**Idaho State Technical Committee**

**December 1, 2020 @ 9:00am MT**

**virtual**

**Adobe Connect Link:** [https://usda.adobeconnect.com/spw/](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fusda.adobeconnect.com%2Fspw%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cad112b5c362a4f34e55208d890ac386f%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637418416641539451%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=kZ7%2FcJ%2FgaHCUGoEKpnCNVN2kwbrLyYE1E8J1OZa4WiM%3D&reserved=0) 
**Call in: 888-844-9904
Access Code: 9711524#**

**Attending:**

The Nature Conservancy

US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Casey Attebery – Sen. Crapo’s office

Idaho Rural Water Association

US Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Idaho Dept. of Agriculture

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Dirk Medive – Rep. Fulcher’s office

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Idaho Dairymen’s Association

US Forest Service (USFS)

Idaho Forest Growers

Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation

Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game

US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Idaho Ground Water Appropriators

Idaho Dept. of Lands

Rural Development (RD)

Idaho Farm Bureau

Farmer/Private Landowner

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

**Introduction of new Technical and State staff:**

* Dan Morrison, NRCS State Compliance Coordinator
* Cory Loveland, NRCS Snow Survey Supervisor
* Maureen Pepper, NRCS State Water Quality Specialist
* Jen Skeldon, NRCS State Biologist

**Staffing update - Curtis Elke, State Conservationist, NRCS**

Currently at 132 Full Time Employees (FTE)

* State Forester hired – Chris Town
* Partner forester positions – Wild Turkey Federation
* Two incoming next week
	+ Financial Services Specialist
	+ Management Analyst – Grants and Agreements
* Mentions of other planned hires
* Reorganization is under way

**Budget update - Curtis Elke**

* Currently in a Continuing Resolution
* NRCS Idaho has received its Advisory Budget. It is good not great. The State Conservationist has asked for additional funds.

**COVID update - Curtis Elke**

* Mission critical travel only
* Offices are currently closed to visitors. But we are open for business and taking phone appointments, conducting business virtually for the most part and visiting cutomers in the field by appointment.

**Western Waters Listening Session – Curtis Elke**

NRCS will host a listening session December 17 to hear from producers, producer organizations, water districts, irrigation districts, other interested water users, etc. regarding water issues in the western states. Western water quantity has been an issue and a broader discussion will take place with input from many western states water user groups. The notice will be placed on the Federal Register December 3.

**CD/CART update report- Orie Winger, Business Tools Coordinator, NRCS**

* Terminology overview
* Last STAC update was approximately 1 year ago
* New system is capable of evolving to meet changing needs
	+ Overview
		- New features/levels of detail
		- Assists with Program policy enforcement
		- Program neutral assessments that may open the door to other useful programs for producers
		- Information captured at the land unit level does not have to be re-entered every year.
	+ Orie made an appeal for GIS layers from partners that would help with quantifying information in CART.

**Cheatgrass Challenge update – Codie Martin, BLM Shoshone Field Manager**

* Co-lead with Josh Uriarte with Office of Species Conservation
* Overview of partners and history of the Challenge
* Proposals came from across the state
	+ Many good proposals, a few needed additional work and have been encouraged to correct deficiencies in the proposals and re-submit.
	+ Funded 6 proposals for $600,000+ from multiple funding sources
		- EQIP
		- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
			* Matching OSC, USFWS

**Easement Direction for Idaho - Curtis Elke and Wade Brown, Easement Coordinator, NRCS**

* Exploring the possibility of shared positions with some Land Trusts to assist with growing workload
* Looking at different ways to preserve agricultural lands in the face of rapid development, especially in the Treasure Valley
* Types of Easements
	+ Wetland Reserve Easement
	+ Agricultural Land Easement
* Overview of the 16 active easements around the state, where NRCS is working on finalizing the easement
* 150+ total existing easements
* Easement assessment is fed into CART as part of the ranking process

**The NRCS RFP process – Curtis Elke**

* Cooperative agreement or grant opportunity (matching funds)
* Identified some areas where we need more help, but we don’t have the human resources (e.g. Area-wide natural resource planning)
* Those who apply, should already have the skills to do the job. We aren’t expecting to have to do much training.
* Expected application period – Feb. 15-March 15

**FSA Update – Tom Dayley, State Director, FSA**

COVID Relief Program called CFAP #2 still open

* Producers are encouraged to explore those opportunities with the County FSA offices

Producers with expiring CRP contracts, should be encouraged to explore their options with both FSA and NRCS.

**Shared Stewardship Update – Ara Andrea, IDL Statewide Shared Stewardship Coordinator**

* What a difference management makes – a tale of fire on two differently managed forest stands
* Staffing report
* Funding report
* Northern Priority Area recap
* Southern Priority Area Recap

**Local Workgroup ReCap – Everyone**

Virtual meetings were not what NRCS wanted, but we adapted in the face of pandemic protocols.

We want diversity of opinion at these meetings and saw an increase in that at some meetings.

* Comments:
	+ - It seemed like active participation/discussion was down due to virtual format.
		- Awkward silences allowed NRCS to jump in more than maybe was needed in some cases.

**EQIP – Lori Kassib, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS**

* Current EQIP Allocations for FY2021
	+ - Formula for Local Team allocations
* EQIP Timeline for FY 2021
	+ - Since the deadline for EQIP applications is Friday, Dec. 4, anyone who still wants to apply should contact their local NRCS office as soon as possible to set up an appointment with a conservationist and discuss all program options.

**Review of 1619 Policy and acknowledgment for partners – Greg Becker, Acting State Resource Conservationist, NRCS**

Compliance requirement, prohibits sharing of the following private information:

**Announcements from committee members**

* The Nature Conservancy- They have submitted an RCPP with Twin Falls Canal and are excited about the proposal and the partnership to address resource issues on Rock Creek.
* Idaho Water Users Association – Pandemic operations and protocols.

**Subcommittee reports**

* Soil Health update

**Continuing Resolution Update**

Dirk Mendive with Congressman Fulcher's office said they are still waiting to see whether it will be another Continuing Resolution or an Omnibus. Mendive said he talked with the Legislative team this morning, and it seems like it might be another CR, but he will follow up with the STAC as soon as they know more.

**Next State Technical Meeting** – March 2, 2020