

MINUTES

WATER MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

JUNE 3, 2015

The Kentucky Farm Bureau Water Management Working Group met at the Hardin County Farm Bureau Office in Elizabethtown, Kentucky on Wednesday, June 3, 2015.

Working Group members present were: Steve Coleman, Chair; Warren Beeler; Tyler Campbell; Todd Clark; Sharon Furches; Terry Gilbert; Pete Goodman; Pat Henderson; Kenny Imel; Kevin Jeffries; David Rowlett; and Larry Thomas. Working Group members absent were: Dr. Nancy Cox; Gary Larimore; and Roger Thomas. Ex-officio members absent were: Tom Fern, State Director, USDA Rural Development; Michael Griffin, State Director, U.S. Geological Survey; John McCauley, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency; Kim Richardson, Director, Kentucky Division of Conservation; and Karen Woodrich, State Conservationist, NRCS. Others in attendance were: Biff Baker, representing Roger Thomas; Drew Graham representing Dr. Nancy Cox; Johnna McHugh, representing Kimberly Richardson; Randy Bayless, representing Michael Griffin; Marcinda Kester, representing John McCauley; P. Scott McMahan, representing Tom Fern Dawn Riley; Bill Caldwell; Chip Zimmer; Jacob Kuhn; Steve Higgins; The meeting was staffed by Joe Cain.

This meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m., EST by Chairman Steve Coleman, who welcomed and reviewed the purpose of the meeting. Introductions were made.

Chairman Coleman asked the Working Group to consider the minutes of the April 29, 2015 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. David Rowlett, and seconded by Mr. Kenny Imel second that:

“We approve the minutes of the April 29, 2015 meeting.”

Motion passed.

Chairman Coleman reminded the Working Group that a depository of meeting information (presentations, useful links, supporting literature and minutes) is located on the Kentucky Farm Bureau’s Newsroom website at www.kyfb.com/water.

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Chairman Coleman asked Mr. Joe Cain to provide the group an overview of recent travels concerning environmental and water issues. Mr. Cain noted in the northeast water seemed abundant and available; however, when he attended the AFBF Environmental Issues Conference in Sacramento it was a totally different story. He noted in the Sacramento area there were lots of lush green rice farms but that many producers were forced to leave about forty percent of their land fallow because of water shortages. He also explained that he went to an irrigation pumping station and saw how water was being distributed throughout hundreds of miles of productive farmland. Mr. Cain also noted that water rights varied and that producers can drill wells to tap into the underground aquifers if they own the land to supplement surface water resources. He also noted that how Kentucky interests work together on water and environmental issues is something to be proud of and the cooperation we have between agencies is almost unheard.

Mr. Warren Beeler, Chairman of the Ag Drought Mitigation Subcommittee, reported there are 3 categories (monitoring, infrastructure what we need, drought impact) the Working Group needs to focus on. He suggested more funding for the Mesonet is important to have more statewide coverage, and with Kentucky having only one underground well monitoring system is not enough to adequately monitor subsurface water resources. Mr. Beeler also reported the subcommittee suggested consideration of an early warning concept that might include a soil health mobile lab, developing a network of farmers across Kentucky to report conditions weekly, and look at means to network irrigation systems to maximize water-use efficiencies. It was noted that Davis weather systems, costing \$800-\$1000, are efficient systems to collect data and post the information on the Internet, and that some are currently linked into the UK Weather Center.

Chairman Coleman called on Dr. Steve Higgins, University of Kentucky, to review the draft Water Harvesting BMP that would be presented to the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Authority for consideration. Dr. Higgins noted this BMP would be a voluntary means for capturing clean stormwater runoff that could be used to supplement livestock water needs at a later time. He also discussed some alternative hay feeding concepts and rotational grazing practices that would benefit soil health.

A motion was made by Ms. Terry Gilbert, and seconded by Mr. Todd Clark that:

“Water Management Working Group highly encourages the Ag Water Quality Authority to consider adding the Livestock Water Harvesting BMP to their toolbox as a voluntary practice.”

Motion passed.

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Mr. Pat Henderson, Chairman of the Information Subcommittee, provided a report of the subcommittee's meeting and progress made. Mr. Henderson stated that the subcommittee needs to see what information farmer members need to operate on a daily basis and how best to deliver that information. The Information subcommittee created a survey that they hope to distribute at upcoming Kentucky Farm Bureau Policy Development meetings in July to provide the feedback needed. Mr. Henderson asked the Working Group to look over the draft survey and make any recommendations on how it could be improved. It was also suggested to create an online survey to include on the Water Management Working Group website for individuals to complete as well as making the survey available to County Farm Bureaus and Advisory Committees. It is recommended that the data be collected by the September meeting.

Mr. Joe Cain asked the Working Group to look over the Recommendations and Action Items that have been compiled from previous Water Management meetings and asked for recommendations or suggestions.

Chairman Coleman announced the next Kentucky Farm Bureau Water Management Working Group meeting will be held Wednesday, July 29, 2015 at the Louisville Water Tower. Dates for upcoming Kentucky Farm Bureau Water Management Working Group meetings were also set for Wednesday, August 19, 2015 tentatively scheduled at the Kentucky Fair & Expo Center.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned for a tour of Mr. Bob Wade Jr.'s farm. The tour included a discussion of Mr. Wade's irrigation system and irrigation efficiencies. He noted he felt it cost him roughly \$1200/acre to install his system, but the difference in a recent drought year was over 200 bushels/acre under irrigation and under 30 for dry land production. He views his irrigation system as an effective risk management tool.

**Recorded by: Katie Spradlin
Administrative Assistant**

**Approved by: L. Joe Cain, Director
Commodity Division**