

MINUTES
WATER MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP
KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

May 28, 2019

The Kentucky Farm Bureau Water Management Working Group (WMWG) met at the NRCS Headquarters in Lexington, Kentucky on Tuesday, May 28, 2019.

Working Group Members present were: Steve Coleman, Chair; Warren Beeler; Sharon Furches; Pat Henderson; and Kenneth Imel. Working Group members absent were: Keith Rogers; Rusty Cress; Todd Clark; Nancy Cox; Terry Gilbert; Pete Goodmann; Kevin Jeffries; Gary Larimore; Shane Wells; and Larry Thomas. Ex-officio members present were: Brian Lacefield, State Executive Director, FSA; Hilda Legg, State Director, USDA Rural Development Office; Paulette Akers, Director, KY Division of Conservation. Ex-officio members absent were: Michael Griffin, KY Director of the U.S. Geological Survey; and Karen Woodrich, State Conservationist, NRCS. Others in attendance were: Joe Cain, KYFB; Greg Stone, State Conservationist, NRCS; Stuart Foster, KY Climate Center; Natasha Bruton, USDA NASS; David Chinn, Monty's Plant Food Co.; David Knopf, USDA NASS; Robert Houtz, UK Café; Chad Lee, UK Grain and Forage Center; Erica Rogers, Farm Credit Mid-America; Pete Cinotto, USGS; Renee Laurent, Governor's Office of Ag Policy; Bill Caldwell, KY DOW; Steve Blandford, USDA/ NRCS; and Deena Wheby, USDA/NRCS.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m., by Chairman Steve Coleman, who welcomed the committee and reviewed the purpose of the meeting. This was followed by introductions. It was noted that due to the weather, many farmer-members of the WMWG were absent.

Chairman Coleman asked the group to consider the minutes of the March 13, 2019 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Kenny Imel, seconded by Mr. Pat Henderson that:

“We approve the minutes of the March 13, 2019 meeting.”

Motion passed.

Mr. Greg Stone, State Conservationist for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS-KY), provided an update on how the government shutdown earlier this year affected NRCS programs and budgets. He discussed his desire to bring back local Resource Work Group meetings, noting NRCS-KY had

held them in the past, but it had been several years. The meetings allow for local feedback on programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and help identify needs of local communities. There had been two local meetings thus far with 30-40 attendees at each meeting. Mr. Stone also gave an overview of his projects in West Virginia on drinking water in Stamping Creek, and a species recovery project on meadowlarks along the Ohio River in four West Virginia counties. He noted all 12 work unit managers will submit project ideas for consideration in KY. Ms. Deena Wheby reported on staff changes at NRCS-KY.

Ms. Hilda Legg, State Director, USDA Rural Development-KY, provided an update on Rural Development funding and programs. She cited a 97% coverage distribution of treated drinking water in rural communities; one of the best coverage levels in the country. However, Kentucky has an aging infrastructure in dire need of upgrades to improve water service. The challenge is current coverage levels would not have the new customer demand needed to help service the debt incurred by the upgrades. Ms. Legg is optimistic about future funding opportunities for the upgrading and adding broadband coverage to all rural communities, noting there currently are 5 applications in to USDA for grants and loans under the new farm bill programs. She also provided an update on hemp issues as USDA regulations have not been formulated; and noted continued interest in addressing distillate slop and its possible agricultural use.

Mr. Brian Lacefield, State Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency-KY, reported on FSA activities across the state and noted FSA and NRCS are co-located across KY in 50 service centers. Mr. Lacefield reported that he and Mr. Stone visited multiple counties to talk with producers about delivery of federal programs. FSA has received Farm Bill implementation training and plan to begin in-state training in June. The first session will be on the Dairy Program revisions. Mr. Lacefield noted more flexibility in the new Farm Bill with sign-ups in programs and how differences between counties are handled under the ARC/PLC programs. Mr. Lacefield announced the Market Facilitation Program touches around 14,000 Kentucky producers valued at approximately \$168 million. The Market Facilitation Program 2.0 details will be out soon and will not be tied to planting decisions or individual crops but will be based on total planted acres.

Dr. Stuart Foster, Kentucky Mesonet, provided an update on weather trends, noting that storms have largely been blocked to our west and diverted more north due to a strong high-pressure ridge. The outlook for early summer is slightly above average temperatures and precipitation. He noted Kentucky has been in one of the lengthiest wet periods in history for this region. Dr. Foster also updated the group on the US Drought Monitor, and noted Kentucky is experiencing the minimum level of severe drought possible in the country. Kentucky Emergency Management has

made getting more Mesonet stations to plug coverage holes in Kentucky a priority; however, they are still seeking partners. He also is working on the Mesonet Annual Report and hopes marketing and testimonials can be used to promote the value of the Mesonet to decision makers and legislators. Kentucky Mesonet will be hosting the US Drought Monitor Forum September 17-19, 2019 in Bowling Green.

Mr. Warren Beeler, KY Governor's Office of Agriculture Policy (GOAP), reported on their budget, citing they are about \$1.9 million short of projections. He said the "new" money was in with a little more than \$40 million this year and a little over \$38 million expected next year. Ms. Renee Laurent added they are currently looking at four new on-farm projects, three projects have already been approved and two appended with a total of five projects moving forward. The GOAP is looking at water treatment for poultry operations to utilize impounded water, as well as new irrigation and irrigation efficiency projects.

Mr. Bill Caldwell, KY Division of Water, talked about potential projects and reported on the need for an updated aquifer map for use by producers. He stressed the need to have an accurate map showing available water sources.

Mr. Tom Reaugh, National Weather Service, provided an overview of the Louisville National Weather Service operations and resources available to the public. The National Weather Service monitors general weather conditions, as well as compiles some agricultural data. Mr. Reaugh suggested there may be value in enhancing the amount of agricultural information they provide and welcomed suggestions as to what information would be useful to the farming community.

The next meeting will be August 28, 2019 at 9:30 AM, CT, and will be held at the new offices of the KY Soybean Association in Princeton, KY.

Suggested topics for discussion included:

- KY Geological Survey mapping initiative and Well Testing Program
- USGS app update and discussion on the status of the mobile gage
- Review of recent KY Water Resource Board activities and projects being considered
- Update on the KY Mesonet and Drought Early Warning System and the enhances website for temperature inversions
- Review of current Kentucky Farm Bureau policy.

There being no further business to come before the Group the meeting was adjourned.

**Recorded by: Tiara Carter
Administrative Assistant**

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