**Local Work Group Partners Meeting - Feb 19, 2025**

**Summaries from Small Group Worksheet - Working on Community Natural Resource Priorities**

**Topic: Invasive Species**

*What 1-2 land uses does this mostly happen on?*

* Riparian areas & roadways (roadsides) seem to be the primary vectors for many species. High flow events exacerbate the spread of invasizes in both zones (erosion & roadwork)
* Edges of pasture/hayfield; sugarbush where competing understory is removed; Clear-cut woodlots; Stream edges & banks that ack vegetation
* Forest lands, riparian areas and other ag/retired ag fields

*If you had to choose, what would be the 2-3 feasible priority solution activities for addressing conservation needs in the next 3-5 years?*

* Outreach and education will be the most important so landowners can identify and report species in the early stages of development – early detection & rapid response
* Herbaceous weed treatment; outreach & support re: cutting and seed dispersal prevention; Woody native species establishment (planting AND maintenance); HOLD utilities and VTrans accountable for best practices when using fill
* Outreach & education to private land owners on herbicide safety to apply on their lands; workshop, techniques and strategies

*What could feasibly be achieved in 3-5 years to meaningly address this problem?*

* Prevent the intro of new species; implement management of already introduced ones; locally led educational workshops; streamline reporting tool; funds for citizen-led management; stricter rules/laws for responsibility of species on property (owner liable if it crosses a boundary)
* Identify uses and safe disposal options; train herbicides application to treat invasives; collaborate at high elevation-management
* Make funding more likely in non-forest lands; most funding currently done in forest; more licensed applicators for hire; more do it yourself work based on proper techniques and science

*Are there NRCS practices or programs that could help solve the problem?*

Yes – 2 - 314, 315, 612, 490 – though 384 may promote invasives; EQIP

Don’t know – 1

No - 0

**Topic: Sustaining local farming while protecting natural resources**

*What 1-2 land uses does this mostly happen on?*

* Small farm enhancement – Ag land, garden, pastures, infrastructure, farmstead, waste storage, feed spots
* Small family farms, forestry, homestead- farm team group, funding opportunity suite, increase payments in planning
* Small grazing, orchards, fruit/veggie; interface with industrial or community space, i.e. value-added facilities; agritourism; might look different than farmer dairy
* Farmstead, pasture
* Ag land, pasture, hay

*If you had to choose, what would be the 2-3 feasible priority solution activities for addressing conservation needs in the next 3-5 years?*

* Technical assistance, outreach, farm set up, shifting requirements, increase in pay for TA; infrastructure (fencing); beef producers-mini NMP, diversify veg; soil samples, manure, NRCS manure calculator, PH-forage, lime, wood ash, clover; scale down practices; rolling grants, height of hay field; specific vegetable tool, workshops
* Increase services to new/small farmers / livestock farms; regenerative farming; rolling grant – raising cutting height; winter CSA
* Increase payments on TA – NMP/energy assets; increase payments for NR restoration; increase engagement to bring a suite of grants and support, i.e. succession planning, marketing, food safety, biz planning, land conservation funding
* Assistance with infrastructure projects; practices that are more geared towards small and medium farms (vs large); Outreach to new farmers-they don’t know we are here
* Targeting mid-size, beef producers with little infrastructure, needs alternative water sources, stream buffers, NMP mini (manure stacking issues, bale feeding, sacrifice lot mgmt), need to convince these guys to change these…..; hay improvement, corral fencing?, animal handling

*What could feasibly be achieved in 3-5 years to meaningly address this problem?*

* Site plan implementation – RAPs; creek crossings, fencing, high/low tunnels, waste storage, outreach, min payments for small farms
* Increase sign-ups for TA, increase Farm Team support; bonus for signing up for certain practices to make it worth signing up smaller acreages; change how payments are calculated for smaller projects-CC under 10 acres is a minimum payment (net 4/acre, increase smaller acreage payment rate), more practices geared toward chicken and pigs
* Shift requirements for NRCS practices: change or add resource concerns that certain practices address so they can apply to smaller farms
* Brooks & rivers fenced off; winter yards secure, not running off with good frost-free waterers; winter CSA facility support, also develop non-flood zone properties for veg people; more land conservation to prevent development; local milk processing or support small dairy

*Other Notes on worksheet:*

* Hay CEEP, wrong time of year; NOFA Family Farmer of the Month, Climate Smart, resilience grants, VHCB-once graduated from farm viability; SPROUT- new farm, good interest rates; specialty crops-veg/fruit, group of farms could apply, industry level
* Need rolling grants for hay cutting height shoes (cutting high is better!); need more winter CSA, local markets with less percent of mark up (community farm store that runs with grants?)

*Are there NRCS practices or programs that could help solve the problem?*

Yes – 3, WSF, Fencing, NMP, Irrigation, watering tubs, liming/wood ash, energy audits, hoop houses, wetland restoration, riparian buffers, stack pads, NMP support (pay for class attendance); but Farm Teams support needs to increase in order to connect suite of opportunities in the state

No – 0

**Topic: Streams & rivers water quality and pollution**

*What 1-2 land uses does this mostly happen on?*

* Ag adjacent surface waters (all); valley floors without adequate treatment or buffers; petrochemical and sediment runoff on roads adjacent to surface waters; forest roads
* Stream crossings (VAST); VASA, Ag and large forested parcels – headwaters; stabilization and upgrading structure size; forest roads and ski trails in areas with hydric soils; forested headwaters
* developed lands,
* Crop lands, farmstead, pasture, hay fields, forest lands
* Unstable rivers and streams on ag lands
* Headwater order 1-2 stream=

*If you had to choose, what would be the 2-3 feasible priority solution activities for addressing conservation needs in the next 3-5 years?*

* River corridors buy outs (easements) and restoration/buffers
* Project development focused on areas that intersect with the previously mentioned land uses; increased outreach to large forested parcels – AMPs resources
* Maximize all crop land practices (cover crops, no-till, manure injection)
* Restore function of small stream systems
* Outreach & technical assistance ; increased payment rates

*What could feasibly be achieved in 3-5 years to meaningly address this problem?*

* No response - 2
* Increased education, outreach (events, workshops, news articles, etc).
* Increased comms about the basin plan

*Are there NRCS practices or programs that could help solve the problem?*

Yes – 3 – vegetative barriers, livestock exclusion, pasture planting

No - 0

**Topic: Adapting to climate instability and weather changes**

*What 1-2 land uses does this mostly happen on?*

* SUMMARY - Agricultural lands, flood plans, municipal roads
* Riparian, flood plains; agricultural lands- need climate-resilient crop varieties; cover cropping, rotational grazing; organic matter increases for water holding capacity
* Agricultural lands-highly erodible fields; private landowners along riparian corridors and lakeshores; municipal roadways
* Ag lands (flood plains); roads, culverts, animal laneways

*If you had to choose, what would be the 2-3 feasible priority solution activities for addressing conservation needs in the next 3-5 years?*

* SUMMARY - Identification of highly vulnerable areas using geospatial data; education/public outreach, accessible & targeted
* Climate resilient crops; agroforestry for cattle/dairy; OM increase for WHC; improved irrigation efficiency; improved drainage systems; climate controlled storage facilities; identify vulnerable landscapes and farms
* Technical staff capacity; outreach to public/municipal/conservation commissions -increased community engagement; high priority or vulnerable area identification (Patrick at MWA); funding supporting 30x30
* More cover cropping (diversity & variety); larger culverts; better roads; riparian planting

*What could feasibly be achieved in 3-5 years to meaningly address this problem?*

* SUMMARY - Target geospatial information/comprehensive map of high impact areas – share with partners; audit system of flood readiness for farms (non-mandatory); soil health- increase soil organic matter through cover crop & biochar
* Identify most vulnerable areas and outreach with these folks (there has got to be GIS maps of this already); we cannot implement strategies without identifying the areas
* Targeted geospatial information, maximize efficiency; comprehensive map of high impact areas – share with partners (culvert size, tile drainage, ag type); complete at least one project per year in target areas – success stories; audit system of flood readiness for farms (IDEA), non-mandatory; biochar for soil health, water holding capacity, what percentage cover cropping, utilizing easement / use financial agreements, irrigation efficiency
* Provide some kind of “flood ready” audit for farms and landowners; identify highly important areas for wetlands to conserve, restore, increase

*Are there NRCS practices or programs that could help solve the problem?*

Yes – 4, limited grant money for municipalities

No – 0