

**MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM
ADVISORY COUNCIL (AC)**

MARCH 9, 2015

1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

USDA NRCS Office
3001 Coolidge Road, Ste. 250
East Lansing, MI 48823

ATTENDEES

Ray Hammerschmidt (Co-Chair), Joe Kelpinski, Warren Suchovsky, Rich Bowman, Mike Bitondo, Doug Buhler, Scott Lonier, Jason Darling, Lori Phalen, Dean Letter, Scott Simon, Melissa Higbee, Brian Geerlings, Sam Hines, Betsy Dierberger

RESOURCE

Ben Schram, Heather Casteel (Scribe), Ben Tirrell, Josh Appleby, Emily Reinart, Steve Shine, Karen Potter-Witter, Laura Doud

GUESTS

Laura Campbell, Jen Silveri, Andrea Stay, Maury Kaercher

WELCOME TO USDA NRCS

- Lori Phalen welcomed the group to the USDA NRCS Office.
- Ray Hammerschmidt thanked Lori Phalen for hosting this MAEAP AC meeting.
- Ray started the meeting at 1:02 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MEETING NOTES

- Ray asked if there were any corrections to the January 12, 2015 meeting notes. No changes were suggested.

MOTION: JOE KELPINSKI MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MEETING MINUTES FROM JANUARY 12, 2015. SECONDED BY RICH BOWMAN. ALL IN FAVOR SAY AYE, UNANIMOUS AYES, HEARING NO NAYS, MOTION CARRIED.

VERIFICATIONS REPORT – JOE KELPINSKI

- Joe read through the handout provided. (Attached)

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY TEAMS – RECONSTITUTE AN EVALUATION TEAM

- Ray suggested that we use the example of the Western Lake Erie Basin team.
 - This would entail putting together materials for producers specific to the watershed.
 - Ray also suggested that a recommendation to MDARD Director Jamie Clover Adams, that this group representing their watershed, be added to the Advisory Council, as appointed by the Director.
- Ray felt that MSU evaluations and surveys might be of some assistance here.

COMMUNICATIONS WORKGROUP UPDATE

- Emily Reinart read through the handout she provided. (Attached)
 - Emily asked that the Advisory Council fill out the purple questionnaire sheet, and return to the Communications Workgroup.
- Emily informed the group that their next meeting is coming up this next Wednesday, March 11, 2015, and that this group currently has an all-time high attendance rate.

MAEAP PARTNERSHIP MEETING

- Joe Kelpinski reported that the partnership meeting went extremely well.
 - The panel consisted of Spencer Stegenga, Bill Creal, Rich Bowman, Jim Zook and Jody Sharrard. Each member of the panel gave a testimonial about how MAEAP has helped or impacted them.
 - Warren Suchovsky informed the group that the diversity of the panel was great and asked how we can use these stories to promote what we are trying to convey with measurable numbers.
 - Lori Phalen informed the group that the panel did very well and did touch on the meaningful environmental impact numbers of the program, rather than just the verification numbers.
- Joe suggested that we hold future partnership meetings during the time frame of January or February, rather than March.

SYSTEMS SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS

LIVESTOCK SYSTEM (LAS) SUB-COMMITTEE

- Dean Letter provided the LAS report and said they are still working on A*Syst questions.

FARMSTEAD SYSTEM (FAS) SUB-COMMITTEE

- Laura Doud reported that a few standards will be changed for fuel storage pads. This change will open up some verification's that have been stuck by this roadblock.
- Laura informed the group a few educational questions have also been updated.
- Depending on where the limits fall, the FAS may need to update the standards requirement on secondary containment.
- Josh Appleby reported that the mobile fueling units risk answers can get confusing. Laura Doud is working on sorting those questions out in the educational sections for the A*Syst.

CROPPING SYSTEM (CAS) SUB-COMMITTEE

- Josh Appleby reported for the Cropping System Sub-committee.
- Josh informed the group that with the risk answers for sock wells and chemigation may start requiring air gaps in the irrigation system.
 - Other changes may include pivot evaluation criteria and educational questions regarding invasive species and nutrient recommendations.
- Josh informed the group that the CAS is waiting on the RTF GAAMPs decisions, but will be ready to present recommended changes at the next AC meeting.

FOREST WETLANDS HABITAT SYSTEM (FWH) SUB-COMMITTEE

- Steve Shine reported that the FWH Sub-committee used their assessment tool at Warren Suchovsky's site.
 - This was the first training for foresters which included a classroom review followed by an onsite visit for evaluation of the tool.
- Steve informed the group that MAEAP Technicians are including Forest, Wetlands and Habitat topics at their Phase 1 meetings.
 - The request for FWH verification is now on the Phase 1 information forms, which are returned to Heather Casteel for consistency with the other systems.
- Steve said that each component of the FWH*A*Syst can stand alone, whether it is Wetlands, Forestry, or Habitat, or all three combined.
- Steve Shine asked how our current systems handle the site if it is rented out.
 - Josh Appleby answered that the person that has control of the land, is the one that is verified. If it has a landowner and a renter, they will need to figure it out between them.
- Karen Potter-Witter said the FWH Sub-committee will be meeting at the end of the month and the FWH*A*Syst recommended changes will be ready at the May AC meeting.

SUNSET FEE UPDATE

- Joe Kelpinski reported that they have had their third meeting on this issue and MDARD is hoping to get it moved before the summer recess. It is expected to have the usual negotiations and should be done by summer break.

LINKING TO NATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

- Joe reported that there has been a small group collected to discuss sustainability efforts with partners.
- Joe provided the Sustainability Committee Notes document from their meeting. (Attached)
 - Josh Appleby brought back an example, LODI Winegrowers Workbook, by the Lodi Wine & Grape Commission, which is a California sustainability program that is in place. This program has three stages that we would use as guidance.
 - Discussion on sustainability efforts and capturing information with continued privacy to our growers.
- Rich Bowman suggested that the fundamentals and data requirements should start with each particular partner, asking what "sustainability" specifically means to them.

MOTION: RICH BOWMAN MOVED THAT THE WORKGROUP COME BACK TO THE AC WITH THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS. SECONDED BY LAURA DOUD. ALL IN FAVOR SAY AYE, UNANIMOUS AYES, HEARING NO NAYS, MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Ben Tirrell introduced himself as the new MAEAP verifier.
- There were no other public comments.

**MOTION: MIKE BITONDO MOVED THAT THE MEETING BE
ADJOURNED. SECONDED BY LAURA DOUD. ALL IN FAVOR SAY
AYE, UNANIMOUS AYES, HEARING NO NAYS, MEETING
ADJOURNED.**

Meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

NEXT MAEAP AC MEETING

Host: Ray Hammerschmidt, MSUE

Location: MSUE Livestock Pavilion, 4301 Farm Lane, Lansing, MI 48910

Date: May 11, 2015

Time: 1:00 p.m. - MAEAP AC Meeting begins

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Casteel