

## **SAES-422 Multistate Research Activity Accomplishments**

**Report Project No.:** NEERA1003

**Project Title:** Northeast Pasture Consortium

**Project Period:**

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Annual meeting dates 4-5 February 2014

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See list on following pages.

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## **Brief Summary of Minutes of Annual Meeting:**

At 3:45 PM on 5 February 2014, the Business Meeting convened. Mr. Peter Miller of Organic Valley had asked to have and was granted a few minutes to alert Consortium members to their Farmers Advocating For Organics grant program. Its mission is to protect and promote organic farmers by investing in organic research, education & advocacy. CROPP Cooperative member-owners voluntarily provide the funds. Since 2007, \$2.1 million dollars have been granted on Research, Education, and Advocacy. Grant applications are reviewed by Members, Staff, and Board of Directors. Sustaining Grants are multi-year. Initiative Category this year is: Focus on healthy soil & seed research. Deadlines for next funding cycle: Small Grants by March 1st & September 1st. Large Grants Letter of intent by September 1st. CONTACT: Kristine Salmi-Snowdeal (Kristine.snowdeal@organicvalley.coop, Office: 608-625-3541). For more information go to: [www.organicvalley.coop](http://www.organicvalley.coop), left side of home page: cooperative giving page. Past Annual Reports; Criteria; Proposal format.

Dr. Ed Rayburn complimented Mr. James Cropper, Executive Director, for his hard work for setting up one of the best Consortium Conferences. He then announced that he was stepping down as the Northeast Pasture Consortium Principal Investigator. He then reported that Dr. Sid Bosworth from the University of Vermont was the new Principal Investigator.

Mr. Ken Miller, the Private Sector Co-Chair, presiding over the Business Meeting asked for nominations of a Private Sector member-at-large for the Executive Committee. Mr. Clyde Bailey nominated Mr. Angus Johnson. Ms. Diane Schivera seconded. Nominations were closed and Mr. Angus Johnson was unanimously elected as the new Private Sector member-at-large. Dr. Andre Brito, the Public Sector Co-Chair, asked for nominations for the Public Sector member-at-large. Mr. Tom Akin nominated Ms. Susan Parry. Mr. James Cropper seconded. Nominations were closed and Ms. Susan Parry was unanimously elected.

Mr. Clyde Bailey invited the Northeast Pasture Consortium to hold their annual conference and meeting at Morgantown, WV on March 11 and 12, 2015. This will be just prior to the 2015 Appalachian Grazing Conference being held at the Waterfront Place Hotel and Conference Center on March 13 and 14, 2015.

Mr. James Cropper thanked Mr. Rob DeClue and Mr. Bob Richardson for their great work on the Executive Committee over the past 4 years as they had completed their tenure on the Committee. Mr. Cropper noted that Mr. DeClue had to work particularly hard to pull together the Pastureland NRI session this year with the change in leadership in Washington, DC and the lack of travel funds available to get Mr. Kevin Ogles at the Conference in person.

After thanking everyone for their participation and making it a great conference, Mr. Cropper adjourned the Conference and Business Meeting.

## Accomplishments:

1. Two newsletters were published, one in August and another in November of 2013, and distributed primarily as email attachments to all of the membership.
2. The 2014 Annual Conference and Meeting of the Consortium was held on February 4-5 at the Ramada Conference Center and Golf Hotel in State College, PA. Ninety people registered for the conference. This was an all-time high. Fifteen poster papers were presented, also an all-time high. Winter weather again plagued the people attending the conference, but most were able to make it to and from the conference, but had to adjust their scheduling to accommodate the weather.
3. The proceedings of the 2014 annual conference and meeting including power point presentations and handouts, poster paper abstracts, and speaker biographical sketches are cued up to be put on the Consortium website, Northeast Grazing Guide, for post-meeting access.
4. The Northeast Grazing Guide website for the Consortium is at: <http://grazingguide.net/>. Sarah Goslee of Agricultural Research Service Research Unit at University Park, PA is our web master.
5. The NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant received in late 2013 by the University of Vermont Pasture Network paid hotel room expenses for farmer members and one speaker from the University of Tennessee. This along with registration fees allowed the Consortium to hold its annual conference this year. Farmer members for the first time paid a reduced registration fee to help cover food costs during the conference.
6. Sent letter in April 2014 to Dr. Ruth Varner, University of New Hampshire, in support of their study, "Trade-offs between soil carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions in organic pastures under management intensive grazing" that they are proposing to the USDA Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions. If funded, this would provide funds to the Consortium for holding a session on this topic at the 2015 Consortium Conference.
7. Currently working with University of Vermont Pasture Network on a grant proposal entitled "Intensively Managed Grazing Livestock as a Tool to Maintain Ecological Diversity, Farm Profitability and Water Quality Along Riparian Zones" for an AFRI Foundational Program Area and Priority Area: Renewable Energy, Natural Resources, and Environment (RENRE) Agroecosystem Management A1451 (Agroecosystem projects designed to develop management systems that significantly increase the output and/or value of at least three ecosystem services). This grant proposal must be submitted by June 4, 2014.
8. The USDA-NRCS Pasture Systems and Watershed Management Research Unit, University Park, PA was named as a USDA Climate Hub for Global Climate Change.
9. Kept all members of the Consortium up-to-date on 2013 Farm Bill progress in the US Senate and House of Representatives throughout 2013. It was finally passed by Congress and signed by the President in January, 2014.
10. Kept the Executive Committee abreast of the disposition of the ARS North Appalachian Experimental Watershed at Coshocton, OH. It was closed as an ARS research facility in 2012. Negotiations fell apart in 2013 between Ohio State University and USDA-ARS for Ohio State to assume control of the federal research acreage. There was disagreement over which entity would receive royalties for



natural gas on the property and Ohio State would also have to agree to maintain research facilities at the research unit. With this impasse, our interest to make sure the lysimeters and gauging stations at the research unit remain in place and continue to collect rain infiltration and runoff and soil water balance data from pastured fields is in jeopardy.

11. Jim Cropper, Executive Director, participated in the Nutrient Management Expert Panel of the Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Work Group via teleconferencing and Share Point during 2013-2014. Provided input on pasture nutrient management issues to support realistic modeling of nitrogen and phosphorus runoff to the Bay from the pasture land use.
12. Jim Cropper, Executive Director, also participated via speaker phone with the Chesapeake Bay Ag. Workgroup at several teleconferences held throughout the past year to provide input on how to improve conservation practice data collection and upgrade the Bay Model to increase its precision in modeling conservation practices effects in reducing sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen loads to Bay waters.
13. Teleconferences are held monthly by the Executive Committee to plan the next annual conference and meeting and address other issues that come up during the year.
14. The Northeast Pasture Consortium Executive Committee produced a NEERA-1003 Northeast Pasture Consortium Support Flyer for use in attracting new members and sending a message to federal and state agencies about the need for financial support. The Impact Communications Specialist at Colorado State for Multistate Research Fund projects assisted us with the final layout. The support flyer was printed in December 2013 and was circulated to the Executive Committee members at the 2014 Consortium Conference. It was sent electronically to Consortium members and allied groups and agencies.
15. Continuing education credit (CEU) requests were sent to the American Society of Agronomy and the American Forage & Grassland Council for certified crop advisors and certified forage and grassland professionals, respectively for the 2014 Annual Northeast Pasture Consortium Conference and Meeting. These were granted prior to the conference and certified crop advisors and grassland professionals in attendance were able to get CEU's by signing their names to a sign-in sheet for each session granted CEU's. The completed sign-in sheets were sent to ASA and AFGC after the Conference.
16. Revised and updated research needs and priorities were discussed at the 2014 Northeast Pasture Consortium Annual Conference and Meeting. See the summary minutes of the conference for details.

### **Impacts:**

1. Significantly improved interactions and communications among producers (dairy, beef, sheep, goat, and horse), agribusiness suppliers, non-governmental organizations, and public research, extension, and technical transfer agencies (land-grant universities, USDA-ARS, USDANRCS) regarding pasture-based animal production systems (traditional and organic).
2. Organic milk producers are being helped with the current collaborative research work

being done on their behalf by UNH, UVM, University of Maine, USDA-ARS at University Park, and Cornell University. Flaxseed supplementation can improve omega-3 fatty acid content in milk so this will help differentiate organic milk from conventionally fed cow's milk even after the cows are off pasture during the non-growing season. Several new ryegrass varieties are being tested for their survival and persistence in trials. This helps any farmers who have thought about improving pastures by reseeding to ryegrass. Ryegrass varieties tested up to this point have not been very successful persisting under the Northeast climatic conditions. Bedding material for dairy cows is an issue in the Northeast as small grain straw is not plentiful, hayfields should produce quality hay - not bedding, and off-farm wood chips run at a premium since they can be used as an energy source, a competing use.

3. Penn State University is also helping organic dairy farmers by looking at annual forage crops to augment forage resources for grazing during the summer slump and extending the grazing season earlier in the spring and later in the fall.
4. University of Rhode Island and Cornell University are helping sheep and goat farmers find new ways to control internal parasites in their flocks that are on pastures. Pharmaceuticals have lost their effectiveness as the parasites become immune to them over time. There are some botanicals and pasture legumes that have anthelmintic properties. The two universities are studying their effectiveness and there are some good preliminary results.
5. The USDA-ARS Pasture Systems and Watershed Management Research Unit at University Park, PA was chosen to be a Climate Hub along with the ARS Research Unit in Ithaca, NY. This strengthens both locations utility within the whole ARS system. It also means that this will be linked to pasture plant species shifts that could occur due to warmer temperatures creeping northward, or not, if winters turn out to be colder as this past one was.
6. The loss of ARS funding of the Consortium due to federal budget cuts has caused a financial strain on it as well. The Conservation Innovation Grant received by UVM will provide some relief for the 2014 Annual Conference as some of that money is earmarked for the Consortium. Other attempts at grants have not been successful. For the 2013 Consortium Conference, registration fees were increased to cover the shortfall in the funds the Consortium had left in its account at WVU. Farmer members have attended free heretofore since they devote two to three days away from their farms. They were asked to pay a nominal registration fee in 2014.
7. A resolution passed by the Consortium at their 2012 annual conference and meeting and sent to the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service that asked for NRCS to restore funding and data collection for the Pasture National Resource Inventory was responded to positively in fiscal year 2013 and again in 2014. The new Natural Resources Conservation Service National Range and Grazing Land Ecologist, Sid Brantly, who attended our 2014 Conference, thanked the Consortium for our support of the Pastureland NRI.
8. Our first session at the 2014 Conference, *Managing Pastures in Riparian Areas for Water Quality and Forage Utilization*, is the first priority by our farmer members for more research or a very extensive literature review that can shed light on whether or not livestock exclusion from streams is the only means available to protect water quality of the streams passing through pastures. It would appear there is an

increasing call in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and elsewhere that only livestock exclusion will do. This may lead to some very bad unintended consequences all around, including land use conversion from pasture to cropland or creating shady areas along fenced-off streams adjacent to the remaining pasture that could lead to bare earth, well-fertilized lounging areas within a few feet of the stream. This session created the large registration of USDA-NRCS employees from Pennsylvania. It also highlighted the Maryland Nutrient Management regulations that apply to pastures. Its first line of defense is to have livestock excluded from streams although it may allow other substitute practices. This has caused the grant proposal by the University of Vermont to seek a more definitive answer about livestock exclusion from streams feeding Lake Champlain as well as the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and the use of intensive rotational grazing as a substitute practice. The Consortium, USDA-ARS, Penn State University, and New York Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts are currently working with Vermont on a joint proposal.

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