

Local Workgroup – Teams Allocation Process
January 30, 2022
Grantsville Library, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

In attendance: Chad Bucklew, Seth Metheny (Garrett Soil Conservation), William Gindlesberger (Garrett Soil Conservation), Miranda Rounds (Garrett Soil Conservation), Jacob Metcalf (Garrett Soil Conservation), Jillian Wood (Garrett Soil Conservation), Jeannie Frazee (Garrett Soil Conservation), Amanda Paul (Allegheny Soil Conservation), Dan Hedderick (MD DNR FS), Matt Sell (MD DNR Fisheries), Adam Heavner (Allegheny Soil Conservation), Carl Robinette (Allegheny Soil Conservation). Steve Young (Allegheny Soil Conservation), Jim Mullan (Allegheny Soil Conservation), Ben Hamis (Trout Unlimited), Melissa Nash (MD Forest Service), Willie Lantz (UME Garrett), Connie Stemple (FSA), Slater Hafer (Allegheny Soil Conservation)

Purpose of the Meeting: To discuss and gather input about how to divide the workgroup TEAMS funding and any changes to ranking rules. The Workgroup is advisory, not voting.

Goals: 1. To look at funds and allocate priorities. 2. Develop ranking questions. 3. Discuss other programs we should be working on.

Chad Bucklew began the meeting at 3:05 p.m. He advised that information regarding Workgroup recommendations needs to be in to the State of Maryland by February 10.

New changes this year: The local workgroup has merged Allegheny and Garrett Counties. Previously the amount available was \$100,000 per district. This year, together it is \$458,767. Funds can be distributed between Livestock, Grazing and Cropland. Livestock is new. Previously Local Work Groups was a very limited amount to small programs. Livestock includes things like manure storage and heavy use area protection. Grazing is pasture, water, stream crossings, etc. Cropland is high tunnels.

Staff has increased because of the Inflation Reduction Act, which should greatly increase funding in the next 4-5 years. Chad Bucklew introduced new staff to the group.

Carl Robinette asked about drainage. He stated that with good drainage it would preserve soil health. He also talked about sub-irrigation with drainage water. He asked if there would be finding for this. He also talked about the many tile systems that are going bad in the region because they were put in so long ago.

Chad Bucklew stated that it was possible to do sub irrigation with this if there was interest. He also stated that Garrett County, at one time, had more tile drainage than any other county. Perhaps need to go back and look at the issue.

Slater Hafer said that he addresses water drainage differently by doing things like contour farming.

Chad Bucklew presented a slideshow and discussed the program background and current funding. Garrett and Allegany Counties are the fifth highest funded Workgroup in the state.

Adam Heavner asked how allocations are derived. Chad Bucklew and Slater Hafer both answered that it is a three year running average. For current applications, contracts must be completed by May 12 and finalized by June 2.

Slater Hafer asked about the Priority Resource Concern trends in Allegany and Garrett counties last year. Chad Bucklew stated that Allegany listed field sediment, nutrient & pathogen loss, livestock production limitation, and wind & water erosion. Garrett listed degraded plant condition as the primary resource concern, followed by wind and water erosion; livestock production limitation; and field sediment, nutrient, & pathogen loss.

Melissa Nash asked which plans from the ones that will be ready by June 2 would be more plausible to complete. Chad Bucklew answered that all of them on the list could be ready by that time.

Slater Hafer stated that we need to understand our primary concerns between the two counties. Adam Heavner brought up the BMP matrix.

Amanda Paul suggested that we need to have a theme to get farmers compliant with Nutrient Management. She brought up stream exclusion.

Jim Mullan asked if there are other funds for stream exclusion. Chad Bucklew answered that there are other alternatives.

Slater Hafer suggested that CTA is the driving force in determining what funds would be best for each planned project.

Adam Heavner asked if we could fund high tunnels through AMA. Chad Bucklew answered that there is only \$50,000 allotted for the whole state in AMD, which equates to about 4 high tunnels across the state.

Adam Heavner asked how the L2 Livestock application would rank in the state rankings. Chad Bucklew answered that it may not do as well because it does not have proximity to a waterway.

Adam Heavner stated that he feels that we could better address conservation if all of the funding went to grazing. Matt Sell agreed that the DNR's main concern is also water quality, so grazing is the most important to them.

Carl Robinette asked if there were any of the projects that align with our WIP goals. Would it give us more points with WIP if we rank a certain way? Slater Hafer stated that it could be both yes and no.

Matt Sell asked if the Workgroup would visit everything again annually. Chad Bucklew said that it will be an annual assessment.

Matt Sell said that he feels funding should be allocated so that each category receives some funding. He suggested funding the #1 Livestock, plus as many grazing as possible, and a couple high tunnels.

Chad Bucklew commented that high tunnels don't contribute to WIP goals, but that they are very beneficial to folks who are farming on a small property. They are the most sustainable thing on a small farm.

Amanda Paul stated that as counties, we are always looking at WIP. She said that high tunnel funding does not meet their goals for WIP. Grazing and Livestock do meet those goals. She suggested \$180,000 to Livestock and \$280,000 to Grazing. Group was concerned that \$180,000 would not fund either the #1 or #2 ranked Livestock application and that money may not be able to be rolled over for a second year.

Seth Metheny asked if MACS can be used with TEAMS. Slater Hafer and Amanda Paul commented that it would be very hard to do.

Chad Bucklew noted that for Grazing, there are 2 in the list from Allegany County and 5 from Garrett County. Of the 7, five are in the Bay drainage.

Seth Metheny asked if being in the Bay drainage ranks higher in the State ranking. Chad Bucklew answered that it generally does.

Will Gindlesburger asked if we could get more allocation next time if we use all of our funding this time. He suggested that we fund Livestock L1 and fill in with Grazing because Grazing ranks higher in the state. That way, on round two, more Grazing could be submitted, which would rank higher.

Adam Heavner asked if L1 and L2 Livestock could be put in other funding and the TEAMS funds used for L3 Livestock since the amount is lower. Chad Bucklew stated that there is no statewide Livestock funding pool, and L1 and L2 rank higher, with L1 having more of a water quality issue.

Slater Hafer reminded the group that many counties will not be sending funds back, so it is very important to make sure everything is complete and signed by the participants before second round funding.

Adam Heavner reminded the group that it is down to 30 minutes left in the meeting.

Willie Lantz stated that he thinks we should fund L1 Livestock if it is a solid deal and put the rest in grazing.

Chad Bucklew suggested that we should put more funding into Grazing than High Tunnels.

Amanda Paul asked which of the three Livestock applicants would be the least likely to be a strong project regarding state ranking and applicant follow-through. Chad Bucklew answered that L2 and L3 were the least likely to rank well because they both are farther away from a stream or water issue. He said that L3 is manure storage structure only.

Seth Metheny said that he agrees that Grazing is the best use of the resource. He suggesting doing all Grazing and some High Tunnel.

Will Gindlesburger asked if we can just do a percentage. Chad Bucklew stated that it is not a good idea because there is no guarantee that we could get more finding to cover the full L1 Livestock project.

A proposal was made by the group as follows: Livestock \$340,000, Grazing \$100,000, High Tunnels \$18,000.

Matt Sell asked if the L1 Livestock for \$340,000 would be a sure thing. Will Gindlesburger said that the applicant has been calling regularly.

Matt Sell asked what amount of funding is expected for round two. Chad Bucklew stated that he does not look for large amounts to be available from other teams.

Slater Hafer told the group that Maryland State has new software so questions about a project can be answered geospatially regarding state ranking.

Concluding the recommendation for division of funding between project categories, the group turned to accessing the ranking questions.

Amanda Paul asked if the group could see the previous ranking questions for Garrett and Allegany Counties again. Chad Bucklew displayed the slide again for the group.

Adam Heavner asked how many points total. Chad Bucklew answered 250. For the overall ranking, 1000, theoretically.

Adam Heavner asked why there are two high tunnel questions on the list. Slater Hafer stated that there needs to be a way to differentiate between the applicants because there is not much difference between them.

Matt Sell asked if question #3 means that we are collaborating with someone in a project. Chad Bucklew responded that it does.

Matt Sell said that question #4 about Riparian Buffers is very beneficial. He suggested switching the point amounts with the #2 question. Melissa Nash suggested that most of the applicants in #4 would be working with an agency in #3. Matt Sell suggested taking 30 points for #3 and putting them on #4. For a. 14 points, b. 41 points.

Adam Heavner suggested that an applicant working with MDA should not add points because it may unfairly give an applicant more points for only doing simple things with MDA.

Chad Bucklew asked the group if there are any other resources that are not being addressed. He stated that anyone not wishing to speak up at this time could contact the staff privately.

Slater Hafer stated to the group that if something would happen with the L1 Livestock project, they would change the plan to fit the community's best interest.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.