

State Technical Committee (STC) Meeting
May 18, 2022

Welcome and Openings Comments – Tony Sunseri, State Conservationist, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for participating.

Introduction of New Executive Directors - Hello there, my name is Nikki Gronli I am coming to you all from lovely Oacoma and Cedar Shores where Rural Development (RD) is having a two-day state meeting to work on goals and strategies. I come from the broadband industry and was familiar with RD in the work they do from that side of thing's, and I am excited to join this group and also get to know your group better.

Hi, my name is Steve Dick. I am the new SD State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA). I come to this organization from the 17 years working for a farm coalition called Ag United for South Dakota (SD), and also from a producer's aspect from McCook County. I appreciate the opportunity to introduce myself and certainly appreciate the work that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) does along with the STC. So later you will be hearing from Owen Fagerhaug, our Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Expert, who deals a lot with the NRCS staff.

Congressional Representatives – Ryan Donnelly, Senator Thune's Office, Washington, D.C., provided us an update. Ryan stated that they are trying to get ahead with scheduling some round tables being state focused on various titles of the Farm Bill and getting some marker bells out there. The end of March, Senator Thune introduced a CRP Bill to try to fix some implementation issues with the 2018 Farm Bill and to make grazing more readily available for CRP contract holders. Then last week, he joined Senator Klobuchar from Minnesota in introducing the Ag Innovation Act. The idea is to have USDA do a better job of collecting conservation data across the various agencies and storing it in a secure data center so that researchers, we think SD and other trusted research partners of the department can. The plan to utilize the data in a manner that maintains producer's confidentiality to determine which conservation practices are having the most benefit. So, producers are aware of, you know, the effects of cover crops and no-till and other conservation practices and the impact they have on improving soil health and ultimately reducing their risk and improving their profitability. Especially right now as we think about the concerns of food shortage would be helpful to know what practices have the most benefits. There is a lot of support on the bill from the conservation community and we welcome any input you have on either CRP or the Ag Innovation effort and looking forward to working with you all on the Farm Bill. Please feel free to send me your ideas.

Tony stated that the locally-lead process is a critical part of what NRCS does. We need to hear from our partners and from our producers across the state. While we are presenting a lot of information today, we want your feedback, and this is the process that we want to hear what you have to say. We have the opportunity to incorporate that process here, this is what one of our big goals are. As we are going through our presentations if you have comments or feedback, please let us know.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Updates – Owen Fagerhaug, FSA, we got a few things in the works on the conservation side. We concluded the General CRP sign-up. We have 20,909 acres offered and there were 14,063 acres accepted. So that is about 41 or 42 percent success rate on our General CRP sign-ups. We do have some residual work to do here through the end of this week. We had 55,600 acres applied or offered under the Grassland CRP. These are yet

to be ranked so at this time we do not know what our success is on this program but at one time we were leading the nation on offered acres under the Grassland CRP. There is still a lot of interest in that conservation is still very prominent within SD. We do have some additional programs coming to us. Mark Norton, SD Department of Game, Fish and Parks may speak to this later on this discussion. We have a proposed Conservation Reserve Easement Program (CREP) Initiative on for the Sioux River Watershed area. That process is currently in the comment period on the National Environmental Protection Act Analysis. Any producers in the affected counties that would like to comment on the impacts to that area can by getting the information available at the county level and be part of the comment period. The CREP Initiative is being lifted. We are in essence mirroring the James River Watershed CREP that we currently have. The Draft PEA for the Big Sioux River Watershed CREP can be viewed on the FSA website here <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/South-Dakota/resources/index> The 30 day comment period started May 11 and ends June 9.

Owen Fagerhaug also reviewed Notice CRP-966 and summarized the review needed for the submission of the revised State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) proposal to comply the contents of the notice. Owen requested that the STC delegate the review to the State Technical CRP Subcommittee. Jessica Michalski, State Resource Conservationist, stated that all STC members wishing to be included on the CRP Subcommittee to submit their contact information to Kathy Irving, Secretary, NRCS, Huron State Office. The revisions will be reviewed by the CRP Subcommittee and submitted according to the Notice CRP-966 by the June 24, 2022, deadline. Below is link to access Notice CRP-966.

[Notice CRP 966.pdf](#)

- Owen discussed the comment period for the CREP proposal in regard to the Sioux River Watershed.
- Owen reviewed the Emergency Conservation Program and the counties currently eligible for sign-up.
- **2022 Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) Drought:** Tripp, Haakon, Jackson, Jones, Potter, Sully, and Dewey Counties.
- **2022 ECP Severe Storm - Derecho Event:** Grant, Roberts, Miner, Hamlin, Codington, Deuel, Brookings, Lincoln, McCook, Minnehaha, Moody, Lake, Charles Mix, Yankton, Clay, Union, Turner, Douglas, Aurora, Jerauld, Beadle, Spink, Brown, Bon Homme, Marshall, Day, Clark, Kingsbury, Sanborn, Davison, Hanson, and Hutchinson Counties.

Owen highlighted the workload completed for 2022 CRP sign-ups. The data is current as of 5/18/2022

WORKLOAD WEEKLY PROGRESS BY SIGNUP TYPE

Signup Type	5/18/2022
SU57 CCRP	
Complete	722
Submitted	98
Submitted for Plan	196
Submitted to COC	42
COC Approved	454

SU57 CLEAR30	
Complete	5
Submitted	0
Submitted for Plan	0
Submitted to COC	0
COC Approved	2
SU57 CREP	

Soil Health Update – Kent Vlieger, State Soil Scientist Specialist, provided an update on the last of the series titled No-Till Doesn't Work and Neither Do Cover Crops. The update provided followed the soil health principles for Integrate Livestock.

[Soil Health Principles Integrate Livestock](#)

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) – Colette Kessler, Assistant State Conservationist of Partnerships, stated that the SD NRCS did not have a CIG opportunity this year due to our budget. Please be thinking about next year and also working to prepare a proposal. We did send out an announcement on the Conservation Collaboration Grants and Agreement with the deadline of May 12. We are currently working to review all the proposals with the review committee. If you have any questions on this process, please contact Colette Kessler.

Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) – Jeff Vander Wilt, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, provided an update on the topic. We did something different this year. We requested that preproposals be submitted in March. We received a total of 41 preproposals. Thank you to NRCS and all our partners. We had a review committee and they made selections that would request a copy of the full proposal which were due July 1. We asked for 20 preproposals to be submitted. In July, we will go through these proposals for final selection. We should have a summary of selected proposals at the August STC Meeting. Jeff also indicated that it is not too early to be thinking of preproposals for next year. Jeff also stated that if you have questions and/or concerns, please contact him. The CIS Web page has a map and fact sheet for each of the Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021 CIS projects. [Conservation Implementation Strategy \(CIS\) | NRCS South Dakota \(usda.gov\)](#)

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCCP) – Jeff Vander Wilt stated that we had four proposals that were submitted. Three of them are SD only and one was multi-state proposal. Two proposals were Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA) and RCCP Classic. We are currently in the review process. States can provide comments to National Headquarters (NHQ). Selections will be made by the Chief at NHQ. Jeff stated that SD has a good chance of getting one selected. He also reported that starting June 5 Krecia Leddy, District Conservationist, Milbank Field Office, will be working out of the Huron State Office serving as the new RCCP Coordinator for 120 days or longer.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - Jennifer Wurtz, EQIP Coordinator, reported that we are currently in the thick of things on getting contracts obligated. South Dakota did not receive any additional funds from the funds assessment. We have ranked half of the CIS pre-proposals. All general fund pools are working towards finalizing the specific contracts. We do not have any disaster sign-ups at this time. If you have any other feedback, please let us know and we can take a look at any damages from the storm last week.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – Joyce Trevithick, CSP Coordinator, provided the group with a summary on the program.

CSP Classic 2022

- Application deadline was January 21, 2022
- 523 applications received
- South Dakota had an initial allocation of \$8,640,000
- Organic allocation of \$200,000, no applications so had to return funds
- Obligation deadline was April 29, 2022
- Funded 59 contracts
- Additional \$4,004,000 Received May 9, 2022, for possibly 19 more contracts
- Obligation deadline June 3, 2022

Classic 2022			
Resource Fund Pool	# RU contracts	Other	Total \$\$ Spent in RU
NIPF	No applications		\$0.00
Organic	No applications		\$0.00
Big Sioux	3		\$544,116.00
Coteau	4	1 BFR	\$627,099.00
Glacial Lakes	2		\$400,000.00
Upper James	4	1 BFR	\$757,728.00
Vermillion	3	1 BFR	\$431,125.00
Central Plains	3	3 BFR	\$536,013.00
Lower James	3	2BFR	\$496,503.00
Lower Missouri	2		\$219,667.00
Mid Missouri	2		\$546,327.00
North Missouri	2	2 BFR	\$509,714.00
River Hills	3		\$413,364.00
Hills	3		\$522,696.00
Northwest	2	1BFR	\$485,795.00
Prairie	1	1 SDFR	\$291,039.00
Southwest	3		\$636,904.00
Three Rivers	2	4 SDFR	\$1,164,053.00
These funds are separated here for informational purposes			
Beginning Farmer/Rancher (BFR)			\$973,201.00
Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher (SDFR)			\$855,092.00

CSP Renewals 2023

- Application deadline was April 15, 2022
- 333 applications received

- Obligation deadline will be after October 1, 2022

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Brandon Kottke, Easement Coordinator, stated that we received new guidance that came out on Compatible Use Authorizations in regard to the dates producers would be approved to hay on their Wetland Reserve Program and Wetland Reserve Easements. National Headquarters came out that each state align their easement mowing dates to match the CRP dates unless we have specific concerns. We held a meeting (subcommittee) to determine where does SD wanted to go with these dates for haying and grazing. Rather than having to request a two-year extension from NHQ, the subcommittee recommendation is to let the research play out before we decide on these dates. The fear is that if we change the dates the guidance would come out that we would need to change the dates again. Any questions or comments, please provide your feedback to Brandon Kottke. He also provided a copy of the map for the primary nesting dates for information and reference.

[PNS_dates.pdf](#)

Lateral Effects Policy Update – Laura Stern, Ag Engineer, Brookings Field Support Office, reported that our CS is nearing completion of our projects to provide consistent lateral effect information to producers in their plot region which includes the states of North Dakota (ND), South Dakota (SD), Iowa (IA), and Minnesota (MN). In the past, there have been concerns raised from stakeholders that back information was inconsistent among the four states and that it was delivered by different means and that it changed overtime without notification. In response to this, the four states have standardized the equations and procedures for calculating drainage setbacks and they have been formalized in a common format for state supplements to the National Engineering Manual. The setback databases have been calculated on the current soil survey data and will remain static. They will only be updated upon agreements of the state conservationist for the four states when it is clear need to do so because some of the setback's distances may have changed for some soils; however, the differences are minimal. All four states will also direct users to a common Web site and on this Web site then producers and contractors will be able to retrieve information that is readily accessible should they have any questions about the information they are receiving. That Web site will also direct them back to their local NRCS office. The Web site is planned to go live in June, so I cannot demonstrate it for you today or show it to you, but I am sure we can do that at a future meeting if there is any interest in doing it. Once the Web site becomes live, I can provide more of a update if needed.

South Dakota Wetland/HEL Compliance Update – Deke Hobbick, Assistant State Conservation for Compliance, provided an update on the topic.

Wetland Workload in South Dakota as of May 1, 2022

FSA-569 data from October 1, 2021: (includes carryover from FY2021)

-18 in Progress

-18 Completed

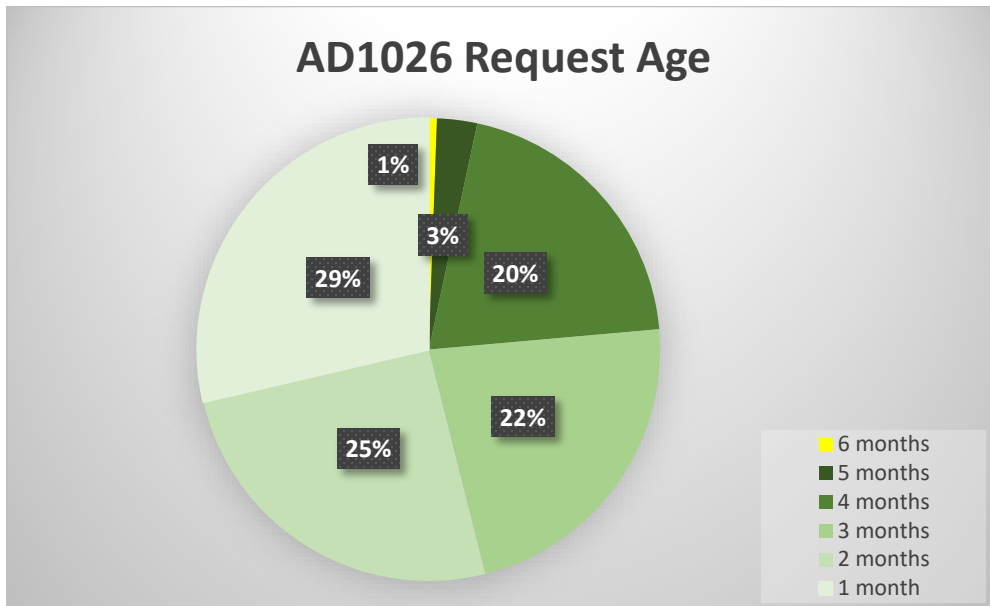
-30 Received

AD-1026 data from October 1, 2021: (Includes Carry over from FY2021)

-178 In Progress

-674 Completed

-577 Received



Highly Erodible Land Workload in South Dakota as of May 13, 2022

HEL AD-1026 data from October 1, 2021:

-1,098 Completed

-9 Outstanding

-673 New Breakings

-108 Determined HEL

Question – How many acres do we have of new HEL? Deke Hobbick indicated that he does not track this; however, we have to request this information from FSA to see what they have. Below is the updated information from Owen Fagerhaug, FSA.

As of May 16, 2022, we have 1,981 fields, total of 16,377.98 acres

With a native sod date of 2021

115 fields and 2,985.13 acres

Partnership Reports – Colette Kessler, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships, stated that the STC has been a wonderful venue for sharing information with our constituents. Colette stated that she wanted to take this time along with the rest of the Leadership Team to invite some of our partners to provide updates. We will do kind of a round robin format about your organization. Below is a list of individuals with specific organizations that provided updates. They are:

- Kevin Robling, Secretary, SD Department of Game, Fish and Parks
- Angela Ehlers, Executive Director, SD Association of Conservation Districts

- Jim Ristau, Director of Sustainability, SD Corn Growers
- Sandy Smart, Natural Resource Program Leader, South Dakota State University Extension
- Bruce Toay, Manager of Conservation Programs, Ducks Unlimited
- Kris Dozark, Department of Ag and Natural Resources
- Matt Morlock, Pheasants Forever
- Cindy Zenk, SD Soil Health Coalition

Tony Sunseri stated that we are all doing our part to try to help keep farming happening here, keeping our natural resources in place and just thank you all for your efforts and making this happen because not one of us can do it alone. Our next meeting is scheduled for August 17. We are going to be attempting to do a hybrid model where we will have a larger room available for folks in an area, but we are going to be offering this virtually also. I am not sure of the location at this time but we will get that information out to you very soon. There will be a virtual option for those who do not want or cannot travel whatever reason. So, thank you again for participating and hopefully I will get a chance to meet several of you between here and there. So please take care and be safe and have a great rest of your week.

The meeting was adjourned.

Kathy Irving

KATHY IRVING
Recorder