**Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**

**12/20/2021**

**Attendees**

# **STAC Members:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bureau of Land Management (BLM) | Alan Shepherd |
| Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) | Melany AtenDominique Etchegoyhen |
| Farm Service Agency (FSA) | Marilyn Jones |
| Nevada Association of Conservation Districts (NVACD) | Connie Lee |
| Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) | Ashley Jeppson for Megan Brown |
| Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) | Birgit Widegren |
| Nevada Land Trust (NLT) | Alicia Reban |
| United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) | Marc JacksonSusan Abele |

# **Known public in attendance:**

Gerry Miller, DCNR Northern NV;
Mark Damron, Conservation District of Southern Nevada (CDSN)
Ron Melon, Mason Valley Conservation District
Bobby Jones, Nevada Department of Wildlife

Carl Clinger, Big Meadow Conservation District

Action Items:

* Ray stated the need to create an urban agriculture subcommittee. Ray will reach out to Mark Damron to gain insights on possible individuals to recruit.
* Geographic Area Rate Caps were reviewed by the STAC members.
* NRCS will work to determine if the Environmental Quality Incentives Program can be used to treat pests recommended by the Elko-Eureka local working group.

**STAC FAQ’s**

**Prescribed Grazing-528 on Public Lands – consideration of payment for prescribed grazing on BLM allotments and FS allotments.**

* Response: Prescribed grazing (528) is an eligible practice for eligible participants leasing eligible public lands. This will depend on the control of land because there are many situations that will determine whether prescribed grazing receives funding under a contract so these need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**Emergency Fund Pools – In the past NRCS has had some Emergency Fund Pools to help out with wildfires. That doesn’t seem to occur anymore - when there is a fire NRCS doesn’t have the ability to respond with funding in a timely manner, and the contracting process does not coincide with when practices need to be applied to the land.**

* Response: EQIP has an emergency fund pool called Natural Disaster Fund Pool but is subject to EQIP eligibility, ranking, and process.
* Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) is designed for immediate implementation of projects to safeguard life and property. Please review eligibility of EWP for details. This will also be discussed in another presentation later in this meeting.

**The LWG would like the STAC to focus on promoting cross jurisdictional management. Working more closely with BLM, NDOW and FS.**

* Response: NRCS is in support of working with other agencies. Examples of this include the Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership where NRCS and Forest Service partner to provide technical and financial resources for a greater impact to conserving and protecting private and public forestland. We are very interested in working with other agencies.

**There is a concern that there are no Riparian ESD’s in NV, however UT does have some developed. There is a rumor that work on the ESD's has ceased, is that true?**

* Response: It is untrue that work on ESD’s have ceased. Currently the agency is working on Provisional ESD’s for the lower 48 states. Nevada site work is being developed by a Utah ecological site specialist. The provisional ESD’s are being prioritized over ecological site work at a finer scale (Example: Riparian areas).

**There is a great potential for cropland to be converted to permanent cover in the near future in the Service Area due to the over allocation of water resources. Are there any NRCS programs to help with this directly and make this a priority?**

* Response: The technical and financial programs are in place to address natural resource concerns. Local Work Groups when this is a priority can submit this to the STAC for consideration.
* Response: NRCS may assist the conversion to a less intensive land use. Further information is needed to decide.
* FSA has programs to assist with this (example: Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)).

**Along the lines of Soil Health, how are rodents being addressed? The common practice is to rip the field to control the rodents, however this contradicts the principles of soil health. Are there any other ways for NRCS to address the rodent problem on pivots?**

* Response: We’ve been informed we may be able to address insect and rodent pests with Pest Management Conservation System (CPS 595). This is being reviewed in consultation with national office and payment schedule/scenario teams.

**There is a concern in Eureka County that several NRCS contracts have been awarded to junior water rights holders. How might those contracts be affected if in the next 5 years those lands are taken out of production by order of the NV State Water Engineer?**

* Response: Participants with active contracts have the authority to request cancellation of their contracts with proper justification. Forfeiture of future payments, cost recovery, liquidated damages are determined case by case.
* NRCS cannot use the status of water right holders to obligate program contracts.

**There is a concern that NRCS contracts are too restrictive. When new science is available the contract holder should have the ability to adopt the new science under the contract instead of the practice that was contracted. Are there options to make the contracts more fluid?**

* Response: NRCS practices are developed with national and state criteria with the latest science. When partners identify new science or technology, they can submit these requests though the State Technical Guide Committee.

**Proposed local question:**

The group decided that they would like to include a local question because they feel like large scale projects in the large canals that affect many producers should get prioritized higher than other similar projects that only affect a single producer.

The question they would like included is:

How many producers will the project effect/benefit?

* 1-2 lowest
* 3-5
* Over 5 Highest

This is currently under review. We are discussing whether we need more information to determine if this is a legitimate question to be added to the ranking. We may need to have further discussion with the LWG.

**Review Complete**

The following question was added to the ranking pool template to address the request above:

Is this application part of a larger group project including enhancing infrastructure benefiting multiple water users? Yes or No

**Coronavirus Agricultural Relief Program (CARP) Payments Update**

* CARP Payments were initiated in Calendar Year (CY) 2021 to make additional financial assistance available to participants with EQIP contracts with practices completed in CY2021 affected by higher commodity prices due to disrupted agricultural output and global supply chains due to the 2019 coronavirus disease. A recent national bulletin extended the deadline from practices completed in calendar year 2021 to March 31st, 2022. Nevada identified 7 practices for eligibility for CARP Payments (listed in Table A):



* + CARP Payments Completed: 21
	+ Total Payments Processed: $144,226.23.
	+ Original Eligible Payments Estimation: $178,819.45

**\*** More practices may have been completed from original inquiry in November 2021. Also, the extension of CARP payments until March 31st, 2022 will increase the total eligible payments if practices are completed until then.

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?**

Mark Damron: I’d like to give a shout out to Jasmine who led our LWG meeting in Las Vegas. She is new to the area and we were all amazed of the girth and depth of all your efforts. It was a great overview of everything we do. I look forward to attending the 1 on 1 workshops to learn more about what we do.
Ray: Thank you Mark for your comments. We are very fortunate to have been able to hire many very intelligent and hard work employees.