**State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**

**NRCS Spokane State Office**

**March 27, 2012**

**Participants– See attached list**

**Opening Remarks** – **Sherre Copeland**

Sherre reviewed today’s agenda. A request was made to add a topic to the agenda on Direct Seed. This request was accepted. Introductions were made.

**National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) – Doug Allen**

State offices were required to hold out 5% of our General EQIP allocations for the NWQI. That is about $550k for Washington.

Draft guidance was put out but we were asked by National not to roll it out to partners or general public at that time. Final guidance was received last week. Deadline is April 6 to provide watersheds to national.

We can submit up to three 12-digit HUC watersheds that address 303d water quality issues, nutrients in ground and surface, pesticides, inadequate water supplies, turbidity, temperature, threatened and endangered species.

We asked Area Conservationists to provide input on what watersheds should be used.

One was chosen from each area. We looked at workload and decided to remove the West Area watershed from consideration due to the probability to be dealing with the Puget Sound initiative. We needed to find 3 contiguous watersheds with the 303d problems and that had enough landowners who would be able to participate in EQIP.

Sign-up will be sometime at the end of April

1st cut-off will be mid-May; 2nd cut-off will be mid-June

National Water Monitoring Plan will be available.

NHQ is working with EPA on this initiative at a national level

**Roylene** – We didn’t get much notice on this initiative. I did send information to NHQ regarding my concerns, but they are still rolling this initiative out. This initiative will have a small amount of dollars available this year. Let’s work towards next year to build this the way we want to see it. I am looking to the STAC to provide input to make it better. Also need input from LWGs.

NRCS doesn’t have monitoring authority, however, we can offer a monitoring practice. Only DOE and EPA have monitoring authority.

**Question** - 303d listed streams – want to place practices in those watersheds. If information doesn’t get to the DOE, how do you measure success?

**Answer** – By working with DOE and EPA. Also by discussion with the 5 Directors.

**Question** – What type of monitoring do you plan on doing?

**Answer** – We don’t know at this point. Waiting to see what national comes out with. It’s possible that NRCS can do implementation monitoring and that individual landowners can voluntarily implement a monitoring practice, but the resulting data will be private. EPA may do some effectiveness monitoring that NRCS does not have the authority to do.

**Question** – Have you worked with Watershed Councils yet?

**Answer** – Not yet.

**Suggestion** – Get them in the loop as soon as possible

**Suggestion** – Consider approaching EPA and DOE about 319 money

**Suggestion** – Don’t forget the tribes – get them involved

**NRCS 590 Nutrient Management Conservation Practice Renewal – Bonda Habets**

Bonda reviewed the new Nutrient Management Conservation Practice – Code 590. She also talked about the draft action plan that was developed for 590 Nutrient Management.

* Conservation practices are renewed every five years.
* The 590 Nutrient Management was posted in January 2012.
* It is more restrictive than the last version. Policy and instruction was provided.
* Monitoring conservation practice standard will be available. At present, it is interim. It has been piloted in a few states. When available, it will be posted to the STAC website.

ACTION – Sherre Copeland – when monitoring practice is available, send email to STAC notifying them it has been posted.

We will need to develop state Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help in address resource concerns. Bonda is requesting that a STAC sub-committee be developed in order to provide information on nutrient management related technical assistance. She would like the STAC to designate a representative to participate on this committee. The representative should have nutrient management technical knowledge. The first meeting is scheduled for April 24th. The committee would then have teleconferences from May to September.

**Comment** – support sub-committee – need input from many groups – 590 is critically important

**Comment** – strongly support this committee

Sherre – Clarification with regard to using a sub-committee review – science behind national standards isn’t up for debate. The objective of convening a sub-committee is to ensure that state laws and regulations are going to be adhered to in the implementation of an NRCS conservation practice standard, and also, to discuss how a standard would be best implemented on the operations we have in our state. If alternative practices need to be discussed, that is a good use of the sub-committee approach. So for example, if the new nutrient management standard limits spreading of manure to once every three years, what are our producers going to do with the excess manure? Can we discuss then, whether NRCS needs to develop a standard and payment scenario for transporting the waste offsite, to a digester, perhaps.

**Question** – Is there a major change in what we have done in the past?

**Answer** - Yes

**Question** – What indications have you received from DOE?

**Answer** – A few people asked what if we don’t provide guidance? Answer – NRCS will implement what we think is correct.

**DECISION** – STAC approves of forming this sub-committee

ACTION – STAC – email your representative’s contact information to Bonda by April 15, 2012

ACTION – Bonda Habets – send out information on sub-committee meeting scheduled for April 24, 2012

**Update on Washington Irrigation Guide – Larry Johnson**

Larry provided an update on where we are with the Irrigation Guide since bringing it before the STAC in January 2012. We have not received any negative feedback on the schedule.

WSU completed a paper on the revision process. Here are the next steps:

1. WSU addresses any comments
2. Public/peer review
3. Decide how best to provide to public

**Comment** – leaving producers out of the process isn’t advisable.

**Question** – Haven’t seen the paper. When was it sent out?

**Answer** – It was sent when revised review schedule was sent.

**Reply** – I didn’t receive it.

**Note** – it was discovered that this information was not sent to the STAC

ACTION – Georgia Sormun – Send documents to the STAC asap

**Puget Sound Initiative – Sherre Copeland**

Sherre gave an update on what has been happening with the Puget Sound Initiative. This initiative has also been referred to as Salmon Stronghold and NW Salmon Initiative. For FY 2012, this initiative is directly related to salmon. A core NRCS team has been established.

Chief White set aside a reserve fund for up to $4.2 million. We don’t know what program funds will be used, but it will probably be in EQIP. Funds will probably come in May, then June/July.

* Approach is to
* Request project proposals for:
* Fish passage
* Waste storage ponds
* Fish habitat improvement
* Timeline
* Put together strategy
* Get feedback from partners/tribes in mid-April
* Finalize request by April 20, 2012
* Advertise request for a 15-20 day period
* Select project - May 30, 2012
* Sign-up for individual landowners – June 2012
* Obligate funds – September 1, 2012

This timeline does not allow a lot of time for outreach. NRCS is hoping that the STAC will be involved with the outreach effort.

**Comment** – see NRCS moving more toward initiatives

**Comment** – opportunity to leverage NRCS $ with other $

**Comment** – if we can show successes, if this goes regional, we will have experiences to share

**Comment** – we need to have landowners who are willing to participate. Coordinate with districts to see what landowners may want to see in order to sign a contract.

**Question** – any TA money?

**Answer** – not really – we already have the TA we are going to get. It was associated with the initial EQIP allocation.

**Feedback from Local Working Group (LWG) Kick-off Meeting – Sherre Copeland**

Most LWGs have held an initial meeting. There was a lot to accomplish in a short meeting, so many have scheduled additional meetings. The State Resource Assessment (SRA) strategy for priority treatment was rolled out at these meetings. Feedback was that it was confusing. Roylene has heard from the LWGs about wanting to change their boundaries to align better with state resource concerns.

**Bonda Habets** – We are limited to eight scenarios.

**Larry Davis** – It was challenging, but we got through it. Steve Nissley filled in gaps about paperwork. A letter is being generated that will be sent to Roylene about the possibility of statewide EQIP hold-down ranking.

**Lee Hemmer** – our LWG decided to go to 10-digit instead of 12.

**Ron Schiebe** – Resource priority concerns – We had to give three top resource concerns. When SRA was published, other areas had more than three. Now other resource concerns we had won’t be funded.

When you use a regional cost list, you must have input from LWGs or you need to go back to what it was. How can you do this without local input?

**Ron Juris** – Concerns about cost-shares, things coming from national level. We do appreciate Roylene and staff working with us.

**Comment** – I don’t see any accountability in prices that came out in cost list. Prices are not reflective for areas.

**Comment** – No producer can do the work for what the cost list says – it is too low

**Direct Seed – Rick Jones, Ty Meyer**

We have been using a rolling packer, but have now been told we can’t. We feel that this is needed for direct seeding. We thought this had been taken care of. This has made a lot of producers not qualify. We have spoken to Roylene and Bonda about this issue. A white paper is being drafted that will be sent to Roylene to request that this be reviewed. After the paper is completed, we will bring it to the STAC.

**Working Lands for Wildlife – Doug Allen**

This program was rolled out this year. It is the old WHIP. There are seven species nationwide. Only one of those species is in Washington – Sage Grouse. Roylene isn’t requesting funding this year.

**Participant List**

**In Person**

Doug Allen, NRCS

Lee Hemmer, Foster Creek Conservation District

Richard Rice, Foster Creek Conservation District

Ron Scheibe, Snake River Local Working Group

Megan Stewart, Asotin County Conservation District

Ty Meyer, Spokane Conservation District

Ron Juris, South Central Local Working Group

Rick Jones, PNDSA

Dave Vogel, WACD

Stuart Turner, Board Certified Agronomist

Frank O’Leary, NW Rangeland Trust

Kirk Mayer, WA Growers Clearing House Assn./Tree Fruit Growers Assn

Jeff Harlow, NRCS

Kurt Merg, USFWS

Georgia Sormun, NRCS

Kirk Cook, WSDA

Bonda Habets, NRCS

Gina Kerzman, NRCS

Don Larsen, WDFW

Kevin Sullivan, NRCS

Sherre Copeland, NRCS

Roylene Rides at the Door, NRCS

Kelly Singer, Colville Confederated Tribes

**By Phone**

Aaron Everett, DNR

Carol Smith, WSCC

Ed Teel, NRCS

Jay Gordon, Dairy Federation

Karma Anderson, EPA

Larry Cochran, Cochran Farms

Larry Davis, Northwest Local Working Group

Mark Clark, WSCC

Mark Nielson, Franklin Conservation District

Mary Rosen, Palouse Conservation District

Nicole Berg, WAWG

Pat McConnell, The McGregor Company

Robin Slate, NRCS