

State Technical Committee Meeting
667 Federal Building
February 17, 2005
1:00 p.m.
Des Moines, Iowa

MINUTES

Present: Rick Van Klaveren, Chair; Lyle Asell, John Walkoviak for Mike Brandrup, and Ubbo Akena, DNR; Rick Robinson and Doug Gronau, Farm Bureau; Tim Recker and Dan Brutche, Corn Growers; Susan Heathcote, IEC; Doug Lindgren, Soybean Association; Dan Brown, RD; Kelly Tobin, Producer; Merlin Plagge, FSA; Lee Faris, Producer; Norman Schmitt, Pork Producers; Dave Petty, Cattlemen's Association; Jerry Miller, ISUE; Ken Tow, DSC; Brad Riphagen for Shannon Ramsey, Trees Forever; Dave Van Waus for Jim Wooley, Pheasants Forever; John Sellers, Jr., SSCC; Butch Neumeyer and Deb Ryun, CDI; Matt Hare, Nature Conservancy; Brad Parks for Jim Sands, NASS; Russ Brandes, Producer; Linda Kinman, Iowa Water Agencies Association; Amy Miller, Producer; Inger Lamb, Iowa Prairie Network; Duane Sand for Mark Ackelson, INHF; and John Byrd, Iowa Tree Farm Committee. Others not members: Madeline Meyer, SSCC; Roger Wolfe and Tracy Blackburn, Soybean Association; Mike Musel, FSA, John Moreland, Senator Tom Harkin's Office; Bruce Barnhart, LICA; Kevin Reynolds, Roger Link, Larry Beeler, Mike Sucik, Rick Bednarek, Mark Jensen, Jim Ayen, Barb Stewart, Marty Adkins, Kim Broders, and Shelly DuBay, NRCS.

Welcome Comments – Rick Van Klaveren

Rick welcomed everyone to the meeting. He announced that Dennis Pate retired and Mike Sucik is on a detail to Acting Assistant State Conservationist-Technology until the position is filled. The job announcement will be open until March 7, 2005. Rick thanked Mike for doing an excellent job in the interim.

Rick shared information about the 2005 budget. There was a reduction in EQIP of \$1.4 million in financial assistance (FA) and \$1.7 million in technical assistance (TA). This year will have \$19.6 million for FA in EQIP. This will have an impact on the technical assistance. Rick shared more details with the group on what could occur. The State Technical Committee had made a recommendation to take \$7 million from the \$19.6 million of the EQIP funds for animal waste systems, this was done. To date, we have 67 applications for animal waste systems. With these applications we have obligated close to \$5 million. We also added special projects to the \$7 million. We should be able to fund all the animal waste systems applications, but not sure if there will be assistance in the design and installation of the systems.

The NRCS nationwide was cut \$23 million in Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) – the fund that helps provide for basic agency operations and assistance to soil and water conservation districts. In Iowa \$1.7 million was cut. In the 2006 budget, the President recommends to put back in the \$23 million plus adds \$14.2 million in CTA.

Rick provided additional information on other programs on proposed budget issues. There was some discussion with the group.

CRP Sub-Committee Update – Kelly Tobin

Kelly shared that the goal for this sub-committee is to make recommendations on the land coming out of the CRP in 2007. Some possibilities would be for these acres to go into grazing, haying, or hunting. Kelly stated there is no other additional information to add at this time but shared that they have met with Congressman King and presented this issue to him and his staff along with 17 other calf/cattlemen producers in the New Market area. This was a good meeting and they were very receptive to this approach and glad that someone was working on an option. Kelly stated they have been contacting landowners asking what their intentions were when their land comes out of CRP. Results of the 55 calls in southern/southeastern parts of Iowa were that most had not thought about it and were hoping it would go back into CRP; half were glad to hear about another option but needed time to think about it. Kelly will follow up with them in 30 days. Kelly provided additional information on other meetings they are holding. He will provide more information at the next meeting on the results of these other meetings/contacts. There was some discussion from the group. Kelly stated that there was a group going to Washington, D.C. in April to discuss this general issue with individuals on the hill.

Conservation Partnership Initiative (CPI) Sub-Committee Update – Lyle Asell

The CPI stems from the Partnership and Cooperation provision of the 2002 Farm Bill. The CPI is targeted at planning in watersheds and was budgeted at \$1 million nationally. There were two applications in Iowa last year. One didn't meet the guidelines intended for the program and other was not quite adequate so they were not forwarded on to see if they could be funded. They do have three or four applications this year that the sub-committee will be reviewing and will make a recommendation to approve and forward on for funding or not approve. This will need to be done by March 17, 2005. The sub-committee consists of Lyle Asell, Chair, John Sellers, Deb Ryun, Doug Lindgren, Susan Heathcote, Duane Sand, John Walkoviak, and Rick Robinson.

CSP Update – Mike Sucik

Mike stated that five watersheds were selected for the 2005 CSP. They are the North Raccoon River, Upper Wapsipinicon River, Turkey River, Root River, and Platte River. The Upper Wapsipinicon and Turkey Rivers will be treated as one watershed since they are adjacent to each other in northeast Iowa. The Platte River will be lead by Missouri and the Root River will be lead by Minnesota. Mike provided a handout of the key points for 2005 CSP and a map showing the counties that will be involved in each watershed. Mike went over the document in detail. There was some discussion from the group. NRCS will place the dates/places of the upcoming CSP workshops on our website.

EQIP Update – Larry Beeler

Larry provided a handout on the public listening sessions being held on March 9 in Carroll and March 10 in Hiawatha. The purpose of these sessions is to receive input from the public and stakeholders on the national EQIP priorities as they are published in the rules. The four priorities are listed on the handout. These comments will be forward to National Headquarters for their consideration. There was some discussion from the group.

Larry provided another handout on the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) which is part of the EQIP rules. In 2004 there was a national program. In 2005 we are going to have a state component, which will be administered at the state level. Larry went over the document in detail. Iowa is one of 12 test states for this component.

Deb Ryun shared that the EQIP sub-committee met this morning with the following individuals: Paul Taulke, Mike Musel, Norman Schmitt, Russ Brandes, Lyle Asell, Dave Petty, Doug Lindgren, Susan Heathcote, Brad Riphagen, Butch Nuemeyer, Jim Gillespie, Larry Beeler, and Jerry Miller. There was a discussion on the five resource concerns with a consensus that all five will stay but the highest priority would have an impact on multiple resources. The sub-committee also reached consensus about keeping flexibility on all five resources to choose from. This sub-committee will establish the ranking criteria for the CIG. There will be a review committee established today to look at the ranking criteria and this would be sent out with the applications so the individuals will know what they are being rated on. There was a concurrence from the entire State Technical Committee for the four recommendations list above.

Deb Ryun will chair the sub-committee that will review the CIG proposals. She will contact each of the EQIP sub-committee for volunteers to serve on this other sub-committee. Only five or six individuals are needed on this side sub-committee not the entire EQIP sub-committee. Larry stated the timeline would be the requests for proposals being published around April 1 with a 60 day response time. The beginning of June the sub-committee of the sub-committee will need to get together to review the proposals.

Rick shared he was very disappointed that Iowa did not receive any additional funding for EQIP. He talked to Tom Christensen, Deputy Chief for Programs, NHQ, and asked why Iowa was not on the list to receive additional funding. Tom stated that there were 10 prioritizations of how they prioritized states to receive funds. There were 17 states that received between \$1.4 million and \$900,000. There was a discussion from the group.

Mark Jensen stated there are four methods how a producer can get an animal waste systems designed.

- They can ask if NRCS is available (100% government paid).
- They can hire a consultant on their own (100% producer paid).
- They can go thru NRCS and receive assistance through a formal A&E contracts (100% government paid) – there are three/four consultants that providing assistance to 50 projects.
- They can hire a consultant from the TSP list (NTE rate – government pays up to the NTE rate).

TSP assistance can be included as an item in an individual EQIP contract and be reimbursed for the cost of engineering assistance up to a Not To Exceed (NTE) rate. This option has not been used for animal waste systems. There is a big workload with 66 CAFOs being approved. Mark provided an overview on a concept of making a change to the NTE for these practices. Mark went over in detail the formula and cost for the practices. It is not our intent to pay for the entire cost of the design and installation; the producer will have to pay for a portion. We will have to do individual exceptions if the producer would like to go in this direction. It is our intention to quit doing the formal contracting. The cost has been higher than we should be paying. There was a discussion from the group.

Iowa Soybean Association Update on CIG Project – Roger Wolf

Doug Lindgren announced that this will be the last State Technical Committee Meeting that he will be attending. Doug has been a part of this group for nine years, since the beginning of the Iowa State Technical Committee. He shared that it has been a great pleasure serving with and for you from the Iowa Soybeans perspective. From the personal stand point, he has gotten to know several individuals and become friends and is thankful for that. He has purchased land near Nemo, South Dakota (Black Hills) and will be moving there in April. They will be starting a campground this summer and invited everyone to come to visit. Doug also stated this is a great organization and function; it's been very valuable to the state of Iowa, farmers, and the environment.

Doug provided the background on how the Iowa Soybean Association received the CIG funding.

Tracy Blackburn, Director of Research, shared a power point presentation with the group. The Iowa Soybean Association received \$1 million grant for their CIG proposal. He went over the research they have done with the funds they received in detail. This includes replicated strip trials, fall stalk sampling, and side dress nitrogen application.

Roger Wolfe provided a copy of a current draft dated 12/17/04 Example Nutrient Management Intensity Options for 2005. Roger went over the document detail with the group. This document has been developed with the assistance of NRCS State Office and has been provided to the field offices as an option for an EQIP practice. Some offices are using this option. Roger stated that last week they had their annual conference in Ames with 250 participants attended. Roger provided a handout titled "Summary of Posters at the Iowa Soybean Association On-Farm Network TM Nitrogen Conference, Ames, Iowa, February 8, 2005." There was some discussion from the group.

WRP/WHIP/FRPP Update – Marty Adkins

Marty provided a brief update on the WRP – we are in the process of allocating/selecting applications. Iowa received \$11.65 million in FY2005. This is down from \$3.35 million in FY2004. We held \$1 million back for floodplain easements/riverine wetlands as we did last year per the recommendation from the State Technical Committee. Marty provided details to the group. We also held \$1 million for the supersheds as was done last year per the State Technical Committee recommendation.

Marty provided a handout on the distribution of the 2005 WHIP funds. He provided more details on the document. There was some discussion from the group.

Marty then updated the group on the Farmland Ranchland Protection Program. The request for proposals has been published in the Federal Register with the due date to the State Office by April 5, 2005. The issue with this program is being able to find a project where the non-federal match can be obtained. Iowa has approximately \$970,000 available in the FRPP. Last year we only use approximately \$230,000. Marty provided more details to the group on possible applications that are being developed.

GRP Update – John Sellers

John provided three handouts that included: 1) GRP Sub-Committee Recommendations for 2005 for \$1,422,579; 2) 2005 GRP Ranking Worksheet; and 3) Summary for Iowa 2003 & 2004 GRP. John thanked the member of the sub-committee for all their hard work. The biggest issue was easements. John stated the sub-committee recommended using 20 percent of the initial allocation for easements and adding a cost effectiveness ranking to the Ranking Form. John provided details to the group. John also stated that he would like to have a few more members added to the sub-committee from the agricultural oriented individual to balance it out. There was some discussion from the group. There was a consensus on the recommendations from the entire State Technical Committee members.

Supersheds/Special Projects Sub-Committee – Ken Tow

Ken stated that Lyle Asell has a brochure that he wanted to share with the group titled “Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund.” There are a limited number of the copies but feel free to take one if you wish. Ken gave brief background on the brochure. There was some discussion from the group.

Ken shared that the last time the sub-committee met was last May-July 2004. Rick and Marty asked the sub-committee to meet again soon to look at ranking project proposals. The sub-committee consists of: Ken Tow and Jim Gillespie, Co-Chair; Lyle Asell, Deb Ryun, Dave DeGeus, Ubbo Agena, Doug Lindgren, Susan Heathcote, Dave Petty, John Sellers, Linda Kinman, Duane Sand, Roger Link, and Marty Adkins. Rick stated that NRCS would need to allocate the funds prior to the next meeting so if someone is interested in being a part of this sub-committee be sure to contact Ken. The sub-committee will be meeting and report back to the group at the next meeting.

Standards and Specifications – Jim Ayen/Mark Jensen

Jim provided a pocket folder with copies of the following standards and specifications: Feed Management Standard (592), Conservation Crop Rotation (328), Contour Buffer Strip (332), Contour Farming (330), Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643), Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (395), and Waste Storage Facility (313).

Jim provided background why NRCS has standards and specifications relating to conservation practices. Jim shared that the Feed Management Standard is a national standard that is being sent to the states to see if they want to accept the standard as is or to adjust it specifically to fit each state’s needs. This is a draft copy and would like to set up a sub-committee to look into this standard as done before with the Nutrient Management Standard. Notify Jim Ayen if you are interested in serving on this sub-committee to help develop an Iowa Feed Management Standard. There was some discussion from the group.

Jim provided details on the standards and specifications with the changes regarding RUSLE2 additions, etc. Provide Jim comments within two weeks. After that time, they will be finalized and set to the field office for use.

Mark Jensen stated there were some additions made to the Waste Storage Facility because the items per quantity were included in EQIP contracts. This needed to have the criteria included in the standard. Mark provided details of the changes, including roofs over open feedlots, stacking facilities, alternative technology, etc.

Prescribed Burn Policy – Jim Ayen

Jim stated that in folder with the standards and specifications, there was also a copy a draft version of the General Manual issuance for the Prescribed Burn Policy. Jim stated that at the Department and agency levels there is concern due to the wild fires that have been occurring. The NRCS National Office provided some policies and we are looking into making this fit into Iowa's policy. Safety is the number one issue, for employees and the public. NRCS has provided training to 179 employees including area resource conservationists, district conservationists, and soil conservationists through a basic 16 hour class. We are now planning for phase 2 training. Jim provided details to the group. There was some discussion.

Rick stated that this meeting room (667) would no longer be available. NRCS will be adding cubicles and employees that will be working on contracts/payments for EQIP and CSP.

Jerry Miller shared there will be a conference held July 6-8, 2005, that will be focusing on the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill. More information will be provided at a later date.

The next State Technical Committee Meeting will be held on April 14, 2005, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 779 Federal Building.