

# USDA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

March 17, 2022

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

## Minutes

### Welcome Comments

State Conservationist

- Approval of Minutes from December 16, 2021 - minutes were approved as written.
- Introductions
- Agency Updates
  - FSA State Executive Director – Matt Russell
    - General sign up for CRP opened on January 31<sup>st</sup> and closed on March 11<sup>th</sup>. FSA will continue to collect signatures and get the offers in to a submitted status. There are currently 494 offers, this is expected to increase slightly.
  - NRCS
    - ASTC-Programs introduction – Sam Adams
    - State Resource Conservationist – Mike Henderson
- 590 Standard Mike Henderson
  - Public comment period will be open for feedback until April 22, 2022. This will be located on the NRCS Iowa homepage and under technical resources.
  - There are only a couple of changes within the document. Some of the highlights are categorization of the phosphorus index only affects the medium risk range; aligning with the Iowa laws on the commercial fertilizer; minor adjustments with the nitrogen as far as the protocol of how to utilize the MRTN to standardize the rate across all producers.

### Status of Farm Bill Programs

Sam Adams

- Programs Update
  - **EASEMENTS DIVISION**
    - FY2022 ACEP-WRE New Acquisitions - tentative selected 13 enrollments 4 pothole applications and 9 riverine. \$7.2 million initial allocation
    - FY2022 ACEP-WREP - working with IDNR on two applications in Story County \$3 million
    - EWPP-FPE – 37 applications. Approximately \$36 million
      - 21 agreements in the process of closing.
      - 8 agreements in the process of surveys being completed
      - 2 agreements to purchase with the Landowners for their decision
      - 6 ready or will be ready soon to go to National Internal Controls.
    - FY2022 ACEP-ALE New acquisitions – application deadline is 3/11 appears we will have four parcel applications. \$300,000 Initial Allocation
    - Easement Staffing increase – Three vacant Area Easement Specialists and five new easement specialists to be hired.
  - **FINANTIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**
    - **CSP**
      - **CSP Renewals**
      - \$6,467,018
      - 156 contracts
      - 89,937 acres
      - **Classic CSP**
      - Initial Allocation: \$9,242,500
      - 246 ranked applications, 173 applications selected

- A 2<sup>nd</sup> batching date for Beginning Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged, Organic, MRBI Boone River-Eagle Creek

- **EQIP**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> batching date for EQIP, EQIP RCPP 2014, and RCPP 2018 was sent out
- Cover Crop Initiative 90 original preapprovals, 3 cancelled; 84 obligated as of 3/11/22 8am. 3 left to obligate (~\$135,849). Iowa total obligations should be \$3,191,240
- EQIP total current Allocation of funds in protracts \$28,967,451 (does not include CCI allocation or RCPP)
  - Total amount EQIP preapprovals in allocation tracker as of 3/11/22 - \$26,307,657 (658 preapprovals).
  - Total EQIP obligations 7%.

- **RCPP**

- Roughly \$65 million allocated since 2015 for NRCS contracting
- 192 applications
- 21 partner agreements

• Partnerships Report

Scott Cagle

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program** – We now have seven RCPP projects that are active

- The following RCPP Projects are active:
  - #1894 Turkey River Watershed Partnership Project
  - #1896 Iowa Systems Approach to Conservation Drainage
  - #1976 North Raccoon Partnership for Soil and Water Outcomes
  - #2266 Midwest Ag Water Quality Partnership Renewal
  - #2374 Cedar River Source Water Partnership
  - #2448 SE Iowa Watershed Partnership
  - #2570 Floyd River Water Quality Partnership
    - We are finalizing the agreements for two new RCPPs that were awarded in 2021. These should begin to be implemented in the spring.
    - #2602 Partners for Natural Infrastructure
    - #269 Innovative Conservation Agriculture (Renewal)
    - New Batching date for all RCPP projects is April 8<sup>th</sup>.

- **EWP Recovery** – Th Emergency Watershed Protection Recovery program has ended for the 2019 flooding events. NRCS obligated over \$15 Million to 123 Damage Survey Reports that transpired into 53 agreements with county entities.

- The EWP Recovery for the derecho event generated 35 Damage Survey Reports and has over \$7.6 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**

- IPC – The Notice of Funding Opportunity is available and the deadline for proposals is April 6, 2022.
- The Notice for Funding opportunities announcement is being prepared for the Iowa the State Conservation Innovation Grants and should be ready for release soon.

- **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 completed in Linn County.

- All partners are encouraged to visit the Grants.gov website for updates to funding opportunities.
- All partners are also encouraged to have staff working on agreements visit with our field office staff before conducting activities.

## Sub-Committee Reports

- CSP

Anna Johnson

- No update this month.

- EQIP

Steve Hopkins

- The subcommittee met to discuss the CIC program that was rolled out in January. There were discussions about selecting priority resource concerns for the program. There was also an emphasis made for focusing on soil health and regenerative grazing. Those items were recommended at the January meeting.
- Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC)--The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss priorities and implementation for the Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC) program in Iowa, which would be rolled out in January of 2022.
- Program Updates:
  - Rubyana Neely provided a brief summary of which decisions needed to be made for the FFY22 CIC program. The program could be used either statewide or in priority areas, and it was to have no more than 3 priority resource concerns. Priority resource concern (PRC) were to be selected at the resource concern category level.
  - Statewide:
    - After discussion by the subcommittee, it was decided to recommend statewide coverage for the program.
  - Priority Resource Concerns and Priority Practices:
    - After discussion, it was recommended to include the following priority resource concerns categories: Soil Quality limitations; Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss; Livestock Production Limitations.
    - Applications must address at least one PRC within these RC categories; emphasis on soil health, regenerative grazing
    - It was recommended to keep the list of practices, excluding mulching and reduced tillage
  - Program Implementation—the CIC program would be announced in January of 2022, to meet NRCS program deadlines.

- State CIG

Scott Cagle

- Summary: The subcommittee met to discuss the FY2022 State Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG).
  - The total amount allocated for the grant in FY22 is \$350,000 in EQIP funds, as in FFY21. There will be a ceiling of \$100,000 per application.
  - Scott Cagle of NRCS reported that there are new CIG priorities from the new administration, including soil health and urban agriculture.
  - Last year's FFY21 Iowa CIG priorities were: 1) Habitat; 2) Water Quality and Quantity; and 3) Soil Health.
  - NRCS will also revise the application review process as a way to remove bias or the potential appearance of bias from application reviews, so that applicants are not involved in the review.
  - Scott Cagle reported that CIG Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) materials will be updated by NRCS for FFY22, will be released at the end of January of 2022, and will have an application due date of April 1, 2022, as shown below:
    - NFO release: late January of 2022.
    - Application Due date: April 1, 2022
    - Applications will be reviewed by NRCS and selected members of the CIG subcommittee after the application due date.
- Post Meeting Update—NRCS Headquarters notified Iowa NRCS in February of new CIG requirements for the FFY22 CIG, and Iowa NRCS is currently negotiating changes to the language of the NFO with NRCS HQ.

- ACEP-WRE Kelly Smith
  - No update this month.
  - A quick update was discussed regarding the GARC rates and the recommendation from WRE previously. These are continuing to be used for 2022.

- ACEP-ALE Sandra Jensen
  - No update this month.

- CRP Sean McMahon/Curt Goettsch
  - The subcommittee has not been able to meet yet as there are only a couple of CRP items to discuss, but they will be coming together soon to discuss.

- SWP Christina Murphy/Bridget Durst
  - No update this month.
  - The subcommittee will be reaching out soon to Programs to start pulling the statistics from the signups for review.

### **Agency Announcements**

- Steve Hopkins – within the Iowa DNR 319 program, recently hired Miranda Hayes as the Northeast Iowa Coordinator. Miranda will be working with the NE watershed groups and partners in that area.
- Derrick Klimesh –
  - Pleased to announce the partnership on the Ag Mitigation Bank. They've also partnered with IDALS on a large wetland restoration banking site in Humboldt County. They will be restoring upwards of 140 acres of wetlands.
  - Conservation compliance – participants in the foreign programs' available credits to trade. NRCS recently released 26.9 credits which is the equivalent to an acre. This resulted in a waiting list, so this program might be used up fairly quickly.
  - Wetland mitigation bank program – compliance is still continuing to close out the HEL backlog. NRCS is getting very close on getting a national wetland determination tool which will provide consistency across the nation for participants.
- STC –
  - Just a friendly reminder that an announcement was forwarded to the committee on CEAP. Two results have been announced and there is quite a bit of information about the results and how you can look at those gains as well as some losses. This provides some very good insight into some of the work we've done in the past.
  - Avian Influenza – There are a few sites that have been detected within Iowa. There is the concern with the migratory waterfowl that moves to date and the vector opportunity that exists, as well as the impact on domestic livestock. IDALS will be taking the lead on this. If there are any questions you can route those through Kate Bussanmas.
  - COVID restrictions – We seem to be moving in a positive direction. We will attempt to hold our June 16<sup>th</sup> meeting in person as well as have Teams available. This will be a hybrid meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 2 PM.

### **Future Meeting Dates**

June 16, 2022

September 15, 2022

December 15, 2022

## Iowa State Technical Programs Report March 17, 2022

### EASEMENTS DIVISION

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**Iowa NRCS State Technical Committee Update - Partnerships**

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**EQIP Subcommittee Meeting Notes**  
**Virtual Meeting by Google Meet & Phone**  
**January 13, 2022**  
9:30 am – 10:30 am

Subcommittee Members Present: Andrew DiAllesandro, USFWS; Will Myers, IDALS; Vince Sitzmann, IDALS; Jorgen Rose, PFI; John Whitaker, CDI; Amy Crouch, TNC; Bruce Barnhart, LICA; Nick Baumgarten, DNR Private Lands Coordinator; Chrisi Mean, EPA; Doug Jones, EPA; Anna Johnson, Center for Rural Affairs; Kate Hansen, Center for Rural Affairs; Paige Frautschy, TNC; Keegan Kult, Iowa Ag Drainage Alliance; Suzan Erem, SILT; Bruce Carney, producer; Dave Petty, producer; Steve Hopkins, Iowa DNR, EQIP/CIG Subcommittee Chair.

NRCS Staff advisors/assistance: Rubyana Neely, Previous EQIP Coordinator; Christine Evans, Incoming EQIP Coordinator; Alan Lauver, Acting Asst. St. Conservationist

**Meeting Notes**

**Discussion Topics:**

**Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC)**--The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss priorities and implementation for the Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC) program in Iowa, which would be rolled out in January of 2022.

**Program Updates:**

Rubyana Neely provided a brief summary of which decisions needed to be made for the FFY22 CIC program. The program could be used either statewide or in priority areas, and it was to have no more than 3 **priority** resource concerns. Priority resource concern (PRC) were to be selected at the resource concern category level.

**Statewide:**

After discussion by the subcommittee, it was decided to recommend statewide coverage for the program.

**Priority Resource Concerns and Priority Practices:**

After discussion, it was recommended to include the following priority resource concerns categories: **Soil Quality limitations; Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss; Livestock Production Limitations.**

Applications must address at least one PRC within these RC categories; emphasis on soil health, regenerative grazing

It was recommended to keep the list of practices, excluding mulching and reduced tillage

**Program Implementation**—the CIC program would be announced in January of 2022, to meet NRCS program deadlines.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 am.

Submitted by:

Steve Hopkins, Iowa DNR, Chair EQIP Subcommittee

**CIG Subcommittee Meeting for FFY2022**  
**Virtual Meeting by Google Meet and Phone**  
**January 12, 2022**  
9:00 am-10:15 am  
**Meeting Notes**

Members Present: Emily Martin, INHF; Susan Kozak, IDALS; Suzan Erem, SILT; Jorgen Rose, PFI; John Whitaker, CDI, Steve Hopkins, Iowa DNR, EQIP/CIG Subcommittee Chair

Staff advisors/assistance: Scott Cagle, NRCS; Robert Mier, NRCS.

**Meeting Notes**

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Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 10:15 am.

**Post Meeting Update**—NRCS Headquarters notified Iowa NRCS in February of new CIG requirements for the FFY22 CIG, and Iowa NRCS is currently negotiating changes to the language of the NFO with NRCS HQ.

**(Scott Cagle can provide a verbal update at the March 17, 2022 State Technical Committee meeting.)**

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