

Local Led Meeting 10/5/2023  
Smuggler's Notch Inn

### Summary themes/comments

#### Local Led Funding Pool/NRCS Related

- Concern over invasive terrestrial plants and management
- Can cover crop practice have different dates for different crops (silage vs grain) for payments and establishment?
- Interest in supporting pollinators – can NRCS practices include more than just plantings, such as brush piles? And need a local native seed source to actually accomplish this.
- Farmers need help with funding for field amendments to increase yield and pest resistance.
- EQIP ranking has gotten to the point that the initial practice needs to be bundled so large to be funded, that the farmer now can't handle the project scale. Maybe Local Led can help solve this?
- There is a need for funding to address wet fields (tile drains?)
- Farmers need support – networking opportunities to share equipment, knowledge, parts, etc. as there isn't enough suppliers in certain areas and they aren't open at the needed hours. Need improved communications from funders (NRCS, VAAF, etc.) to make sense of it all, thought Farm Teams were a good idea. Need a database with all funding options that sorts by farm characteristics and project needs.

#### Other general topics:

- Meetings/workshops for farmers need to include incentives to attend, tangible outcomes, and be at times that they can actually attend.
- Concern over genetic modification (GMOs)
- How to have tourism, development, housing, transportation, municipal infrastructure, zoning bylaws that encourage a responsible land ethic? Confusion around Act 250
- Need more youth education

#### Kate's Notes:

- There is a lack of vegetation on some of the Lamoille River banks and in some areas there is just knotweed. The knotweed did provide some bank stability during the flooding.
- In some areas there are trees growing up amongst the knotweed - will they be able to grow tall enough to not be shaded out?
- Emily (not sure last name) from Stream Wise suggested to one of the farmers there to use netting for the knotweed, but then there won't be any vegetation in some areas. Is that really better?
- The RAP rules make it hard to manage buffers with invasive species - don't allow you to brush hog the knotweed in the buffer or manage it in other ways.
- Concern about farms growing GMO corn that pollutes waterways (seemed to be concerned about the GMO specifically not the associated herbicide/pesticides)
- Balance of tourism with environmental impact - Stowe is full of tourists that don't care for the land
- We need more K-12 education around environmental topics
- Act 250 is confusing and causing housing to be more spread out than it needs to be
  - Makes it hard to build multi-unit housing
  - There needs to be more education about Act 250 that doesn't get into the politics
- Need to balance feeding people, housing, ag, and conservation

- Need more housing, we have a lack of housing yet so many people with second homes that are empty much of the time
- You cannot live without a car here
- Lack of zoning rules in some towns, it is so variable by town
- How do you even know which towns have a planning commission, how do you start one if there isn't one?
- For many people, the town center they are closest to is not in the town they are in
- Concerns about drinking water quality? This isn't as much of a concern for Vermont compared to the rest of the country, water might be a commodity in the future that we export
- The cover crop deadlines don't work for farms depending on the year especially those growing grain corn
  - Could there be different deadlines for different crops - a different deadline for grain corn vs silage because even a cover crop that doesn't have the best germination is better than nothing. Maybe a different payment rate?
- Wet fields this year are staying wet to the point of not being able to farm them
- Need funding for tile drainage, otherwise we will lose ag land if there continues to be more precipitation. Once we know the research on which soil types lose more nutrient through tile, maybe fields could qualify for some payment of installing tile depending on the soil type.
  - Maybe tile that goes into a constructed wetland or other way to capture nutrients before entering the water
- Goats like knotweed and work together to eat it even when it is mature

Dorothy's Notes:

Discussion Notes:

- Networking among farmers can be difficult and time consuming. There are many different platforms and methods to try to communicate, and some platforms such as Craigslist are not as useful as they were previously. Better communication methods needed to share knowledge and information, especially about grant opportunities, and to match needs and resources (such as feed, services, etc)
  - Explore how active VT Pasture Network listserv is, or if VT Veg & Berry listserv may include dairy, beef, and other farmers
  - Need efficient regional or state level networking and communications platforms for VT farmers and producers
  - Need to communicate Farm Feed Finder Marketplace
- Meetings and events that intend to engage with farmers and producers need to be sensitive about timing, be focused on relevant topics, and have tangible outcomes
  - Incentives to come to meetings and events, such as payment, free meal is good to get people to come out
  - Need to plan for time of day and/or time of the year when farmers may not be as busy
  - Organizers should plan meetings and events to have tangible outcomes for participants, and not replicate demands from previous events too much
    - Sometimes events ask for participants for input they have previously shared at similar events, which can be tiring for participating producers coming to multiple events and meetings
- Interest in more opportunities to share equipment
  - Tool library, equipment coops would be very helpful, especially for equipment that is used occasionally

- Database for organizing assistance programs, based on the farm/producer type, scale, goals, demographics, etc.
  - It can be difficult to navigate the wide array of financial and technical assistance programs available, so a method to narrow it down to those that the farmer/producer/land steward would actually qualify for would be very helpful
- Service providers, NRCDs, etc need better methods of communicating programs for smaller producers and homesteaders
  - Often they are not connected with NRCS
- EQIP assistance can sometimes be difficult for producers because of how packages are bundled, and how this may require producers to take on more projects at once than they have the capital or capacity to. (Yet without the bundled packages/resource concern they might not rank high enough to receive funding)
  - Local Funding Pool may help producers be more focused, take on fewer projects at a time

#### Mel's notes

##### Lamoille Pollinator Pathway

- Can register land on PP website and receive PP sign
- Lauren Gibson gave vernal pool talk at Lamoille County Nature Center
- Michael Kiernan at Bee the Change is working with Peter Danforth to bring back pollinators; planting pollinators in between solar panels
- Pollinator Pathways website has lots of information on folks working on pollinators
- People are asking about putting in pollinator habitat
- Chris planned a pollinator practice
  - Farmer needs to know when to plant and where to buy seeds
- Would be nice to have a local place with native seeds for pollinators
- NRCS pays landowners to connect field to pollinator habitat; species mix is up to NRCS planner's discretion.
- Pollinator Pathway can be used to back up part] of the practice (e.g., a specific seed mix)

##### CSP

- CSP IRA vs. CSP Classic
  - Within CSP IRA, certain practices have to be implemented
  - Can brush piles be included in practices for pollinator habitat?
- CSP Assist
- Sometimes landowners call, conduct a site visit, submit an application, and then don't want to sign.
- It's possible to double CREP and CSP, but someone that already has one contract will be ranked lower.
- Tell Sugarmakers to sign up for CSP because they will get paid to do what they're already doing.
  - Unless there are resource concerns with the forest roads

##### Bat population decline

- NRCS practices for bat habitat – no cutting in between 4/15 to 9/30
- Online tool for endangered species – ICT

### Charles' Notes

- Farmers were concerned with field resilience/soil health needs
- Farmers were concerned with getting financial aid for paying for different field amendments that were supposed to help but did not help their yields/resiliency to pests
- Receiving financial aid for field amendments that are not classified as climate smart, meaning that the sprays that were applied, the ones that did not work, will not be able to be reimbursed
- Questions brought up by farmers included; where can we improve river flooding area? How do we slow rivers and waters going directly into the water/river? How do we address eroding banks? How are field with tile drainage managed differently from fields without tile drainage where both were flooded?
- Most farmers refer to "riprap" as junk and a waste of time/resources