

Eastern Shore Agriculture Collaborative

Meeting Notes for Sixth Meeting
4H & Extension Office, Denton, Maryland
April 30, 2009

Overview

The Eastern Shore Agriculture Collaborative meeting held on April 30th was intended to focus on three areas of discussion that included the need for technical assistance to the agriculture community, exploring a funding or financing clearinghouse for agriculture projects, and determining options for making agriculture land more profitable. There were nineteen people in attendance.

Technical Service Provider Highlights from USDA/NRCS

Tim Pilkowski, Maryland state conservation agronomist for USDA/NRCS spoke to ESAC stakeholders about the Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan process that applies in Maryland. Tim stated that they have received approximately 430 applications from Maryland to date. Tim explained to the group that there is a need for NRCS is to have more technical service providers who are able to develop the conservation plan component of a CNMP. He discussed the six elements of a CNMP that need consideration that include 1) manure and wastewater handling and storage 2) Land Treatment Practices 3) Nutrient Management 4) Record Keeping 5) Feed Management and 6) Other Utilization Activities. Manure and Wastewater Storage and Handling and Land Treatment are the two components most Technical Service Providers lack in providing assistance. Training for TSPs is needed to address this issue.

Tim explained that there is currently limited USDA/NRCS staff available to develop all of the CNMPs under application for cost-share assistance. It would be extremely useful for NRCS to have technical service providers available who can complete the conservation plan aspect of the CNMP and allow NRCS to sign off on the CNMP. Currently, Maryland has eight technical service providers certified to develop CNMPs but more trained providers are needed. NRCS intends to hold a week long conservation planning training program for the Mid-Atlantic region in the fall of 2009 to help TSPs meet the requirements needed for development of a CNMP. The date and location for this training have not been determined yet. The cost will be approximately \$500 which will include in house and field training for writing a conservation plan. Anyone interested in attending the training should contact Tim Pilkowski directly at tim.pilkowski@md.usda.gov. Those participants who register for the training should have some solid experience and working knowledge of conservation planning

policy and all applicants will need to complete the NRCS Conservation Planning training modules 1 through 9 in order to become certified to develop a Conservation Plan. Part 1 of the training, which are modules 1-5 will be taken on the computer at the participant's own pace. This includes general background, policy and procedures for conservation planning. Part 2 are modules 6-8 and will be hands-on, field application of the planning process plus some classroom exercises. This is the training Tim talked about scheduled for fall 2009. Part 3 is module 9 which will have participants develop an actual conservation plan using information learned in Part 1 and 2.

Tim also explained that once participants completed this training, they would become certified as Apprentice Planners. This means that the planner would have the ability to develop a Conservation Plan but could not actually sign the plan. All plans will need to be signed by a fully certified planner. With this in mind, Tim has been suggesting to develop a Conservation Planner mentoring program for participants so that the Apprentice Planners could utilize the expertise of retired professionals qualified to write conservation plans and CNMPs to assist with plan development. After a period of time working with retired professionals, newly trained technical service providers will hopefully have the technical knowledge to be qualified to be fully certified in developing plans. Tim suggested that ESAC may be a useful group that could help to support and promote a mentoring program for newly trained technical service providers.

CleanEast Program Update

Kelly Shenk from the Chesapeake Bay Program Office gave ESAC stakeholders an update on a recent EPA meeting that reviewed a program called CleanEast. The meeting was held on April 28th in Baltimore to explore opportunities for NRCS and state agricultural agencies to use resources offered by the CleanEast program to develop or update nutrient management plans in order to comply with the CAFO rule.

The CleanEast program provides at no cost technical support to owners and operators of beef, dairy, swine and poultry operations in the Eastern U.S. to help them identify and implement farm management practices. Owners who are selected to this program will receive on-site support services from a qualified technical service provider such as an environmental assessment, a NMP review or update and even a new NMP development. The Clean East Program is run by RTI International and North Carolina State University through a cooperative agreement with US EPA. For more information about this program, please visit <http://livestock.rti.org/>.

Software for Development of NMPs and CNMPs

Dr. Josh McGrath talked about the issue of current University of Maryland nutrient management software called NuManPro and this software being compatible with NRCS CNMP writing software called MMP (Manure Management Planner). Josh indicated that he was not very familiar with either programs but consistency is needed so the two programs to not conflict with each other. Both Josh and Tim talked about the need to possibly merge the two programs so that consultants developing NMPs and/or CNMPs could use one software program. Further discussion is needed between NRCS, University of Maryland and MDA. It was suggested that ESAC may be a useful group to help facilitate this discussion.

Funding/Financing Clearinghouse for Agriculture Projects

Joanne Throwe from the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center (EFC) introduced the topic of a developing a clearinghouse of information about funding resources to be made available to the agricultural community. She mentioned that EFC hosts funding matrices for the Mid-Atlantic region at <http://efc.umd.edu/links.html>. Joanne said it was updated about a year ago but is not as extensive as it could be. It would be an excellent starting place for a future clearinghouse site. Kelly Shenk said the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation constitute the bulk of grant funding for agriculture projects. One stakeholder mentioned that many farmers are not likely to use the internet to look for funding opportunities. This led into a discussion about looking at the various opportunities that exist for farmers now to make farming profitable.

Options for making Agriculture Land Profitable

Bill Satterfield from the Delmarva Poultry Industry (DPI) commented that there were a number of potential opportunities for making agricultural land more profitable and that farmers were being contacted directly by various vendors on a regular basis. Since it is often time consuming and difficult to determine the best opportunity among the many choices available to farmers, a process by which ESAC could help determine the most suitable vendors and opportunities were discussed. After some discussion by stakeholders about how to assist farmers, it was determined that the best way to inform farmers would be with the help and expertise of the extension agents. Information by some of the ESAC members would be given to DPI to distribute to their farmers in a newsletter.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

19 People Participated

Category	Name		Position	Company/Affiliation
Environment	Jenn	Aiosa	Maryland Senior Scientist	Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Ag Org	Kenny	Bounds	Vice President, Government Affairs Officer President	MidAtlantic Farm Credit LEAD Maryland Foundation
Ag Org	Tom	Brinson	Corporate Environmental Manager	Allen Family Foods
State	Mark	Davis	Deputy Principal Asst	Delaware Department of Agriculture
Fed	Mark	Dubin	Agric. Tech. Coordinator	USDA/CSREES
Ag Org	Kurt	Fuchs	Asst. Director for Government Relations	Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.
Environment	Suzy	Friedman	Project Manager-Agriculture Projects	Environmental Defense
Ag Org	Lynne	Hoot	Executive Director	Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
Academic	Jim	Lewis	Senior Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources & County Extension Director	Caroline County Extension
Academic	Josh	McGrath	Asst Professor/Extension	UMD Environmental Science & Technology (ENST) Maryland Cooperative Extension
Ag. Org	Steve	McHenry	Executive Director	MARBIDCO
Academic	Connie	Musgrove	Senior Research Coordinator	UMD Center for Environmental Science
State	Tim	Pilkowski	Conservation Agronomist	MD NRCS
Ag Org	Bill	Satterfield	Executive Director	Delmarva Poultry Industry
Fed	Kelly	Shenk	NSC Coordinator	EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office
Ag Org	Beth	Sise	Grower	Mountaire Farms
Agribusiness	Jack	Tarburton	Representative	Perdue Farms Incorporated

Category	Name	Position	Company/Affiliation
Academic	Joanne Throwe	Associate Director	University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center
Academic	Jennifer Timmons	Extension Specialist for Poultry	Maryland Cooperative Extension-Lower Eastern Shore