**STAC MEETING 11/18/2014**

**Meeting Notes**

**Attendance roster:**

**Nevada State Office:**

* Birgit Widegren, NDEP; Gary Roeder, NRCS; Heather Emmons, NRCS; Bob Conrad, Nevada Depart. Of Ag (NDA); Gerry Emm, BIA; Susan Looper, NRCS; Stephanie Wilson, US EPA; Sherman Swanson, UNR; Tina Mudd, NDA; Dick Reason, TCD; Ali Chaney, Natural Heritage; Duane Petite, Nature Conservancy

**Elko Field Office:**

* Rachelle Peppers, Pheasants Forever/NRCS; Kaycee Garcia, NRCS; Neil McQuary, public; Connie Lee, NDOW; Andi Poneca, HWCWMA NVACD; Lisa Jim, public; Jaime Jasmine, NRCS

**Yerington Field Office:**

* Ed Biggs, NRCS; Elveda Martinez, Walker River Paiute Tribe

**Caliente Field Office:**

* Maggie Orr, LCCD SCC NVACD; Cory Lytle, NRCS

**Minden Field Office:**

* Katrina Krause, NRCS

**Forest Service – Carson City Office:**

* Jim Gifford, NRCS

**Fallon Field Office:**

* Debbie Hoffmann, NRCS; Lex Riggle, NRCS

**Lovelock Field Office:**

* Christie Scilacci, NRCS; Carl Clinger, BMCD

**Ely Field Office:**

* Ed Sturges, NRCS

**Winnemucca Field Office:**

* Kari Randle, NRCS; Steve Weaver

**Meeting Minutes**

Bruce welcomed everyone and reviewed items from the previous meeting:

Forestry Discussion: Energy evaluations and audits and need for technical service providers. 31 TSPs reside in Nevada and zero do energy audits as they are unwilling to travel to Nevada to do these. Electric company, pump suppliers and others have stepped up to do them. Need energy audits to get upgrades. There are local providers we need to tap into.

Herbacious weed control: Spray for three consecutive years – payment on 3rd year. Not for croplands. We have it in our schedule. Bruce explained how it works.

*Bruce re-capped the Elko Local Working Group meeting notes and opened the floor for missing items:*

* Elko suggested a CIG state program. There is a sign-up, there is a state CIG, there was discussion for limitations on controls and limitations.
* RCPP – Opportunities for partners to put in for proposals. Issue with pipe we ask for in our practices. This is the only report Bruce has received.

**2014 Farm Bill:**

Passed mid-year. Field staff had only ½ year to implement it. They did an outstanding job. Received $14 million in requests and contracted $9 million on cost sharing and 5 easements for $3.5 (or was it 5?) million.

There has been a lot of discussion regarding the relevance of local work groups and state committees. Only 1% of the groups are involved in what’s happening on the ground. There’s a lot of concerned people for the 1% that’s still producing, but our view gets distorted when folks focus on GMOs and sustainability. Leaves the 1% with a bad view of these people.

We can be the voice and address the priority concerns. We have the responsibility to look at ways to find resource concerns. Local work groups are important but we need to engage the local offices to spread the word.

**Lex Riggle Update:** 2nd year Fallon office has worked with Dairy Farmers of America. FO has been working with local dairy farmers on EQIP contracts for new separators, pipelines installed, animal waste systems and nutrient management plans. 30,000 additional milk cows will have to come online. They are targeting international market. Obligated to spend 5% on NWQI.

Dick Reason: Small farms are a resource. They need to know there’s help. If there’s any way to get those people active, they’re good voices. It helps to not have larger farms as regulated.

**Gary – FA Programs**

RCPP is a new program created by 2014 FB – fast tracked 1st year quickly – NRCS and partners to deliver conservation programs.

Sherm Swanson – asks Gary to provide an example of Stewardship Program Enhancements.

Gary: Pumping plants pumping water efficiently; look at iron on the ground, pivots, nozzles, etc. Look in terms of water quantity. Computerize or update pump plant with remote sensing. Not limited to water and irrigation. Wildlife-friendly haying and fencing are other examples.

Dick: Sometimes we get too technical instead of focusing on what’s on the ground. Are we getting more water on the ground when we read the meter? Our bottom line is different than NRCS’s a bit.

Carl: RCPP program question – Would this program be a program that could identify problems with watersheds like Humboldt River Basin?

Gary – Yes, if all partners come together.

These programs are designed for issues that can hit the ground running and be able to complete in 5 years or less. Humboldt River has been in the making for 100+ years.

Carl – Understands Gary’s point but knows that the livelihood and impact to producers is huge and affects up to 100 producers and puts them in jeopardy. Asks Sherm if UNR could work on this?

Sherm comments on how they could fit in.

Connie: Challenges of RCPP. Felt one she worked on didn’t have sufficient capacity built. Pre-work needs to be done to get landowners on board.

Tina asked – how do you help more agencies get the information on issues that need attention.

Carl responded – identify the problem with a lead and everyone jump on board to make things happen.

Sherm said – get people together to just come together to identify these issues and how to tackle them. Another project on South Fork could be an example. Channel incision – a lot of need for money on the ground and partners.

Carl would like to move towards getting an interested group (Pershing County, Humboldt Basin Water Authority, etc.) to move towards working on ideas to identify these issues.

Dick seconds the motion.

Connie Lee offered assistance to get the meeting started.

Gary said he prefers it be locally led as much as possible.

**Bill Elder – Resources Update**

Bill stated that the need for a formal NDF Agreement isn’t necessary and wants to keep it low key.

New biz – Bill gets lots of requests for brush management conservation, but there is a lack of uniformity on how it’s being done and wants a training to ensure we’re doing the right thing on the ground. Wants to do it in a way that doesn’t provide hazards – partner with NDF. Stewards of tax dollars to get it done.

**Gary – 2015 EQIP Fund Pools**

*5% Wildlife Requirement –*

Sherm: Is there much of an opportunity to use this?

Gary: Yes, historically through WHIP. There was a drought pool.

*Veteran/Military –* Gary describes criteria for this, beginning farmer/rancher, HU, etc. and veterans provision.

*NWQI –* Lex covered it when discussing project in Fallon. Gary recommends we continue looking at watersheds we did in 2014.

Sherm agrees with this. Is there an opportunity to get funds for this that other states don’t use?

Gary explains $449,000 spent last year on dairy initiative. We haven’t had people beating down our doors for this. One good sized dairy per year usually comes on board as it’s a large sum of money and technical resources. Watersheds that were a priority: Sheckler, Soda Lake, etc.

Dick: The Humboldt River should be added to the list. Asks us to think about it.

Bruce: It’s challenging because it’s not a water quality issue, it’s water quantity. RCPP fits better.

Dick agrees but says the less water you have, the lower the quality.

*High Tunnel -*

How to handle high tunnel – how do we handle now that it is no longer an initiative?

Identified it’s a good fit for producers that are providing to farmers markets and smaller producers.

Try to maintain that 70% be allocated to local fund pools out of GA.

NA allocations are use or lose fund pools and move to another state that can use the funds. NA take 18% of the funding – if we don’t spend it, it goes to a state that can. We need to participate or have the activities here to receive the funds.

Gary said we do have a large pot of EQIP money we can use and have control of.

Gary brought to everyone’s attention that they will notice he did not add drought related initiatives in the fund pool and how it’s hard to work towards a plan on the Humboldt watershed when we do not know what we’re working with or the target issue.

Lack of water isn’t a quality issue – need to look at functioning issues.

Can we point a finger at something on an impairment to work towards a plan for improvement?

Some issues related to things that happen a long time ago are still affecting the Humboldt River. Water quality are with the streams that flow into it. Some of these streams are labeled municipal use. Could be constraints that are put into place that make it unworkable.

Gary made a recommendation to Bruce to stay in the same watersheds for next year.

Without high tunnel limitations how do we move forward? We’ve been able to help small producers and homeowners who had never participated before.

Gary asked for High Tunnel Caps and ideas:

Suggestions: Limit 50K payment cap for hoop houses, landowners have to meet all state and local permits, need to identify weather issues and life span is only about 3 years or possibility a need for a maintenance plan.

Dick – Thinks the 50K cap is a good idea – thinks there might be a good idea to think of a more permanent structure if the 3 year project worked for the participants or agrees maybe it needs a maintenance plan to replace plastic in 3 years but not the entire structure.

Neil – Elko – Thinks that 50K for only a 3 year project is not good use of NRCS funds – maybe there should be a more long term solution like a greenhouse.

Gary suggests that greenhouses may be too expensive and backs the idea of a maintenance plan suggested earlier.

**Elko Association of Conservation Districts:**

They have desires to limit the number of pivots under EQIP. Bruce told them they can’t do that early on. We can look at payment caps and ranking criteria. We pay 75% now. We could lower to 50%. Currently there is no limit on the number of pivots but suggested limiting the payment caps.

Bruce opened the floor for discussion on how to handle the issue of pivot replacements:

Jaime - Concerns are that the pivot replacements are really costly and more funds are going to pivot replacements and not other projects. Mentioned that other states do not provide FA to replace pivots and we are providing 100% of the replacement costs.

Dick – thinks the cap on pivots would be a good idea.

Christie – suggested ranking should come into play instead of caps, because we could get into the habit of capping everything.

**Gary – Easement programs**

Gary informed everyone that GRP has been removed and replaced with an AG Land Easement plan.

Bruce – Closed meeting and brought up possible **action items**:

RCPP – Humboldt River Committee

Options on the pivot issue