

Colorado State Technical Committee Meeting

US Fish and Wildlife Service Building – Lakewood, CO
October 23, 2012

Meeting Held By: Phyllis Ann Philipps, State Conservationist, NRCS
Eugene Backhaus, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS

Meeting Presenters: Eugene Backhaus, NRCS Ken Bingham, FSA Ken Morgan, CPW Phyllis Woodford, CDPHE Bill Noonan, USFW	April Dahlager, RD Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS Dawn Jackson, NRCS Rachel Murph, GLCI
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Minutes by: Charlene Lucero

Welcome – Phyllis Ann Philipps, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for attending and explained how important it is to have the State Technical Committee.
- Stated all the accomplishments and obstacles for Colorado for this year.
- Introductions

Follow up – Eugene Backhaus, State Resource Conservationist (NRCS)

Topic	Issue	Alternatives	Recommendation	Decision
State Technical Committee FY 2013	Propose two meetings a year with a possible third meeting as adhoc for any issues that need attention.	None	One meeting set in October (beginning of Fiscal Year) and one in April (mid-year) with an adhoc meeting TBA.	Meeting set for the third Tuesday of the month. April 16, 2012 October 15, 2012* Please see note at end of minutes.
Technical Guide Notices (TGN)	How is the external review process working out for the TGNs?	None	None	Majority agreed that the emails work for the review process. Continue with the email process.

- Four Technical Guide Notices went out since last meeting, 658-661. If you did not get notices let us know and will get them out to you.
- Minutes and presentations are posted on NRCS Technical Resources [website](#).

Rural Development (RD) Report – April Dahlager, Business Programs Director

- Currently doing outreach efforts for the Hispanic Women’s Farmers and Ranchers (HWFR), meetings are being held throughout the state.
- Funding is stagnant and no large increases at this point.
- RD is becoming more interactive with other agencies. Colorado is a StrikeForce State and we are supposed to find ways to work together and reach folks that we have not reached before for USDA programs. RD is the leader of the StrikeForce. There are 29 counties in Colorado that qualify for our outreach to underserved and first time qualifiers.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Report – Ken Bingham, Program Manager

- Ken is new Conservation Program Specialist, replacing Billy Merritt
- Correcting CRP errors and have significant strides in getting funds out.

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- Active CRP Acres for Colorado 1,586,759.7
 - Summary of Emergency Haying and Grazing Managed Haying
 - Total contract 2,681
 - Total acres 390,116
 - Reviewed 2012 Managed Haying, Managed Grazing, and Routine Grazing by counties
 - Reviewed 2012 Emergency Haying and Emergency Grazing by county
- Hand out contains all the details and is available at website.
- FSA is also doing outreach efforts with HWFR

NRCS Program Update – Dawn Jackson, ARC – Programs, NRCS

GARC – Geographic Area Rate Caps

- Wetland Reserve Program and Grassland Reserve Program utilize GARCs for easement compensation
- Easement compensation is based on the lowest:
 - Appraised Fair Market Value
 - Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC)
 - Landowner Offer
- NRCS contracts for an Area Wide Market Analysis to help determine values
- Previous decisions on GARC Calculations
 - GRP: 60% of AWMA value (40% Grazing Land Value)
 - WRP: 80% of AWMA value
- Refer to Map of Market Areas
- Refer to PowerPoint for the Market Analysis marked with GARC values.

Comment: Helpful to see the neighboring states information as it pertains to GARC values.

Question: Is there any qualitative priority given to certain properties?

Answer: There is a ranking process in place.

Comment: The values will go out to the field offices for comments. NRCS does not currently have GARC authority.

Question: Once numbers are set does landowner have any say?

Answer: Once the landowner sees the rates it is the offer able rate unless landowner wants less.

Easement Program Targets for FY13

- Held meeting in July 2012 to gather input on other easement program targets and priorities
 - Keeping land and water in agriculture
- Recommendations / Discussion for Targets
 - Sage Grouse
 - Other species
 - Culturally or Historically significant areas
 - Other recommendations

EQIP FY13 Largest financial assistance program in Colorado

- Colorado's Allocation Formula (based on local and watershed workgroup comment and State Technical Committee input)
 - Colorado River Watershed – 6%
 - Gunnison-Dolores Watershed – 3%
 - Lower Arkansas Watershed – 21%
 - Lower South Platte Watershed – 13%
 - North Platte/White/Yampa Watershed – 5%
 - Republican River Watershed – 9%
 - Rio Grande Watershed – 10%

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- San Juan Watershed – 9%
- Upper Arkansas Watershed – 9%
- Upper South Platte Watershed – 15%
- Within each watershed, funds were broken into smaller ‘pools’ for:
 - Animal Waste Mgmt 5%
 - Wildlife and Riparian 5%
 - Soil Management 20- 30%
 - Water Quality/Quantity 25-35%
 - Forestry or Agro-forestry 5–15%
 - Grazinglands 20 – 40%
- Some funding pools not used (for a period of 3 years or more) – typically Ag Waste Mgmt, Wildlife and Riparian
- Considering making these targets a statewide ‘pool’

Discussion on ‘pooling’

Question: Are initiatives a part of the general pot of funds?

Answer: Initiatives are not part of the general funds.

Benefit of ‘pooling’ is for example - If there are not any applications in that ‘pool’ we look at the other pools and see where the money is requested.

Conservation Initiative for FY13

- National Air Quality Initiative
 - Counties that could be within initiative based on PM10 and Ozone concerns:
 - **Adams, Arapahoe, Archuleta, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Fremont, Jefferson, Larimer, Pitkin, Prowers, Routt, San Miguel, and Weld.** (Bolded counties were past initiative counties targeted for Ozone)
 - Discussion
 - Where are the concerns are targeted and if they are agriculture sources.
- National On-Farm Energy
- National On-Farm Energy Initiative (Statewide)
- National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative (Statewide)
- National Organic Initiative (Statewide)

Refer to Ogallala Aquifer Initiative – Map

- Water Quality offer in 2013
 - DeWeese Reservoir and the Fruit Growers are the target
 - Beaver may be the third
- Lesser Prairie Chicken 2012 Refer to Map
- Sage Grouse – No map available, done county by county, used 2012 Moffat county map as an example

Working lands for Wildlife Initiative

- Greater and Gunnison Sage Grouse
- Lesser Prairie Chicken
- Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
- Black-footed Ferret (CO listed as one of the states within the initiative but is not a high priority focal area at this time)
 - Developing the Black-footed ferret initiative, waiting on legislation to reintroduce the species in Colorado, will probably take another year to get it through.

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Summary of 2012 Program Year

- EQIP 34.6 million
- AWEP 813,000
- WHIP 1.2 million
- CSP 2.5 million
- CStP 2.5 million
- GRP 1 agreement; 1 easement
- WRP 1 easement
- FRPP \$7.1 million for 15 easements

As we accept applications we will not look at AGI as a factor. The doors are not wide open there still may be retroactive. It is all based on the Farm Bill.

Comments on Programs: On target to roll out in December.

Statement: Neighboring state irrigation systems have replaced pivot systems or irrigation systems that have been broken down.

Can EQIP be used to increase the efficiency worthy of replacing the system? Landowners have to meet the lifespan.

Currently Colorado has not done that. Is that something Colorado would consider? If neighboring states are doing this practice, does this set precedence? Treat the resource concern and treat the problem. There would need to have some criteria to meet a concern.

Show of hands on people consider the replacement practices.

Comment: General fund sets 10% of EQIP funds aside for beginning farmer and socially disadvantage farmer.

Targeted Conservation Proposals

- Received 40 applications FY 2012.
- Selected 19 projects that would need landowner applications
- We will follow up with the groups, so far limited success.

Comment: Good grassroots opportunity for NRCS, it is a good thing.

Topic	Issue	Alternatives	Recommendation	Decision
Easement Program Targets	Gathering input on other easement program targets		Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sage Grouse ○ Other species ? ○ Culturally or Historically significant areas 	Other recommendations given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wetlands/Playas ○ Habitat Types
FY 13 EQIP	Considering making target areas a statewide 'pool'		Make target areas a statewide "pool"	No dissention on putting the monies in a general pool
Air Quality	Where should we focus our	1. Keep existing areas.	Focus on the same counties with the	Group agreed with Recommendation of

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	concerns? Should we stay with our Ozone counties or work with the added counties and refocus?	2. Expand PM10 areas 3. Expand for N deposition per RMNP Ag Sub	Ozone concerns and target some major concerns *Dust, N	continuing focus on current counties.
Targeted conservation proposals	Do we want new projects for 2013?	Focus on the 2012 projects?	Suggestion: Ask for new proposals	Agreed on requesting new projects for 2013.

Guest Speaker, Colorado Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

Bill Noonan, Colorado Coordinator, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, USFWS

- PowerPoint Presentation done. Refer to presentation on website.
- Reviewed USFW projects across the state.

State Technical Committee Structure Reports and Discussions

Air Quality Subcommittee Report– Phyllis Woodford, Program Manager, CDPHE

PowerPoint Presentation, hand outs on air quality for STC approval.

- AQ Committee Update
- FY 2013 Initiative
 - Develop a targeted Conservation effort
 - Nine counties recommended for the initiative: Boulder, Larimer, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld, and Yuma
- Refer to Map and NRCS AMMONIA/NITROGEN AIR QUALITY INITIATIVE handout.

Questions?

Q: Do you have an accurate measure for ammonia? Yes there are some monitors throughout the park and in the state.

Q: Do you feel nitrogen is coming from agriculture and the east? There is some contribution from the west and other states. Colorado gets up slopes in the spring.

Comment: Get agriculture to be proactive to avoid mandated actions.

Topic	Issue	Alternatives	Recommendation	Decision
FY 13 Targeted AQ Conservation Effort	Prioritize a “Suite of Practices” that is measureable. Demonstrate progress on agriculture’s contribution to nitrogen deposition reduction efforts in Rocky Mountain National Park. Keep emission reduction actions on a voluntary path for agriculture. Provide benefits		Does STC group concur with the AQ committee targeted effort?	No dissention. The group supports the initiative just concern that the results are accurately monitored.

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	to other Colorado AQ concerns, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ozone ▪ Regional Haze 			
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Refer to presentation at [website](#).

Forestry – Naomi Marcus, Forest Stewardship Coordinator, CSFS

Nothing to report

Grazing Lands – Rachel Murph, State Rangeland Specialist, NRCS

- GLCI is in the process of looking at their structure – by-laws/policies and determining how they want to structure themselves and if they want to align with the national strategic plan.
- Conferences the 5th annual conference in Orlando, FL Dec. 9-12
- Colorado SRM conference looking at grazing practices. Nov. 39-30. Ft. Collins.
- GLCI is offering scholarships for agricultural producers/grazers to attend conference(s), please contact Jeanne, Harley Ernst, or Rachel Murph if there is anyone interested.
- Working on having meeting prior to STC meetings. Committee made up of landowners, committee is open for suggestions to the committee or if there are topics/issues that need to be reviewed by the committee.

Wildlife Subcommittee Report – Ken Morgan, Private Lands Program Manager, CPW

Subcommittee met last week and very engaged with doing things to enhance wildlife.

- Rio Grande CREP
- Practice 612
 - Working on draft practice document to allow native shrubs to be planted for LPC.
 - Final draft has not been approved
- Emergency Haying and Grazing
 - Concerns arose for this year. - Documented some practices that were not in compliance and going to watch closely.
 - Stubble heights were in non-compliance
- FSA was filled in on the compliance issues and can administer a penalty, if second violation they will be removed from the program. Need to hold landowners accountable.

Q: If a landowner is under the emergency haying program, the hay harvested is for the landowner, correct? They cannot sell to neighbor or anyone else.

A: Correct, hay is for use of the landowner only.

Ken Bingham stated: FSA is not an enforcing agency, the handbook does not support landowners having others graze on their property.

- BFF Special Initiative –
 - The initiative is available to 12 western states - Colorado is in this mix.
 - Colorado cannot participate at this time due to state legislature. Currently CO Cattlemen’s Association is working on getting approval for re-introduction.
 - Beneficial for people that have prairie dogs on property
 - Provisions for perimeter control of the prairie dogs has been addressed

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- Revised Upland SAFE proposals.
 - Changes have been made to no longer overlap boundaries of other areas
 - Changed some of the seed mixers, more applicable per NRCS standards
 - 0 acres requested but want to be in the queue when acres are available.

Topic	Issue	Alternatives	Recommendation	Decision
Revised Upland SAFE Proposal	The areas of revision were: boundaries, seedmixes, and 0 acres allocated.		Presented Revised Proposal to STC committee for approval.	No dissention, proposal will be presented to FSA committee.
Lesser Prairie chicken nesting dates	Change nesting dates to follow along with all the other nesting dates. Reason: this allows us to provide more practices in the proposed date.		Subcommittee recommended dates to be changed.	No dissention.

Closing – Phyllis Ann Philipps, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Thanked everyone for their time and input.
- Explained the benefit of input in the meeting to be beneficial to all. If there are issues or concerns that are brought up here we can address these at the next meeting so we can get answers out to everyone.
- Minutes will be sent out to everyone along with the results of the issues and recommendations; this will give a pulse on what direction to head.

*NOTE: Next meeting will be **April 23rd**, dates for the meetings changed to the fourth Tuesday of the month. Reason: October date was going to be after a holiday and would have some members traveling on a holiday.

If you have any feedback please contact NRCS.

Thank you for all your attendance and participation.

Adjourned