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Commissioner

**North Carolina Department of Agriculture  
and Consumer Services**  
*Division of Soil and Water Conservation*

**Patricia K. Harris**  
Director

**THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
AgWRAP Review Committee**

Wednesday, August 22, 2012: 9:30am-12:00pm  
Archdale Building, 5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, 512 N. Salisbury Street in Raleigh and webinar

**Meeting Minutes**

Attendees: Natalie Woolard, Gary Higgins, Greg Hughes, Thomas Brown, Tom Ellis, Julie Henshaw, Dick Fowler, Vernon Cox, Cindy Safrit, Chester Lowder, Michelle Lovejoy, David Williams

**I. Welcome and introductions were by the group.**

**II. Minutes from July 30, 2012 meeting**

The minutes were approved by consensus.

**III. Soil and Water Conservation Commission actions**

The Soil and Water Conservation Commission met on August 14, 2012. The approved the following committee recommendations:

- AgWRAP Detailed Implementation Plan for Program Year 2013
- Cancelled/unencumbered PY 2012 AgWRAP district allocation funds will be use to provide supplements to PY 2012 contracts. However, cancelled funds previously allocated for new agricultural water supply/reuse ponds will only be used to fund agricultural water supply/reuse ponds.
- The following persons are eligible to sign for job approval authority (JAA) for irrigation and mico-irrigation practices: District or NRCS staff with appropriate job approval authority, a NC licensed irrigation contractor, a technical specialist with irrigation designation, a person with design certification by National irrigation Association or professional engineer.
- Division engineers are required to review irrigation designs from any of the private entities to ensure that the design meets all program requirements.

**IV. NRCS Standard exceptions – Update of July 31<sup>st</sup> meeting with NRCS**

The meeting on July 31<sup>st</sup> included NRCS, DSWC, and NCSU engineering and technical services employees. The group reviewed the micro-irrigation standard in light of the concerns expressed by districts, and they were able to interpret the standard rather than developing exceptions. Staff is working on a 1 page template for this practice, which was built off a template provided by another NRCS in another state. Developing a guidance document of what the standard requires so that contractors are able to understand the expectations of this practice. This group is working on training both for conservation partnership employees and private contractors. They will also be working to build awareness in the private sector on the expectations for BMPs receiving cost share.

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The cost list for irrigation BMPs will be revisited prior to the start of next program year. Many components costs vary based on type and size of the system. **Drafting new costs will continue as an action item.**

V. PY2013 State Pond Application Cycle: \$425,000 (this will increase to capture any funds not spent on ponds from last year's state pond process)

a. Ranking criteria

1. Suitability of the foundation for the core of the dam

- Consider requiring a backhoe soils investigation during the application process. This would require coordination with a soil scientist on site. Cost associated with this investigation would be the applicant's responsibility – but if application is approved, the cost could be part of the applicant's 25% match. The NRCS standard recommends a cultural resources review. Due to concern about cultural resources reviews, this investigation will not be required, unless the site assessment includes notes about suitability of the site.

**Next meeting's action item: have a presentation on cultural resources review – requirements for state cost share contracts. Contact Jim with NRCS to learn about their process, also include information about state requirements.**

<ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NC/NCweb/Technical/technical-references/NC-CR-Policy-Summ.pdf>

**Field Tech Guide Section 2, Cultural Resources – Cultural Resources undertaking list of practices.**

- Consider adding points for soils investigations – highest points for the backhoe investigation – will have to have a soil scientist on site; ½ the points value for soil auger investigation, none if they don't conduct a soils investigation. Consider setting a similar point value as received for permitting.
  - a. Consider adding a confirmation that landowner was still willing to move forward with project if material is not available within a certain mile radius (due to higher costs associated with hauling in outside material).
  - b. If a backhoe investigation is not required for all applications, then require it if the preliminary site assessment for new ponds where there are notes listed. Ex. rock, lack of suitable core material, etc.

2. District level of support for the application can be addressed by adding a space for comments. In the future, the group could consider a limit for the number of applications per district for submission.

3. Should districts complete the application for just the portion of their operation they are irrigating? What approach should be taken with evaluating their water conservation measures?

- Use a **management unit** approach, not total operation approach.
- Define management unit well for districts

4. Conservation measures and associated point values

<b>Water conservation measures already in practice on operation</b>	<b>Point value</b>	<b>Acres/units</b>
<b>Increasing organic matter and improving infiltration</b> (max point value = ?)		
No-till	3	
Cover crops	3	
Contour farming	3	
Sod based rotation	3	
Strip-cropping	3	
Soil amendments or mulch to add organic matter	3	
<b>Reducing irrigation demand</b> (max point value = ?)		
Micro-irrigation / drip irrigation	15	
Low pressure system (not micro or drip)	4	
End gun shutoffs	4	
Plasticulture	10	
Night irrigation	5	
Use water meter to track water usage	3	
Follow a pre-existing written irrigation management plan	5	
<b>Studying water use</b>		
Have a completed water usage audit	5	
<b>Managing aquaculture &amp; livestock water use</b> (max point value = ?)		
Ball waterers	3	
Reduce flushing of ponds between harvesting fish and receiving new fish	10	
Transfer water to emptied ponds instead of discharging	10	
<b>Other: please describe</b> (points to be determined at ranking)		

5. Draft PY2013 application: Refer to attachment A

6. Draft August 2012 preliminary pond site assessment form: Refer to attachment B

7. Require the NC Water Assessment Tool outputs:

<http://www.ncagr.gov/SWC/tech/onlinedesigntools.html>

V. Set next meeting date – doodle poll during week of September 4<sup>th</sup>.