**Region 1 \* New England**

**State-FIFRA Issues Research and Evaluation Group (SFIREG)**

**Meeting Report**

**December 7-8, 2015**

1. **Pre-SFIREG Meeting:**

EPA Region 1 meeting held at the EPA Regional Laboratory in Chelmsford, MA on November 18, 2015. Participation included pesticide program staff from Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (by phone), Maine Department of Agriculture, Food & Rural Resources (by phone), Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets and EPA New England Regional Office.

State Lead Agency Participants: Diane Jorsey (CT), Robert Isner (CT), Taryn Lascola (MA), Gary Fish (ME), Dave Rousseau (NH), Judy Harper (NH), Linda Boccuzzo (VT), Cary Giguere (VT), & Jeff Comstock (VT).

EPA Regional Office Participants: Sharon Hayes, Rob Koethe, Andrea, Szylvain & Kan Tham.

1. **Agenda Outline:**

WPS Rule Implementation & C/T Rule Status Presentations and Discussions

State/Tribal Reports

Pollinator Protection Activities

Pentachlorophenol Treated Power Pole Report

Grant Guidance and Reporting Implementation Discussion

EPA Regional Office Updates

1. **WPS & C/T Rules:**

* Jeanne Kesai (EPA/OPP HQ) made a presentation via conference call to summarize provisions of the Final Ag Worker Protection Rule and discuss the implementation schedule.
* **Primary concerns for States:** 1) Current availability of WPS training materials (provided by EPA) to support schedule of pending winter/spring training meetings. States are asking for charts/fact sheets related to implementation and compliance schedules for both WPS & C/T Rules. 2) States are not seeing evidence of coordination/communication between EPA and AAPSE for WPS training efforts. 3) Are there EPA/OPP resources (to be) available for development of WPS category training manuals and databank of certification exam questions? 4) C/T Rule creates required revisions to State C/T Plans. States expressed major concern/uncertainty regarding schedule and/or mechanism for submitting revised plans to EPA and requirements for SLA Appointing Authority concurrence and Federal Register publication.

1. **State Report Highlights:**

* State reports focused on efforts to restore Pesticide Program staffing levels. Good progress has been made in Maine and New Hampshire. For Massachusetts, the Program Director position is still vacant and being covered by an acting director from among current staff. For Connecticut, prospects for replacing vacancies are dire because a hiring freeze has been re-instated due to forecasts for a significant budget deficit.

1. **Regional Pollinator Activities:**

* Pollinator Management Plan & Stakeholder Meetings; Maine, Massachusetts & New Hampshire each held statewide pollinator summits/forums as part of a state plan and stakeholder development strategy during 2015. Managed Pollinator Protection Plan (MP3) work will continue for 2016. Vermont is currently focused on stakeholder recruiting and coordinating with inter-agency planning for a statewide pollinator symposium in March, 2016. Region 1 states have agreed to exchange pollinator meeting agendas, questionnaires and evaluation results as resource materials for planning and improving future events.
* Neonicotinoid Legislative Activity; There is significant activity among the New England states by municipal and state governing bodies (legislatures, city councils, select boards, and citizen advocacy groups) to institute prohibitions and/or restrictions on the use of neonicotinoid insecticides. These initiatives characteristically occur outside the context of State Pollinator Plan and stakeholder development efforts. This dynamic requires state pesticide regulatory programs to respond and provide information and conduct education and outreach activities to multiple (and simultaneous) venues. States are having divided success at incorporating chemical specific (neonicotinoid) initiatives into the broader context of statewide pollinator protection/management planning. Several states report these supplemental activities are diverting program energy and resources from focused effort on stakeholder recruiting and MP3 development.
* Bee Kill Complaint/Investigation Status; Region 1 states report a distinct lack of bee kill complaints or investigation requests during 2015. For the few investigations conducted by Connecticut, there are no violations reported.

1. **Vermont Pentachlorophenol Treated Power Pole Report:**

* Vermont staff made presentation on, and distributed copies of, recent final draft of multi-agency report. Report was prepared in response to VT Public Service Board (PSB) regulatory docket. The PSB is state judicial/regulatory entity responsible for oversight of all energy production, distribution and permitting projects. The report characterizes the use of wooden power poles by VT utility companies, provides a review and discussion of the potential human and environmental health impacts of pentachlorophenol, includes a summary of the reported incidents of water quality sites (drinking water systems) impacted by pentachlorophenol treated power poles investigated and/or remediated by state agencies and the utilities in recent years and creates a list of recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the use and disposal of treated power poles by VT utility companies.

1. **Regional PIRT Priorities:**

* Regional PIRT scheduled for 2017 to be held in Maine.
* State inspection staff asking for more frequent one day, program/topic specific, training events. Inspectors and supervisors advocating for format that focuses on inspector peer group training presentations and communication opportunities. Next event tentatively scheduled for week of March 21, 2016.

**9)** **Next Meeting:** Scheduled for May 11, 2016 at NH Department of Agriculture, Concord, NH.