

USDA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Des Moines, Iowa

MICROSOFT TEAMS

Teleconference Coordinates:

Dial: 1-202-650-0123

Passcode: 861818169#

December 16, 2021

1:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.

Minutes

Welcome/Opening Comments

State Conservationist

- Approval of Minutes from September 16, 2021
 - There were no additions or corrections to the September 16, 2021, minutes. All in favor of approving.
- Introductions
- Agency Updates
 - FSA State Executive Director introduction – Matt Russell
 - NRCS
 - Discussed the State Technical Advisory role. If you would like to know the functions of this committee, please let the STC know and NRCS can send this out to the committee. The key input is technical advice on the Farm Bill Programs.
- 590 Standard
 - 590 Nutrient Management Standard IA Draft ready for review and comment. We will be conducting meetings to review the standard, guidance document and changes. We will also be open for comment and feedback at that time.

Farm Bill Programs – Alan Lauver

EQIP

- 1) Current Iowa EQIP FY22 allocation: \$32,167,451
 - a. New fund pool: Cover Crop Initiative - Pilot program in four counties - \$3.2 million
 - b. Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC) being implemented – 5% of funds
- 2) 1st ranking date for EQIP is January 28, 2022
- 3) Coronavirus Agricultural Relief Payments (CARP) are being paid on 23 contracts for a total of \$755,160. The payment helps cover the cost of higher material costs due to coronavirus

CSP

- 1) FY2022 CSP-GCI: Working to obligate 11 applications, for 344.5 acres and \$31,025.
- 2) FY2022 CSP Renewal: Working obligate 163 applications for \$6.6 million.
- 3) FY2022 CSP Classic allocation is for \$9.2 million. Ranking deadline is March 4, 2022.

ACEP-WRE

- 1) FY22 Ranking cutoff is January 21.
- 2) Area Easement Specialist are working on ranking and management plans/compatible use authorizations.

ACEP- ALE

- 1) Subcommittee meets on 12/14 to set application and ranking cutoff
- 2) Processing FY2020 enrollments 2 with INHF.

WREP

- 1) Working with IDNR to finalize legal boundary surveys.
- 2) Pending FY22 allocation
- 3) Working with IDNR to finalize legal boundary surveys.
- 4) Pending FY22 allocation

Partnership Update- Scott Cagle

Regional Conservation Partnership Program – the following 5 RCPPs were awarded in 2020 are active.

The following RCPP Projects are active:

- #1894 Turkey River
- #1896 Iowa Systems Approach to Conservation Drainage
- #1976 North Raccoon
- #2166 Soil and Water Outcomes Fund
- #2266 Midwest Ag Water Quality Partnership Renewal

We are finalizing the agreements for the five new RCPPs that were awarded in 2021. These should begin to be implemented in the spring.

EWP Recovery – Th Emergency Watershed Protection Recovery program has obligated over \$15 Million to 123 Damage Survey Reports that have transpired into 53 agreements with county entities and expending a little over \$12.7 Million so far. The EWP Recovery for the derecho event generated 34 Damage Survey Reports and has over \$7.5 million obligated for removal of debris from rivers and creeks. We have expended a little over \$325,000 on four completed agreements.

Iowa Partners for Conservation and State Conservation Innovation Grants – Iowa NRCS awarded three State CIGs and 3 IPCs this year.

CIG Blackhawk SWCD - Perennial Groundcover: A Scalable Systems Approach to Achieving Soil & Water Conservation with High-Yield, Row Crop Production in Iowa.

Practical Farmers of Iowa Soil Health - Putting Soil Health to the Test: Can We Reduce N Rates and Improve ROI?

Practical Farmers of Iowa Water Quality - Improved Water Quality and Landscape Change through Novel Investment in Grazing Infrastructure

IPC Iowa Association of State Soil Commissioners - Technical and Outreach Support to Promote Soil and Stream Health Within the Clear creek Watershed

Pheasants Forever - Increasing Wildlife Habitat and Soil Health through Amplified Engagement with the Agronomic Community

Poweshiek SWCD - Poweshiek County Conservation Partnership

WFPO – We have three Watershed Flood Prevention Operation agreements that are now active and all of them have initiated watershed planning in Polk, Clarke and Dubuque counties. All future WFPO opportunities will be required to first have a Preliminary Investigation and Feasibility Report completed at the discretion of the State Conservationist. Currently, we have one PIFR being implemented as soon as final guidance is issued.

All partners are encouraged to visit the Farmers.gov website for updates to funding opportunities.

Sub-Committee Reports

CSP- Anna Johnson

- No significant update this month.

EQIP- Steve Hopkins

- Livestock target: NRCS requested reducing the livestock allocation from 59% to 50% of Iowa's EQIP allocation, which would free up funding for other programs.
- Soil Health Initiative: subcommittee met to discuss ways to increase the participation. It was agreed there were needs for more technical assistance and funding.

- There was discussion regarding the list of action items and the developed guide sheet for cattle producers. This includes a range of activities that will help to assist with promoting soil health.
- During the subcommittee meeting, Kevin Kuhn discussed a document proposing to increase participation for the SHI. Some of the proposed actions were to develop an NRCS fact sheet, develop a guide sheet for cattle producers, and include soil testing as part of initiative.
- Recommendation to STC is for SHI in Kevin's action document, to move approx. \$1.1 million to the SHI from the approx. \$2.7 million in livestock funds that will be freed up.
- STC stated that he has partially approved this request and has requested for more dollars; he received a match on cover crop initiative, but not on the livestock initiative. We will continue that request.

State CIG- Steve Hopkins

Recommendation: CIG back-to-back discussion will be happening soon to discuss the outcome of the meeting consistency. This outcome will be brought back to the next meeting.

ACEP-WRE - Kelly Smith

- Subcommittee met through Teams on December 8th and discussed the ACEP funding. \$1.6 million for ACEP Stewardship; \$7.2 million for new enrollments; and potential doubling of ACEP funding through the "Build Back Better" plan.
- Recommendation: FY22 GARC Rates: The subcommittee's recommendation is to use present to present option 2 for FY22 and discuss best options for FY23 during summer 2022. Option 2: Hire a 3rd party appraiser to appraise each tract before a value is offered.
- STC will weigh the pros and cons prior to making decision on this.

ACEP-ALE – Sindra Jensen

- Subcommittee met on the 14th to talk about the priorities in process of the working lands easements program. The subcommittee went through ranking and discussed the program's purpose and best ways to expand within Iowa. The partners would like to secure more funding for ALE enrollments in Iowa. Applications to be submitted will be March 11th with ranking date 8 weeks following.
- Another discussion was held regarding seeking designation for certain grassland areas in the state to be grasslands of special environmental significance. This would be special category in ALE and additional receive a higher percentage rate and separate ranking/funding pool. The subcommittee will be looking into this more as they move forward.

CRP- Sean McMahon/Curt Goettsch

- No significant update this month.
- Iowa leads the nation in CRP contracts.

SWP- Christina Murphy/Bridget Durst

- No significant update this month.

Future Meeting Dates

March 17, 2022

June 16, 2022

December 16, 2021 State Technical Committee Meeting- Programs Report

Alan Lauver, Acting ASTC-P, NRCS

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EWP-FPE

- 1) 25 agreements to purchase moving forward. We are now issuing extensions to the purchase agreements and landowners are second guessing their decisions.
- 2) We will start working on closings. The closing agent we have a contract with has been a struggle to get him to follow the statement of work we provided. Shelley is working with him and Sindra is getting status updates.
- 3) We have an additional 20 applications to still process.

December 16, 2021

Iowa NRCS State Technical Committee Update - Partnerships

Regional Conservation Partnership Program – the following 5 RCPPs were awarded in 2020 are active.

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EQIP Subcommittee Meeting Notes
Virtual Meeting by Google Meet & Phone
December 7, 2021
11:30 am – 12:50 pm

Subcommittee Members Present: Andrew DiAllesandro, USFWS; Will Myers, IDALS; Catherine DeLong, ISU; Jorgen Rose, PFI; Alicia Vasto, IEC; John Whitaker, CDI; Amy Crouch, TNC; Bruce Barnhart, LICA; Nick Baumgarten, DNR Private Lands Coordinator; Chrisi Means, EPA; Emily Martin, INHF; Anna Johnson, Center for Rural Affairs; Paige Frautschy, TNC; Allie Rath, Pheasants Forever; Keegan Kult, Iowa Ag Drainage Alliance; Suzan Erem, SILT; Jeff Hastings, Trout Unlimited; Bruce Carney, producer; Dave Petty, producer; Matt Dvorak, Iowa DNR Source Water Coordinator; Steve Hopkins, Iowa DNR, EQIP/CIG Subcommittee Chair.

NRCS Staff advisors/assistance: Rubyana Neely, EQIP Coordinator; Kevin Kuhn, Resource Conservationist; Alan Lauver, Acting Asst. St. Con for Programs; Jon Hubbert, State Conservationist.

Meeting Notes

Program Updates:

Rubyana Neely (along with Alan Lauver) provided program updates on FFY22 EQIP allocations, including NWQI, NWQI Source Water, MRBI, and other EQIP programs. (FFY22 EQIP funding is shown in a table provided separately.)

Discussion Topics:

Livestock Target: NRCS has requested reducing the Livestock allocation from 59% to 50% of Iowa's EQIP allocation, which frees up some funding for other programs (Livestock would still include both grazing and AFO applications).

Soil Health Initiative:

Background: A Soil Health Initiative sub subcommittee met to discuss ways to increase participation in the SHI. It was agreed that there were needs for more technical assistance and for more funding.

As a follow up, NRCS met to discuss several action items to increase participation.

At the EQIP Subcommittee, Kevin Kuhn went over a document (provided separately) outlining the proposed NRCS action items to increase participation the Soil Health Initiative. Among the proposed actions were:

- developing a new NRCS fact sheet
- possibly developing a guide sheet for cattle producers, to help get more participation in the SHI from cattle producer
- including soil testing as a part of the initiative

Recommendations:

The EQIP Subcommittee voted unanimously to recommend the action items for SHI in Kevin Kuhn's document, and to recommend moving approximately \$1.1 million to the SHI from the approximately \$2.7 million in Livestock funds that will be freed up to be moved.

Regarding the soil testing, the EQIP subcommittee voted unanimously to keep soil testing as optional, not required, in the SHI.

The meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm.

Submitted by:
Steve Hopkins, Iowa DNR, Chair EQIP Subcommittee

11-9-21 draft Soil Health Initiative Action Items

<u>Potential Action Items</u>	<u>Responsible Person</u>	<u>Date to be Completed</u>
1. F.Y. 2022 Iowa Soil Health EQIP Initiative Fact Sheet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update to show newly added 528 grazing scenario b. Update current incentive rates if changed c. Update 590 additional practices language d. Update to show Soil Health Testing Component – <i>need to determine this first</i> e. Add: <u>Climate Smart</u> – <u>Soil Smart</u> – <u>Water Quality Smart</u> under title 	Jason Johnson/ KK	12/1/21
2. Make 590 more approachable with our Conservation Planners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give training on the new 590 standard b. Create strategy for support to Field Office / Conservation Planners to help them implement 	Kevin Kuhn	Nov / Dec 2021
3. Increase applications/ contracts with cattle producers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create guide sheet on how to effectively graze cover Crops in a CB and in a CBO rotations. b. Create guide sheet on how to feed small grain to swine & cattle c. Research on small grain markets d. Outreach plan to cattleman 	Jeff Matthias	Jeff Matthias
4. Soil Testing component <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine what this would include: conservation activity 216 / Hayne type test / infield assessment b. Determine if this will be an option in the initiative or an added requirement 	Hillary Olson	EQIP Sub Committee

Note: This is being looked at now so we can be prepared to act on it for this year.

- 5. Determine/ Increase Technical Assistance those Producers enrolled are receiving Kevin Kuhn
 - a. Reach out to those Field Offices that have soil health initiative contracts
 - i. Set up TEAMS meeting to discuss how things are going, expectations, how can we assist
 - b. If need develop a strategy to offer more assistance to the Conservation Planner
 - c. Discuss program with Conservation Agronomists at Heartland Coop.
 - d. Have grazing specialists volunteer working with the Conservation Planner for contracts with 528 grazing plans needed.
 - e. Have Soil Health Specialists volunteer to assist the Conservation Planner with infield soil health testing.

- 6. Make this funding initiative easier for the FO to use
 - a. Create strategy that the FO would have a better idea if their applications would receive funding. *i.e., make funding pool for each Area or Team sub area.* Programs for F.Y. 2023

- 7. Increase Funding to the Initiative
 - a. Ask national to allow Iowa to go to a 50% livestock funding level Program/ Hubbert

Note: this has been done after its determined what other states have used for livestock operations. When it's known if NRCS will meet its 50% mandatory obligation of EQIP funds to livestock.

Other Action items discussed:

- 1. Increase Small Grain Incentive, ask to have the incentive raised from \$9.44 annually (*\$28.32 for 3 years*)

Note: NRCS won't pay for forgone income on a cash crop. Also: the payment is \$9.44/ acre for all acres in the rotation. CBO rotation of a 100-acre field after 3 years would have 100 acres of Corn, 100 acres of Beans, and 100 acres of Small Grain. Total payment for adding a small grain into the rotation is 100 acres * \$9.44/ac * 3 years = \$2,832, \$2,832 / 100 acre of small grain planted = \$28.32/ ac.

- 2. Make it so we can fund 329 and 340 practices together without a 590 or 328 small grain component. Could add Soil Testing as 3rd requirement.

Note: we do have a lot of contracts now for cover crops and no-till. Soil Health testing would be an additional.

3. Give an incentive for putting in perimeter fence to allow for grazing cover crops
4. Create a phased in approach to the 590 practice

Note: Iowa NRCS has discussed the idea of splitting the 590 into 3 segments that would allow a producer to meet the standard for P & K, Nitrogen, and / or Sensitive Areas. This concept will need to be given to National NRCS when the 590 Standard is reviewed again. If it was adopted Incentive payments could be made for each of those areas.

5. **CSP Bundle B0000CPL25 – Cropland Soil Health Synergy**
Review existing 340 scenarios that state no grazing. Follow bulletin to ask that those be changed to allow grazing. 340 sceneries include: E340A and E340H.

Kevin Kuhn/ Programs send in 2/2022

FY22 Initial EQIP Allocation

EQIP FY22 Allocation	Percentage	\$30,567,451
Beginning Farmer	5%	\$1,528,373
Socially Disadvantaged	5%	\$1,528,373
Livestock	59%*	\$18,034,796
Wildlife	10%	\$3,056,745
Source Water Protection	10%	\$3,056,745
CIC: Conservation Incentive Contract	5%	\$1,528,373
MRBI		\$3,984,521
NWQI		\$395,930

* 50% = \$15,283,726

Additional Fund Pools

- High Tunnel
- On Farm Energy
- Organic
- CPAs, DIAs, CEMAs (was CAPs)
- Soil Health Initiative
- Prairie Pothole
- Non-Farm Bill Targets
- Proposed Prairie Strips

NWQI breakdown

NWQI Project	HUC12 Code	FY22 EQIP Project Budget
Existing Implementation Watersheds		
Wall Lake Inlet	071000060401	\$55,400
Lower South Fork Chariton River	102802010108	\$555,710
Middle South Fork Chariton River	102802010105	
Upper South Fork Chariton	102802010102	
Headwaters Wolf Creek	102802010204	\$622,021
Lost Branch-Chariton River	102802010207	
Chariton Creek	102802010201	
Silver Creek	070600020202	\$201,000

NWQI SWPA Project	FY22 Project Budget
Implementation SWPAs	FA
Spirit Lake SWP (2 HUC12s)	\$262,656
Cedar Lake (Winterset) SWP (1 HUC12)	\$139,530

MRBI breakdown

MRBI Project	# of HUC12s	FY22 EQIP Project Budget
Existing Implementation Watersheds		
Boone River – Eagle Creek	7	\$141,548
Cedar Creek	3	\$432,250
Turkey River	3	\$102,170
Deep Creek	2	\$301,700
Lower Skunk River	6	\$577,213
Walnut Creek	3	\$282,475
West Branch Floyd River	4	\$232,462
West Fork Crooked Creek	3	323,436
North Racoon	10	\$815,000
Mud Creek	7	\$234,000
Central Turkey River	6	\$236,505
North Branch Turkey River	3	\$365,000
Middle Cedar	3	\$235,236
Slocum	1	\$98,840
South Skunk – Headwaters Cedar	4	\$540,787

EQIP-CIC (Conservation Incentive Contract)

- Payments for management practices
- Can be a steppingstone for producers between EQIP and CSP
- Based on priority resource concerns within a high priority area
- 5-year contracts
- Funds must be 5% of EQIP general funds

Code	Asset
328	Conservation Crop Rotation
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till
338	Prescribed Burning
340	Cover Crop
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till
368	Emergency Animal Mortality Management
449	Irrigation water Management
484	Mulching
511	Forage Harvest Management
528	Prescribed Grazing
554	Drainage Water Management
590	Nutrient Management
591	Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste
595	Pest Management Conservation System
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
647	Early Successional Habitat Development-Mgt
810	Annual Forages for Grazing Systems
207	Site Assessment and Soil Testing for Containments Activity
216	Soil Health Testing
217	Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management
218	Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment
228	Agricultural Energy Assessment

Cover Crop Initiative --Pilot

- Funds: 3.2 million
 - 1.6 from Iowa EQIP General fund
 - 1.6 match from National
- Only in select priority area
- Cover crops only practice in fund pool
- Quick turnaround, obligation date is January 28

EQIP FY22 Allocation	Percentage	\$32,167,451			
Beginning Farmer	5%	\$1,608,373			
Socially Disadvantaged	5%	\$1,608,373			
Livestock	50%	\$16,083,726	59%	\$18,978,796.09	
Wildlife	10%	\$3,216,745			
			Prairie Pothole	\$500,000	
			Prairie Strips	\$100,000	Proposed
Source Water Protection	10%	\$3,216,745			
CIC	5%	\$1,608,373			
MRBI		\$3,984,521			
NWQI		\$395,930			
Cover Crop Initiative		\$3,200,000			
	Required:	\$34,922,784			
Remaining:	-\$2,755,333.35				
High Tunnel		\$200,000			
On Farm Energy		\$400,000			
Organic		\$200,000			
CAPs		\$200,000			
Soil Health		\$500,000			
Non Farm Bill Targets		\$500,000			
	Sum:	\$36,922,784			

Remaining: **-\$4,755,333**