

Enhancing Collaboration Among Agencies Providing Cost-share Funding to Agricultural Producers in Jackson County, Florida



Kathleen Coates & Mike McMunigal

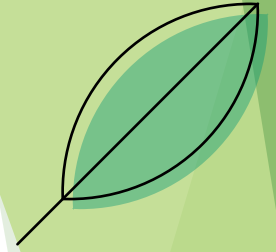
April 25, 2025

NRLI Practicum, Class XXIV (second best class ever)



Issue Summary

- ▶ *To restore Jackson Blue Spring, multiple agencies provide cost-share funding to incentivize agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) that reduce nitrogen application and water use.*
- ▶ *Funding programs vary widely among agencies, but with areas of overlap. Through enhanced collaboration, these agencies could share information and experience, potentially leading to more effective program implementation and improved restoration outcomes.*



Relevant Parties

Florida Department
of Agriculture and
Consumer Services
(FDACS)

Florida Department
of Environmental
Protection
(FDEP)

Jackson County Soil
& Water
Conservation District
(JCSWCD)

Natural Resources
Conservation Service
(NRCS)

Northwest Florida
Water Management
District (NFWMD)

Workshop Goals & Strategies:

Goal: Share Information, Improve Communication, and Build Relationships

Strategies:

- ▶ Design a process agenda that encourages participation from all attendees
- ▶ Include “small group” interactive activities
- ▶ Provide breaks and refreshments
- ▶ Anticipate the process & responses
- ▶ Be prepared to adapt!



Techniques

- Situation Assessment Matrix
- Process Agenda
 - *Identify and understand the issue*
 - *Consider relevant parties*
 - *Include others in planning*
 - *Identify best techniques*
 - *Iterate and adapt*
- Room Set-up (U-shaped seating; space for activities)



SITUATION ASSESSMENT MATRIX: Cost-Sharing Programs for Agricultural Producers Within the Chipola River Springs and Jackson Blue Spring Groundwater Contributing Area – Navigating Differing Programs

Summary of Conflict or Partnership: How can the relevant agencies collaborate to more effectively communicate cost-sharing programs to agricultural producers? Can we better utilize social media, webinars, conferences, organization meetings, IFAS events, etc. to enhance communication and increase participation? Is there confusion among agricultural producers about the various cost-share programs, differing eligibility requirements, schedules, and funding limits?

RELEVANT PEOPLE, GROUPS AND ENTITIES	POSITIONS	INTERESTS	DATA / STRUCTURAL	RELATIONSHIPS	VALUES AND/OR IDENTITY
Who? Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) – Implements cost-share program with funding from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)	What? FDEP & NFWFMD Agricultural Cost-share Program: to reduce nitrogen and water use in Jackson Blue Spring and Chipola River basins.	Why? NFWFMD & FDEP interests: to achieve the nitrogen total maximum daily load (TMDL) specified within the Basin Management Action Plan for Jackson Blue Spring and Merritts Mill Pond system.	There is some overlap in eligible equipment and agricultural practices across the three cost-share funding programs.	NFWFMD receives funding from FDEP for program implementation. Similarly Jackson County SWCD receives funding from FDACS for program implementation.	NFWFMD places a high value on relationships, integrity and customer service.
Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) implements the Florida Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services (FDACS) Agricultural Cost Share Program within Jackson County.	FDACS BMP Cost-share Program (administered by Jackson County SWCD): to assist agricultural community in implementing BMPs that reduce nitrogen and water use. (Also have funding for disaster response.)	FDACS – to support the Basin Management Action Plan listed above.	There are also many differences: (1) eligible equipment and practices, (2) geographic areas, (3) eligibility requirements, (4) level of funding and percent match, (5) application process, (6) funding cycle and timing of awards, and other factors.	NFWFMD & FDACS staff coordinate to confirm Notice of Intent (NOI) and BMP enrollment to confirm producer eligibility for funding. They also coordinate to ensure total funding provided to a producer does not exceed 100 percent.	FDACS – advocates for agriculture
	NRCS: programs provide technical and financial assistance for	Jackson Co. SWCD – to assist landowners with agricultural issues		Recent challenge: NFWFMD requires each producer to have a unique	Jackson County SWCD – advocates for the community and for natural resources
					NRCS – is also service-based for agriculture.

Participation Techniques

- ▶ Icebreaker
- ▶ Go-round
- ▶ Small Group Activity
- ▶ Debrief Activity
- ▶ Breaks / Snacks
- ▶ Post-workshop Evaluations



Participation Techniques

► Ice Breaker

"What is your favorite cartoon or fictional character or comic strip?"





Go-rounds by agency facilitated sharing information about the cost-share programs

A photograph of four people in a meeting. On the left, a man in a plaid shirt stands with his hands in his pockets. Next to him is a woman with blonde hair wearing a pink cardigan over a patterned top, holding a document. In the center, a man in a blue and black jacket over a blue striped polo shirt stands with his hands on his hips. On the right, a man in a light green polo shirt and a grey baseball cap is looking at the man in the center. They are in a room with large windows in the background.





Debrief activity identified common ground among workshop participants

3. Which workshop components worked well and what could be improved?

The breakout session



5. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?

*10/10 snacks.
Well done.*

3. Which workshop components worked well and what could be improved?

*Well-organized, discussion was engaging,
love a sticky note activity 😊*

5. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?

Great implementation of NRLI skills.

Anonymous evaluations provided feedback and insight regarding NRLI techniques

Outcomes

- ▶ Met primary goals
- ▶ Feedback questionnaire
- ▶ Interest expressed for future collaboration meetings

PROGRAM SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES		
NWFWMD/DEP	FDACS/JCSWCD	NRCS
Equipment	Cost-share rate range of 75-90% based on level of commitment from cooperator	
Irrigation C/S on retrofitting irrigation equip only	C/S on retrofitting irrigation equip only	C/S on new irrigation equip only
Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)	Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)	Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)
	Regional/large scale projects to address BMAPs (requires infrastructure typically)	
Cover crops 300 ac cap Contract applies to current year	No cover crop c/s – might revisit again in the future	Cover crops \$450,000 cap Contract applies to following year (ie – lengthy process)
Application periods and deadlines are different between all 3 programs or have rolling application periods.		
5-year contracts	3-year contracts	
	Developing online application process and denial letters	
Funding contingent on eligibility criteria only (ie – no ranking process)	Funding contingent on eligibility criteria only (ie – no ranking process)	Funding contingent on eligibility & ranking criteria
Funding cap is based on specific funding source	Funding Caps \$150,000/farming entity	\$450,000/farming entity for EQIP \$250,000/farming entity for CSP

4. What type of future coordination/collaboration activities would be beneficial to you (e.g. in-person or virtual meetings of this group, collaborate through IFAS working groups, other)?

More workshops and collaborative efforts,

Agricultural Cost-share Funding Agency Workshop

Feedback Questionnaire

1. Was this workshop helpful for you?

Very helpful

2. Did you learn anything new?

Yes - some about NRCS

3. Which workshop components worked well and what could be improved?

All - this was greatly needed

2. Did you learn anything new?

yes, I learned a lot about the differences between the agencies.

3. Which workshop components worked well and what could be improved?

Really enjoyed breaking out into groups and having a more individual conversation with the agencies and getting to know everyone better.

4. What type of future coordination/collaboration activities would be beneficial to you (e.g. in-person or virtual meetings of this group, collaborate through IFAS working groups, other)?

more in-person meetings if possible, it's nice to network and be able to have more interaction and face time with everyone and hear different struggles & recent developments.

Lessons Learned

- ▶ It's good to have some NRLI "ringers" in the group
- ▶ Breaks and snacks provided great networking opportunities

Michael Felton	NALIS
Lauren Campbell	FDEP
Maddy Hara	FDACS
Chris Denmark	FDACS
Sarah Ketron	FDEP
Jessica Ferris	FDACS
Jerrick Sagubal	NWFWMD
Clewa Kuchar	FDEP
Zach Easton	FDEP
	NALIS

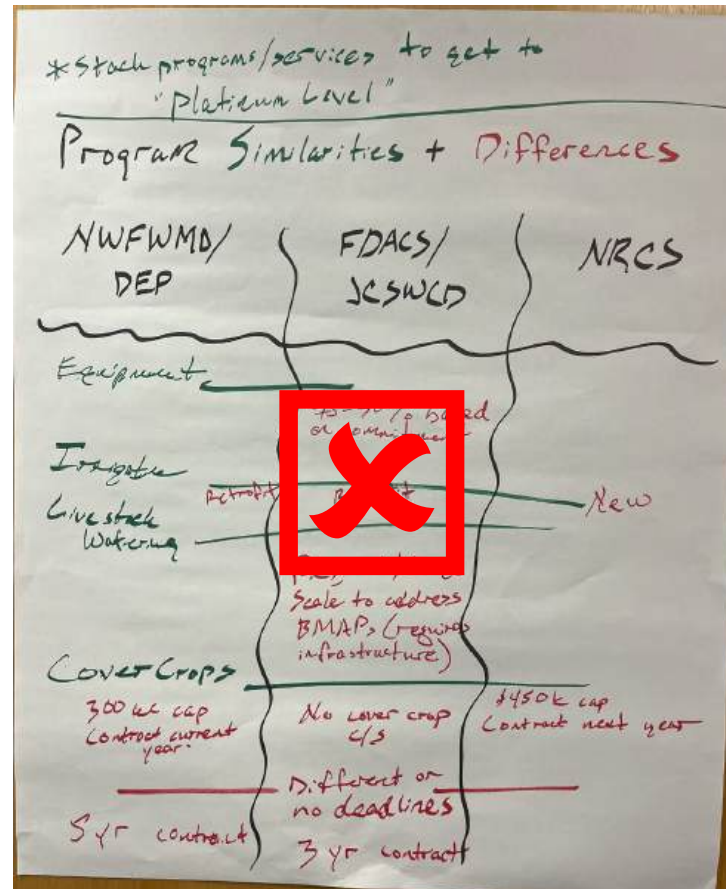


NRLI alum
naturally
leading sticky
note exercise!!!



Lessons Learned

- ▶ Mike should not be in charge of recording on the flip chart
- ▶ Kathleen should not be in charge of photos
- ▶ NRRI works....it really works!
- ▶ Time flies when you're having fun



PROGRAM SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES		
NWFWMD/DEP	FDACS/JCSWCD	NRCS
Equipment	Cost-share rate range of 75-90% based on level of commitment from cooperator	
Irrigation C/S on retrofitting irrigation equip only	C/S on retrofitting irrigation equip only	C/S on new irrigation equip only
Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)	Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)	Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)
	Regional/large scale projects to address BMAPs (requires infrastructure investments)	
Cover crops 300 ac cap Contract applies to current year	No cover crop c/s - might revise again in the future	Cover crops \$450,000 cap Contract applies to following year (ie - lengthy process)
Application periods and deadlines are different between all programs or have rolling application periods.		
5-year contracts	3-year contracts	
	Developing online application process and denial letters	
Funding contingent on eligibility criteria only (ie - no ranking process)	Funding contingent on eligibility criteria only (ie - no ranking process)	Funding contingent on eligibility & ranking criteria
Funding cap is based on specific funding source	Funding Caps	\$450,000/farming entity for EQIP \$250,000/farming entity for CSP

Lessons Learned

- ▶ Be prepared to adapt
- ▶ Plan for extra folks showing up
- ▶ Feedback questionnaire closed the loop
- ▶ Small group exercise and participation



Next Steps

- ▶ Workshop follow-up
- ▶ Follow-up meetings
 - ▶ May or June 2025 meeting with producers
 - ▶ Expanded Agency meetings with IFAS, FFB, others

Meeting Summary
Agricultural Cost-Sharing Programs in Jackson County
Funding Agency Workshop
March 27, 2025, 10 a.m. ET

NWFWMD Office
81 Water Management Drive
Havana, FL 32333

Attendees:

Name	Organization	Contact Email
John D. Baggett	FDACS	John.baggett@fdacs.gov
Michael Felton	NRCS	Michael.felton@usda.gov
Lauren Campbell	FDEP	Lauren.campbell@floridadep.gov
Maddy Hart	FDACS	Madeline.hart@fdacs.gov
Chris Denmark	FDACS	Christopher.denmark@fdacs.gov
Sarah Ketron	FDEP	Sarah.ketron@floridadep.gov
Jessica Ferris	FDACS	Jessica.ferris@fdacs.gov
Jerrick Saquibal	NWFWMD	Jerrick.saquibal@nwfwmd.com
Cierra Kuchar	FDEP	Cierra.kuchar@floridadep.gov
Zach Easton	FDEP	Zachary.easton@floridadep.gov
Nathan Jagoda	FDEP	Nathan.jagoda@floridadep.gov
Gary Chew	NWFWMD	Gary.chew@nwfwmd.com
Case Pilcher	NWFWMD	Case.pilcher@nwfwmd.com
Michael Barr	FDEP	Michael.barr@floridadep.gov
Kathleen Coates	NWFWMD	Kathleen.coates@nwfwmd.com
Mike McMunigal	SJRWMD	mjmcmuni@sjrwmd.com

Notes:

Sharing Programmatic Information

- The workshop began with a go-round to each of the agencies to share a high-level overview of their individual agriculture cost-share programs.
- The overviews were accompanied by printed information sheets and program summaries provided to participants by the respective agencies. Program summaries were shared by NRCS, NWFWMD/FDEP, and FDACS staff.

Identifying Funding Program Similarities and Differences

- Participants identified similarities and differences among the three cost-share funding programs.
- In general, all three programs offer cost-share assistance for equipment and practices that conserve soil and improve soil health, protect water quality, improve nutrient management, and enhance grazing management practices.

PROGRAM SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES		
NWFWMD/DEP	FDACS/JCSWCD	NRCS
Equipment	Cost-share rate range of 75-90% based on level of commitment from cooperator	
Irrigation C/S on retrofitting irrigation equip only	C/S on retrofitting irrigation equip only	C/S on new irrigation equip only
Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)	Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)	Alternative water for livestock (troughs, pipeline, etc.)
	Regional/large scale projects to address BMAPs (requires infrastructure typically)	
Cover crops 300 ac cap Contract applies to current year	No cover crop c/s – might revisit again in the future	Cover crops \$450,000 cap Contract applies to following year (ie – lengthy process)
Application periods and deadlines are different between all 3 programs or have rolling application periods.		
5-year contracts	3-year contracts	
	Developing online application process and denial letters	
Funding contingent on eligibility criteria only (ie – no ranking process)	Funding contingent on eligibility criteria only (ie – no ranking process)	Funding contingent on eligibility & ranking criteria
Funding cap is based on specific funding source	Funding Caps \$150,000/farming entity	\$450,000/farming entity for EQIP \$250,000/farming entity for CSP

Questions?

Kathleen Coates
Director, Resource Management Division
Northwest Florida Water Management District
&

Mike McMunigal
Strategic Planning Basin Coordinator
St. Johns River Water Management District

NRLI Class XXIV (Again, second best class ever.)

