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Commissioner

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

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Director

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

Wednesday, October 16, 2012: 9:30am-12:00pm
NCDA&CS Agronomic Lab Conference Room, 4300 Reedy Creek Road, Raleigh
<https://agr.ncgovconnect.com/arc> (919)420-1375

Attendees: Julie Henshaw, Mitch Peele, Cyndi Caroli, Greg Hughes, Teresa Furr, Tom Hill, Daphne Cartner, Natalie Woolard, Jeff Young, Pat Harris, Kelly Ibrahim, Dewitt Hardee, Tom Ellis

I. Welcome and introductions

Attendees introduced themselves and Julie Henshaw provided a brief overview of best management practice (BMP) implementation using AgWRAP funds to date.

New Pond Progress: 7 completed projects. Additional pond projects are under construction, others have completed designs awaiting construction, and some are still being designed.

County	Contract number	AgWRAP amount
Buncombe	11-2012-801	\$ 15,000
Lincoln	55-2012-802	\$ 18,000
Lincoln	55-2013-804	\$ 18,000
Lincoln – engineering	55-2013-804	\$ 9,000
Moore	63-2012-821	\$ 15,000
Pasquotank	70-2012-801	\$ 14,063
Perquimans	72-2012-801	\$ 15,000
Sampson	82-2012-801	\$ 15,000
Total spent to date (new ponds)		\$ 119,063

An additional \$247,861 spent on district BMPs from 61 PY2012 contracts.

At the next meeting, the actual cost data for completed new ponds will be reviewed. This will help the committee develop recommendations regarding cost caps for this practice for future years.

II. Approval of minutes

The minutes from the February 2013 meeting were reviewed and approved by consensus.

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III. **AgWRAP PY2014 Detailed Implementation Plan**

The committee reviewed the AgWRAP PY2014 Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP), which was approved by the Soil and Water Conservation Commission at their October 1, 2013 meeting. The commission also held a special meeting on August 30, 2013 to discuss different allocation strategies for AgWRAP and provide guidance to staff on what to include in the DIP. \$1,000,000 is available for the program in FY2014: \$500,000 available statewide, \$500,000 limited to counties affected by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) settlement: Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey. Up to 15% of these funds can be used by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation and districts to provide technical and engineering assistance, and to administer the program.

State Allocation

The Commission will allocate all PY2014 funding through a competitive regional application process for selected program practices including: new ponds, pond repair/retrofits, pond sediment removal and a potential new practice of streamside pickups based on the spring development standard. \$425,000 will be available for these practices.

The western, central and eastern division regions will be eligible to receive 1/3 of the available funds (\$141,667 per region), and projects will be approved using the same ranking criteria for each region. Should a region not have sufficient applications to fund, the commission will allocate the remaining funds by approving applications in other regions.

TVA Eligible Districts Allocation

The Commission will allocate all PY2014 funding through a competitive application process for selected program practices including: new ponds, pond repair/retrofits, pond sediment removal and a potential new practice of streamside pickups based on the spring development standard, conservation irrigation conversion and micro-irrigation systems. \$425,000 will be available for these practices. The following counties are eligible for this allocation: Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey.

Conservation plan requirement

All approved applications, regardless of funding source, must have a completed conservation plan prior to the district requesting design assistance from division engineering staff

Committee discussion

- Division staff will ask whether the TVA funding will allow the same support for technical and engineering assistance.
- Districts are requesting additional information to ensure they are meeting the conservation plan requirement. The goal of this requirement is to clarify expectations with cooperators regarding these conservation practices and to make sure that resource concerns are identified and addressed. It is important for districts to provide follow up with applicants so that they understand the requirements of the program, as well as the limitation of funding. Division staff will work on providing guidance on the level of plan needed and a template plan including headings of necessary topics. This guidance will only be a starting point for the plan; each plan should be site specific and address both resource concerns and landowner objectives.

- a. *Timeline for application process*
 - February 1 district deadline; recommendations for approval to March commission meeting.
 - If shorter time period is needed, the district deadline would be after first of the year with a called commission meeting in February.
- b. *Online application form(s)*
 - One application for all practices that are in both funding sources.
 - One for irrigation practices only eligible for TVA funding.
- c. *Project ranking – parameters for prioritizing BMPs*
 1. Agricultural water supply/reuse pond
 - a. Use parameters from last year.
 2. Pond repair/retrofit
 - a. Type of repair needed – assign point values per type. Examples include: tree removal on dam only; rusted outlet pipe replacement (how does that impact the integrity of dam?), floating siphon system, repair of primary or secondary spillway
 - b. Consider how to protect water source without rebuilding the entire pond
 3. Pond sediment removal

Erosion control installed on operation or drainage area above pond required in BMP policy

 - a. Water demand
 - b. Current life of pond based on practice life expectancy
 - c. Pond sediment removal plan completed
 4. *Stream water pick-up (discuss after next item on agenda)*
 5. Conservation irrigation conversion (TVA only) and micro-irrigation systems (TVA only)
 - a. Current water use vs. projected water use (use percentage reduction)
 - b. Expansion? How to evaluate newly required lines?
 - c. Water reuse
 - d. Water conservation measures
 - e. Design ready to install? May still need to provide education for contractors. A targeted outreach effort could be done in the TVA region. NCSU and NRCS would lead this effort – will contact Gary Grabow to see if there is an extension agent that could provide this outreach. In NRCS Area II Jill Malton conducted district training on these practices.
 - f. Existing water source – both reliability and stream classification (increasing base flows) – additional benefits to water sources. Would be difficult to calculate/evaluate so should not be included.
 - g. Energy conversion is not eligible.

Alligator weed concern. Education and technical assistance for now. Could be revisited in future.

IV. Stream water pick-up BMP

A draft BMP policy based on the spring development standard and designs were discussed. Revisions were made to the draft policy, and the name baseflow interceptor was suggested. Refer to attachment A which includes the draft policy (using track changes) and sample design worksheet. Two types of the design were shared. Army Corps of Engineers would have to conduct a site visit and tell the applicant which nationwide permit they should apply for. Division staff will contact Army Corps of Engineers staff to discuss this practice and its impacts. The hope is that a process could be developed similar to the pond exemption process.

- a. This BMP can be a standalone practice.
- b. This BMP can be a facilitating practice(s) with new ponds and pond repair/retrofits.
 - 1. The number of these BMPs associated with a pond will be based on the site and the specific design. There will not be a limit.
 - 2. This practice will fall under the following pond policy as an associated component: *The pond shall be for agricultural use and includes all associated components to meet the intent of the design.* Applicants will only be eligible for the pond practice OR the pick-up – not both.
- c. Cost share eligible components – tabled due to time constraints. A cost list will be presented for consideration at the next meeting.
- d. Project ranking: parameters for prioritizing BMP applications - tabled due to time constraints.

V. Micro-irrigation system BMP policy review – tabled due to time constraints
Confirm that the intent is to improve efficiency, not assist cooperators in being able to irrigate

VI. Review draft AgWRAP rules – tabled due to time constraints
A workgroup will bring a revised draft back to the committee. Tom Ellis and Natalie Woolard volunteered serve on this workgroup. Any other members interested in assisting with rule drafting, contact Julie Henshaw.

Next meeting will be conducted remotely to finalize the streamside pick up BMP and application timeline for submission for the November Soil and Water Conservation Commission meeting.