

**Summary minutes of the
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC)
Federal Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 22, 2015**

Date and Time: Thursday, October 22, 2015 9:00 Am – 5:00 PM.

Location: Colorado Department of Agricultural HQ, Bloomfield, Co

Purpose: The purpose of the FRRCC meeting was for the panel to discuss its charge of Soil Health, as well as discuss other issues of importance to the agricultural community.

Participants:

FRRCC Panelists in attendance:

Dr. Steve Balling, Chair

Mr. David Petty, Deputy Chair

Mr. George Boggs

Mr. Daniel Botts

Mr. James Ford

Mr. Omar Gazza

Mr. Archie Hart

Mr. Patrick Johnson

Mr. Phillip Korson

Mr. Joseph Logan

Mr. Paul Martin

Mr. Thomas McDonald

Dr. Janis McFarland

Secretary Bill Northey

Dr. Larry Sanders

Ms. Cheryl Shippentower

Mr. Don Teske

Mr. Dennis Treacy

Mr. Roger Noonan

EPA Staff in Attendance from the Office of the Administrator:

Mr. Ron Carleton, EPA Agriculture Advisor

Mr. Thomas Brennan, Acting DFO FRRCC

Ms. Cheryl Woodward

Facilitator:

Ms. Maya Brietburg-Smith

Other attendees: A list of members of the public who attended the meeting is provided in Appendix A.

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 and proceeded according to the meeting agenda. A summary of the meeting follows.

October 22, 2015

Opening Statements and Welcome:

Mr. Thomas Brennan, the Designated Federal Officer (DFO), opened the meeting and made a brief opening statement noting the FRRCC Panel is a Federal Advisory Committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). He noted the meeting was open to the public and that meeting notes were being taken for the public record.

Next the FRRCC Chair, Dr. Steve Balling gave his opening remarks. He welcomed the panel to the meeting and thanked all involved with preparing for the meeting for their efforts. He also introduced our meeting facilitator Maya Brietburg-Smith. He mentioned that this was a follow up meeting to a January 2015, FRRCC meeting which was held in January of 2015. In the previous meeting soil health and our charge was the main topic, and Dr. Balling reminded the panel to build off the earlier meeting and not to cover the same ground. The FRRCC was clear, that they would not advise the Agency to regulate soil health, as they felt that this is not the Agency's role. Rather he challenged the panel to move forward with advice for the Agency on how to help promote soil health nationally. He also asked the panel to consider other topics of interest for which the FRRCC may want to give advice on agriculture issues. Dr. Balling invited the group to put other such topics on the table for discussion.

Maya Brietburg-Smith then added her own welcome to the panel. She then described her expectations for a cordial, organized and respectful panel discourse. Maya then walked the Panel through the agenda and topics we were to cover in our meeting.

Next, Ron Carleton, the EPA Agricultural Advisor, gave his opening remarks. Ron welcomed the Panel and thanked everyone involved with pulling the meeting together. He also gave a special thank you to the Colorado Department of Agriculture for hosting the FRRCC meeting in their office space. He also encouraged the panel to have a robust/vigorous discussion on not only soil health, but also other topics of potential advice to the EPA.

Ron then gave an update on several Agency-wide topics of interest that he felt were relevant for this group: 1) The Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule; 2) the Worker Protection Standard; 3) ground level ozone rule; 4) reducing carbon emissions from coal fired power plants; 5) a joint USDA/EPA pollinator task force; and 6) the Renewable Fuel Standard. His comments were mostly just a quick update on these six topics and where each item was in the regulatory process. However he did spend more time discussing WOTUS than the other five topics. The legal status of the WOTUS rule are quite complex and as of the meeting date (10/22/15) the 1st circuit court had issued a stay of the rule. The WOTUS rule is now in the 6th circuit court of appeals for potential consolidation of the issue. The take away for the Panel was that the WOTUS rule is currently stayed by the courts, and it will likely take some time for this to all play out in the court system.

Ron then switched to discuss the charge before the group: Recognizing the agency's regulatory mission to protect public health and the environment, how can EPA best create a framework for facilitating partnerships that builds upon existing resource protection efforts through collaboration and innovation? In what ways can this framework advance the Agency's knowledge, efforts and use of resources to promote soil health, particularly as it relates to water and air, and to the adaption to a changing climate? Ron then outlined what the lineup of presenters will be for the day, and how to build off what the presenters have to say to discuss soil health issues. He challenged the panel to connect soil health to USDA's role, and EPA's potential role. He spoke about how soil health is imperative to climate change and extreme weather events, like the historic floods right here in Colorado in 2013. He challenged the group to find ways the Agency could interact with existing USDA programs, like the Regional Climate Hubs. Ron stated the EPA has an interest here, even if not regulatory program/interest. He pointed to the Clean Water Act section 319 as a prime example of the interest. Under Section 319, states, territories and tribes receive grant money that supports a wide variety of activities including technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects and monitoring to assess the success of specific nonpoint source implementation projects. Using 319 as an example, Ron discussed how soil health is directly tied to nutrient management issues that the EPA will continue to have an interest in moving forward. Promoting soil health as a tool for mitigating the impacts of agriculture going forward is something EPA has a voice in and challenged the panel to discuss how the Agency plays into this issues. Ron made it clear that the EPA will not regulate soil health, but rather asked the panel to help the Agency work this issue to head off other problems, such as nutrient run off. The FRRCC met on this topic in January 2015, and Ron is looking forward to having the panel's advice on how EPA can partner/collaborate on soil health.

Next Ron outlined what is likely to be a busy 9 months ahead for the FRRCC. Ron expressed his desire to have follow-up teleconferences to this meeting, and to be building towards a Spring 2016 meeting of the FRRCC. Ron then opened the floor for questions from the panel members.

Question from Thomas McDonald: He asked that Ron remind the panel what the charge regarding soil health is.

Answer from Ron Carleton: Ron reread the charge for the Panel: "Recognizing the agency's regulatory mission to protect public health and the environment, how can EPA best create a framework for facilitating partnerships that builds upon existing resource protection efforts through collaboration and innovation? In what ways can this framework advance the Agency's knowledge, efforts and use of resources to promote soil health, particularly as it relates to water and air, and to the adaptation to a changing climate?"

Question Bill Northey: Bill asked for more information regarding the flow of information back and forth between the Agency and the FRRCC. Specifically he wanted to find out more about the WOTUS.

Answer Ron Carleton: Ron agreed that better information sharing between the EPA and the FRRCC is something worth improving and building upon. He committed to working closely with other stakeholders on how to improve communication and collaboration. He also asked the FRRCC Panel for their ideas on how we could do this better.

Question from Dennis Treacy: This one theme, communication, has been an issue for a long time with the FRRCC. EPA needs to be more process focused on how to develop better partnerships with stakeholders in the agricultural community. He also wanted a better understanding of how the FRRCC can add input to the agency. Finally he wanted a better back and forth exchange with the EPA.

Answer from Ron Carleton: He understands Dennis's desire for better back and forth flow of information between the EPA and the FRRCC and wants to set up a framework for those improved interactions.

Question from Janis McFarland: The FRRCC needs help understanding the landscape better. We need to understand the different initiatives at USDA (discussed at last FRRCC meeting). For example, how does EPA hook into the USDA Climate Hubs that were established in 2014? How does EPA currently hook into the voluntary Programs run by USDA? How does EPA get USDA information on these topics? Understanding these kinds of communication issues would help the FRRCC make better sense of what to focus on and where to plug in.

Answer from Ron Carleton: He agreed this was very important. Building the relationships between EPA/USDA is critical. He agreed that the USDA Regional Climate hubs were an area where EPA could/should play. As an example he mentioned that the US Department of Interior was listed as a partner at the USDA Climate Hubs but the EPA was not listed as a partner, He wondered why that is? He wondered if EPA should be a formal partner? He also stated the Administrator wants to build collaborative partnerships with USDA in particular and agreed with Janis that this was a potential opportunity.

Next Don Brown, the Commissioner of the Colorado Department of Agriculture, and Chris Wiseman, the Deputy Commissioner, welcomed the FRRCC to their facility and gave a brief presentation. In Chris'

welcoming remarks he mentioned that agriculture was second or third leading component of the Colorado economy and creates 173,000 jobs across the State. Agriculture generates over \$40 billion annual to the State's economy and that Colorado is in the top 10 of twenty commodities nationally.

Don Brown then also welcomed the FRRCC to their facility and outlined his background and current position as Commissioner. Don then spoke of the importance of soil health both nationally, and specifically in Colorado where soils are very fragile. In Colorado, soil organic content tends to be quite low and retaining water in soils is a challenge. He also mentioned how extreme weather events have impacted Colorado agriculture, citing recent major floods and droughts over the past 5 years. He then mentioned how this may be part of climate change issues that may become a sustained challenge both nationally and in Colorado. In September 2015, his organization published a Climate plan, and he wanted the FRRCC to know that soil health was a key to managing/mitigating climate change for the State. Don summed up by saying soil health was a hugely important issue. Agriculture has the responsibility for feeding the world and soil health is a major part of that responsibility. Don then took questions from the FRRCC.

Comment from Ron Carleton: Ron thanked Chris and Don for hosting our meeting and reiterated that soil health was indeed a big part of stabilizing the impacts of climate change.

Question from George Boggs: He asked Don to share his perspective on the intersection of Regulatory agencies/soil health/climate change?

Answer from Don Brown: Regulation does intersect with real life production of food and fiber. Regulation needs to be well thought out and scientific in nature. Don also felt that many in the world were quite removed from food in their daily lives. For example when people need gas they go to the gas station and when they need food they go to the grocery store. Many in modern society have lost touch with agriculture in their daily lives.

Follow up question from George Boggs: Were there opportunities for other ways of having influence over soil beyond just regulation?

Answer from Don Brown: Agencies drive rules and regulations. What is also needed is to go to the grass roots and the people who really know what is happening on the ground level with agriculture. Down at the grower level Don thought we may find collaborative opportunities with folks who were not working agendas, but working the land.

Question from Dan Botts: In Florida, three counties produce more than Colorado numbers. In Florida we farm sandy soils and the soil health issues are very complex and diverse. There is no single process that can fix soils health issues for everyone in Florida.

Answer from Don Brown: He reiterated the need to go to the people on the ground for solutions.

Comment from Steve Balling: All agriculture is local. This makes it a challenge to regulate and flexibility is needed.

Comment from Omar Garza: He stated he works directly at the grass root level, and agreed that is where the action is located. Regulations should be ground up. He recommended that EPA work with USDA and take advantage of what growers and are seeing at the ground level.

Comment from Don Brown: Farmers and ranchers should be working with the government wherever possible.

Question from George Boggs: People loath regulators. EPA has agricultural advisors in every Regions. Does EPA need more engagement?

Answer from Don Brown: It would be helpful to have a stronger EPA Regional agricultural presence. Not for regulatory purposes, but as information collectors and disseminators.

Comment from Thomas McDonald: He commented on how technology is moving within agriculture at a fast pace, and commented that this trend is going to continue. He also pointed out that technology may lead to different future regulatory mechanisms that are in place today. He also pointed out that consumer demands on growers and ranches may someday out-pace regulatory frameworks. Given that possibility, he urged for more education targeted at consumers.

Comment by Don Brown: Education needs to be beyond consumers and across the board – States/Federal agencies/everyone. Don stated he thought we were already late in the process for education on a number of fronts across America. He thinks a good place to start is with children and get education about agriculture into the school age generation. He suggest topics such as: Food production; conventional farming is ok; organic food is a choice; the need to reach urban areas where children don't have agriculture as part of their daily lives.

Steve Balling then wrapped up this portion of the agenda and thanked Chris and Don for their time and thoughts. The FRRCC then took a 15 minute break.

Next Clay Pope, CSP, LLC/USDA Southern Plains Climate Hub gave presentation titled "The Secret is in the Soil".

http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/the_secret_is_in_the_soil_0.pdf

Clay then opened up the floor for comments and questions.

Question from Donn Teske: Donn stated he agreed with the direction of Clay's presentation and asked, do you think all you said could reverse the trend?

Answer from Clay Pope: It won't solve it all, but it gets us going down the road. The Farm Bill is an important bill for environmental health issues. Regulations have their place, but it is a long process. Right now we have things we can do, and we have the tools and authority to do these things. Actions we can take now can truly lead to economic benefits. The partnerships and techniques I outlined in my presentation will help growers make money and help with climate change.

Question from Janis McFarland: How could we improve the connections between the USDA climate hubs and the EPA?

Answer from Clay Pope: The relationship is needed, especially from a communications level. The EPA 319 program is a good example. Currently USDA NRCS technical assistance and EPA partnerships exist. It is a positive example of inter-agency coordination. Another good example is the EPA's carbon program at Region 6. "I agree with you Janis that increasing partnerships and USDA/EPA relationships is

needed. “ EPA is a player with regards to climate change and agriculture and the FRRCC needs to help the Agency find the common ground where they can and should be working with USDA.

Question from Dan Botts: I want to ask about the carbon credit ideas that are out there. In Florida we have a push on this issue. How does a grower get credit for what is already being done? During the new negotiations regarding the health of the Everglades, Ag is often seen as the problem. The reality is the agricultural community is doing great work.

Answer Clay Pope: We need to get folks around the table to discuss policy realities and considerations at the State level. That would be a good first step. We need to break down the silos at the State and federal government to get grower issues properly “plugged in.” Communication is the key.

Steve Balling then thanked Clay for his presentation and for the interesting discussions.

Next, Robin Dunkin, Air Programs Manager for the Natural Resources Group for the EPA gave presentation titled “Air Quality Presentation”.

http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/healthy_soils_slides_29oct15_0.pdf

Robin then opened up the floor for questions and comments.

Comment from George Boggs: George suggested that the Agency use money collected from fines levied by the clean air act to provide incentives for growers to try climate change mitigation techniques. He asked Robin what she thought about this idea.

Answer from Robin Dunkins: It is an interesting idea. Right now they don’t have a final answer for how to make this kind of idea come together, but she is encouraged that the States are actively developing programs that have diverse approaches to address the kinds of things George is driving at. She did mention that any carbon offsets need to be real, quantifiable, and permanent.

Question from Maya Brietburg-Smith: What do you mean by “permanent”?

Answer from Robin Dunkins: the best way to answer that is to give an example. In California, there is an engine change-out program. Before the EPA approved this program, the Agency made sure to know what happens to the old engines. If they are repurposed and used for other activities then there was no net benefit. So California destroyed the engines, thus making this a permanent mitigation practice.

Question from George Boggs: Could negotiations be made for a 10 year term?

Answer from Robin Dunkin: More discussion would be needed on that, I think a 50 year window may be a more appropriate lens for negotiations.

Question from Janis McFarland: Can you point us to the organization(s) within the Office of Air who develops methods for modeling how soil health impacts carbon sequestration?

Answer from Robin Dunkins: that work is shared between EPA’s Office of Research and Development and the Office of Air.

Question from Dennis Treacy: On the methane reduction project, it seems like a great voluntary program. What are the incentives that EPA offers?

Answer from Robin Dunkins: Right now we are trying to find what the barriers are and address the potential problems before they appear. So the benefit is heading off future issues.

Question from Tom McDonald: Can sequestration be tied to row crop transition from till to non-till? Also do you have any thoughts on grassland and conservation easements being included/counted for sequestration?

Answer from Robin Dunkins: All those ideas are on the table for discussion.

Steve Balling then thanked Robin for her presentation and the discussion that followed.

Next Hema Subramanian, EPA Office of Water, gave a presentation titled "The Nutrient Recycling Challenge."

http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/epa_nutrient_recycling_challenge_oct_2015_0.pdf

Hema then opened up the floor for questions and comments:

Comment from Dennis Treacy: He expressed that he had never before been involved with a project with the EPA quite like this one. It is very out-of-the-box and Smithfield Foods jumped in enthusiastically. He stated his company spent tens of millions of dollars on managing wastes. He expects lots of good ideas to be judged by the agency and others and he was very optimistic about this innovative project. So he clearly sees this as not only a good idea, but a good business opportunity.

Answer from Hema Subramanian: EPA could not be here without Smithfield Foods support. It is a true win/win for both of our organizations.

Comment from David Petty: This is a perfect example of how the EPA is outside-the-box working with agriculture and being solution focused. Thanks to Hema and Smithfield Foods.

Comment from Tom McDonald: This is the first committee meeting I am aware of where EPA is helping find solutions not just finding something wrong. A true win/win.

Comment from David petty: EPA is helping find the economic value of manure. EPA has taken a negative (Manure waste) and is making it a positive. This is a very special project.

Comment from Hema Subramanian: Hema introduced an EPA brochure on this project and handed it out to the FRRCC panel members.

http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/epa_nutrient_recycling_challenge_factsheet_oct2015_draft_0.pdf

Question from Omar Garza: Are we going to get this voluntary partnership focus from EPA on agricultural issues?

Answer from Hema Subramanian: Hema answered for her specific project that, yes, a new web site will have a section just on this – under voluntary partnership programs. Hema went on to say she thinks it is a good time for these types of partnerships across the board.

Steve Balling then thanked Hema for her presentation and discussion.

Next, Steve Balling and Maya Brietburg-Smith then thanked all the presenters and gave a summary of meeting thus far to set the table for an open discussion of the panel; then opened the floor for a discussion period with the entire panel.

Question from Dan Botts: Dan pointed out that USDA has an ongoing “soil renaissance program” that is well funded (~\$300-400 million). He asked if this group (the FRRCC) or the EPA has made any attempt to hook into that group? If not he put on the table the question, should EPA be involved in that program?

Answer from Ron Carleton: He was not aware if the EPA was plugged into the “soil renaissance program”, but thought it was worth exploring.

Comment from Tom McDonald: He pointed out the connection of Hema Subramanian project to soil health, specifically with regards to organic content in soil.

Comment from James Ford: Getting youth involved in soil health and agricultural issues in general was important. He mentioned the use of comic books and social media as a way to get children more engaged.

Comment from Dennis Treacy: His experience is that people in agriculture will do almost anything if you build solid relationships and if they have and understand the reasoning behind initiatives. He also pointed out that EPA is often confused about incentives and as a result many initiatives fall apart for this reason. The agricultural community wants to improve the handling of materials and the environment. Hema’s group is really fostering incentives that are very out-of-the-box. Dennis thinks the FRRCC should consider writing Administrator McCarthy a letter highlighting this project as a model for how to work with agriculture.

Comment from Roger Noonan: Envirocon is a great forum to engage young people on agricultural topics. Envirocon goes beyond the 4H program and is a great group for the EPA to potential partner with on these topics. Roger also commented on the need for a regional/localized regulatory focus from EPA. For example, although no till has obvious benefits, it is not an option for every grower situation. Also dairy farmers use a lot of sand in the Northwestern United States and elsewhere sawdust is used. These examples highlight the need for local regulation.

Comment from Larry Sanders: Larry said that there are many farmers doing good work with respect to the environment. Any report that the FRRCC produces needs to stress this point. He also highlighted the importance the Land Grant Universities across the country and talked about the important role they have as that bridge between government/research/farming. It is a huge system that is already in place and encouraged the FRRCC and EPA to find ways to better use this readymade system. He also stated that the Land grant Universities need resources.

Comment from Patrick Johnson: Patrick made the point that practices on farms are all localized and had tremendous variation across the country. So EPA needs to consider that for initiatives to work, they

need to not only fit nationally but locally as well. He encouraged EPA to reach out to USDA NRCS and land grant universities to ensure that potential partnerships will be helpful. Patrick also pointed out that incentives help farmers try better management practices. Often farmers are unable to implement these new practices without support for transition – particularly if it is cost neutral or costs more. The current economic squeeze is making trying new things more difficult. For example, both no till and cover crops have proven difficult to adopt by farmers in many parts of the country. Putting a cover crop down can cost up to \$30-40 per acre which, for some growers, represents a very big commitment. His experience has shown that incentives from USDA and the private agricultural industry has been a big help for pioneering new techniques.

Comment/question Steve Balling: Depending on where you are at within the country, different organizations have deeper relationships. For example in California, USDA NRCS is virtually unknown, but the Land Grant University is a major player with agriculture. He then asked Clay Pope, if you wrote a letter to the EPA Administrator, what would you say to her? (Clay asked to think about that for a while).

Comment/question from Ron Carleton: He thought the idea of more partnerships with the Land Grant Universities is an idea worth capturing in a note to the EPA Administrator. He then asked if EPA should do more with the State Departments of Agriculture. Perhaps through their National association? He is optimistic about the opportunities to work those connections and wondered if a framework could be developed by the FRRCC to help open up these relationships?

Comment from Janis McFarland: Janis commented on the EPA and soil health. She said that approval and release of new technologies for growers for insect/weed/disease control could greatly benefit soil health. She pointed out that the EPA Office of Pesticide Programs' (OPP) budget was significantly down. This is creating a barrier for tools to reach the growers. She encouraged the FRRCC to push the EPA to make existing programs work better. That a better funded/running OPP would get tools out more efficiently.

Comment from Phillip Korson: Picking up on Ron Carleton's question for Clay Pope, he suggested we tell the Administrator what we want from the EPA – better partnerships, collaboration and resources. He cited Hema Subramanian's project as a model. He would encourage the Administrator to promote these kinds of projects on soil health issues. He would challenge the EPA to help bring resources to address nutrient issues.

Comment from Archie Hart: Archie expressed his agreement for Ron Carleton's point that the State Departments of Agriculture is a good place for EPA to reach out for partnerships. At that level it may be easier to identify the roles of the partners and build the proper infrastructure for soil health initiatives. Archie also said that any potential regulations need to be well thought out to be effective.

Comment from Ron Carleton: Ron followed up and agreed with Archie's points.

Comment from Dan Botts: EPA needs to be thinking about incentives, a "carrot and the stick" mindset. EPA/Water Management Districts/States/and many others all have a seat at the table on the soil health issue. Specifically with practices meant to enhance/protect soil health. In Florida there are lots of complex issues, for example, all buyers say they want/need clean ditch banks while others want vegetation on ditch banks. Growers have choices to make. They often listen to the buyers. The key is communication between organizations who often send competing messaging to agriculture. It takes

serious dialog to get to the heart of some issues. Growers are looking for more certainty, cost shares, longer agreements, clear best management practices, etc. Growers need both certainty and flexibility.

Comment from Bill Northey: Using a recent State of Iowa law suit on non-point source pollution as the example, Bill made the point that growers need: 1) reduced uncertainty; 2) flexibility; 3) more EPA staff dedicated to agriculture in each state (Expansion of the current EPA Regional Agricultural Advisors staff); and, 4) Folks who can fix issues on the ground level for agriculture. The problems faced are complex and with many different solutions. Agriculture needs options, not micromanagement. A solutions framework of regulations, not just one standard. Regulations need to be developed from the bottom up. So, for soil health that likely means we need thousands of growers experimenting with new and varied techniques. How can the FRRCC help? That is our challenge. The challenge for the EPA is developing trust. They need to do more delivery of information across agriculture. Hema Subramanian's project is a great example of how to make a difference and build trust in the Agency. Trust and credibility are keys to finding solutions.

Comment from George Boggs: George said regarding the FRRCC change of soil health, that he had suggestions for EPA. EPA has several issues: lack of engagement on this topic; EPA often uses a top down approach when bottom up is needed; EPA is often reactive instead of strategic; and, EPA is not site-specific focused. Investments are needed to help bridge the gap to profitability. Thus incentives are key to help create a market place for soil health ideas. Policy calls/adjustments by EPA are needed. For example, water quality gets "credits" but not so for air quality. Stove piping is an issue for EPA and its relationship with agriculture. Multidisciplinary teams are needed within EPA as they reach out on this topic. EPA need more staff in the field and at industry meetings. The agency needs to better understand what farmers need, and work towards innovative solutions.

Comment from Joe Logan: Soil health is at the top of the agenda for the FRRCC and he was happy to see that occur. For farmers to change practices (for topics such as carbon markers and environmental services) you need to have incentive programs. Also EPA should celebrate local areas where soil health issues are being handled well. EPA should pay for soil health practices to move forward. EPA should measure soil health success in a quantifiable and rigorous manner. EPA could be a part of a large consortium of organizations pushing these issues. There are currently a number of nutrient trading initiatives in play now – some good, some not so good. EPA needs to help bring science and rigor to these initiatives. This role of measurement and verification would be a good fit for EPA. Currently many are skeptical of the modeling and measurement goals of the nutrient trading activities in play.

Comment from Janis McFarland: On October 7th of this year, President Obama signed an initiative that calls for federal agencies to take into account ecosystem services. This new memorandum markets to many of the ideas being developed by the Environmental Councils of States. ECOS. Janis suggests having a soil health component in this project.

Comment from Clay Pope: Clay is responding to Steve Balling's question of what he would put in a letter to the EPA Administrator. Clay suggested these items: 1) Express appreciation for current successful EPA/USDA/State collaborations (like the 319 program); 2) Build on existing partnerships and best management practices; 3) rely as much as possible on locally led voluntary efforts to improve soil health; 4) support current efforts on the state and local level, such as demonstration plots. (e.g., Develop partnerships and collaborations between EPA, NRCS, State Departments of Agriculture, Land Grant Universities; local conservation districts; etc.); 5) encourage the States to be leaders in soil health

issues; (e.g., use fees taken in the Clean Water Act /Clean Air Act violations to fund soil health projects/incentives); and lastly, 6) continue dialog on greenhouse gas offsets with USDA and other partners.

Comment Eugene Thilstead (EPA Region 5 Agriculture Advisor): NRCS programs match and share funds to make sure 319 can be accomplished in each state. By comparison the USDA FSA is not a cost share. That program has a big soil health component and it is voluntary. USDA rural development funding is a partnership too. Another example of funding partnerships is the soil conservation districts.

Comment from Dan Botts: He stated Clay was right that we need a framework of options that work. Dan also pointed out that, in many cases, specialty crop growers do not have existing relationships with USDA programs (This is the case in Florida).

Comment from George Boggs: George commented that larger land owners are easier to work with but often harder for USDA to reach. It can be hard to separate income issues from performance issues. So who is watching out to ensure that alignment of resources for growers? How does EPA want to spend its 319 funding? In the State of Washington about half the money goes to the state staff to administer. He also questioned why money from EPA fines goes back to the Treasury and not back to EPA to put into localized projects.

Comment from David Petty: Money to States is hard to control, as the States decide what to do with the funds.

Comment from Roger Noonan: NRCS has a process to address determining the local priorities for environmental funding. EPA should have a seat at that table. This is a way to get better involved at the grass roots level.

Maya Brietburg-Smith summarized the themes she heard in the conversation this way 1) Grass roots level efforts are key; 2) Partnerships are important both for building on existing and developing new partnerships; and, 3) The need for a framework to address these problems/issues. She then asked the FRRCC, what else do we want to take on as a committee?

Comment from Paul Martin: Paul expressed his appreciation for the quality of the discussions at this meeting. As far as the soil health charge given by the EPA Administrator, Paul thought this would best be done by a FRRCC subcommittee. He suggested the subcommittee could develop a white paper outlining the basics of our recommendations going forward to the Administrator. He suggested we keep outreach to the regulated community as a key element. He suggested we mention the lack of trust with some in agriculture for the EPA. He mentioned that incentives are needed, that human health and environmental risk assessments could be part of an equity discussion, considering small versus large growers. Water quality/air quality/climate change/upper watershed management/strengthening relationships all should be considered in the soil health charge white paper.

Comment from Dennis Treacy: he agreed with Paul that the Administrator wants soil health issues addressed. Let's throw out new models for her. We can borrow from Clay Pope's slides. Discuss some techniques that could help across the board. Give the Administrator some simple/substantial messaging from the FRRCC. Dennis felt the Administrator needs to hear from the FRRCC how important incentives are to the agricultural community. Also communication is very important for the Agency. EPA needs to put its money where its interests are for them to be effective with agriculture. Finally EPA needs to be

aware and careful that their interest in soil health does not lead to the misperception that the EPA is planning on or actually regulating soil health. That would be a media problem for sure.

Comment from Larry Sanders: He was recently involved with a project that surveyed land owners and asked them why they did conservation? The most popular answer given was that they did it for what is in it for them not for the downstream beneficiary for their actions.

Steve Balling then called for volunteers to serve on a subcommittee to lead in the development of answer the soil health charge question. The following folks volunteered: George Boggs (chair of the subcommittee), Larry Sanders, Bill Northey, Joe Logan, Janis McFarland, and Dan Botts. Although Clay Pope is not an FRRCC member he offered to be available to the group if they wish to bounce ideas off him, especially regarding his presentation.

Next Steve Balling asked the FRRCC panelists if there were any other topic for which they wished to give advice to the Administrator.

Comment from Patrick Johnson: Patrick suggested the FRRCC may want to give consensus advice from the committee on regulatory topics in public process right now, for example the SPCC and the worker protection standard.

Comment from Dennis Treacy: Asked that whatever the subcommittee develops is worked back through the FRRCC and Steve Balling agreed that would be the process moving forward.

Comment from Steve Balling: He asked if pollinator protection was an issue for the FRRCC to take on as a committee.

Comment from Janis McFarland: Work on agricultural production habitat issues may be of interest to the FRRCC. This would include the Endangered Species Act, invasive species, pollinators, insecticide/herbicide resistance, and other such issues.

Comment from Roger Noonan: Food safety is a key topic for the FRRCC to consider.

Comment/question from Ron Carleton: Paul mentioned outreach and communication, should this group take that on in a focused manner? There was solid support from many in the room. Ron asked if it was worthy of a subcommittee?

Comment from Dan Botts: Having an educational process to develop a holistic outreach plan in the field and at headquarters of EPA would be a good idea. EPA needs to improve its engagement/communication with USDA and agriculture across the board.

Comment from David Petty: EPA staff need to get a handle on a very basic level what they can and cannot do regarding soil health and how to get it in motion quickly. FRRCC can help with this issue.

Comment from Paul Martin: If EPA has ownership of a soil health program it is more likely to succeed. Hema's incentive program is a good model and an example where they have taken ownership.

Comment from Omar Garza: Omar commented that Dennis said outreach alone is not good enough and Omar agrees. Omar suggests that EPA engage with agriculture at the grass roots level. That is what EPA needs to do to learn about what is happening locally with agriculture.

Comment from Roger Noonan: EPA does not interact with states as much as they should and encourage the agency to build their relationships with the State Departments of Agriculture.

Comment from Bill Northey: EPA needs to consider adding more regional agriculture advisor staff; increase the travel budget of the EPA regional agriculture advisors; encourage them to get out into the field and be hubs for information exchanges.

Steve Balling then called for volunteers to serve on the FRRCC Communications Subcommittee. This Subcommittee will develop a white paper on how EPA can better plug into partnership and communicate across all parties involved with agriculture. The following FRRCC members volunteered: David Petty (subcommittee chair), Dennis Treacy, Patrick Johnson, Omar Garza, James Ford, Paul Martin, and Phillip Korson.

Steve Balling then made one last offer to collect other ideas the FRRCC may want to peruse. He invited panel members to send him any other ideas they may have on what the panel may want to advise EPA on moving forward.

The meeting was then formally adjourned by Acting DFO, Tom Brennan.