

USDA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Neal Smith Federal Building
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
NRCS Hugh Hammond Bennett Conference Room
Des Moines, Iowa

MICROSOFT TEAMS Teleconference Coordinates:

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June 16, 2022
1:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.

Minutes

Welcome Comments

State Conservationist

- Approval of Minutes from March 17, 2022
 - Minutes were approved as written.
- Introductions
 - Round of introductions were made.
- Agency Updates
 - NRCS
 - Budget – we’ve had decent funding at the beginning of the year to start the farm bill rollout. It’s like what previous years have looked like regarding the EQIP. CSP was a little lower than we’ve had in previous years. Easement programs were funded at a consistent level, and we’ve had a large increase in EWP because of the 2019 flooding. The agency requested additional funding to cover some other workload parameters and some additional CSP and ACEP ALE funding.
 - Staffing – NRCS is in good shape this year. At this time, we are finding that we are significantly down in staffing but operating at a higher pace than we can get with the support from HR capacities. Uh, budget wise staffing, we're in a very good shape this year. Our national limit is at 500 and our current staffing is at 452, so roughly 48 staff decrease we are short. We are hiring internal and external candidates but having some relocation concerns. We do have some lag to fill positions, but we are still operating effectively and keeping up with the speed.
 - FSA
 - Currently awaiting results for the grassland signup; there will be more information and clarity at the fall meeting. Please see CSP update for further items.

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. Appraisal price is leading to lower acceptance. \$7.2 million initial allocation
 - FY2022 ACEP-WREP - working with IDNR on two applications in Story County \$3 million
 - EWPP-FPE – 32 applications. Approximately \$36 million
 - FY2022 ACEP-ALE New acquisitions – application deadline is 3/11 appears we will have three parcel applications. ~\$800,000 in funding
 - Monitoring is complete on 1,099 of 1,816 easement parcels (60.52 percent).
 - Onsite work remains to be completed on 691 parcels.
 - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- CSP obligation as of 6/15/22
 - 129/207 obligation rate: 62%
 - CSP General funds: \$9,566,786
 - NIPF: \$374,284
 - Agland: \$9,140,755
 - BF: \$579,524
 - SWP: \$1,197,952
 - Organic: \$20,382
 - CSP-MRBI: Boone River: \$51,747
- EQIP Obligation as of 6/15/22
 - 676/815 obligation rate: 74%
 - EQIP General funds: \$31,751,527
 - Livestock
 - 412 selected applications
 - \$19,262,456
 - 59% of allocation
 - Wildlife habitat
 - 184 selected applications
 - \$3,256,480
 - 10.12% of allocation
 - Source Water Protection
 - 49 selected applications
 - \$3,319,428
 - 10.32% of allocation
 - Beginning Farmer
 - 174 selected applications
 - \$8,440,241
 - 26.24% of allocation
 - Socially Disadvantaged
 - 12 selected applications
 - \$574,903
 - 1.8% of allocation
- RCPP
 - Roughly \$65 million allocated since 2015 for NRCS contracting
 - 192 applications
 - 21 partner agreements
- Partnerships Reports
 - Regional Conservation Partnership Program – We now have ten (10) RCPP projects that are active.
 - The following RCPP Classic Projects are active:
 - #1894 Turkey River
 - #1896 Iowa Systems Approach to Conservation Drainage
 - #1976 North Raccoon
 - #2266 Midwest Ag Water Quality Partnership Renewal
 - #2374 Cedar River Source Water Partnership
 - #2448 SE Iowa Watershed Partnership
 - #2570 Floyd River
 - #2696 Innovative Conservation Agriculture Renewal
 - The following RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangement Projects are active:

Scott Cagle

- #2166 Soil and Water Outcomes Fund
- #2602 Iowa Conservation Infrastructure
- These projects are provided through \$65 Million in Federal funds and \$131 Million in Partner contributions.
- **EWP Recovery** – The 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 completed 86% of the agreements and the remaining agreements are being completed at this time.
- **Iowa Partners for Conservation and State Conservation Innovation Grants**
 - We are funding two IPC agreements in FY23.
 - Iowa Organic Association – Organic Training & Tools for Iowa NRCS Staff
 - Iowa State University - Forest-to-Farm: Innovative carbon media and supply network for enhanced bioreactor adoption and performance
 - We are currently negotiating four new State Conservation Innovation Grants for FY23 as a result of the recent NFO.
- **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.
- **Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) Lateral Effect Tool** Derrick Klimesh
 - The four States of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota have standardized the equations and procedures for calculating drainage setbacks and they have been formalized in a common 4-State supplement to the National Engineering Handbook. All four States will also direct producers to a common website and user interface to provide access to the lateral effect distances and supplemental guidance. While information for most soils will be readily available to producers, there will remain certain classes of wetlands that will require a site-specific evaluation by NRCS. The website is planned to go live in June of 2022.
 - This doesn't change our methodology; it is just a tool for the public that want to maintain their eligibility and receive recommendations.
- **Technical Standards Update** Mike Henderson
 - **Eco Sci Standards**
 - CPS 590 Nutrient Management – working through additional public comment period. Target adoption for standard is October 2022.
 - CPS 659 Wetland Enhancement – working through comment period to implement approved national variance to allow tile water flow into oxbow restorations.
 - CPS 642 Critical Area Seeding – Developing a fillable Implementation Requirements document.
 - Removing reference for using CPS 590 Nutrient Management for establishment. CPS 590 Nutrient Management standard does not apply to one-time nutrient applications at establishment of permanent vegetation.
 - CPS 382 Fence – Utilizing revised national standard dated 7/21 to update Iowa standard.
 - CPS 511 Forage Harvest Management – Utilizing revised national standard dated 10/20 to update Iowa standard.
 - CPS 484 Mulching – Utilizing revised national standard dated 10/17 to update Iowa standard.

- CPS 512 Pasture and Hay Planting – Utilizing revised national standard dated 10/20 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 338 Prescribed Burning -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 10/20 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 528 Prescribed Grazing -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 3/17 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 391 Riparian Forest Buffer -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 10/20 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 5/19 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 585 Stripcropping -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 10/17 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 612 Tree/Shrub Establishment -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 5/16 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 490 Tree/Shrub Site Preparation -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 10/20 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 9/10 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 380 Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 7/21 to update Iowa standard.
- CPS 650 Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation -- Utilizing revised national standard dated 7/10 to update Iowa standard
- o The plan is to update the standards, have them ready for adoption and then review annually.

Sub-Committee Reports

- CSP

Anna Johnson

- o CSP Minutes
 - CSP signup numbers currently for 2022 (*see attached table*).
 - \$9.2M has been allocated for CSP contracts. Any additional funds coming from NRCS-HQ would not come with targets, but funding pools where targets are not met yet would be prioritized. Then shift to accepting more ag land classic applications.
 - Producers who are not selected are allowed the option of deferring their contract to the following year.
 - Program staff collaborated with NRCS Jason Johnson on outreach about additional April 8th signup. No more solicitation for 2022 signups will be happening.
 - PFI could do targeted outreach for organic and socially disadvantaged funding pools but need lead time.
 - These producers are more likely to be interested if it is clear what conservation practices are available for them: organic practices for organic operations and note many folks who qualify as socially disadvantaged have small and diverse operations.
 - NRCS can do some research on available practices that might be attractive to these groups.
 - NRCS had done a big push on training for field staff on organic operations, new staff who missed it may appreciate receiving it.
 - Iowa NRCS will decide when the 2023 signup deadline will be.

- o CFRA farmer roundtables and farmer feedback

Kayla Bergman

- CFRA held farmer roundtables in February, solicited farmer feedback via postcard campaign.
- Received lots of feedback about individual experiences.
- Two themes rose to the top: producers want more support in interpreting soil tests and want to develop renewal applications and selecting practices/enhancements to be less difficult.
- Some discussion. Note Iowa NRCS will be making recommendations to NRCS-HQ at the end of April about new conservation practices to add; can solicit feedback from District Conservationists.

- Next meeting
 - Plan to meet in mid-July
 - Expect to discuss & select Priority Resource Concerns for 2023.
 - Request for feedback from NRCS staff on how the PRC's selected for 2022 are working.

- EQIP

Steve Hopkins

- EQIP Minutes

- EQIP Program Updates:
 - Rubyana Neely provided an update of FFY22 EQIP funding obligations to date by program, the details of which were shown on a spreadsheet (provided as a separate document).
 - The overview of the funding summary by program led to several questions, including:
 - How has the national Soil Health Initiative been working? (\$3.2 million has been obligated in Iowa, according to Rubyana Neely) There were questions raised whether it as advertised well enough by NRCS in Iowa (eligible counties received notification), and whether there could be more publicity about that (and other) programs.
- Riverine Program Discussion:
 - Jeff Hastings of Trout Unlimited had raised concerns to NRCS several weeks prior to the EQIP Subcommittee meeting that the current ranking of riverine applications seemed to not be favoring quality habitat improvement applications but were instead favoring lower quality applications, with a large amount of the available funding spent on streambank stabilization but not habitat improvement. A small meeting was held between several NRCS state office staff, Trout Unlimited staff, and staff from the NRCS Decorah office, and the EQIP Subcommittee chair, to discuss the issue. It was decided to establish a sub-subcommittee with fisheries and wildlife expertise, and NRCS program experience, to review the riverine ranking process and to make recommendations back to the EQIP Subcommittee. Steve Hopkins offered to invite different professionals to participate in the sub subcommittee, and task them with conducting a review of riverine ranking. They'll then bring back those suggestions to the EQIP committee and then further to the STAC when available.
- Additional Discussion:
 - Sean McMahon recommended that more advertising be done to better promote prairie strips programming and funding. It was decided to focus the next meeting on making specific recommendations to NRCS to improve its promotion. The stream bank does have a value, but it is a lower value. It's a good thing to look at.
 - Sean McMahon also suggested that we could do better advertising on the soil health initiative and also better promote the prairies strips – advertise the different funding available with all the initiatives.
- EQIP Funding Sheets (*attached packet*)
 - 74% obligated eqip funds
 - 810 selected applications
 - Current Available Funds \$152,092.00
 - Please refer to the attached table of funding.

- ACEP-WRE

Kelly Smith

- No update this month, but please follow up with Kelly if you have any questions.

- ACEP-ALE

Sindra Jensen

- No update this month, but please let Sindra know if you have any follow up questions.

- CRP

Sean McMahon/Matt Russell

- Safe acres going to continuous signups. The CRP subcommittee will do some minor changes with this, but FSA doesn't require approval from the STAC, just giving a heads up. Sean mentioned that he had a national notice that had a requirement review of all the safe projects. There were changes made to them to comply with those rules. It was noted that IDNR have had all the safe projects, Todd and his staff took on reorganizing those. The plan is to have a subcommittee to discuss that next week. The projects are due to national by June 24th.
- Clear 30
 - It's a 30-year incentive that prioritizes eligible water quality practices such as riparian buffers are used to filter strips, contour buffer strips, grass waterways, as well as some of our wetland restorations. If producers happen to have contracts expiring September 30th of this year, they're eligible for a long term 30-year contract.
 - If there are contracts expiring this year, they would be eligible for the 30 years contract on October 1st. FSA made this a national priority in 2021. There were 160 contracts in Clear 30 last year for the first time and hoping to see this grow.
- Hired a new conservation specialist, so that makes two in the last year.
- SWP Christina Murphy/Bridget Durst
 - Working with the IDALS on MS river basin.
 - Regarding the national Water Quality Initiative, they're also in the process of working with DNR on the opportunity to make shifts and changes with that. Both of those came out in a recent national Bulletin. They'll be working with those lean partners to address those two opportunities on source water protection.

Member updates

- IDALS – Working on gathering a wetland team and hearing some stir on the cover crops rate.
- Senator Ernst's office – As always, please let them know if any updates are needed to the farm bills and how they can assist.
- Iowa Soybean – RCPP is heavy right now. Hired a soil conversationist to work on this program. Iowa Soybean is holding 6 grassroots meetings and to discuss more conservation efforts.
- RMA – Pamela Stahlke reviewed a form that pertains to the double cropping. RMA will be looking to expand their crop insurance on double cropped soybeans to more counties and is looking for the county and producer feedback. The survey will be due July 1st. [RMA Double Cropping Flexibility \(office.com\)](#)
- Iowa Organic Association – Roz Lehman provided a thank you for the opportunity to provide organic and technical training. There will be technical training being offered on July 18th and will focus on organic production systems. More information will be located on their calendar of events.

Future Meeting Dates

September 15, 2022

December 15, 2022

Iowa FY2022 Ranking Pools	Watershed	FY22 EQIP allocation
FY2022 IA AFO		\$7,559,457.00
FY2022 IA CPA, DIA, CEMA		\$176,295.00
FY2022 IA High Tunnel		\$131,517.00
FY2022 IA Non AFO		\$5,428,259.00
FY2022 IA On Farm Energy		\$874,550.00
FY2022 IA Organic		\$189,162.00
FY2022 IA Prairie Pothole		\$683,278.00
FY2022 IA Socially Disadvantaged		\$339,801.00
FY2022 IA Soil Health		\$769,993.00
FY2022 IA SWP		\$2,705,435.00
FY2022 IA Wildlife		\$2,532,349.00
FY22 IA Cover Crop		\$3,191,228.00
FY22 IA EQIP CIC		\$1,882,800.00
FY22 IA Prairie Strips		\$9,479.00
FY2022 IA Non Farm Bill		\$578,900.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Boone River-Eagle Creek-Incl	\$108,655.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Cedar Creek	\$571,070.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Central Turkey River	\$0.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Deep Creek	\$93,475.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Lower Skunk River	\$361,268.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Middle Cedar	\$105,071.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Mud Creek	\$158,996.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	North Branch Turkey River	\$353,452.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	North Raccoon	\$24,714.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Slocum	\$111,862.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	South Skunk-HW Cedar	\$413,689.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Turkey River	\$135,405.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	Walnut Creek	\$181,944.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	West Branch Floyd River	\$507,543.00
FY2022 IA MRBI	West Fork Crooked Creek	\$811,292.00
FY2022 IA NWQI	Rathbun Lake	\$501,071.00
FY2022 IA NWQI	Silver Creek	\$187,329.00
FY2022 IA NWQI	SWP Cedar Lake	\$17,070.00
FY2022 IA NWQI	SWP Spirit Lake	\$6,635.00
FY2022 IA NWQI	Wall Lake Inlet	\$42,099.00
Totals		\$31,608,505.00

Current Available Funds \$152,092.00

Targeted National Priority	Selected Apps	Cost	% of Allocation
Livestock	410	\$19,171,351.14	59.60%
Wildlife Habitat	184	\$3,225,049.19	10.03%
Source Water Protection	49	\$3,319,428.00	10.32%
Socially Disadvantaged	12	\$572,903.00	1.78%
Beginning Farmer	170	\$8,346,205.00	25.95%

74% obligated
810 selected applications

FY2022 Iowa CSP Allocation						
Fund	Dollars Allocated	Selected Dollars	Balance (Available Dollars)	Allocated %	Selected Final %	# of Applications Selected
Ag Land Classic	\$6,720,625	\$6,351,258	\$369,367	72%	76.8%	130
Beginning Farmer (BF)	\$505,080	\$495,066	\$10,013.98	5%	6.0%	16
Socially Disadvantaged (SD)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0%	0.0%	0
Source Water Protection	\$1,019,636	\$1,008,282	\$11,354	11%	12.2%	16
Organic Certified	\$200,000	\$21,590	\$178,410	2%	0.3%	1
Organic Transition	\$200,000	\$0.00	\$200,000	2%	0.0%	0
NIPF	\$274,492	\$269,202	\$5,290	2%	3.3%	15
NIPF-BF	\$120,286	\$120,067	\$219	1%	1.5%	3
NIPF-SD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0%	0.0%	0
CSP-MRBI: Boone River	\$202,500	\$0.00	\$202,500	2%	0.0%	0
Total	\$9,242,619	\$8,265,465.02	\$977,153.98	100%	100.0%	

181 of 246 applications selected

Second round sign up deadline: April 8, 2022

FY23 CSP renewal sign up deadline: April 15, 2022

Ranking deadline for 2nd round: May 20, 2022

Requested an additional \$1 million dollar funds for CSP FY22. National will notify Iowa this week if additional funds are coming.

Addendum

Clarified over email following the meeting: on the CSP-MRBI funds, there were no applications submitted on the first round of applications. If no applications eligible for these funds are submitted under the second round sign up the funds will be returned to the National office.