

Local Working Group

MINUTES

May 13, 2020

1:00 PM

GoToMeeting | Teleconference

ATTENDANCE

Chad Allison	Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Vanessa Bessey	FDACS- Office of Agricultural Water Policy
Lauren Butler	UF/IFAS Extension-Okeechobee
Howard Harrison	District Conservationist- Natural Resources Conservation Service
Audrey Kuipers	Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District
Courtney Murphy	Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District
Bonnie Pelaez	FDACS- Office of Agricultural Water Policy
Matt Pearce	Florida Cattlemen's Association
Libby Pigman	South Florida Water Management District
Gary Ritter	Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Glynn Rutledge	Board Supervisor
Sheila Shirah	Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District
Nicki Smith	Board Supervisor
John Williamson	Williamson Cattle Company

PROVIDED FEEDBACK PRIOR TO MEETING

Greg Kennedy	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Raulie Raulerson	FDACS-Office of Agricultural Water Policy

- I. Introductions- Participants took turns introducing themselves and the organization/agency they represented. Participants were given the survey questions in advance to prepare for the meeting.
- II. Purpose of Local Working Group- purpose of this meeting is to gather feedback about USDA-NRCS programs and priorities, encourage public involvement and report to the State Technical Committee
- III. 2018 Farm Bill Program Background- programs discussed EQIP, CSP, RCPP, ACEP (ALE/WRE)

Farm Bill Key Provisions:

- 50% of EQIP funds must be allocated to livestock agriculture (down from 60% in 2014 Farm Bill)
- 10% of EQIP funds must be allocated to wildlife practices (up from 5% from 2014 Farm Bill)

Mariano Corona
Seat 1, Chairman

Nicki Smith
Seat 2

Donald Sellers, Jr.
Seat 3

Douglas Burnham
Seat 4

Glynn Rutledge
Seat 5

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-10% of our funds go to Historically Under-served Farmers (5% to Beginning Farmers & 5% to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers)

- Higher payment rates of up to 90% are available for the following types of farmers:
 - New/Beginning Farmers (have not farmed in 10 consecutive years)
 - Limited Resource Farmers
 - Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
 - Veteran Farms who are also New/Beginning Farmers & Socially Disadvantaged will be given a high priority

-EQIP - higher payment rates, up to 90%, for up to 10 state selected high-priority practices that address state priorities

-RCPP is now a stand-alone program

IV. Resource Concerns Definitions and Priority Ranking- the following resource concerns were discussed and ranked with #1 having the highest priority:

RANK	RESOURCE CONCERN	MEAN/AVG
1	Soil quality limitations	2.82
2	Livestock production limitation	3.18
3	Pest pressure (invasive species)	4.27
4	Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss	4.71
5	Concentrated erosion	6
6	Source water depletion	6.71
7	Aquatic habitat	8.2
8	Degraded plant condition	8.43
9	Air Quality Emissions	8.7
10	Field Pesticide Loss	9.71
11	Storage and handling of pollutants	9.85
12	Wind and water erosion	10.14
13	Terrestrial habitat	10.29
14	Inefficient energy use	11.71
15	Weather resilience	12.43
16	Fire Management	12.86

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- V. Prioritize NRCS Conservation Practices - - NRCS FL would like the conservation project ranking process to consider the proximity of the project area to priority areas within the state. The following practices were ranked the top 10 priorities:

RANK	CONSERVATION PRACTICE	SCORE
1	Nutrient Management	6
2	Prescribed Grazing	6
3	Irrigation Water Management	6
4	Heavy Use Area Protection	5
5	Irrigation Storage Reservoir	5
6	Integrated Pest Management	5
7	Waste Storage Facility	3
8	Drainage Water Management	3
9	Water and Sediment Control Basin	3
10	Cover Crop	2
	Conservation Cover	2
	Composting Facility	1
	Waste Treatment	1
	Residue and Tillage Mgt, Reduced Till	0
	Residue and Tillage, No-Till/Strip/Direct Seed	0
	Waste Transfer	0
	Terrace	0
	Animal Mortality Facility	0
	Grassed Waterways (accidentally left off survey)	

- VI. Prioritize Source Water Body Protection Areas- The following were discussed and ranked:

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	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Clean Water Act Section 303 (d): Impaired Waters. These waters have been identified as impaired and threatened with one or more pollutants or issues. These pollutants could be heavy metals, phosphorous, pesticides, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Federal, state, and locally protected lands. These areas provide long term protection for various land uses, habitats and wildlife species. Conservation projects adjacent to or near these already protected areas can provide additional resource benefit. Examples of protected lands could be conservation easements, state and national parks, military bases, state and national forests, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Surface waters that directly impact Lake Okeechobee and/or the Everglades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensitive and/or declining habitats including native terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Watersheds that have an approved Florida Basin Management Action Plan	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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- VII. Additional comments provided through our survey were emphasis on exotic plant control specifically Smutgrass, tropical soda apple and Brazilian pepper tree. No new pay rates were discussed or submitted.
- VIII. Adjournment at 1:51pm. Next meeting TBA- May 2021

Special Note:

On behalf of the Local Working Group, Audrey Kuipers completed the official Association of Conservation Districts LWG Survey on 5-14-20, that will be sent to the State Technical Committee with the responses recorded above.