## FY 2023 - Team 3

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program Proposal**

Team 3 consists of the following field offices: Chama, Hernandez, Santa Fe and Taos.

## Chama Field Office

The Chama NRCS field office is situated in the north central mountains of New Mexico and serves the Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) located in the north- central part of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. It is bounded on the north by the Colorado-New Mexico state line, on the east by the Tierra Amarilla Grant line, on the south roughly by the southern boundary of the Carson National Forest, and on the west by the Rio Chama and part of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, covering approximately 952,750 acres. Elevations range from 12,200 in the San Juan Range of the Rocky Mountains down to an elevation of 6,400 feet in the western plateaus and mesas. The Major Land Resource Areas are MLRA-48 RM and MLRA-36 WP.

Approximately 719,476 acres (75%) of the area is rangeland. About 100,000 acres of this is grazeable private forests that are best suited for multiple resource management rather than being used solely for timber production. Livestock carrying capacities vary greatly due to differences in elevation, precipitation, past management, and topography. However, they are generally more productive than most other areas of New Mexico. Grazing generally occurs only during the late spring, summer, and early fall due to high elevation winter snows.

Approximately 215,767 acres (23%) of the area is forested. The forest types are pinyon- juniper, aspen, ponderosa pine, and mixed conifer. These lands furnish many other important functions as watersheds, wildlife habitat, recreation, and grazing for livestock. The value of these areas for multiple resource management far exceeds its potential for any single purpose. Timber harvest production is average to poor in the ponderosa type compared to the rest of the state, and good in the mixed conifer types.

Approximately 17,507 acres (2%) of the area is irrigated hay land. The soils range from moderately deep to deep-over-shale. Surface water provides nearly all the irrigation water.

## Hernandez Field Office

The Hernandez Field Office serves the East Rio Arriba SWCD and is situated in north central New Mexico in the Rio Grande Valley just below the confluence of the Rio Chama and Rio Grande. The Rio Grande is New Mexico’s main waterway and dissects the state from north to south, providing habitat and life to a diverse range of species within the narrow corridor. Total SWCD acreage is approximately 1,331,960 acres. Approximately 48% is forested, 47% rangeland, and 5% is cropland.

This area consists of surface irrigated small farms and small rangeland livestock operations. Organic produce farming is increasing in the area along with specialty crops such as herbs. Many individuals and families grow hay on irrigated land and graze federal lands with permits during the summer and with some year around grazing operations. The area also includes two Native American pueblos, Santa Clara and Ohkay Owingeh, as well as various Spanish Land Grants that all have deep roots to the land and agriculture.

## Santa Fe Field Office

The Santa Fe NRCS Field Office provides services to the Santa Fe – Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Santa Fe – Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District boundaries consist of the northern three quarters of Santa Fe County, Los Alamos County, and a small area of southern Rio Arriba County. The area includes the cities of Santa Fe and Los Alamos, and four Tribal Governments. The SWCD covers approximately 1,208,903 acres, with 778,570 acres (76%) rangeland, 237,242 acres (23%) forested, and 13,901 acres (1%) of cropland. The area within the district is typified by small farms along the tributaries to the Rio Grande in the north and large ranches in the southern part of the district. Crops grown are alfalfa, grass pasture, apples, truck crops and some specialty crops such as flowers.

## Taos Field Office

The Taos NRCS Field Office is in Taos, NM, the county seat of Taos County. The Taos Field Office serves the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) which shares the same boundary as Taos County. The Taos SWCD covers approximately 1,400,985 acres and consists of 24,591 acres of irrigated lands (1%), 709,288 acres of rangeland (51%), and 667,106 acres of forests. Alfalfa hay, alfalfa-grass mix hay, pasture for livestock, and small grains are all produced on irrigated lands. Rangelands and some forest lands are used for livestock grazing with the primary type of livestock being beef cattle. Most of the forests are encompassed by Taos Pueblo and the Carson National Forest, however significant wildland urban interface exists and has been designated as a priority for reducing wildfire risk. All lands throughout the Taos SWCD provide food and cover for various types of wildlife including deer, elk, quail, and blue grouse.

## Local Work Group:

The Local Work Group (LWG) meeting was held September 13, 2023 at 1:00 pm virtually over Zoom. The LWG was hosted by the Upper Chama SWCD in Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico. There were 19 people in attendance. The Local Work Group was comprised of board members from East Rio Arriba SWCD, Taos SWCD, SWCD administrative assistants, and NRCS New Mexico employees from Team 3 and the North Area Conservationist.

## Conservation Needs Assessment:

## We discussed this and most districts do not have one. This is an item that I will address during the SWCD meetings.

## GIS Data prepared by the districts to use to funding:

## I will work with the districts to develop watershed plans when we are able to fund them.

## Program Outreach:

## The LWG recommended we schedule meetings in areas where we have low participation and, they suggested we target Land Grants and acequias within Team 3.

## Payment Schedule Recommendations for FY2023:

## No Recommendations

## CSP Recommendations:

## No Recommendations

## CIG:

## No recommendations

## ACEP:

## Taos noted that they should be allowed to manage easements since they have a working knowledge.

## Schedule of Activities:

## The schedule of activities was reviewed with the LWG.

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| --- | --- | --- |
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## Priority Resource Concerns:

Priority resource concerns were identified by the LWG for each land use below and their weighted priorities (percentages):

Irrigated Crop:

Water - Source Water Depletion - Inefficient Use of Irrigation Water 28%

Soil – Wind and Water Erosion - Sheet, Rill & Wind Erosion 12%

Water- Salt losses to Water - Salts transported in Ground Water 12%

Soil – Soil Quality Limitations - Organic Matter Depletion 12%

Soil – Soil Quality Limitations / Soil Health 12%

Soil – Soil Quality Limitations / Compaction 12%

Animals- Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and Invertebrates / Pollinators 12%

 Forest:

Plants -Degraded Plant Condition -Wildfire Hazard excessive biomass 40%

Plants-Degraded Plant Condition – Inadequate Structure and Comp. 12%

Animals – Livestock Production Limitation – Inadequate L/S Water 12%

Soil – Concentrated Erosion – Classic Gully Erosion 12%

Soil – Soil Quality Limitations / Soil Health 12%

Soil – Erosion - Rill and Wind Erosion 12%

Rangeland:

 Plants-Degraded Plant Condition - Plant Productivity and Health 30%

Plants-Degraded Plant Condition- Plant Structure and Composition 10%

Soil – Wind and Water Erosion - Sheet, Rill & Wind Erosion 10%

Animals – Livestock Production Limitation – Inadequate L/S Water 40%

Soil – Soil Quality Limitations / Soil Health- 10%

**Practices/Contract Item Numbers Caps:**

It was determined that no caps should be developed.

## Ranking Criteria:

The national ranking system will be used to rank all applications. State ranking questions developed at the state office level will be used. Local ranking questions were developed using the priority resource concerns addressed at the LWG meeting. Attached are the ranking sheets.

## Team Sub Accounts and Funding Considerations:

Should there be insufficient funding requests in any category; the remaining funds will be allocated in direct proportion to the requests received in the other categories.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent |  |
| Irrigated Cropland: | 35 percent |  |
| Rangeland: | 30 percent |  |
| Forest | 35 percent |  |

**Payment Percentage Rates:**

The LWG does not recommend a lower rate

**Screening Criteria:**

No screening criteria was recommended by the LWG.

**Tie Breakers:**

Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) is the only authorized method for documenting application ranking. Side records or questions documented outside CART are not acceptable. Ties are to be broken with the efficiency scores in CART. If applications have the same ranking and efficiency score all or none of the tied applications will be funded. There is no tie breaker beyond the efficiency score.

**CART Assessments:**

The LWG did not have and recommendations

**Attachments:**

Team #3 Ranking Questions FY 2023 - Rangeland

Team #3 Ranking Questions FY 2023 - Irrigated Crop/ Pastureland

Team #3 Ranking Questions FY 2023 - Forest land