



Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Inc.

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

Virtual/Remote Meeting

In Attendance: John Roberts, Kirsten Workman, Brian Kemp, Ray Brands, Marie Audet, Sarah Audet, Eric Clifford, Lorenzo Whitcomb, Ben Dykema, George Foster

Motion to approve...:

Second:

Discussion:

Passed (0/0/0)

10:00 am Directors Business Meeting

Call to order & President's Report

Brian Kemp

- *Drought update forthcoming*
- *Talked to Chris Ross, Addison Independent also about drought issues*
- *Request from Ryan Patch to introduce new lawyer on staff to see farms and ipendements to*

Secretary Report

Kirsten Workman

- *Review and approve August meeting minutes (attached)*
- *No new member applications*

Motion to approve: Brian Kemp

Second: Marie Audet

Discussion: fix spelling on Matt

Passed (6/0/0)

Treasurer Report

Jeff Carter

- *Review July financial reports*

Motion to approve treasurer's report: Marie

Second: Loren

Discussion: Jeff..over the next few months we should be looking towards future to project out budget, let me know what reports you want out of quickbooks. Ben...fringe benefits might need to be renamed to better reflect actual expenses

Passed (7/0/0)

Executive Director Report

John Roberts

Sent out link to members for the drought loss survey. He feels like there could be plenty of information to justify for the county.

- *Communications Plan & BOTF Grant application*
Kirsten, Sarah and John have been meeting

Would like to request a budget for expenses of \$5,000-\$7,500 as a ballpark for expenses
Will depend on online/print/etc; a lot to update redo;

Website server host (\$14-20/mo)

Printing applications, brochures

Advertising

Jeff...current budget in grant option

Submitted a BOTF grant in conjunction with CRWFA, proposal for 24 Hours in Farming VT, early May

- Member Relations

Not a lot of that this month. Sent out 3 applications, will follow up
Making his way through the membership list

- Organizational Outreach

Reaching out to new dean of CALS

Peter Walk, DEC commissioner, concerns about being pulled between agencies

- Grant/Project Activity Update

FAP grant applications, tracking practices beyond agency funding

- Legislative Update

Spoke with Jane, legislature seems to be focused on passing budget
Hemp regulations

GENERAL MEETING

Additional attendees: Marlie Rupe, Pam Stefanek, Amy Richardson, Rene Thibault, Wendy Wilton, Jed Davis, Jed Rubin

10:30 – Marli Rupe, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Ag. Water Quality Section Chief

Regional Conservation Partnership Program, major grant from NRCS that state secured, \$16 million in conservation practices and easements, most of the first grant was spent, asked to reapply, \$10 million for the next five years. How should we spend it? Different than last one which was focused on accelerating existing NRCS practices. This time we want to be more innovative, how do we tweak or add practices, combine or do differently. \$2.5 million specific to ag (the remainder in forestry, wetlands and easement), some flexibility, and some TA. Hired 2.5 FTEs with previous funding, through VACD, current staff in ADdision is Henry Webb. There is the ability to hire additional staff...pasture management. This current grant includes a 'land rental option' – compensation for trying new practices, a lot like the older BMP challenge program,

Criteria: farm has to have at least one parcel of conserved land that they manage (even if rented or in process)

Agency Ideas:

- Shorter day corn
- Alternative to herbicide for cover crop termination
- Stacked practices
- Manure injection with data logger/flow meter,
- Higher cost share rates for certain practices, longer payment allowances
- Soil health, PES, CAP plans for soil health plans

Questions:

- Brian: could this backfill lack of BMP funds for folks that aren't ranking well in EQIP? Marlie: Yes there is potential for that. Some of the cuts have been in agency match towards
- Marie: How do you connect to the projects? Referrals, direct farmer, etc? Marli: yes all of the above, the TA staff have been reaching out, NRCS sharing information, districts, extension. Marie: are you focusing at high risk areas? First step is on the farmer level, then focus on the higher risk areas on the farm.
- Ben: NRCS and manure equipment was required to only be used on YOUR farm, but wouldn't there be more impact from sharing, but NRCS does not like to approve that. Marli: I was not aware of that, but that is a good point of a way to bend or tweak a rule.

Other Ideas:

- Brian: One year corn rotations, don't qualify for NRCS, winter killed cover crops don't qualify for FAP. Marli...yes this is the kind of thing we are talking about in terms of being creative.
- Jeff: Equipment purchase? Manure transport to further fields? Marli – can't cover equipment purchases (only practice implementation). LCBP money is being pushed to see if we can use for equipment purchases. Manure transfer is expensive but we still need to do it. That could be possible (under 590 standard?)
- Kirsten: anything to encourage more manure spreading in the growing season.

John mentioned that CVFC may be able to submit future ideas in a coordinated way or reach out to you directly

802-490-6171 |

11:00 – Wendy Wilton, Farm Service Agency, Vermont Executive Director

CFAP: Most payments have been to dairy, new coverage includes maple, 600-1000 applications expected from maple, expect a second round.

- John: people may hesitate to apply for state money because they're concerned about double-dipping. What are the mechanics of that? Is it really risk?
 - Wendy – encourage ALL producers to apply for BOTH. They have had multiple conversations with VAAFM. State funding came from the Treasury, CFAP came from the original CARES (USDA) act and CCC \$\$\$. Treasury money had some limitations –
 - JAN-FEB = CARES \$ - no conflict with state
 - March - Sept – CCC \$ this is where the conflicts arise (PPP)
 - Second round we won't know...time period, funding source, etc.
 - Producers who apply for both still benefit
 - Marie...PPP is NOT a conflict. The state application is a tricky one...qualifying questions. PPP/EIDL is not a payment for revenue losses, it is related to payroll. Be careful how you answer the question
 - DMC – insurance price protection not sure if that is a conflict? Diane may be able to enlighten us
 - Brian: I understand the second CFAP may come from a different pool and a fall application to the state shouldn't conflict. Wendy: not sure, she has raised the issue with Tom Berry and USDA.
 - Marie: the applications are set up to find conflicts, so if folks just fill out the applications they won't get in trouble as the 'double dipping' will be caught.
 - Wendy – technical assistance is out there,
 - Marie: Farm Viability is finding smaller farms having the most trouble, making sure organic farmers know they are eligible,
 - Make sure information is entered accurately...will catch problems and ensure priority in funding (it won't get lost in the pile). If it is incorrect, it just gets stuck?

- Amy – filing deadline? CFAP September 11th. For maple, put them on ‘registers’, that would count.

DROUGHT: western side of state, especially Addison and Rutland counties. Collecting information to justify an emergency declaration. ECP (emergency conservation program) – wells/water sources, etc. Tina Williams is collecting damages (30% crop loss). Larry Parker as well. Regional impacts (Massachusetts).

Call FSA to declare losses: Water Resources & Crop Losses...quantity and quality

About half way there (couple more weeks) to have a request by mid-September

Losses after declaration are still eligible for assistance

11:30 – Diane Bothfeld, Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets, Director of Administrative Services

Main messages – get money, pay bills!

Not first come first serve in dairy, could take some time, but will pay you back.

Myths:

- No \$ for organic
- No \$ for small farms
- No \$ for folks with CFAP

John...can you give us some stats?

Yesterday – 140 payments, \$4.9 million \$39,000 average, \$500 - \$100,000, 15 LFOs have applied,

Milk loss on milk price decline = large farms are easy

Smaller size farms it takes more works to show the cap, you can claim penalty deducts for milk over quota, COVID reductions on pay checks, revenue declines from milk productions,

140 out of 760 eligible businesses.... legislators think we didn't need it. 261 people have accessed the application, but not finished it. We can't see why or what's in there.

Organic producers is heavily related to components...summer reductions in components can claim this, and marketing deducts....doesn't need to be directly related to COVID.

Sheep/Goat producers are also eligible.

Farm Viability can provide help...call early for help. Deadline is September 30th.

Marie...felt like it was fairly straight forward. Angst of double-dipping, Diane...claiming CFAP twice. DMC does create some duplication (under duplicative payments in the last page). Upcoming milk prices may go up....August, September.

Second round for folks who applied but didn't reach their cap

Loren: have you talked to AgriMark about speeding up transferring the information to VAAFM? Question is in, waiting for response.

Wendy: 122 enrolled in DMC, were sent a letter with a statement of what they had received, she will put a call out to here service center people to share the message to apply for both. Second round of CFAP, will state \$\$ disqualify?

John: is the Agency able to flag obvious mistakes and redirect them. Important to use the FAQs to see where we already have seen mistakes. They are resending these back for producers to review.

If you're not capping out in the milk table, there are other revenue/expense areas. As long as the math is there, it can likely be justified. Include page numbers, exact references,

Brian: important for folks to know you only have one chance to upload the documents, you can't go back in and add thing in later (eg. narratives, etc). Emphasize in FAQs.

Amy: save as you go? The milk production table you can, otherwise you need to complete a section and push next for it to save. Narratives...a good place for an explanation.

Marie: showing when we cap out could help save time. Question about what folks want help with...required by the legislature.

John: where are we at with loss of producers....report will come out this week. Cow operations 649 in Jan, 629 in August (20 farms).

Marie: contacted by Zuckerman campaign to participate in a town hall on September 24th, they are reaching out especially to folks with 'land lines', Brian Campion and animal welfare issues will be on.

Brian: Do we want to organize additional thoughts to share with Marli on RCPP? John made notes and can put together a response in writing.

12:10 PM Motion to ADJOURN Meeting: Loren Wood

Second: Eric

Passed: (7/0/0)

Next Meeting...October 7, 2020