Meeting Summary
Agricultural Preparation/Adaptation Working Group (PAWG)
November 14, 2007, 9AM – 11:00AM PDT

Participants

Kirk Cook, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture (Ag PAWG Lead)
Erik Hulburt, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture (non-member)
Debra Ann Inglis, Washington State University
Chad Kruger, Washington State University
Tom Myrum, WA Water Resources Association
Lisa Pelly, Washington River Conservancy
Craig Smith, MW Food Processors Association
Bill Snyder, Washington State University
Claudio Stöckle, Washington State University
Jeanne Wallin, Wallin & Associates

Summary

1. Welcome and roll call.

2. Members of the Ag PAWG have drafted and distributed strawman proposals describing strategies for each impact area. On the call, members discussed comments received and further refinements for each paper.

3. Comments about the Invasive Insects and Pathogens Strategy included the following:
    a. This strategy focuses on examining existing programs and expanding them or adapting them as potential templates. The overall implementation approach is to pursue innovative ideas that are cost effective and involve industry as much as possible. The strategy will be that much more successful if avenues can be created for growers to participate.
    b. Members suggested that, given funding challenges, a feasibility study of an existing program might be a good recommendation. Members noted that merging with and building upon existing programs makes sense from a resource perspective, and is consistent with the fact that agriculture has already been dealing with climate change. Jeb Owens suggested the animal disease diagnostic network WDDL as a potential model for providing a rapid response network for pests that affect animal health. Debra Ann Inglis suggested looking at the electronic interactive pest control system in Idaho as another potential model. This effort is currently focused primarily on vegetables, but there may be components that can be adapted to focus on monitoring and reporting of invasive species.
    c. Debra Ann Inglis will include information on additional plant pathogens and a description of potential impacts from an increasingly favorable environment for these pathogens from climate change.
    d. This strategy can also ameliorate threats to animal health from climate change impacts.
    e. Members suggested renaming the invasive species “czar” a “coordinator”.

4. The economics portion of the paper will establish the overall external environment and global framework within which Washington agriculture will be preparing and adapting to climate change, including shifts in global food demand and supply (e.g. the potential loss of Australia as a competitor). The economic section will consider how Washington might best respond to these global changes.

5. Comments from the Findings on Water Availability, Climate Change and Agriculture Strawman Proposal:
    a. Several recommendations from the Water PAWG overlap with issues the Agriculture PAWG is considering (e.g. water conservation and efficiency). The Agriculture PAWG will ensure that the focus for their water-related strategies is specific to agriculture.
    b. The narrative will be broadened to be as inclusive as possible; specific geographical areas will be discussed only if needed to highlight specific issues. The members recommended identifying fundamental principles that can be applied to each watershed.
    c. Members noted the importance of managing water in light of climate change impacts in Washington for all users. The paper should emphasize the importance of water availability for agriculture as an incredibly important use, but not to the detriment of others.
    d. Craig Smith will provide information on value-added processing that underscores the importance of agriculture for Washington's economy.
    e. Member suggested that conservation should be pursued first and aggressively as the highest priority, cheapest, and easiest way to find "new" water. Members suggested referencing Ecology's Referendum 38 conservation project, the Yakima Watershed Enhancement Program and the Natural Resources Conservation Service for examples of conservation programs.
    f. Members discussed that conservation alone will not be adequate to meet new needs. Storage is needed to address shifting precipitation patterns, and ensure adequate supplies for current and future uses. Members discussed that storage must be pursed, and pursued in ways that are environmentally correct. Members suggested recommending small distributed on-farm or cooperative projects. There is a need for additional information and research on small-storage options. Tom Myrum can supply information about several examples of successful small-scale water systems and technologies in use around the world.
    g. Crop management techniques are part of demand-side conservation and represent a unique opportunity for agriculture, as a large water user, to do its part to conserve water. While these techniques correlate to small-storage options and conservation, farm management techniques involve producers directly, while storage facility options involve other stakeholders and technologies, and so this strategy will be considered separately.
    h. The main crop management technique that will be highlighted for water conservation is no-till agriculture, which has a number of additional benefits, including carbon sequestration and erosion control. Research indicates that no-till agriculture could increase soil moisture by 10 percent. Claudio Stöckle has a model that demonstrates this potential.
    i. Kirk Cook will draft recommendations for the water availability strategy and ensure that the discussion leads to the recommendations.

6. The Agriculture PAWG noted that this paper is in effect a work plan for the future as agriculture continues to prepare and adapt to climate impacts, and the approach will continue to be refined as learning occurs over time, and additional research makes better information available.

7. The members will continue to refine the draft strategies, and review drafts and provide comments over email. Kirk Cook will follow up with members as needed to finalize the document.

8. The meeting concluded at 10:45 a.m.