



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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STAC Meeting Information and Handouts available online line at
http://www.nv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/stac_meetings.html

The Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) met on Oct. 22, 2012 by videoconference from the Cooperative Extension office in Winnemucca, 1 – 4 pm. NRCS State Conservationist Bruce Petersen welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating.

Partners attending were Carl Clinger, Big Meadow Conservation District; Dick Reason, Tonopah CD; Gerry Emm, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Randy Emm, Cooperative Extension; Brian Thomas, Indian Nations Conservation Alliance; Clint Koble, Farm Service Agency; Maggie Orr, Lincoln CD; Tim Rubald and Sandy Quilici, Nevada Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources; Jerry Buk, Cooperative Extension; Doug Busselman, Nevada Farm Bureau; Elveda Martinez, Walker River Paiute Tribe; John Watermolen, Nevada Division of Forestry; Sherm Swanson, College of Agriculture/Cooperative Extension; Marlea Stout, Lahontan/Stillwater CDs; and Paul Stockton, Carson Valley CD.

In addition to Bruce, NRCS employees attending were Gary Roeder; Paulette Balliette; Leah Mori; Bill Elder; Mike Odegard; Justin Feeman; Kory Kulinsky; Jim Gifford, Ed Biggs, Gretchen Beausoleil, Allen Moody, Connie Lee, Tara Vogel, Sam Sanders, Katrina Krause, and Liz Warner.

District Conservationists Cory Lytle and Jim Gatzke were in travel status to Winnemucca to attend the Nevada Assoc. of Conservation Districts (NvACD) meeting, Oct. 23-24.

AGENDA ([Handout #1](#))

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING ([Handout #2](#))

Bruce reviewed the action items from the previous STAC meeting, held Nov. 29, 2011:

- Forestry resource concerns not being addressed — John Watermolen asked about the possibility of a funding pool for forestry practices. Maggie Orr asked how we decide if a practice is a forestry practice. Bruce said we need to figure out what forestry means in Nevada. **ACTION**
- Drainage fund pool needed for drainage issues — still studying this issue
- Duck Valley ditch lining options —
- Hire TSP's to address NEPA on public lands — will leave on list for further consideration
- Program opportunities on conversion to dry land farming —
- Energy efficiency — Bruce said energy is a high priority; extra points are awarded in the ranking for energy practices; some practices are limited; one producer applied for headquarters energy analysis. NRCS will develop a fact sheet explaining the energy programs offered by FSA, Rural Development, and NRCS. **ACTION**
- Share initial program funding and allocation process — funding was included with minutes from Nov. meeting; allocation process will be discussed at this meeting.
- Tribal Grazing Management Initiative — was announced but no applications were received; will continue to support
- Pest Management and Integrated Pest Management Subcommittee — Bruce asked Mike Odegard to organize a subcommittee and explore methods/practices for cost-share assistance. Brian

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Thomas suggested that APHIS PPQ be invited to participate because of their biological control programs. **ACTION**

- Cost share on pipe: Is there an option available to increase payment in certain circumstances? — the new payment schedule is resolving this issue
- Carl said he still hasn't gotten answers to some of the issues raised at previous meetings, such as rock for ditches. **ACTION**
- Carl also asked if a walk board could be added to outlet gates, for safety. **ACTION**

FY12 SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (Handouts #[3-1](#), [3-2](#), [3-3](#))

Gary reviewed three handouts showing summaries of program contracts and obligations for FY 2011 and FY 2012, by county, and by historically underserved customers. We increased the number of contracts obligated this year from 137 to 213, spending over \$11.5 million.

EASEMENT PROGRAMS ([Handout #4](#))

Gary reviewed a handout showing easements for FY 2011 and FY 2012.

PARTNERSHIPS

NRCS hired five partner biologist positions with Nevada Dept. of Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Pheasants Forever. Bruce said that the "Field Office of the Future Plan" was submitted to National Headquarters. He recommended that NRCS maintain the number of offices we currently have in Nevada.

FARM BILL AND BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

Bruce said that NRCS is under a continuing resolution. The Farm Bill expired in September. Some programs were extended, like EQIP and WHIP; some programs have been put on hold. Nevada is proceeding with a sign-up period. Deadline is Nov. 16. Bruce said Congress has been good to conservation. The National Initiatives that we implemented increased the amount of funding in Nevada.

Doug Busselman asked what will happen if the government faces across-the-board cuts proposed by the super committee. Bruce said we'll have to wait and see.

NEVADA EQIP FUNDING ALLOCATION FORMULA ([Handout #5](#))

Gary Roeder explained the funding allocation formula. He said that local work groups get about 70% of the state allocation. About thirty percent is maintained at the state level, for state priorities like fire rehabilitation, tribal grazing management, and 5% for historically underserved (beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged) producers. Brian mentioned that it is important for tribal producers to complete the ag census survey so that they get their share of the allocation.

Carl asked that the numbers on the handout be validated. Dick asked for the percent of applications that weren't funded, the number of contracts funded versus the applications received. Tim Rubald asked about the number of eligible applications, the demand versus the number of applications funded, and requested them by ranking level (high, medium, and low). Gary will do. **ACTION**

A discussion about LWGs followed. Gary said some LWGs spent more than their allocation; others didn't spend any. Carl said it is the responsibility of the CD to make sure the LWG meets. Dick Reason said they aren't functioning like they should.

Connie Lee volunteered to set up a committee to review roles and responsibilities of LWGs in an attempt to get them engaged again. **ACTION**. The first meeting was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, after the NvACD business meeting. Carl Clinger, Dick Reason, Tim Rubald, Gary Roeder, Maggie Orr, and Liz Warner volunteered to participate.

References:

- [Nevada Fact Sheet on LWG \(ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NV/web/publications/local_work_groups_factsheet2006.pdf\)](ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NV/web/publications/local_work_groups_factsheet2006.pdf)
- USDA Conservation Program Delivery Manual
 - Locally Led Conservation [Part 500](#)
<http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/RollupViewer.aspx?hid=27712>
 - Local Working Groups/State Technical Committee [Part 501](#)
<http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/RollupViewer.aspx?hid=17101>

Carl mentioned that CDs aren't asked to review conservation plans any more. Justin Feeman said he provides a summary to his district supervisors but they would like more detailed information. Bruce said that conservation plans could be shared with CD supervisors as long as the personally-identifiable information is omitted. Tim would be glad to work with Bruce to provide information to CDs on conservation plan review. **ACTION**

Doug said that the allocation formula changed the process from the old days when LWGs had more impact on setting priorities. Bruce said he will review the allocation formula to see if it can be improved, made more defensible and more resource land-based. **ACTION**

FY 2013 FA PROGRAM FUND POOLS ([Handout #6](#))

Paulette reviewed the national initiatives and obligations by programs. She said about 80% of the applications received were funded. Bruce said that the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program was used to fund high tunnels in Nevada, to reach out to new producers who may not qualify for EQIP. About 25 applications were obligated in FY 2012.

Leah Mori asked about an additional drought allocation. Gary said the initial allocation in FY 12 was from USDA. Congress is still reviewing additional drought allocations.

Carl asked why there weren't any approved contracts for WHIP. Bruce said the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) Initiative targeted two species: sage-grouse and southwestern willow flycatcher. Gary said the money not used for WLFW was used for WHIP drought.

Carl asked about the Humboldt watershed funding. Gary said that was a national water quality initiative. NRCS worked with Nevada Division of Environmental Protection to identify watersheds. Two contracts were funded. Bill Elder said 5% of our state allocation went to this national initiative. Watersheds were on the 303(d) list. Carl asked for a document showing what was done with the funds. **ACTION**

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Gary discussed the national initiatives:

- Certified Organic – no applications
- Transitioning to Organic – no applications
- High Tunnels – 25 funded in FY 2012; 14 under AMA, 11 under EQIP
- On-Farm Energy Initiative – 1 energy audit funded
- Sage-Grouse – funding several contracts on private and public land

Doug asked about regulatory certainty for sage-grouse and what practices afforded producers certainty. He suggested NRCS define, explain assurances, and promote it in plain terms. **ACTION**

Randy Emm asked about tribal pipelines and group projects. Gary said a conservation plan needed to be developed first in consultation with the Tribe and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

EASEMENT PROGRAMS

Gary explained Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) rates ([handout #7-1](#)) and tables showing compensation values ([handout #7-2](#)). Connie would like to see the process of how these were developed. **ACTION**

Gary asked for comments on the proposed GRP ranking tool ([handout #8](#)) and WRP ranking tool ([handout #9](#)). **ACTION**

Gary said the bi-state area has the highest priority for GRP since that distinct population of sage-grouse will be considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act next year.

Gary asked STAC members to submit comments on the ranking tools in 3 weeks – Nov. 12. Gary's e-mail is gary.roeder@nv.usda.gov; phone: (775) 857-8500 x 103. **ACTION**

Gary discussed the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) Plan for Nevada ([handout #10](#)). Gary said The Nature Conservancy is partnering on a \$5 million FRPP contract.

NEW BUSINESS

Justin Feeman asked for guidance on how NRCS interacts with CDs. **ACTION**

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.