Patricia D. Hastings

From: "Patricia D. Hastings" <hastings@AESOP.Rutgers.edu>
To: "NJinPAS Field and Forage" <NJinPASfieldforage@AESOP.Rutgers.edu>; "NJinPAS Forests and Xmas Trees" <NJinPASforestsxmas@AESOP.Rutgers.edu>; "CEDHs" <CEDH@AESOP.Rutgers.edu>; "NJinPAS Fruit" <NJinPASFRUIT@AESOP.Rutgers.edu>; "NJinPAS Vegetable" <NJinPASvegetable@AESOP.Rutgers.edu>
Cc: <barbara.phillips@nj.nrcs.usda.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 04, 2005 9:52 AM
Subject: NRCS Release: Two Listening Sessions in March to Receive Public Comment on Farm Bill Programs

*Received 3/3/05: For immediate release by the **Natural Resources Conservation Service** (NRCS); 220 Davidson Avenue, 4th Floor Somerset, NJ 08873; 732-537-6040 Fax: 732-537-6095; http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov. Courtesy of News Contact Barbara Phillips; 732-537-6044 or barbara.phillips@nj.nrcs.usda.gov. To review this press release as published and formatted see ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NJ/programs/ListeningSessionIssues.pdf.* See below for hotlinks to prior releases that discuss issues they hope will be addressed at the sessions.

Two Listening Sessions Scheduled to Receive Public Comment on Farm Bill Programs

February 28, 2005—Two sessions will be held in March to receive **public comment about Farm Bill** (Farm Security
and Rural Investment Act of 2002) programs being administered in New Jersey by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The established national priorities of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), natural resource issues specific to NJ that are not currently addressed by EQIP, and the State Technical Committee will be the focus of these sessions, but participants will be welcome to introduce other Farm Bill issues. The national priorities of EQIP and program details can be viewed on the NRCS website at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EQIP.

The panel for these sessions will be comprised of representatives from the New Jersey Conservation Partnership, which includes the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), New Jersey Department of Agriculture, State Soil Conservation Committee, Soil Conservation Districts, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Participants will be registered at the door. Sign language interpreters will be on hand at both sessions. Written comments may be submitted at either of the sessions or emailed directly to NRCS national headquarters (David.Webster@usda.gov) with the subject line "NJ Listening Session Comment."
Listening Sessions are scheduled for:

- **Tuesday, March 8, 2005**, at 7:30 p.m. at the **Gloucester County Extension Office**, 1200 N. Delsea Drive, Clayton, NJ 08312, Phone (856) 307-6450.
- **Tuesday, March 15, 2005**, at 7:30 p.m. at the **North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Office**, 54 Old Highway 22, Suite 201, Clinton, NJ 08809, Phone (908) 735-0733.

For more information about these sessions contact Janice Reid (732) 537-6042, Barbara Phillips (732) 537-6044 or your local NRCS Service Center. NRCS Service Centers are located throughout New Jersey:

- Hackettstown - serving Sussex, Morris and Warren: (908) 852-2576 ext. 3
- Frenchtown - serving Hunterdon, Somerset, and Union: (908) 782-4614 ext. 3
- Freehold - serving Mercer, Middle sex and Monmouth: (732) 462-0075 ext. 3
- Hainesport - serving Burlington, Camden, and Ocean: (609) 267-0811 ext. 3
- Woodstown - serving Gloucester and Salem: (856) 769-1126 ext. 3
- Vineland - serving Atlantic, Cape May, and Cumberland: (856) 205-1225 ext. 3

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Note: There have been previous press releases:

1. Listening Session Announcement ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NJ/programs/ListeningSessionAnnouncement.pdf (27 kb) - date, location, and times given
2. Listening Session Issues ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NJ/programs/ListeningSessionIssues.pdf(198 kb) - three focus issues to be highlighted at March Listening Sessions.

   Excerpt from this release: The NRCS is required to establish a technical committee in each State to assist in the technical considerations and to develop the technical guidelines necessary to implement conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (the 1985 Act), as amended. Not counting the NRCS field staff, ***the NJ State Technical Committee currently has 45 listed members, but only 12 members that routinely attend Committee meetings and/or participate on sub-committees****. Of these, 75% represent federal or state agencies, and 25% represent agricultural organizations.* ***NRCS is concerned that there are agricultural interests, such as commodity groups, cultural groups, or limited resource farmers whose voices are not being heard.*** *Over the last 18 months, two letters have been mailed to over 50 agricultural entities identified in the NJ Guide to Agricultural Organizations (NJDA) to request their participation. To date, only 1 new active member of the Committee has resulted from this effort.*

3. Press Release: NRCS Seeking Feedback from Farm Bill Program Customers ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NJ/programs/NRCSPressRelease-ListeningSessions.pdf (January 23, 2005) (137 kb)
4. Press Release: Two Listening Sessions Scheduled to Receive Public Comment on Farm Bill Programs ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NJ/programs/NRCS_PR-ListeningSessions_Feb.pdf (February 28, 2005) (135 kb)

Patricia D. Hastings
NJinPAS Coordinator/Assistant Pesticide Safety Education Program Coordinator/New Jersey School IPM Coordinator
Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension of New Jersey, the Garden State!
hastings@aesop.rutgers.edu; phone: 732-932-9801 (messages); 732-932-4271 (direct after 4pm)
PMO websites @ www.pestmanagement.rutgers.edu