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NEW MEXICO

NRCS STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Albuquerque NM USDA Conference RM 629, November 29, 2018

Introductions:

Rick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Programs:

State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups-

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)-

EQIP and EWP:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – We are now Team Funding in NM. We received \$19.6 Million dollars for allocations in FY2018. There was a big jump in allocations that were obligated for NM Wildlife from FY17 to FY18. We look at Private and State Lands for allocations not Federal. The Field Offices need to share with producers what fund pools are available. Producers will have to designate a fund code at some point. Communication needs to increase between partners and the FO. Every FO did receive funding and all FO obligated contracts.

National Initiatives-

- Strikeforce: \$4,000,000 Allocated
\$ 4,000,615 Obligated
- Acequia (Future Directions) – Was not funded by NHQ
- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI): \$ 350,000 Allocated
\$177,391 Obligated (primarily to Animas River Watershed)
- Ogallala: \$1,350,000 Allocated
\$991,284 Obligated
- Lesser Prairie Chicken (LCPI) - \$500,000 Allocated
\$750,484 Obligated
- Joint Chiefs - \$153,800 Allocated
- WaterSMART – Initiative with BOR where:
 - BOR works with water and irrigation districts to improve operations water delivery systems, water districts, and water basins.



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- NRCS then works with producers within the delivery system area or district to increase on-farm efficiencies and introduce conservation practices.
- General Criteria:
 - Participants and Land must meet normal EQIP Eligibility Criteria
 - Participants receive irrigation water Bureau of Reclamation source
 - Irrigation water provider has an approved Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART project for water conservation
- NM Received \$2.5 Million which was divided to each project area.
 - Each project area received an initial allocation of \$416,666
- 6 Project Areas in NM
 - Animas Watershed- \$80,249
 - Arch Hurley- \$625,883
 - Carlsbad Irrigation District (CID)- \$375,154
 - Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)- \$520,331
 - Middle Rio Grande Irrigation District Socorro District

EQIP 2019 State Priorities:

- Degraded Plant Condition
- Insufficient Water
- Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife
- Soil Erosion
- Soil Quality Degradation
- Water Quality Degradation

NM FY 2019 Major Deadlines:

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) – Requires a local sponsor, they must provide minimum 25% match.

EWP- UTE Park Fire: NRCS have been working mostly on Philmont. We have identified several places for sediment basins as well as areas for contour tree felling or mastication along with re-



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seeding. There is also the potential for debris removal and some wattles and a diversion around some structures.

July 11, we met with Vermejo Park Ranch. We identified a location for a sediment basin and mastication with reseeding. They opted out of participating in EWP.

BAER – SWCA was hired by Department of Homeland Security to head up the BAER team.

EWP- Ute Park Flood: A recent wildlife in the upper reaches of the watershed directly above Ute Park has changed the dynamics of the watershed.

ACEP, CSP and CIG:

Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Agriculture Land Easements (ALE) and (WRE)

ALE: NRCS payment is 50% of the appraised market value of the easement. This can be raised to 75% for **grasslands of special significance**.

WRE: NRCS payment is 90% of the appraised market value **not to exceed \$5,000 per acre**.

Developing the Ranking Questions:

CSP Local Ranking Priorities:

- Rangeland- Improves habitat for grassland birds.
- Cropland- Increase in the amount of conservation tillage, cover crops and pollinator habitat.
- Forestland-

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) –

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) –

- Stimulate innovation in agricultural conservation technologies
- NM will budget \$75,000 from EQIP allocation for 2019
- Applicants must provide 50% match, can be cash, in-kind and donations
- Priorities: Soil health, grazing management, organic production, others?



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Conservation Reserve Program CRP:

Steve reminded everyone that CRP is a FSA program and oversees its management. NRCS's responsibility is to provide technical assistance to FSA and their clients through conservation planning. The CRP manual states that planning and conservation practice designs must meet NRCS policy and standards. The CRP manual also mentions that NRCS State Technical Committee (STC) is responsible for selecting and approving conservation practices used in CRP Conservation Plan of Operations. Joilynn Garcia, FSA CRP Manager will be working with the STC to approve CRP practices for the 2019 Farm Bill.

Recent CRP Updates:

- Since the 2014 Farm Bill has expired, a new CRP is not authorized or funded.
- CRP contracts from the 2012 Farm Bill still have funds for annual rental payments, modifications and cost-share.
- Annual CRP Soil Rental Rates (SRR) have changed since 2017:
 - 2017 General CRP SRR Range - \$15-\$37/acre
 - 2018 General CRP SRR Range - \$12-\$20/acre
 - 2017 Grassland CRP SRR Range - \$15/acre
 - 2018 Grassland CRP SRR Range - \$2-\$5/acre

Partner Updates:

Went around the room and provided partner updates.

Suggested a State Technical Committee briefing on updates and changes on the new Farm Bill, this will be held sometime in 2019.

Have completed 2014 and 2015 acequia projects (approximately 17 acequias).