TAC Forestry Sub-committee meeting
October 28, 2018
DCR Office - Staunton

Members present
Patti Nylander
Rachel McCullen
Sarah Hagan
Carl Garrison
Bryan Hofmann
Jim Echols
Todd Groh
Katie Hellebush
Amanda McCullen

Reviewed previous meeting notes; a couple of spellings of names needed to be corrected. Otherwise, the meeting notes were accepted as presented.

Review of Full TAC meeting decisions:

- 7F, 9F, 10F, 11F have all been tabled. Based on this information, there is no further action required from the sub-committee
- 3F and 4F were advanced by the full TAC
- 12 F was returned to the committee with concerns about spraying of pesticides and conversion of buffer areas to orchards

Note: Brian will take 9F to the VCAP advisory committee to see about raising the amount of funds available in VCAP.

1F– DOF making site-specific recommendations on number of trees to be planted:
Discussion:
What would this language in the updated manual look like? Does there need to be a statement pointing out density follows the Form 7.8 Cost-share Plan?
Concern that standards contradict themselves – in one section, the manual says 110, in another reference it calls for 300 trees per acre (TPA)
On some planting projects, the density may vary already; this difference is based on the forester recommendations for planting projects.
Rather than focus on density, the emphasis is on the types of trees that are planted. This may indicate that additional stems such as pine seedlings can be added in.
NRCS staff at the Full TAC had concerns that this recommendation is a deviation from their standard, which calls for 300 trees per acre (tpa) in riparian buffer plantings (primarily in CREP).
The increase in planting density changed from 110tpa to 300tpa in 2015 in CREP.
Discussion about using whips in areas where natural regeneration is pretty strongly guaranteed. (Whips are larger seedlings that can be planted at a density of 25tpa on sites where natural regeneration is going to occur.)
What research exists about whip survival? Root-shoot survival is a concern. Some of the early whip projects have seen 50% mortality. Species that have typically been grown out for whips at Augusta Forestry Center have been trees that grow large anyway; Red Oak, Sycamore.

A couple Friends of the Rappahannock projects have been done with planting trees large enough that will allow a raptor to perch. This is a way to encourage rodent predation. Research into this is ongoing. When determining tree numbers and species for a project, tree-planting maps typically will include only plantable acreage, whereas the entire excluded area is counted in the Bay model.

Made a motion that the following changes are made in the manual specs
Brian made the motion, Amanda seconded.
In the specs FR-3 projects, strike the FR-3 Cii (parenthesis statement) line from the manual. Under FR-3; 8B remove "NRCS 391 riparian buffer standard" and add "Forester 7.8 Cost-share form" and add the statement; "with density determined by DOF forester and form 7.8 cost-share form."
Motion Passed unanimously.
The language in the VACS manual would be as follows:

> 8. This practice is subject to the specifications outlined in the NRCS 391 Riparian Forest Buffer Standard with density determined by a DOF Forrester in accordance with Form 7.8.

2F – Do away with incentive payment and make the program 100% cost-share (pay 100% of the eligible cost instead of the current 75% of eligible cost)**.**
Discussion:
Keep incentives for both FR-1 and FR-3.
Jim proposed that cost-share rate for FR-1 remain at 75%
Some discussion about changing the cost-share rate for FR-1
Amanda is in favor of keeping the rates the same for consistency for both FR-1 and FR-3. Given WIP III acreages goals, it is beneficial to get as many acres as possible.
The higher incentive will help with getting more AgBMP's
Some offices may view riparian-based Best Management Practices (BMPs) as more important than non-riparian BMPs. Therefore, riparian BMPs may be funded above something that is not riparian BMP.
Paying a higher incentive may get more people through the door to sign up for a BMP.
The cost to plant trees on any ground is the same. Land in a riparian area is potentially more productive grazing land than other land. Therefore, it is logical that compensation for that should be higher. FR-3 also gives us large reductions in nutrients entering streams, so it is logical to provide extra incentives for the installation of this practice.
Typically, an FR-1 sites are larger project areas.
Maybe raising the incentive instead of the cost-share is the more attractive proposition for farmers.

Jim made a motion: Amanda seconded
Raise the FR-1 incentive payment and keep the cost-share rate at 75%
$100/ac for 10 years
$150/ac for 15 years
Motion passed unanimously

Note: At the September 28, 2018 forestry subcommittee meeting the group recommended raising the cost share for FR-3 to 95% and raise the cap from $50,000 to $70,000.
Summary:
The forestry subcommittee advances the following suggestions:

- For FR-1
  - Keep the cost-share rate at 75%
  - Raise the incentive payment to $100/ac for 10 years

    - Raise the incentive payment to $150/ac for 15 years
- For FR-3
    - Increase the cost share payment to 95%
    - Increase the cap for FR-3 payment from $50,000 to $70,000.

3F – Reduce number of stems per acre required in FR-3 from 300 to 100 stems per acre.
This advanced at the full TAC meeting on October 18, 2018 so; it was not discussed at the forestry subcommittee meeting on October 24, 2018.

4F – If applicant applies for FR-3, in conjunction with and SL-6, cap stays at $70,000 to promote forested riparian buffers.
This advanced at the full TAC meeting on October 18, 2018 so; it was not discussed at the forestry subcommittee meeting on October 24, 2018.

5F – Provide 100% cost-share on riparian buffers
Discussion:
Brian motioned that cost-share rate was raised for FR-3 in the suggestion 2F, so no further action required. Sarah seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.
Recommendation to the full TAC: Table this item.

6F – Higher incentives for tree plantings within buffer (longer timespan on contracts)
Discussion:
Committee is against the idea of deed restrictions
Discussion of offering a shorter time span.
Not in favor of offering a longer lifespan; 20 years
Consider offering higher incentive for CCI Payments made to landowners as a means to keep practices in a program.
Each CCI has its own specification and different incentive payments. CCI-FRB-1 has a 5-year lifespan.
Stream exclusion CCI payments can work for failed CREP projects.
The CCI-FRB-1 has an incentive payment for forested buffer; $200 paid up front – onetime payment
CCI payments are not utilized a whole lot for forested buffers, mainly because people may be hesitant to re-enroll in a program if their trees did not do well the first time.
Jim made a motion that no further action is required. Brian seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.
Recommendation to the full TAC: Table this item.

7F – 100% cost share for buffer establishment with 3-year establishment contract included to ensure proper establishment of forest buffer through proper maintenance.
This suggestion was tabled at the full TAC meeting on October 18, 2018 so; it was not discussed at the forestry subcommittee meeting on October 24, 2018.

8F – Consider creating a cost share option for planting trees in existing "SL6" practice buffers, possibly to include a rental incentive payment upfront.
Concern that districts will be burdened with multiple payments over years.
Landowners already have the option of coming back and signing up for an FR-3 if they have a SL-6.

Sarah made a motion to table, Rachel seconded.
Motion passed unanimously. No further action required
Recommendation to the full TAC: Table this item.

9F – Develop buffer strategies for properties that are not traditional agriculture, but may be in a rural or even suburban setting, and have a stream flowing through their property. This may mean expanding the VCAP
This suggestion was tabled at the full TAC meeting on October 18, 2018 so; it was not discussed at the forestry subcommittee meeting on October 24, 2018.

10F – Develop a position that can consolidate all of the best options for buffer projects.
This suggestion was tabled at the full TAC meeting on October 18, 2018 so; it was not discussed at the forestry subcommittee meeting on October 24, 2018.

11F – Some form of sustainable farming certification
This suggestion was tabled at the full TAC meeting on October 18, 2018 so; it was not discussed at the forestry subcommittee meeting on October 24, 2018.

12F – With existing programs, reduce the restrictions to make the programs more palatable for farmers.
Discussion:
At full TAC, concern that orchards will be created if this sort of practice is allowed.
Concern about possible orchard production (increased use of herbicide adj. to a stream)
Tree planting projects are landowner objective based. They receive a planting list from the forester.
Current practices are already allowed.
Additional discussion around mowing; mowing is currently allowed within excluded areas. Different types of fences are allowed. Flash grazing is NOT allowed. Currently some use of fruit and nut trees is permitted.
Amanda made a motion that this item be tabled. Brian seconded.
Motion passed unanimously
Recommendation to the full TAC: Table this item.

New proposals
Silvopasture practice – plant and protect trees in pastures to provide shade for cattle

Discussion:
Concern from farmers that lose their shade for cattle when participating in a stream exclusion project.
In conjunction with SL-6, plant trees in pasture as a means to create shade for cattle and reduce their concentration right against the fence of the stream exclusion.
Does this address any water quality concern? Alternatively, does this address a farmer concern? (shading their livestock)
Some additional resource concerns may be generated as a result of exclusion projects – concentrating cattle just outside an exclusion project, creation of eroded paths through pastures to get to water crossings are examples of resource concerns that may be generated as a result of a riparian buffer project.

Virginia Tech has been doing research in silvopasture. Going from a less productive forest stand to attaining multiple benefits.
NRCS has started some work with planting open fields and protecting the trees with fencing
Losing shade can be a deterrent for farmers to participate in an SL-6.
Would planted trees even generate shade in time for the life of a contract?
Is adding trees in a pasture truly "silvopasture"?
Some concern with terminology – silvopasture implies that trees and crops are growing on the same piece of ground for the purpose of harvest.
Rotational grazing already has to be in place for silvopasture systems to work.
Carl made a motion to table (remove); Todd seconded.
Motion carried. 5 to 1
Further discussion that perhaps other groups could work with those farmers where the project may work. Several committee members felt that this was a good idea and bears further investigation/research into the possibility of trying this type of project, but not adding it as a VACS BMP.
Recommendation to the full TAC: Table this item.

<u>FR-3 with 100% of maintenance costs for years 1-3</u>

Discussion:

Currently, producers come to ask for financial assistance with carrying out work on projects.
With current incentive payments, those payments are meant to help with maintenance.
Consider instead of paying an incentive, doing reimbursements of maintenance costs after 3 years. A landowner brings in their receipts for work completed.
Consider establishing this as a separate practice, and then at year 3, landowner can come back to the office for reimbursement.
Should the "incentive" payment and "maintenance" be two different things?
Concern that money is given towards a project while it is still under contract. This could open an assortment of problems because producers with other BMPs may want to be covered with maintenance money. For example, a pump burns out and needs to be replaced, additional gravel needs to be added to a crossing, etc. Where do you draw the line for providing maintenance money for practices? May extend beyond the original intent of helping the trees.
Cannot control what the producer does with the funds once he receives them. The producer receives this money up front and should be receiving instruction on what they need to do in terms of taking care of their trees.
Getting the trees to survive in riparian buffers is a challenge. It takes a lot of work.
Verification checks can help determine if survival is sufficient. If it is not, the producer needs to pay funds back.
Establish language at the beginning of the process that states funds received are for maintenance.
Consider addition of language in manual that ties maintenance requirements in the cost-share form.
Addition of more eyes on the project; maybe foresters come along on those site visits that can help verify that a planted project is successful.
Changing language may not be favored by the TAC.
All organizations that work with producers on tree planting projects can do a better job of encouraging maintenance.
If we want to get people to sign up, should the process be more burdensome? We need to be honest with the producer about the amount of work that it will take to get a successful project. They need to know what they are getting into.
Amanda made a motion that this be tabled: Rachel seconded

Motion passed 5 to 0 with one abstention. The motion carried.
Recommendation to the full TAC: Table this item.

30S – couple off stream watering with tree planting in pastures

Discussion:

This was addressed in the silvopasture suggestion and that was tabled.
Carl made a motion to table. Brian seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.
Recommendation to the full TAC: Table this item.

Send out meeting minutes. Will share with committee members, can meet prior to the full TAC to approve. Determine next meeting needs following full TAC.