



United States Department of Agriculture

NEW MEXICO
NRCS STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
MS Teams Net Meeting, August 26,2021

Introductions:

Kenneth Branch welcomed everyone to the meeting. Provided introductions of the instructors and reviewed the agenda. He informed everyone the meeting is being recorded.

Due to the amount of information NRCS is asking for feedback and recommendations by October 22,2020 via email to the state program managers Athena Cholas and Aaron Reynolds. Contact information is provided in the power point presentations.

State Conservationist Update

Xavier Montoya Remarks: Continue to be flexible- NRCS had and continues to see lots of changes, not only with the 2018 Farm Bill but with the COVID 19.

NRCS has brought on new employees who begin their career teleworking

Can see some changes to 2023 farm bill such as climate change,

Programs:

Kenneth Branch-

- Provided the group the responsibilities of the State Technical Committee as there are new members to the group.
- He asked all recommendations be provide by October 22, 2021
- This will allow members of the Committee time to attend LWG meetings
 - Provided information on the LWG. Meetings will be posted to the state website when they are scheduled.
- Provided the proposed program deadlines for FY 22
- Provided information on Coronavirus Agriculture Relief Payments (CARPs)

Please see the document titled “State Technical Committee Aug 26, 2021 Opening, General, CARP updates” for materials/information presented on this subject.

Aaron Reynolds

- presented an update on EQIP.
- A FY 2021 recap was given
- The proposed FY 2022 spending plan for the state was also discussed
- Information was also provided regarding Source Water, WaterSMART, High priority practices.
- Aaron proceeds to give information for EQIP FY 2022. He reviewed high priority practices as well as priority resource concerns with weighted percentages, where feedback is needed by the committee. (for a complete list of resource concerns and practices see attachment titled “Resource Concerns in EQIP national ranking template”
- EQIP CIC priority areas, land uses, practices and resource concerns were discussed.



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- Aaron asks that recommendations and feedback be sent to him via email (Aaron.reynolds@usda.gov) by October 22 ,2021

Please see the document titled “State Technical Committee Aug 26, 2021 EQIP” for materials/information presented on this subject.

Athena Cholas

- The program percentages for NM were reviewed as well as Caps for practices. Request for recommendations
- Provided updates and ongoing activities to the Payment schedule. She noted some practices that NRCS New Mexico is currently reviewing. Feedback was requested from the committee by October 30, 2020.
- The Conservation Stewardship program was also discussed during this time. Athena provided some updates related to the sign up and funding levels in FY 21 as well as the fund codes established for the program.
- The ranking weights and resource priorities were discussed.
- An Agriculture Conservation Easement (ACEP) program update was also given by Athena. During this update she provided a list of input needed from the committee. She also gave a basic breakdown of each easement type.
- Athena closed out with some basic information regarding the Conservation Innovation Grants. Athena reviewed the 6 active agreements and listed some state priorities where input is needed.

For full details of the materials presented please refer to the topic titled “State Technical Committee- Aug 26,2021 Payment Schedule, CSP, ACEP, CIG”.

Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)

Ana Gomes provided the committee an update on the new CART. She is presenting information on how the tool works, the workflow and the ranking questions. During this session the state priority resource concerns were discussed as noted during Aaron and Athena’s presentations.

Ana showed the group the minimum and maximum percentages for each resource concern. Kenneth requested the committee have recommendations for state priority resource concerns and weighted percentages to him by October 22, 2021

For full details and for a complete list of resource concerns see the documents titled “CART Update” and “State Technical Committee- Aug 26, 2021 CART Assessment”. Also for a complete list of resource concerns and practices see attachment titled “Resource Concerns in EQIP national ranking template”

Resource Technology (RTS):

Steve Kadas, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, gave an overview of the ecological sciences areas covered by the RTS staff.

Steve talked about the new definition for “Non-Industrial Private Forest” NIPF.



The national definition was based on acres. The largest forest landowners would not meet that definition.

We are requesting feedback to NM NRCS so we can create our own definition of NIPF.

Another topic is identified hydric soils on farmed wetlands. NM does not have these soils as they do in the Midwest or East. Most of these are around riparian areas or playas. 11 indicators that look at the aspects of hydric soils. Such a low need, there is no need to change the 11 indicators. Steve will send out indicators for review and comments as to how they affect NM's hydric soils.

Regional Conservationist Partnership Program (RCPP)

Kris provided the deadlines of August 27, 2021 for RCPP applications.

She showed the RCPP projects that have been completed, renewed or still active with funding amounts.

Kris reviewed the four RCPP projects that have been announced with the application deadlines for producers to apply.

For full details of the materials presented see document titled "State Technical Committee- Aug 26. 2021 RCPP"

Partner Updates:

FSA Updates:

Joilynn Gray provided updates on CRP

She talked about the objectives and cost share. She reviewed the rental rates and other additions such as climate smart practice incentive.

The practices for climate smart were reviewed and the practice types percent.

CRP is voluntary which has general CRP and Continuous CRP

- General
 - Sign up periods was Jan 4 to July 23rd
 - 133 offers and all were ranked and accepted in Curry, Lea, Roosevelt, Torrance and Union
- Continuous CRP
 - Offers are not ranked, they have to meet eligibility
 - Grassland has different criteria.
 - Had several offers for HELI
 - Sign up Jan 4- Aug 6
 - Counties include Curry, Harding, Lea and Roosevelt
 - SAFE
 - First one was in Lea
 - FSA has hit the cap for this program
 - Another project was approved in Lea and Roosevelt Co
 - No offers submitted
 - Grasslands
 - Total of 326 offers
 - Offers being ranked, no results as of today
 - Most offers were for 15 years.



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Conservation priority areas under CRP

- National CPA
 - NM is not included
- State CPA
 - Allow state to address concerns in a designate area
 - Receive extra points
 - Air Quality- Southeast NM
 - Wildlife- LPC areas
 - Water Quality- East NM
 - Asked for recommendations on CPA be send to her and Steve Kadas

Roosevelt SWCD

- Provided information on shade balls and made recommendation to NRCS that this be a conservation practice paid on through EQIP
- See attached document titled “shadeball_presentation” and “Final Ball Cover Log Sheet Sept 2018” for details regarding shade balls presented by the SWCD.