

January 24, 2017 Union County Soil and Water Conservation District

Present:

Laurel Schaafsma - Chairman; Pete Cameron - Secretary; Duke Emerson - Treasurer; William Schretzmann -- Board Member; Barton Wilder -- FDACS/WMD Representative; Wiley Feagle -- NRCS Representative; Dave Nistler -- Union County IFAS Agent

The meeting opened with voting for approval of the November minutes (there was no meeting in December).

Laurel brought up the subject of the Union/Bradford Fair in March (7-12 March) and our participation therein. As with last year, we assume that we would be sharing the Bradford SWCD table, passing out literature, freebies, and answering questions. Laurel indicated that she may have some free plants (good). Wiley Feagle of NRCS said he will look into getting some coloring books to hand out. Duke will approach Union County High School to see if there are any students in need of service hours to help out at the UCSWCD booth and learn something about our organization in the process. Laurel spoke about creating an information board and Barton mentioned the possibility of getting an informational video. These things are all contingent upon Paul Still allowing us to share the Bradford SWCD booth and upon us finding UCSWCD members who have the time and are willing to man the booth with Paul.

The next topic was the speech and poster contest and whether we will sponsor a Union County participation in the statewide competition. Our local competition would have to be completed in time to send winners on to the Area 2 competition in Jacksonville on 18 April. Discussion led to the following conclusions: the poster contest would be limited to grades 1-4, with prizes of \$25, \$15, and \$10 for winners 1-3 in grades 1 & 2 and the same for winners in grades 3 and 4. The topic would be "Healthy Soils are Full of Life." The speech contest would be for grades 6 - 12 and prizes would be \$75, \$50, and \$25. William thought that getting local businesses to come up with some of the prize money would be a good way to get their involvement. Our promotion of the poster and speech contests was voted on and approved.

In his capacity of FDACS representative, Barton mentioned that the Cow/Calf manual was being amended and would now be called the Cattle BMP manual. The small farms BMP manual for farms from roughly 5 to 50 acres is still in the formative stage and Laurel is on the steering committee. Another idea in the conceptual phase at FDACS is Pollinator Promotions, with a possible cost share for landowners who would foster pollinator maintenance.

The last topic was raised by Dave Nistler, who has recently returned from Louisiana where he, Bob Hochmuth of Live Oak IFAS, and Mr. Bieling discussed future growing of tabasco peppers in North Florida. Currently, the McIllaney company imports its hot peppers from foreign sources, such as South America, where the peppers are picked by hand. However, they want a US source where the peppers are harvested by a mechanical picker. The prototype picker that they are experimenting with now loses too much to the ground. McIllaney feels that North Florida has the right soil and climate to profitably grow the peppers using drip irrigation/fertigation and a mature mechanical picker. The possibility of this new crop has caused a lot of excitement. The adjournment at 8:10 was voted by the members.