

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Nature Conservancy
101 East Grand River
Lansing, MI 48906

MEETING NOTES JULY 25, 2011

Present:

Max Benne, Ken Blight, Elaine Brown, James Clift, Tom Coon, Bill Creal, Lauri Elbing, Melissa Higbee, Sam Hines, Phil Korson, Allen Krizek, Peter Ostlund, Lori Phalen, Scott Piggott, Dale Rozeboom, Gary Trimner, Jan Wilford, Paul Zuger

Resource Staff:

Jennifer Eyde (scribe), Joe Kelpinski, Emily Ries, Heather Throne, and Tom Young

WELCOME

Scott welcomed everyone to the meeting and Council members re-introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING NOTES AND AGENDA

- The notes from the June 6, MAEAP AC Meeting were reviewed and approved.
- The meeting agenda was reviewed and the group agreed to hear from the MAEAP Communications Workgroup prior to the standards review so that Heather Throne, MAEAP Communications Workgroup Co-Chair, could attend another meeting.

AROUND THE HORN

- Lauri Elbing recently attended the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus where there was discussion regarding MAEAP. Lauri distributed informational handouts on MAEAP. Senator Booher, vice chair of the Senate Ag Committee, was also in attendance.
- Jan Wilford reported that she and Jim Johnson were provided the opportunity to present the MAEAP standards and discuss the MAEAP verification process with the Ag Commissioners at the Ag Expo. The Commissioners will review the standards for familiarization prior to the September Commission Meeting.
- Phil Korson attended a tour in northwest Michigan featuring MAEAP verified farms. The tour was sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Heather Throne is organizing a tour for July 28, which will provide an overview of Michigan's ag industry and emphasize MAEAP. Participants on the tour will include staff from the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies, MFB, Greenstone, and MABA.
- Jan Wilford participated in a conference call with the Environmental Defense Fund regarding funding for nutrient management in southwest Michigan. The funding, also provided by NRCS, could create four new technician positions.

MAEAP COMMUNICATIONS WORKGROUP REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Heather reported that the MAEAP Communications Workgroup met on July 7 and assigned a taskforce to develop a multi-year plan for MAEAP. The taskforce will be meeting in August and Heather will report out at the next MAEAP AC Meeting.

The domain name for MAEAP's website had expired and since MAEAP is a moving partnership, the original folks that registered the website are no longer with the program. MDARD was able to re-register the website and it is now back up and running for another five years.

Action: The Council decided that MDARD would be responsible for registering and continuing the domain name for MAEAP's website.

Heather asked the Council for input on how to effectively market MAEAP to the ag community to achieve the Governor's goal of having 5,000 farms MAEAP verified by 2015. Ideas included:

- researching behavioral change to determine best type of media to use to communicate information;
- promotional brochures;
- tapping into current resources; leading agri-business, partners, and commodity organizations that have existing media in place;
- utilizing conservation districts for the local delivery;
- targeting influential farm owners;
- and to consider the younger generation of farmers and the types of social media to reach them.

The next MAEAP Communications Meeting is scheduled for August 31, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the USDA, NRCS office.

Action: Heather will forward the meeting information to Jen to be distributed to the Council.

LIVESTOCK SYSTEM REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Gary reported that the Livestock System Sub-committee met on July 12 to review comments received regarding the Livestock System Verification Standards. A "Summary of Changes" document was provided to the Council and reviewed.

Paul asked for clarification on the 'parking lot' procedure. Items placed in the 'parking lot' will be sent back to the sub-committees for review and revision or recommendation for the next year. They will then be presented to the Council during the next annual review of standards.

Action: Scott will ask Directors Creagh and Wyant how they would like to address the parking lot issues and a timeframe for doing so in order that they may be incorporated in the annual review of standards process.

The MDEQ expressed concerns with the language in risk questions 7.01, 10.01, and 10.07. The concern with risk question 7.01 is that it does not state that manure can not be applied if there has not been a soil test, while 10.01 specifically states, "Manure is not applied to fields without a current soil test." They would like to see this statement, or something similar, added to 7.01.

The Livestock Sub-committee feels that the additional language is not necessary because it does not pose an environmental risk by excluding it. 7.01 is referring to pastures where livestock are typically kept and farmers do not mechanically apply manure to pastures; 10.01 is referring to fields in crop production and thus the statement needs to be made there.

Action: The Council agreed that in order to be clear to all folks, both non-ag and ag, the language "Refer to 10.01" will be added under medium risk for 7.01.

The Council also discussed the MDEQ's concerns with medium risk question 10.07 (See Summary of Changes document).

Risk question 5.03 was discussed regarding the definition of 'temporary'. The sub-committee would like to see the medium risk limited to 180 days versus the 365 days as currently stated. The 365 days comes from the RTF Manure Management and Utilization GAAMPs. The GAAMPs Committee is currently working on revisions to the language regarding manure stockpiling and will need to be cross referenced in the standards once they are complete.

The Livestock System Verification Standards were accepted with the amendment to 7.01.

FARMSTEAD SYSTEM REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Jan Wilford reported for the Farmstead System sub-committee. A "Summary of Changes" document was provided to the Council and reviewed. The Farmstead System Verification Standards were accepted with the recommendations from the sub-committee.

CROPPING SYSTEM REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Allen Krizek reported for the Cropping System Sub-committee. A "Summary of Changes" document was provided to the Council and reviewed. The sub-committee recommended that risk questions 5.01, 5.05, and 5.07 be removed as MAEAP verification standards and recorded as educational questions. MSU needs more data on the fall application of nitrogen fertilizers and therefore does not recommend at this time. Also, there isn't any specific language in GAAMPs addressing the issue. James Clift would like to hear more from MSU as it applies to corn.

Action: The Cropping System Sub-Committee will request that a GAAMPs committee review the practice of applying nitrogen fertilizer in the fall and make a determination.

The Cropping System Verification Standards were accepted with the recommendations from the sub-committee.

VERIFICATION REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Jan reported that the MAEAP Verification Committee will be meeting on August 5, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the Crops Research Building. The main topics of the meeting will be MAEAP verification procedures and protocols and to establish standards for conditions of revocation. The developed "MAEAP Verification Protocol" will be presented at the next AC Meeting.

REVIEW GUIDING PRINCIPLES DRAFT

The Guiding Principles draft will be reviewed at the next MAEAP AC Meeting.

BEYOND STANDARDS; DIRECTION FOCUS FROM MDARD

The Council discussed the next steps that they are to take once the standards have been adopted. Under the "General Legislative Charge" to the AC (distributed at the April 1 meeting), the AC is also to provide directive to the MDARD Director on the following:

- *Water quality and environmental monitoring.*
- *MAEAP activities.*
- *Interagency coordination of conservation programs.*
- *The use of money in the clean water fund created in section 8807 and other funding sources to promote MAEAP and activities to encourage more MAEAP –verified farms.*
- *Options to increase assistance to assist small- and medium-sized farms in achieving MAEAP standards.*
- *The creation of subcommittees as needed to address emerging and ongoing issues.*

The Council would like to learn more about the above listed and hear from Directors Creagh and Wyant on their expectations of the Council regarding each.

Action: Scott will send a request to Directors Creagh and Wyant to attend the next MAEAP AC meeting and provide clarification and direction on the next steps the Council is to take in fulfilling their legislative charge.

OTHER BUSINESS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The Livestock System Committee will be meeting on September 20, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at Michigan Pork Producers.

Jim Johnson and Jan Wilford will be introducing the system standards, as accepted at this meeting, to the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development at their August 17 meeting.

The standards are scheduled for adoption at the September 14 Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development Meeting.

Action: Jen will forward the agendas for the August 17 and September 14 Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development Meetings to Council members.

Scott asked for additional comments and since there were none, the meeting was adjourned.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be in August. The exact date, time, and location are still to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Eyde
August 1, 2011