

Agriculture & Forestry Advisory Panel Meeting

Meeting Teleconference - WebEx

16 September 2020

1:00 pm

At a Glance

- The Advisory Panel's charge is to identify a range of emission reduction and sequestration recommendations that are consistent with available research and analysis, for our agriculture and forestry sectors that contribute to achieving the statewide emission limits.
- There is a short timeline to develop a workplan. Each sector's plan will be brought to the Climate Action Council for review and approval at their October meeting.
- Next meeting will be Oct 1st at 1pm
- Information regarding meetings and materials can be found on – www.Climate.ny.gov

Present

WebEx: (107 total attendees including panelists and agency staff)

Advisory Panel:

Commissioner Richard Ball, Chair AGM; Peter Innes, DEC; Michelle Brown, TNC; Samantha Levy, AFT; Robert Malmshemer, SUNY ESF; Peter Woodbury, Cornell University; Tom Gerow, Wagner Lumber Co.; Elizabeth Wolters, NYFB; John Bartow, Empire State Forest Products Assoc.; Stephanie Morningstar, Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust; John Noble, Noblehurst Farms; Amanda Barber, Cortland SWCD; Julie Suarez, Cornell University; Nelson Villarrubia, Trees NY; Suzanne Hunt, HuntGreen LLC/Hunt Country Vineyards; Rafael Aponte, Rocky Acres Community Farm; Ned Sullivan, Scenic Hudson; Peter Lehner, Earth Justice; Donna Wadsworth, International Paper.

Agency Staff:

David Valesky, Brian Steinmuller, (Presenter), Jennifer Clifford (meeting host), Lindsey McMahon, AGM; Maureen Leddy, (Presenter), Suzanne Hagell, Willow Eyres, Jeffrey Mapes, Jason Drobnack, Gregory Mumby, Mark Lowery, DEC; Stephanie Wojtowicz, Christopher Eastman, DOS; Ziggy Majumdar, NYSERDA; Giovanni Holmquist, ESD; Lewis Payne, NYPA.

Introductions

Commissioner Ball, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Panel Member Introductions: Panel Members

Each panelist provided a brief introduction including name, affiliation, and connection to agriculture and forestry.

NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) Overview

Maureen Leddy, Director, Office of Climate Change, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

GOAL: Gain common understanding of the requirements of the law and the timeline in which steps must be completed

- CLCPA sets goals for various percent reductions of greenhouse gases and carbon emissions based on 1990 levels across the entire economy
 - 40% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, from 1990 levels
 - 85% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050, from 1990 levels
 - 100% emission reduction – net zero emission by 2050
- Ag & Forestry Advisory Panel will develop a work plan that will inform the Climate Action Council (CAC) in developing a Scoping Plan of recommendations for achieving GHG limits
- The Advisory panel must present the CAC with its recommendations by March 2021. The CAC must produce a draft scoping plan for public comment by January 2021
- Law includes an emphasis on benefitting the workforce and disadvantaged/under-resourced communities through consultation with the Climate Justice and Just Transition working groups

Agriculture and Forestry Advisory Panel Charge and Workplan

Dave Valesky, Deputy Commissioner, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

GOAL: Identify the responsibilities of the panel

- Panel must develop a work plan with recommendations to meet reduction goals. A template will be provided to create this plan that ensures consistency of the level and detail of information provided across panels.
- Cross panel conversation is encouraged as these recommendations are developed (i.e. biofuels)
- Energy and Environmental Economics (E3) consulting firm will be available to assist with market research, technical support, and more as the feasibility potential recommendations are explored
- A working group comprising staff from contributing state agencies or authorities will be assisting. The Advisory Panel Handbook notes that it is the responsibility of the chair, Commissioner Ball, to make assignments to state agency staff.
- The panel is to meet monthly moving forward
- Must hold public forum before submitting final recommendations

State of Agriculture and Forestry Sectors

Brian Steinmuller, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Peter Innes, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

GOAL: Begin to understand the scope of the sectors, existing programs and ongoing work related to environmentally beneficial practices in the agriculture and forestry sectors

Advisory Panel Facilitated Discussion

GOAL: Provide thoughts and ask questions regarding information presented thus far and discuss potential next steps

- Important to start with broad ideas and then narrow by economic implications, timeline, and other specifications.
- Panel members can send ideas, research studies and other valuable resources to Deputy Commissioner David Valesky, and Brian Steinmuller, Assistant Director of the Division of Land and Water Resources, AGM to be sent out to all panel members. A SharePoint site will be set up for panelists to post and share information.
- Has there been an attempt to locate or compile catalog of existing efforts (state and federal) as it relates to compensating farmers for putting carbon back into the ground? To ensure recommendations put forward do not duplicate efforts, but rather that capacity is strengthened in the overall mission. (Suzanne Hunt)
 - Cornell is currently working with Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC).
- Are statutory changes allowable or are we limited to suggesting policy recommendations? (Peter Lehner)
 - Recommendations need to be sensitive to the reality of feasibility, time, and cost. Recommendations should be actionable that can readily translated into regulations. (Maureen Leddy)
- **Is there further analytical data on diverging carbon chart on forestry sector presentation? (John Bartow)**
 - Data set can be supplied to panelists. (Peter Innes)
- Accounting for carbon removals from substitution of wood products for steel, concrete, etc. will be examined considering the upstream and sequestration benefits.
- Overall carbon storage is rising in NY forests, but rate of sequestration is slowing. Are there analytics on that? Recommending how we can sequester more carbon in forests that we currently have will be key. (Tom Gerow)
 - NYS forests are growing in age meaning there are larger trees with a greater carbon stock, however, old trees sequester at a reduced rate, also land use change across the state has resulted in the decline of forestland overall. 3M acres of forest preserve in NYS adds to that carbon pool. It is important to keep in mind that regeneration does not necessarily mean long term sequestration as some trees experience short lives due to disease and other causes. (Peter Innes)
- Trees sequester a lot of carbon that is verifiable. Strategies should include utilizing trees in all spaces that are appropriate. (Peter Woodbury)
- Strategies for public lands and for private lands. Family owned vs. other ownership would help categories for recommendations. **Can we get the raw data numbers for forests including urban?** (Amanda Barber)
 - Yes. US Forest Service Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) data sources focus on forestland which minimizes urban environments, and more. Unsure of how robust urban data is but we can examine what is available. (Peter Innes)
- **Need detail on the NYS agricultural portfolio including number of farms per farm size (small, medium, large), range of income, etc.**
 - Additional detail on agricultural statistics can be provided including a snapshot of conservation efforts. (Brian Steinmuller)

- Throughout this recommendation process we need to discuss public and private sector partnerships. Providing economic incentives will be necessary to drive the change for farmers to implement practices (i.e. carbon markets). (Suzanne Hunt, Julie Suarez)
- There are cost-effective practices that sequester carbon now (i.e. cover crops) that can support near-term goals while developing longer term concepts. (Amanda Barber)
- Funding sources for recommendations was included in panel charge questions.
- Misconception that the farmer or the state are only sources of funding. Third-party financing helped scale renewables in the electricity sector aiding with upfront cost barriers. There are companies who have committed to carbon neutrality who will have to buy offsets. (Suzanne Hunt)
- This panel should consider what is achievable, what makes sense, what is a good future direction to go in, then determine cost and financing options. (Commissioner Ball)
- **Is there a template for the work plan or further guidance on type of recommendations to provide? Is there a rubric for policy evaluation that we can use to guide our recommendations?**
 - There will be a consistent template provided for developing recommendations so the CAC can compare the recommendations from each panel (Maureen Leddy).
- How many farms are practicing regenerative ag? How is regenerative ag defined?
 - This panel should determine the definition of regenerative ag practices (Stephanie Morningstar)
- Does the Methane Reduction Plan set benchmarks for the methane impact from livestock versus other sources or measured weather targets were met? (Julie Suarez)
 - That plan broadly states general strategies for reduction within different sectors rather than precise measurements of past levels versus present levels. (Brian Steinmuller)

Links and reference to studies mentioned by panelists:

- [New York Agriculture and Climate Change: Key Opportunities for Mitigation, Resilience, and Adaptation](#) (Carbon Farm Study), Peter Woodbury & Jenifer Wightman, Cornell University
- [GHG Associated with NYS Natural and Working Lands Forests, Farms, and Wetlands](#), NYSERDA
- AFT has a report coming out soon; Potential for Conservation Practices to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions on Croplands – NY (CARPE Tool) (Samantha Levy)

Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 1st with further details to come.

Meeting concluded at 3:53pm

Please contact Peter Innes, NYSDEC; Deputy Commissioner David Valesky (AGM) or Brian Steinmuller, Assistant Director of the Division of Land and Water Resources (AGM), if you have questions.

Peter Innes: peter.innes@dec.ny.gov

David Valesky: david.valesky@agriculture.ny.gov

Brian Steinmuller: brian.steinmuller@agriculture.ny.gov