

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

June 15, 2023
1:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Minutes

Welcome Comments

Neil Dominy, Acting State
Conservationist

- Approval of Minutes from April 13, 2023 (*attached*)
 - Unanimous approval.
- Introductions
 - Neil welcomed everyone to the meeting. Participants that joined virtually typed their name in the chat. Participants in the room introduced themselves. Attendance list is below.
- Agency Updates - General
 - NRCS – Neil Dominy, Acting State Conservationist
 - Jaia finished up her Acting State Conservationist duties on June 3rd.
 - We are working on our fourth quarter close outs – agreements, budget, and program obligations.
 - Working as a team to develop a Roadmap for Success. This is business plan to strategically use IRA funding as well as foundational planning. Several conversations are being held to development the document. Due June 23rd.
 - Hiring update - Approximately 98 actions are in process. Constantly hiring.
 - Jaia Fischer, ASTC-Management & Strategy
 - We are working through CIG and IPC applications. Announcements should be made in the near future.
 - RCPP is being worked on at the national level. More information will be in the Partnerships Update.
 - We are working on Partnerships for Climate Smart in the state. Iowa has 27 projects approved nationally. Mike Henderson is the state lead and will be working with a national program manager on these projects.
 - FSA – Curt Goettsch, Chief Agricultural Program Specialist - Conservation & Compliance Department
 - Matt Russell is in Washington, DC and unable to attend the meeting.
 - FSA is currently busy with crop reporting.
 - Working through CRP workload.
 - Disaster programs are getting finished up or extended.
 - Hiring update – several Program Technician (PT) positions are open across the state. County Executive Director (CED) Trainee positions are also open, closes soon.
- Local Workgroup Feedback
 - This is opportunity for any local workgroup feedback to be shared.
 - Working with facilitators on 5-year plans across the state and have local work group meetings. Hard to get attendance at the local workgroup meetings. Request to encourage local groups to attend.
 - Question – Where can they find out about meetings? Check with the local district. The meeting should be posted in the local paper and online, and posted at least 24 hours in advance. People can request to be added to the contact list. About 90/100 plans developed and approved. We are talking about annual reviews with CDI on these plans.

Public Participation

- Guest opportunity to address committee and present opinion and recommendations. Written report encouraged but not required.
 - Neil opened for public comment. No comments received.

Neil Dominy, Acting State
Conservationist

Technical Topics Submitted by STAC Members

- Conservation Practice Standard Review
 - Discussion on Conservation Practice Standards not being processed consistently. Pat is the Chair of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Committee to present the information.
 - State Technical Committee Member provided feedback about standards and the review process, requesting changes from the old standard to the new standard. Different divisions are handling posting differently. We are looking into the policy and process. We will review at the next FOTG Committee Meeting and provide updates.
 - Sean McMahon- Meeting in Carroll County right now on drainage storage and recovery, which equates to Tailwater Recovery Practice Standard. Drainage water is captured, then pumped during the drier periods, which results in yield increases and nutrient load reduction. Iowa does not have this standard in place and there is interest. There is still a request for a Prairie Strips Practice Standard.
 - Question from chat: Will you extend the comment period when you address the redline change request? We will need to review policy and requirements before we comment.

Patrick Chase

Status of Farm Bill Programs

- Programs Report
 - See attached report.
 - Question - How much money is obligated in Iowa for wetland easements? National holds the money; we do not have a pot of money set aside for Iowa. 10 applications have dropped out. If the last 18 easements are closed out, Iowa will have 26 total easements. We had 76 applications at the start. A handful of applications dropped out relatively quickly.
 - Question - How much money is spent on EWP in Iowa? Do not know.
- Partnerships Report
 - See attached report.
 - Question - RCPP Application has a section about innovation, but no points are given for innovation. It seems to conflict. Do you know if innovation will be scored? There are 3 parts with points – impact, partner match, and partnerships and management. Innovation may be considered, but may not receive points. Robert will look into it.
 - Question - Climate Smart Grants and RCPP – Is anyone convening the Iowa Projects to identify potential areas of overlap? There is competition for the same clientele, and a desire to keep the information straight for clientele. It is confusing for partners, employees, and producers. We are working on compiling the list of projects and reviewing them both geographically and by resource concerns addressed. Climate Smart is selected at the national level. Internally we are working on a database for NRCS employees to show the different agreements and information. It may also include Climate Smart projects. Important to communicate the different programs available and not duplicating payments. We will need to monitor.

Sam Adams

Robert Mier

Sub-Committee Reports

- CSP
 - See attached report.
 - Kate invited others to join the group. Please email her if you'd like to join.
- EQIP
 - See attached report.
 - Proposed Action from Wildlife Sub-subcommittee: Formal recommendation to review ranking and funding distribution for the Wildlife fund pool.
 - Request for the Urban Ag Subcommittee to keep the EQIP Subcommittee informed with Urban Ag efforts.

Kate Hansen

Nick Baumgarten

- ACEP-WRE Kelly Smith
 - No report, no meeting.
- ACEP-ALE Chair
 - Seeking a chair.
- CRP Sean McMahon
 - See attached report.
 - Question – Could you expand on the biofuels and grazing pilot project on CRP? We do not have the information yet. There is interest in eastern Iowa.
- SWP Christina Murphy
 - No report, no meeting.
 - Received the National Bulletin on refining SWP areas and will be reviewing. We will be meeting in the next few weeks with NRCS to see if any adjustments need to be made.
 - Sam Adams – There is a new system nationally, like MRBI. They wanted to put watersheds into a different database system because of errors. About two years ago we received about one-third of the funds requested. We were able to fill the rest of the requests with EQIP funds. The error did not get corrected. Moved money into NWQI to allocate funds.
- Urban Ag Tim Palmer
 - See attached report.
 - Recommend discussing some of the unnecessary red tape that is hurting farmers – infrastructure, city restrictions. It's helpful to understand the restrictions.

Reports from Committee Members

- CDI – Interviews for new CDI Director were held today. Filling job vacancies.
- RMA – Notice on Federal Register for listening sessions on prevented planting as a part of nationwide outreach. Listening Session will be in NW Iowa on August 9 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. Seeking input on prevented planting rules. Written comments will also be accepted. LRP – suspended 60-day ownership requirement for severe drought. Double cropping in Iowa for about the southern 2/3 of the state can get a written agreement without any prior history.

Other Items

None

Future Meeting Dates

September 21, 2023

December 21, 2023

Attendance

In person

Neil Dominy, NRCS
 Jaia Fischer, NRCS
 Sam Adams, NRCS
 Rubyana Neely, NRCS
 Robert Mier, NRCS
 Mike Henderson, NRCS
 Patrick Chase, NRCS
 Nick Baumgarten, DNR
 Sean McMahon, IAWA
 Kelly Smith, DNR
 Zachary Cassidy, SILT
 Carlee Sabus, CDI
 Ryan Smith, IWF

Virtual

Susan Kozak, IDALS
Sue Snyder-Thomas, NRCS
Jordan Moser, HSEMD
Todd Bogenschutz, DNR
Kate Hansen, Center for Rural Affairs
Josh Divan, Pheasants Forever
Vince Sitzmann, IDALS
Paige Frautschy, TNC
Curt Goettsch, FSA
Sarah Nizzi, Xerces Society
Matt Dvorak, DNR
Cora Fox, Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Thanos Papanicolaou, ARS
Bruce Barnhart, LICA
Jessica Downey, NRCS
Christina Murphy, Iowa Association of Water Agencies and West Des Moines Water Works
Joe Dierickx, Iowa Farm Bureau
Jeff Jensen, Trees Forever
Kevin Stukenberg, RMA
Mark Jacobs, Houston Engineering
Joe McGovern, INHF
Keegan Kult, Ag Drainage Management Coalition
Tim Palmer
Lori Altheide, NRCS
Angela Barker, Allendan Seed, Guest
Catherine DeLong, ISU
Mark Heckman, Eco Engineer

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