

Sandhills SET Green Fields Initiative Progress Report

Names: _Paige Burns, Susan Kelly, Stephen Greer

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Short-term Actions

Please describe what actions you have taken, if any, to implement the strategies described below. Such actions may take the form of meetings or telephone conversations you have scheduled to further progress on the Green Fields Initiative, trainings you have attended, grant applications you are pursuing, etc.

Strategy 1.1: Provide farm business planning trainings to beginning farmers and forestry management plan assistance to landowners.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
Create a team to start a "beginning farmer" program	Held the Sandhills Farm School in Moore County beginning in February 2014; worked closely with Gary Bullen (NCSU); included more than 3 SET counties; in 2015 will be held in Richmond County.
Evaluate beginning farmer training modules	Sandhills Farm School just concluded (Oct 2014); evaluations indicate a need to do some separate trainings because the school only accommodates 30 people
Apply for grant funding to develop beginning farmer training program	Gary Bullen (NCSU) was awarded a grant for \$300k to further develop and promote the farm school curriculum around the state.
Develop and deliver beginning farmer program	Held the Sandhills Farm School in Moore County beginning in February 2014; worked closely with Gary Bullen (NCSU); included more than 3 SET counties; in 2015 will be held in Richmond County.
Develop strategies to recruit landowners of forest land and timber growers in coordination with the NC Forest Service.	Recent legislation reduced the amount of funding to the NC Forest Service. This has resulted in the Forest Service having to charge for forestry management plans, thus causing a decline in the number of requests for assistance. Paige Burns will talk with NRCS about grant funding for this.
Track Forest Service progress and training and assist as needed.	See above.
Other	NCSU has received a \$58K RBEG from USDA to create trainings for farmers to compliment the current Farm School curriculum. CultivateNC (NCCES CRD) has created presentations on "Creating a Culture of Food Safety", "Market Channels", and "Insurance Coverage," which are currently under review. As match for the RBEG, Becky Bowen of CultivateNC will provide weekly direction and support on the implementation of GFI strategies until such time as a permanent position is funded.

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Strategy 1.2: Provide continuing education to beginning and experienced farmers in marketing to improve profitability.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
Develop a job description for desired marketing position	Because of a need for sustained support of GFI, organizers are proposing that GFI incorporate as a nonprofit. Becky Bowen will assist in the development of the governance structure for GFI, as well as draft a job description for Executive Director for GFI who will support the creation of the food hub described in Strategy 2.2. Once the food hub is operating, it is likely that it will need a marketing manager.
Inquire at NCDA, NCSU, and NC A&T for a marketing specialist	This position is not currently available.
Apply for grant funding for marketing specialist for the region	Becky Bowen will follow up with Pat Corso (Moore Co Economic Director) and Marty Butler (Richmond Co Economic Director) to determine their progress on the development of the food hub.
Hold workshops on cooperative models	Will be developed as a separate training, along with the CultivateNC trainings described in Strategy 1.1.
Develop trainings on innovative marketing and production techniques	Becky Bowen and Noah Ranelles of NCA&TSU will coordinate curricula to avoid duplication of efforts on innovative marketing and production techniques – production techniques include high tunnels and other season extending techniques to create a new market.
Other	These additional trainings can be used by new and existing growers and will be held on a rolling basis. Possibly can be used at the “Farm School Reunion.”

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Strategy 1.3: Provide farmland transition planning and estate planning materials.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
Collaborate with Mount Olive University and Andrew Brannan to determine their plans on transition planning resources	Held a succession/transition planning event in March 2014 with Mount Olive University and Andrew Brannan. Becky Bowen will coordinate with Andrew Brannan to develop trainings for attorneys, accountants, and financial planners.
NCCE and SALT partner to develop farm succession materials	Representation from SET counties was not as good as organizers hoped. NCCE and SALT need to develop "intentional" marketing materials to broach the need to succession planning by area growers.
NCCE will identify at-risk properties and develop an outreach program with SALT	NCCE will approach NC Farm Bureau regarding their succession planning materials and coordinate the approach to at-risk properties.
SALT will distribute farm succession materials	It is hoped that the new GFI structure will encourage membership of growers. Becky Bowen will develop a membership structure that encourages participation by a variety of stakeholders in GFI.
Other	

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Strategy 1.4: Provide tools to connect available regional farmland to emerging farmers, including the creation of an interactive web site.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
SALT will research existing land referral services linking available farmland to emerging farmers, including rentals	Noah Ranelles of NCA&TSU has created NC Farm Link for this purpose. It is in the beta testing stage. Paige Burns and Susan Kelly have signed onto NC Farm Link. The intention is to link the GFI web site to NC Farm Link so that properties in the SET counties are intentionally included to preserve working lands.
Other	Becky Bowen will work with Noah Ranelles to ensure incorporation of SET counties in the NC Farm Link web site.

Strategy 1.5: Provide resources to agriculture lenders on the value of alternative agricultural enterprises.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
Contact Carolina Farm Credit to initiate conversation	Susan Kelly will contact Rebecca Wood about developing a program to help ag lenders work with farmers. Also ask if Carolina Farm Credit could be a sponsor of GFI, once GFI organizational structure is complete.
Contact Gary Bullen (NCSU) about interest in gathering feedback from ag lenders and developing resources	
Other	

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Strategy 1.6: Address barriers to value-added agriculture.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
CultivateNC will seek grant funding to provide capacity for gathering feedback and developing an action plan	NCCE County Directors will approach Chambers of Commerce in each SET county to host a Wine/Beer and Dine listening session to gather feedback on perceived barriers.
NCCE will gather feedback to develop a list of barriers to value-added agriculture	
Other	

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Strategy 2.1: Engage consumers in the conversation about local food and its value in terms of individual health, community well-being, and regional self-sufficiency.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
Contact CEFS for assistance in consumer education; identify other potential partners	Develop a bookmark or other marketing materials to promote consumption of local foods; consider promoting the Locavore app to restaurants and consumers.
Promote 10% campaign	
Work with chambers of commerce to market local foods consumption	<p>NCCE County Directors will work with Chambers of Commerce to promote restaurants serving locally-sourced foods.</p> <p>Chambers can commit to have a policy to source 10% of food served at their events and partner events from local growers.</p>
Other	GFI may ultimately act as a regional food policy council to advocate for public policies related to food.

Strategy 2.2: Create a regional food hub.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
Determine demand for locally grown products (Sandhills Farm to Table)	Feasibility study is complete with favorable recommendations.
Determine status of food hub feasibility study initiated by Partners in Progress	NCCE and other stakeholders should work with Moore and Richmond County managers in securing grant funding for the establishment of a food hub in Richmond County.
Other	

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Strategy 2.3: Identify high value alternative crops that lead to environmentally-friendly other value-added opportunities. Provide options and information to producers on diversification and “income patching.”	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
SALT and NCCE will research availability of resources for ag products and for non-traditional uses of ag and timber land	
Determine best delivery method of information to land owners	Becky Bowen will develop a bi-monthly newsletter to contact SET county growers on GFI progress and high value alternative crops, diversification and income patching.
NCCE will work with Partners in Progress on developing wood waste materials for plant	Enviva is a pelleting plant destined for a facility in Richmond County. Paige Burns will talk to Brad Allen of the NC Forest Service about how landowners can advantage of this new market.
Other	

Strategy 3.1: Hold an annual educational event to introduce the newest thinking on models of sustainable agriculture and best practices in community development.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
SALT will work with PIP and NCCE to identify potential partners and sponsors	USDA RBEG has \$5K in seed funding for this event. Becky Bowen will seek an extension of the grant funding so that the event can be held in the Fall of 2015.
Hold planning meeting for summit	
Research grant funding and sponsorships for summit	USDA RBEG secured.
Other	

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Strategy 3.2: Provide tools for agriculture groups to enable them to promote agriculture and timber industries at local events, schools, etc.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
NCCE will collaborate with Farm Bureau and Ag Advisory Boards on research data to support talking points	Becky Bowen will coordinate with Noah Ranelles to see if ag infographic is being prepared for GFI counties.
Craft talking points	Becky Bowen will prepare a powerpoint presentation on GFI to use for public presentations to ag groups and government
Identify advocates in county government	
Other	

Strategy 3.3: Adopt an "Agriculture Literacy" curriculum into schools and youth programs and promote regionally.	
Action Steps	Actions Taken
NCCE will collaborate with Farm Bureau, SCC, and Soil and Water Districts on how to involve school stakeholders in discussion of ag literacy program	<p>Kathy Byron of Sandhills Community College is trying to get Ag Literacy programming into the schools.</p> <p>Susan Kelly proposes an ag literacy round table discussion in Richmond County that will engage K-CC.</p> <p>Stephen Greer will support Moore County Farm Bureau on ways to get ag literacy in the county school system.</p>
Other	