

**Summary Minutes of the
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC)
Federal Advisory Committee Teleconference
Friday, December 11, 2015**

Date and Time: Friday, December 11, 2015; 2:00 – 3:30 PM, EST

Location: teleconference

Purpose: The purpose of this teleconference is to discuss progress and next steps for actions that were identified as a result of the October 22, 2015 FRRCC meeting, open to the public, in Denver, CO. Discussion will include progress of the Soil Health and the Outreach and Engagement Working Groups, and identification of additional topics that members want to advise the Administrator on.

Participants:

FRRCC members in attendance:

Dr. Steve Balling, Chair
Mr. David Petty, Deputy Chair
Ms. Peggy Beltrone
Mr. George Boggs
Mr. Daniel Botts
Mr. Robert Burns
Mr. James Ford
Mr. Joseph Logan
Mr. Thomas McDonald
Dr. Janis McFarland
Mr. Roger Noonan
Secretary Bill Northey
Dr. Jennie Popp
Mr. Robert Rynning
Dr. Larry Sanders
Ms. Cheryl Shippentower
Dr. Ann Sorenson
Mr. Dennis Treacy

EPA Staff in Attendance from the Office of the Administrator:

Mr. Ron Carleton, EPA Agricultural Advisor
Ms. Donna Perla, DFO FRRCC
Ms. Cheryl Woodward

Other Attendees:

Public Participants:

Dr. Richard Bonanno, University of Massachusetts
Mr. Patrick Johnson, Cypress Brake Planting Company
Mr. Phillip Korson, Cherry Marketing Institute
Mr. Paul Martin, Spear Six Ranch
Mr. Donn Teske, Donn Teske Farm
Ms. Bridget DiCosmo, Inside EPA
Ms. Alyssa Charney, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Materials Available: The agenda and meeting materials are available at the FRRCC web site:
<http://www2.epa.gov/faca/farm-ranch-and-rural-communities-federal-advisory-committee-frrcc-meeting-calendar>

Meeting Summary

The meeting was announced in the Federal Register on November 25, 2015 and proceeded according to the meeting agenda. A summary of the meeting follows.

December 11, 2015

Ms. Donna Perla, the Designated Federal Officer (DFO), opened the meeting announcing the call as a teleconference for the FRRCC and that public input would be solicited following discussion amongst the Committee members.

Dr. Steve Balling, the FRRCC Chair, thanked everyone for coming onto the call. He noted that over the past several years there have been many changes and although there was some confusion over membership, it was important for the members to continue the work that was started at the Denver meeting on October 22, 2015. He then described the purpose of the meeting, as stated above, and went over the agenda and asked if there were any questions on the agenda.

Ron Carleton, the EPA Agricultural Advisor, thanked committee members for their service on the FRRCC, and proceeded to give updates, including:

Clean Water rule – there is a nationwide stay from the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals while they determine whether they have jurisdiction. They had arguments earlier this week. Don't have a sense now of when a jurisdictional decision will be made. This rule is also subject to some Congressional debates as part of appropriations. Those negotiations continue.

USDA Advisory committee – Agricultural Air Quality Task Force – met in Knoxville this past year and a possible joint meeting between FRRCC and the Agricultural Air Quality Task Force was suggested, sometime in 2016. Ron raised this with the group; explained that as the committee works through their charge, there is potential for this joint meeting and wanted them to be aware of it.

Next week – [December 16 – 17, 2015] State Agricultural Directors meeting, where dialogue on National or regional issues were expected. A meeting with Region 10 State Agricultural Directors is the first meeting a series of regional meetings.

EPA's Office of Water's nutrient recycling challenge, which was presented at the FRRCC's October meeting, has launched. Ron mentioned that the launch was announced in the Midwest, and was well received by stakeholders, and got good press coverage. Phase I is requesting concept papers to be submitted. Ron shared the website with committee members, if they were interested in further details; found at: <https://www.challenge.gov/challenge/nutrient-recycling-challenge/>

Communication and Engagement Working Group

Dave Petty, the chair of the communication and engagement work group, gave an update to the committee on the Communication and Engagement working group's progress. The workgroup has had three conference calls to date [December 11, 2015]. They started their work by looking at what they had recommended to EPA in 2009 and 2011, and realized they had identified most, if not all, the significant issues in those previous efforts, with some continual overlying themes. The work group decided it would be important to track how many of the recommendations had been enacted or accomplished, as their next step before developing new recommendations. Dave referred to a paper that the former Acting Agricultural Counselor, (Alison Wiedeman), had provided to them on what was accomplished. He noted that communication has to happen both ways, and sees part of FRRCC's role as helping EPA better implement some of these recommendations, when appropriate.

Dave suggested that there may be things that the Committee could do as a FACA committee that could lead to more of the recommendations being adopted. One idea was to ask Regional Agricultural Advisors in every region for success stories and to probe whether they are aware of the Committee's previous recommendations to the Administrator. Although it can be assumed that these Advisors are busy, the Committee also knows that there are a lot of successful efforts that have taken place. One highly acclaimed example is the EPA Office of Water Nutrient Recycling Challenge. Dave pointed out that the inception of this project came from an animal agriculture group that was open to everyone and grew in membership. It was noted that the National Cattleman's Beef Association, the National Pork Producers Council, and the National Chicken Council were all partners in an effort to recognize the economic value of manure. The need for EPA's Nutrient Recycling Challenge grew out of dialogue in this group, and it was recognized that EPA acted on it.

Dave noted that the group has to recognize that there are parts of EPA who have tried to bring collaboration forward, and it would be valuable to identify where there have been successes, to help broaden this collaborative approach, agency wide.

Steve Balling noted that looking at what has been done in response to the 2009 and 2011 recommendations is the kind of engagement that FRRCC has been asking for. It is not clear that EPA has had an opportunity to implement all these recommendations. Although these recommendations were made in the context of water quality, there may be opportunities to implement these recommendations beyond water quality, (for example air quality and other areas).

Dennis Treacy thought this was a good summary of where the FRRCC is at this point. He noted that the FRRCC has asked several Administrators about these issues, but FRRCC needs to understand what

recommendations have not been acted upon. The workgroup needs to pose those questions again, if they have not been answered just yet.

Tom McDonald asked whether the workgroup had identified one or two things that should be a focus, or whether the workgroup is still trying to figure out what has or has not been implemented.

David Petty responded that identifying what has and hasn't worked would be valuable. He surmised that it all comes back to better communication and trust in both directions. He reinforced the idea of asking the Regional Agricultural Advisors to identify success stories with the agricultural community and ask them what their plans are for communication and outreach within their individual regions.

Peggy Beltrone noted that given that we're nearing the end of the Obama Administration, the Administration may be keen on identifying what has been accomplished during this term. She agreed there is a need to foster a culture of identifying success stories and that there may be activities within some programs that are successes that have not been well articulated.

David Petty noted that, given that the Administration is in its last year, the FRRCC will need to respond to what has been done, in such a timeframe that the Administration can respond and implement things before the Administration ends.

Dennis Treacy reminded the group that there was a long list of recommendations, and that it would be hard to pluck out a few themes. Once the group figures out what has been implemented, FRRCC may want to just resubmit things that have not been implemented thus far.

Soil Health Working Group

Larry Sanders started the discussion on the Soil Health Working Group status. He explained that the Soil Health Working Group had just started their discussions and that an initial draft of an approach and concepts for a recommendation letter was just developed and distributed to the Working Group for comment.

A schedule for work was laid out – working backwards from the end goal of a letter of recommendations to the Administrator in June. Larry welcomed input from the FRRCC and noted that a full Committee call will be scheduled sometime in February to discuss a preliminary draft or whatever progress is made by the Working Group. A final draft is anticipated in April for the full committee to modify or finalize for June.

George Boggs is co-chair for this working group and mentioned that the group may need to reach out to some other organizations that have been focusing on Soil Health. Some concepts that the working group is exploring include: identifying EPA's role in soil health, given that this is a focus more within USDA and other Institutes, Associations, Foundations, and Universities, and potential opportunities for EPA partnerships with these entities; identifying how soil health relates to EPA programmatic goals and missions; and taking an initial look at EPA policies or support that may contribute to improving soil health.

George Boggs and Larry Sanders noted that they will be contacting FRRCC members who had indicated an interest in this working group. Members who had identified an interest in this working group were named:

George Boggs, Larry Sanders, Daniel Botts, Joseph Logan, Tom McDonald, Janis McFarland, Roger Noonan, Jennie Popp, and Bill Northey.

Someone mentioned that EPA has a good group of Regional Agricultural Advisors that devote either some or all of their time intersecting with the agricultural sector. It was noted that they are doing a good job, but that more could still be done. The group noted that there may be some potential role for these Regional Advisors in their recommendations to the Administrator on EPA's role on soil health.

Information was also shared about a Webinar being put on January 12, 2016, by USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service describing the functions and goals of their new Soil Health Division. It was noted that it would be helpful to the Committee to understand the function of this new organization within USDA.

Next FRRCC Meeting

April 20 – 21st was mentioned as a potential date for the next FRRCC meeting in the Washington, DC area.

Public Participants Comments

Public participants were asked if they had any comments.

Paul Martin, from Spear Six Ranch in California noted that if the FRRCC identifies what EPA has already responded to from previous recommendations, and whether they were successful or not, it could further inform the FRRCC of areas where the Committee can help EPA implement some remaining recommendations.