

State Technical Committee Meeting  
577 Federal Building  
July 21, 2005  
1:00 p.m.  
Des Moines, Iowa

## MINUTES

Present: Rick Van Klaveren, Chair; Butch Neumeyer and Deb Ryun, Conservation Districts of Iowa; Rick Robinson, Farm Bureau; Dan Brutche, Iowa Corn Growers; Jerry Miller, Iowa State University Extension; Susan Heathcote, Iowa Environmental Council; Kelly Tobin, Producer; Derryl McLaren and Merlin Plagge, Farm Service Agency; Dave Petty, Iowa Cattlemen's Association; Ken Tow, IDALS - Division of Soil Conservation; Dave Van Waus for Jim Wooley, Pheasants Forever; Mark Ackelson, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation; Lyle Asell, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Brad Riphagen for Shannon Ramsey, Trees Forever; Leslee Spraggins, Nature Conservancy; Jim Sands, National Agriculture Statistics Service; and Inger Lamb, Iowa Prairie Network. Others not members: Jim Gillespie, IDALS – Division of Soil Conservation; Duane Sand, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation; Mike Sexton, Soy Graphics Enterprises; Bob Oakley, Iowa Environmental Council; Larry Beeler, Marty Adkins, Tom O'Connor, Paul Sweeney, Jim Ayen, Steve Brinkman, and Shelly DuBay, NRCS.

### Welcome Comments – Rick Van Klaveren

Rick introduced Paul Sweeney, Assistant State Conservationist – Operations, for NRCS. We are also adding a third Assistant State Conservationist – Programs. The vacancy will be out within a few weeks. Roy Campbell will be the Program Manager for CRP in the NRCS State Office.

Rick also shared that Iowa is number one in the nation with the number of contracts for the 2005 Conservation Security Program. The budget for CSP was \$2.3 million due to the number of contracts.

Jerry Miller stated that the work that NRCS provided on CSP was commendable with all the issues that had to be taken care of with great appreciation – the entire group gave applause NRCS as a whole.

NRCS requested an additional \$1 million for EQIP but were not able to get it.

Rick stated that as the agency as a whole, the budget is going to be tighter next year.

### Easement Programs/WRP/WREP Update – Marty Adkins

Marty Adkins stated he attended a conference in Washington, D.C. this week and provided information to the group on the results. This conference was relating to all the Farm Bill Programs that involves easements. There are several changes that affect the way that the programs are administered. Dave Brommel is the Easements Program Coordinator in NRCS. Marty provided more information on the Easement Program Team.

Marty provided background information that related to an audit that was conducted a year ago by the USDA-Office of Inspector General (OIG). They were looking how the easements were being purchased by USDA and NRCS across the county. There is a set of regulations that are managed by the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT). They buy more easements than any other federal government agency. Due to this, they were delegated the responsibility to keep the easement acquisition policy up to date for the entire federal government. There is an additional step on the appraisal with a technical review. The easement amount will be changed due to the entire farm that is owned or a partial ownership in being appraised, not just the piece of property they want to apply to the specific government program. The residual values post restoration will be accounted for in the appraisal process. Marty shared a power point presentation with the group that had detailed information.

The decision to reconvene the WRP Sub-Committee was made to address out of order easement requests; how funds are being distributed; and other adjustments that need to be addressed.

WRP Sub-Committee consists of the following:

Derryl McLaren, Chair	Richard Todd
Dave DeGues or Leslie Spraggins	Marty Adkins

A Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) proposal was coordinated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and the Nature Conservancy.

Lyle Asell provided details of the WREP proposal. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) coordinated the proposal but the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) and the Nature Conservancy were involved as well. The proposal is addressing two areas of the state. It is called the Big Rivers Project. There are approximately 5,000 acres targeted. This would focus on migratory birds on the Missouri River area. On the Iowa Cedar there are unique restriction of amphibians and reptiles. The Nature Conservancy committed \$11 million along with the other agencies donating funds. This would be a 50-50 cost-share program.

There was some discussion from the group. There was concurrence from the State Technical Committee to support the proposal. This proposal was then provided to the NRCS National Headquarters for consideration.

#### CSP Update – Tom O’Connor

Tom provided a handout to the group. He went over the document in detail (see attached). There was some discussion from the group. As soon as the information is provided from National Headquarters on the number of applications accepted/funded, NRCS will provide it to the group. The 2006 watersheds that were recommended from the State Technical Committee were submitted to the National Office for consideration. Rick Van Klaveren recognized Tom O’Connor for a great job he has done as the program manager for CSP.

#### CIG Update – Paul Sweeney

Paul stated that the money for the Conservation Innovated Grants comes out of the EQIP allocation which was \$400,000 of technical assistance. There were nine applicants submitted and two were approved. They are from Agren, Inc. and Trees Forever. They will be receiving \$126,000 of the \$400,000. The remaining \$274,000 will go back to the EQIP contract pool and we will take addition contracts.

The Agren, Inc. proposal purpose is to facilitate grassland improvements in the Loess Hills. An example would be if a landowner is needing to have a prescribed burn and needs a place for his cattle, the cattle could be moved to this grassland bank for a period of time then move them back after the management.

Tree Forever proposal establishes 15 demonstrations sites/projects using buffers on organic farms. These sites would be using conventional buffering and alternative type of products, trees, etc. that would add value to their operations.

There was a Sub-Committee that reviewed provided the recommendations on the proposals to be funded.

#### EQIP Update – Larry Beeler

Larry provided a handout to the group and went over it in detail (see attached). There was some discussion from the group. Larry shared in FY06 there is a national ranking template that considers national priorities, state priorities and locally customize the ranking process for applications. This ranking template has to be used in FY06 which Iowa is a pilot to test. There was a discussion from the group. The Sub-Committee will meet prior to the next meeting to review the allocation process.

#### Special Projects Sub-Committee Update – Jim Gillespie

The Sub-Committee met on July 18 to review the seven proposals that were submitted. Jim provided a handout to the group. The handout provided the criteria that was used to select that included local leadership, workable project plan, meaningful commitment of local resources, strong landowner support, evidence that additional financial assistance can be used quickly for priority area and resource concerns, and measurable accomplishments can be shown. Jim also provided the eight project assessment factors (see attached). The Sub-Committee consists of the following individuals:

John Sellers	Deb Ryun	Lyle Asell	Marty Adkins
Dave Petty	Duane Sand	Dave DeGues	Jim Gillespie
Susan Heathcote	Ubbo Agena	John Walkowiak	Ken Tow

#### Watersheds Update – Marty Adkins

Marty provided a brief overview of the status of PL-566 and Little Sioux. We have 2 projects that are being worked on by the Planning Staff both are future PL-566 projects. The project that is the furthest along is the West Tarkio Creek located in Montgomery and Page Counties in Iowa and Atchinson County in Missouri. The technical work on this project is nearing completion. The next phase is the plan writing. The other project is located in Clarke County for the Clarke County Water Supply. This is a much smaller project and simpler in term of objections then the West Tarkio. The resource inventory is complete and they are developing and evaluating alternatives at this time. The report writing will begin next fiscal year, pending on funding. We have additional requests for planning in the future that include One of Two River located in Taylor County. Other counties that have requested assistance includes Madison, Ida, and Cherokee Counties along with the city of Fredericksburg. Marty provided additional details of what may be budget restraints.

On the construction side of things, we are really moving along well. We are where we want to be at this time of year. The projects with the most work are in Soap Creek located in southeast Iowa and East Fort of the Grand in southern Iowa. This type of work has been driven by congressional earmarks.

There was some discussion from the group.

#### Nutrient Management Standard (590) – Rick Van Klaveren/Jim Ayen/Steve Brinkman

Rick shared there will be a new National Nutrient Management Standard coming out in November 2005. It is very important to work on the state supplements of this practice standard. One issue pertained to the Conservation Security Program. Last year, Iowa NRCS made the decision to follow the practice standard 590; you should qualify for the CSP. There are other states that decided to follow the universities recommendation which did not follow what the practice standard for that state. There are other issues with meeting state law regulations. Rick asked Jerry Miller to Co-Chair the sub-committee to re-look at this standard. This is going to be a very big/controversial/critical job.

Jim Ayen introduced Steve Brinkman, Nutrient Management Specialist. Steve he has been with NRCS for 2 ½ months. He comes with the background in agronomy and practical experience.

Steve provided detailed information on the 590 standard. He would like to get a unified standard between ISU, EPA, DNR, etc. There was some discussion.

Jerry Miller shared some background. There are two groups that have been working on this issue/working on the science behind the recommendation that we currently use for nitrogen application across the region. They are the Soil Fertility faculty and the Upper Mississippi River Basin staff that crosses over to Indiana. They will have a report out approximately the first part of October.

The second will be a workshop. This initiative will involve another group (multi-state) that will focus on a conference title “Gulf Hypoxia and Local Water Concerns.” This workshop is designed to assess tools to reduce agriculture and nutrient losses to water resources in the Corn Belt. This will be a 3 day conference beginning on Monday, September 26 at noon – Wednesday, September 28 at noon at the Scheman Building at Iowa State University. This involves scientist and agencies individuals across states from the five upper Mississippi states to Indiana and Ohio. Jerry provided details of this conference. The website is [www.UMRSHNC.org](http://www.UMRSHNC.org).

Rick Van Klaveren asked for another Co-Chair for this committee. Provide names to Jim Ayen.

#### Standards and Specifications – Mark Jensen/Jim Ayen

Mark Jensen provided copies of the following standards and specification: Drainage Water Management (554); Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste (591); Waste Treatment (629); Closure of Waste Impoundments (360); Waste Facility Cover (367); Anaerobic Digester – Ambient Temperature (365); Anaerobic Digester – Controlled Temperature (366); Animal Mortality Facility (316); and Composting Facility (317). Mark stated that Mark Garrison, new Agricultural Engineer, has been going through and researching the animal practice standard from national, other states, and universities. They are in draft form; provide comments back to Mark Jensen by August 11.

Trees Forever Earmark – Information/Update – Brad Riphagen

Brad Riphagen shared Trees Forever has been working with plantings with landowners on buffer sites across the state for several years. Brad stated that Trees Forever has recently completed their annual report for 2004 which he provided a copy to everyone. The program started working in the mid 1990's bring in Farm Bureau, NRCS and others to see how Trees Forever might add information and education to the riparian management systems that are being installed across the state through CRP. They reassessed after five years to evaluate what needed to be changed to continue providing the proper information that was needed by the landowner. Brad provided details of the annual report with the group. Brad also provided a copy of "Working Watersheds: Buffers & Beyond" which includes Fact Sheet with Accomplishments; Site Nomination Form; and "Together We Grow" coloring book. There was some discussion from the group.

Rick Van Klaveren thanked everyone for coming today, it's exciting to see the interest in everyone in this State Technical Committee. It doesn't matter what is asked to do, everyone really steps forward to get the job done. Rick stated that he has been involved in other State Technical Committee Meetings in his previous job and this Committee has more energy and enthusiasm than others. Thank you again.

Rick Robinson shared that Doug Gronau has been moved to a rehabilitation section of the hospital in Omaha. The family is looking to find a place closer to home for the rest of his rehabilitation process.

The next State Technical Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 15, 2005, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 577.