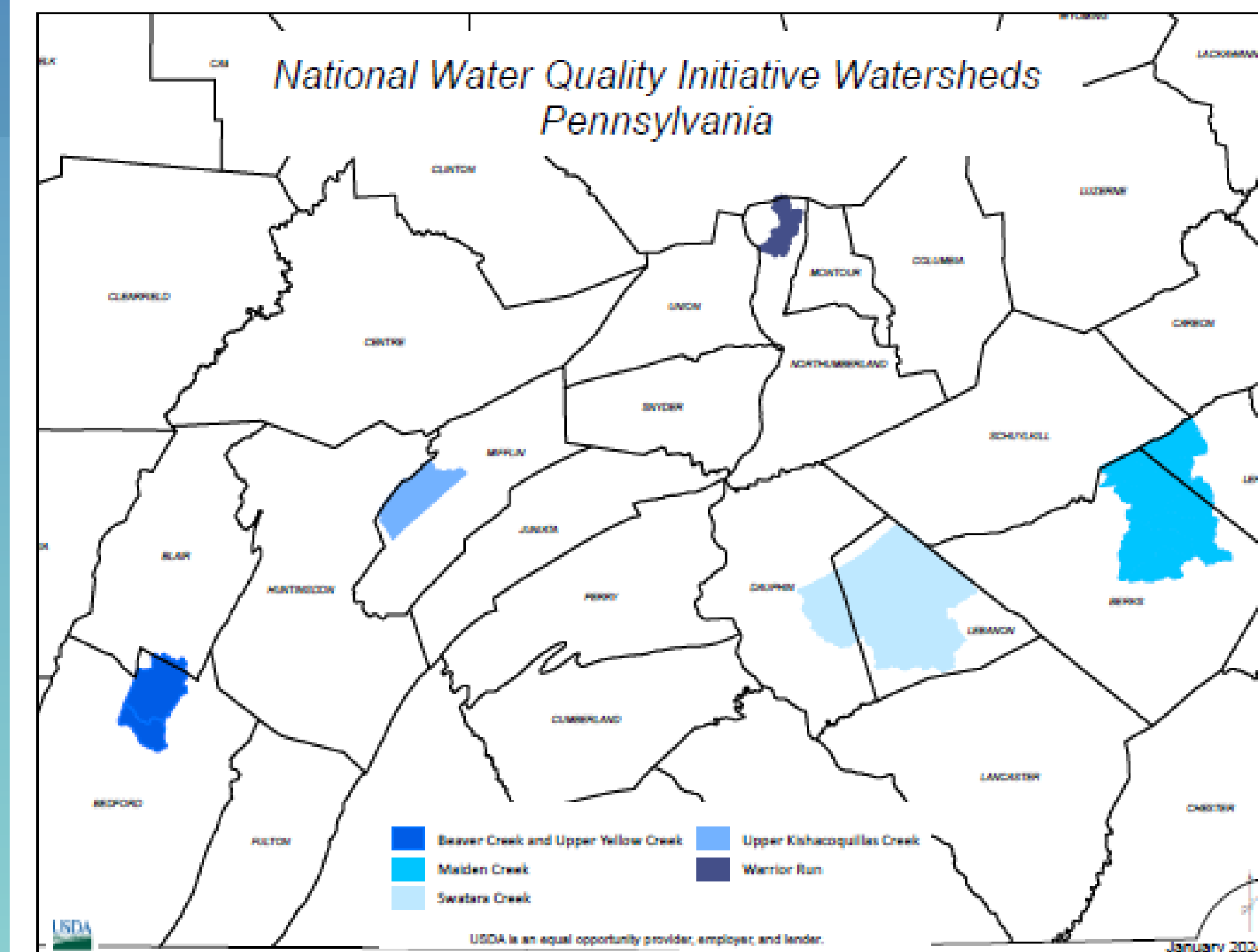


Ashley Lenig

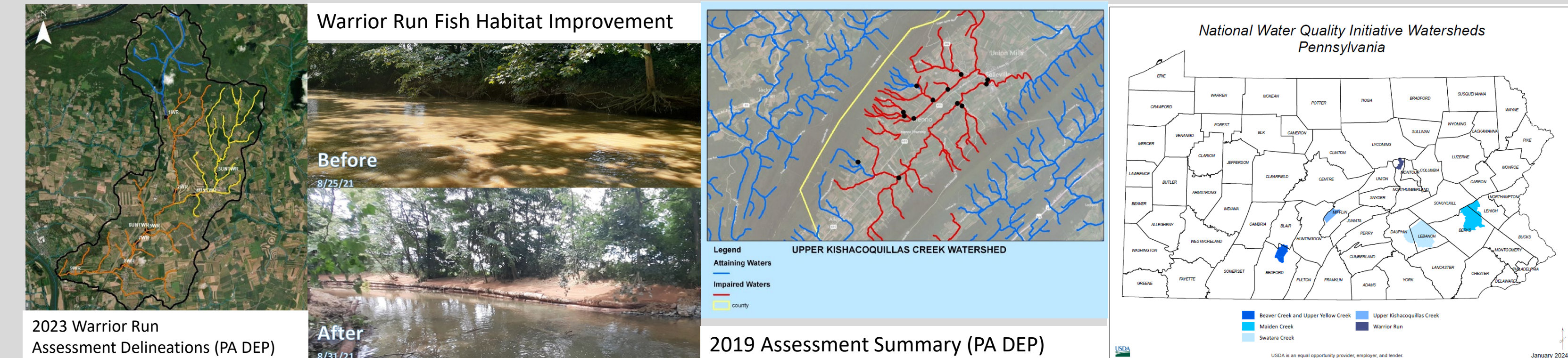
Conservation Program Manager (CSP, CIG, NWQI)

ashley.lenig@usda.gov

National Water Quality Initiative



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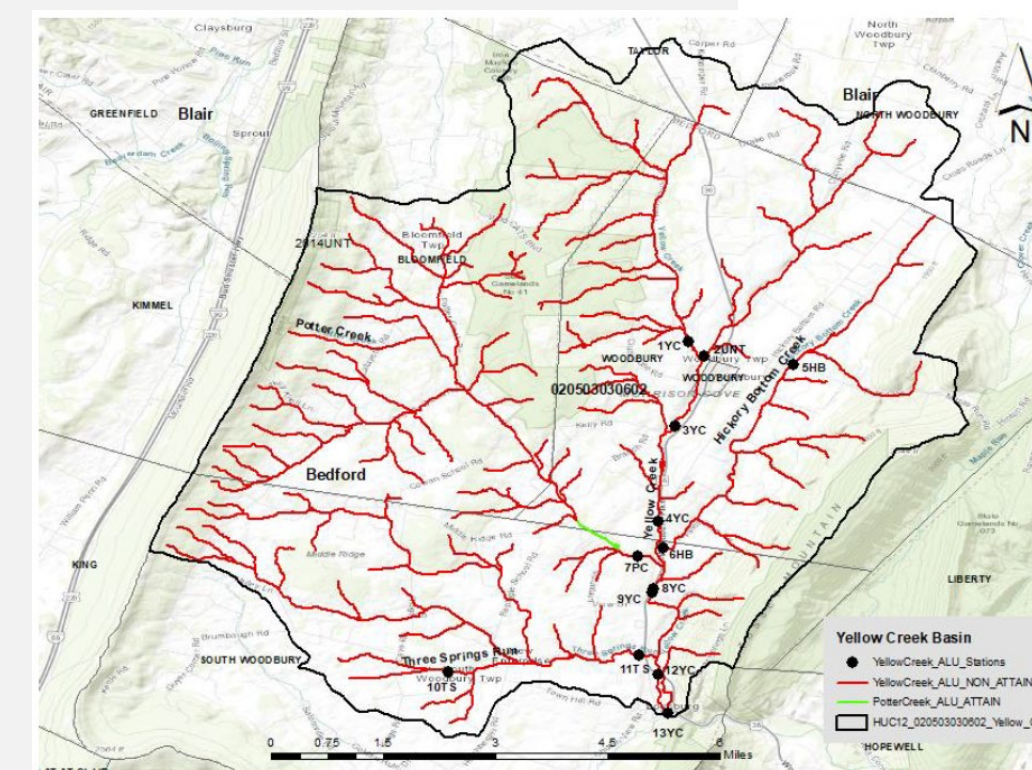
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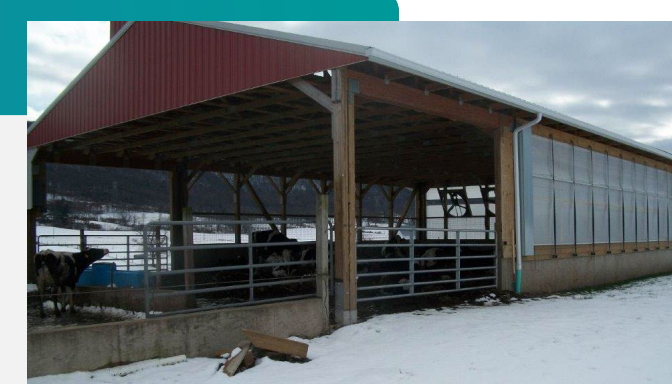
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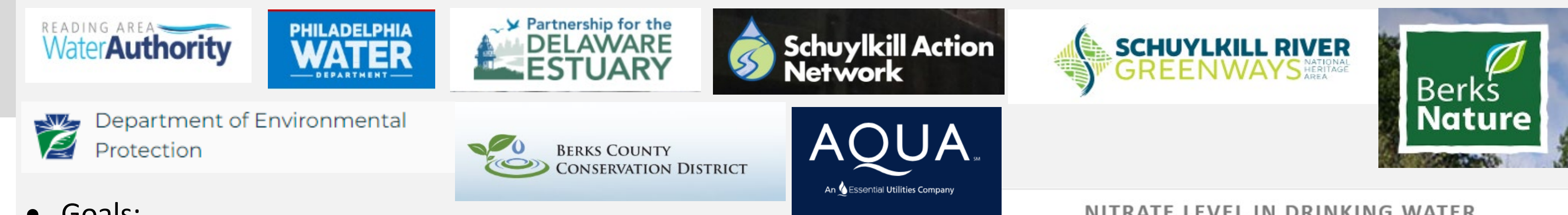
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- Progress towards participation rate is up to 12%.
- Overall, the data shows positive trends towards meeting turbidity and participation goals in this NWQI watershed.



	Ave. Annual Turbidity	Ave. Annual Peak Turbidity	# Peak Storm Events	Total Annual Precipitation	Reduction in Ave. Annual Peak Turbidity
					Inches
2018	23	71	20	67	x
2019	21	76	17	48	7%
2020	13	72	10	38	1%
2021	12	62	14	46	-13%
2022	13	70	11	42	-1%
2023	12	60	10	35	-15%
Ave.	14	60	14	46	-4%

Adam Dellinger, NRCS, Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Manager, was introduced and provided an update on RCPP. (See attached hand-out) He defined the RCPP program, funding of projects and the goals intended. He discussed the active RCPP projects in Pennsylvania and their stage of completion. He indicated two new RCPP projects for which funding is currently in negotiation. The first is scaling adoption of adaptive nitrogen management using imaging and nitrogen crediting technology. The lead partner is the Nature Conservancy, which has been awarded \$21.7 million, with a project area of the Chesapeake Bay in PA, MD and DE. The purpose being to Plant multi-species cover crops and use low-cost camera systems to produce variable rate fertilizer prescriptions for the following cash crop. The second project is the Mid-Atlantic Dairy farmers producing tangible results through climate Smart solutions. The lead partner in this project is the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association. \$10 million has been awarded for the Co-op milkshed within PA, MD, VA and NC. The mission is to provide funding for dairy farms to implement climate smart practices which improve local water quality, yield GHG reductions, and improve soil health. It is anticipated that contracts will be offered during FY2025. He stated that 50 Land Management applications have been selected for funding in FY 2024, obligating \$10.9 million in RCPP Financial Assistance (FA) dollars, and listed and identified those contracts. He continued by discussing FY24 Notice of Funding (NFO), Critical Conservation Areas (CCA). Up to 65% of 2024 RCPP funding is targeted to CCAs, that includes the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and the Great Lakes Region. He continued to discuss CCA Special Assistance, which is new for FY2024. He announced upcoming webinars for applicants will be held on April 23rd, from 2 to 4pm and on May 30th, from 2 to 4pm. The same information will be shared on each scheduled webinar, it just gives applicants two opportunities to suit their schedules. The links for these webinars are posted on the NRCS Public Website, RCPP, How to Apply. He noted that the resources needed for submitting a proposal are posted on that website as well.



United States Department of Agriculture



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Update

Adam Dellinger

State Technical Committee Meeting

4/16/24



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Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- **NRCS and Partners leverage resources to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges, and provide measurable improvements to resource concerns.**
- **RCPP funds projects including a wide range of on-the-ground activities:**
 - Land management/land improvement/restoration practices
 - Land rentals
 - Entity-held easements
 - United States-held easements
- **Results in an outcome driven partnership with conservation, economic, and social outcomes.**



Active RCPP Projects in PA

1. **Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape**
 - Easements – Central PA
2. **Ag BMP Implementation in the Chesapeake Bay**
 - BMPs – Berks County
3. **Buffalo Creek Watershed Conservation Alliance**
 - Easements and BMPs – Western PA
4. **Lancaster's Common Agenda for Clean Water**
 - BMPs – Lancaster County
5. **Turkey Hill Clean Water Partnership**
 - BMPs – Central PA
6. **Healing Mine-Scarred Landscapes via Restoration**
 - Easements and Mine Restoration - Statewide
7. **Delisting Ag-Impaired Streams in Central PA**
 - BMPs – Central PA
8. **Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation**
 - Easements and BMPs - Statewide



***New* RCPP Projects selected for funding currently in negotiation**

- **Scaling Adoption of Adaptive Nitrogen Management using Cover Crop Imaging and Nitrogen Crediting Technology**
 - Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
 - Award: \$21,723,626
 - Project Area: Chesapeake Bay in PA, MD, and DE
 - Plant multi-species cover crops and use low-cost camera systems to produce variable rate fertilizer prescriptions for the following cash crop.
- **Mid-Atlantic Dairy Farmers Producing Tangible Results Through Climate Smart Solutions**
 - Lead Partner: Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association
 - Award: \$10,000,000
 - Project Area: Co-op milkshed within PA, MD, VA, and NC
 - Funding for member dairy farms to implement climate smart-practices which improve local water quality, yield GHG reductions, and improve soil health.
 - **Expect to offer LM contracts in FY2025**



New RCPP Land Management (BMP) Contracts

- 50 land management applications have been selected for funding in Fiscal Year 2024
- Obligating a total of \$10,998,530 in RCPP FA dollars
 - Buffalo Creek Watershed Conservation Alliance
 - 1 contract, \$229,090
 - Lancaster's Common Agenda for Clean Water
 - 8 contracts, \$1,719,155
 - Turkey Hill Clean Water Partnership
 - 2 contracts, \$546,500
 - Delisting Ag-Impaired Streams in Central PA
 - 13 contracts, \$3,282,229
 - Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation (*NEW for 2024!*)
 - 26 contracts, \$5,211,556



FY24 Notice of Funding Opportunity



- **\$1.5 Billion available in FY24**
 - Funded from two separate authorizations: 2018 Farm Bill and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA).
- Projects may be funded between \$250,000 and \$25 million over the life of the project (5 years).
 - Funding typically includes a 75% FA / 25% TA split
- Due Date: Proposals must be received by 4:59 p.m. on July 2, 2024.
 - Contact me ASAP if you are interested in submitting a proposal



FY24 NFO - Critical Conservation Areas

Up to 65% of 2024 RCPP funding is targeted to CCAs

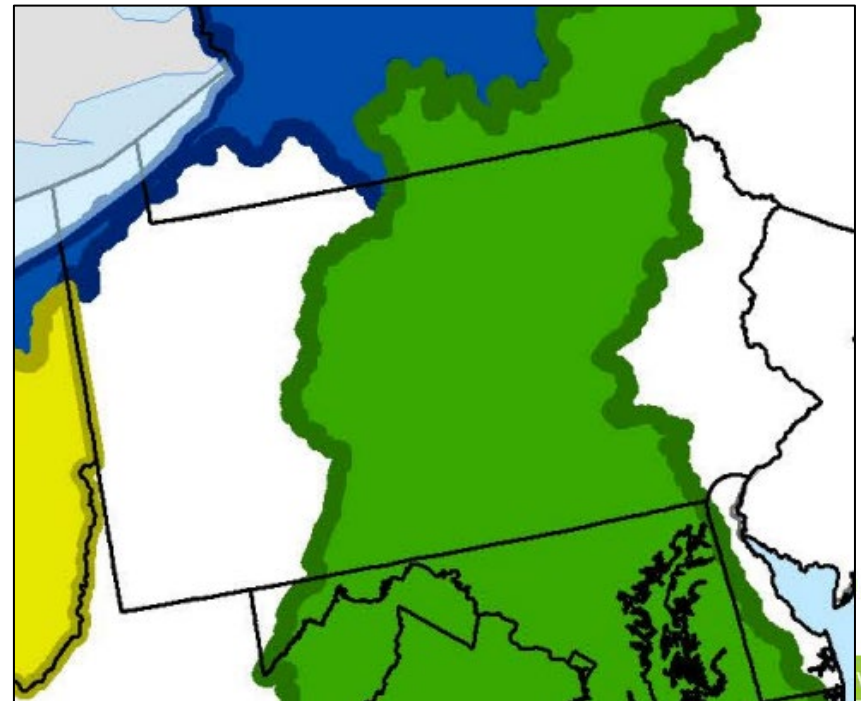
Proposals must address specific resource concerns as identified for each CCA in the Notice of Funding Opportunity

Chesapeake Bay Watershed

- Inadequate habitat
- Water quality degradation

Great Lakes Region

- Inadequate habitat
- Water quality degradation



FY24 NFO - CCA- Special Assistance

- **New for 2024** - special proposal writing assistance available for underserved entities representing producers and communities in CCAs
- No-cost proposal developed services provided by a 3rd party contractor
- Up to 20 applications will be supported, based on a first-come first served basis
- Proposals must be for CCA-funded projects, not State/Multistate
- Available to organizations such as Community based organizations, Hispanic-serving institutions, or national tribal organizations
- More details available on the national RCPP “How To Apply” page



FY24 NFO - Upcoming Webinar for Applicants

Webinars will provide general information about RCPP and how to apply. The same information will be shared at each webinar.

April 23, 2024: 2pm to 4pm EDT

Registration Link:

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/e2f45f75-7ea4-410b-b1c9-567537cd2454@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>

May 30, 2024: 2pm to 4pm EDT

Registration Link:

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/226dcb51-0b57-43b1-b340-95e535238713@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>



RCPP “How to Apply” website



Resources for Submitting a Proposal

-  [RCPP Coordinator List](#) (85.51 KB)
-  [RCPP FY2024 Proposal Guide for Partners](#) (1.99 MB)
-  [RCPP Outcome Guidance](#) (199.04 KB)
-  [RCPP Partner Contribution Template](#) (41.4 KB)
-  [RCPP Proposal FAQs](#) (459.05 KB)
-  [RCPP Technical Assistance Guidance Fact Sheet](#) (314.58 KB)
-  [RCPP State Conservationist Questionnaire](#) (224.24 KB)
-  [RCPP State Conservationist Questionnaire Easement Addendum](#) (213.4 KB)
-  [RCPP State Conservationist Questionnaire Easement Addendum Tips](#) (169.47 KB)
-  [RCPP Application Assistance for Projects that Support Underserved Entities](#) (108 KB)
-  [RCPP Notice of Funding Opportunity Proposal Support Questionnaire](#) (255.55 KB)





Please reach out with any questions

Adam Dellinger, RCPP Coordinator

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717-237-2206



Natural
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nrcs.usda.gov/

Denise Coleman announced that Under Secretary Robert Bonnie was scheduled to visit the NRCS Office within the next few minutes and encouraged all present and on-line to stay and participate in his visit.

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was closed.

Sign In and Attendance

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Albert, Mick	NRCS
Anastasi, Tony	NRCS
Anderson, Melissa	Center for Dairy Excellence
Barnes, Dayanna	NRCS
Blair, Scott	PA Game Commission
Bozak, Alex	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Bresaw, Katheryn	ADP
Brownson, Katherine	US Forest Service Liaison to CB Program
Campbell, Brenda	PACD
Campbell, Brian	NRCS
Chaplin, Jeffrey	USGS PA Water Science Center
Coleman, Denise	NRCS
Cornelio, Cidalia	Denver Foundation, Unity and Economic Develop
Cornelius, Ryan	NRCS
Cornelius, Ryan	NRCS
Dellinger, Adam	NRCS
Dubin, Mark	Univ of Maryland – Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Fearer, John	Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture, Fish & Wildlife Svc
Frantz, Barry	Capital RC&D
Garland, Cynthia	FSA
Green, Travis	Northwest Territory Mgr,
Hand, Kristen	Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape
Hanner, Melissa	NRCS
Hartman, Bob	Cradle of Liberty Council, Boy Scouts of America
Hartman, Dave	PA Grazing Lands Coalition
Hebelka, Joseph	Source Water Protection Program
Hernandez, Andrea	PA Sustainable Ag
Hughes, Kami	NRCS
Kahn, David	Agronomics
Killiws, Anna	CBC
King, Marel	Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Achilles Chesapeake Bank Commission
Klotzbach, Chad	Allegheny Farm Services
Ladner, Kirk	PA Rural Water Association
Lauren White	NRCS
Lauver, Dane	NRCS
Lenig, Ashley	NRCS
Lewis, Erin	Wildlife Foundation, Delaware Program
Ludwig, Dan	NRCS
Marks, Mary Lynn	NRCS

O'Neill, Kelly	Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Ombalski, Katie	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Palmer, James	NRCS
Parry, Susan	NRCS
Paulter, Kevin	USDA, Natural Agriculture Statistics Service
Rogalus, Meghan	Delaware Estuary
Sanders, Eric	Team Ag
Sassaman, Beth	NRCS
Schwartzter, John	DCNR Bureau of Forestry, Woodland Stewardship Section
Secord, Heidi	FSA
Smeltz, Heather	NRCS
Smith, Julia	Pheasants Forever
Spangler, Justin	Land Studies
Stahl, Tom	Forestry Planning Section
Sweeney, Joe	Science Institute
Szuch, Ryan	NRCS
Taucher, John	PA Game Commission
Wagner, Doris	Univ of PA
Wagner, Kurtis	PRWA
Weaver, Jeremy	Weaver Environmental
Williamson, John	Team Ag
Wolfgang, Doug	SCC

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
ATTENDANCE

NAME	ORGANIZATION/ AGENCY/ COMPANY	E-MAIL ADDRESS (if different/changed since last meeting)	MAILING ADDRESS or PHONE # (if e-mail not available)	How did you hear about this meeting?		
				e-mail	newspaper	other (specify)
Marcel King	CB			☒		
Anna Killius	CB			☒		
John Williamson	Team A's	johnw@teamaginc.ca		☒		
Don Wusforn	SC			☒		
Eric Souda	Team A's	erics@teamaginc.ca		☒		
Dan Laven	NRLS			☒		
Barry Frantz	Clayton CC: D			☒		
Cynthia Garland	FSA	cubsm72@verizon.net		☒		
Heidi Seard	FSA			☒		
Kelly D'Neill	CBF			☒		
Heather Smute	NES			☒		
Ryan Stach	NRLS			☒		
Kurtis Wagner	PRWA	kurtwagner@proton		☒		
Julia Smith	Plasants Forer			☒		
Daranna Barnes	DRCS			☒		