

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/Project Name:	Indiana NRCS State Technical Committee		
Date of Meeting:	August 24, 2023	Time:	1300-1500
Minutes Prepared By:	Angie Hines-Montgomery	Location:	Indiana NRCS State Office and Microsoft Teams (Virtual)

1. Meeting Objective

Meeting to discuss current events, projects, problematic areas, and to strategize future endeavors.

2. Attendees

In-Person

- Curtis Knueven, Acting State Conservationist
- Shannon Zezula, State Resource Conservationist
- Jerod Chew, Assistant State Conservationist – Partnerships
- Josh Griffin
- Jeff Keifer
- Tom Crowe
- Mike Spalding
- Jared Thomas
- Brianne Lowe

Virtual

- Mike Cox
- Katie Fagan
- Mike Dunn
- Sam Stroebel
- Angie Hines-Montgomery, Executive Assistant
- John Kinney
- Liz Jackson
- Joe Rorick
- Jason Kishton
- Mike Hughes
- Toby Days
- Mike Brocksmith
- John Seifert
- Jeff Powelson
- Beth Clarizia
- Kristen Arnold
- Eliana Blaine
- Betsy Bower
- Ben Wicker
- Stephanie Frischie
- Stacy Herr

3. Agenda and Notes, Decisions, Issues

Topic	Discussion
STC Comments- NRCS Updates Curtis Knueven Jerod Chew Shannon Zezula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting STC, Curtis Knueven, introduced himself to those who attended in-person and online. - Provided a status update on incoming Indiana State Conservationist. - Provided brief update of “looming shutdown” and proposed holding monthly ISTC meetings for the near future as funding and bills are forth coming. - Provided gratitude for partnerships and collaborations. - Curtis, Shannon and Jerod shared hiring of new Biologists and Foresters within NRCS, future staffing, partnership/on-the-ground conversations and collaborations and working relationships.
Wildlife Sub-committee Recommendations (Slides Attached) Brianne Lowe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brianne Lowe provided a brief and broad overview of the scope of work and projects during the current year and trending for the future from the Wildlife Sub-Committee meeting and discussions. - Indiana seeding calculators are available in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (wildlife - 420, general seeding, cover crop, fire breaks) - Recommendation #1: Add March to the dormant seeding dates for native plantings (Current dormant season dates are December through February).. - The committee discussed dormant seeding expansion earlier into fall. There are not enough data to support dormant seeding into November, but the wildlife professionals are seeking real world examples and data to study. - Recommendation #2: New species added to 420 calculator: October 1, 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Grasses/Graminoids: Broomsedge, Softstem bulrush ➢ Wildflowers/Forbs/Legumes: Yarrow, Late boneset, and Prairie Sundrops. ➢ Josh briefed background of promotion for Broomsedge being added and benefitting wildlife. ➢ Suggested field days across the states within November and December. - Aggressive grasses discussed: Indiangrass, Big bluestem and Switchgrass. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Field days to expand education and demonstrations (virtual and in-person) ➢ Research resources available for gradual transition. - Interseeding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Hearing within Indiana and nationwide the struggles with interseeding. ➢ Site prep: Needs to be aggressive, lots of disturbance. Related to the aggressive grass concerns. ➢ Seeding: Low seeding rates are not competitive enough. Certain forbs less competitive than others. - There is a team of Indiana wildlife professionals working on guidance to address aggressive grasses, thistle/johnsongrass, Goldenrod, Sericea Lespedeza, cool season grass infestation, lack of forbs, invasive species, woody encroachment. - Recommendation #3: Support to expand the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) priority area to match the SAFE Bobwhite priority area for consistency purposes. - The full Indiana State Technical Committee concurred with all 3 recommendations.

<p>Easement Updates</p> <p>Mike Hughes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mike Hughes introduced himself as acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. - Easement Financial Assistance Funding for FY23 was shared with allocations from original amounts and additional funding amount totals. <p>Easement Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easement Geographical Area Rate Cap rates for next year expected to remain the same. - Easement staff will add an acquisition person and Beth will become the stewardship person (September 11) - Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)-Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) is expected to be a national ranking again for FY24. - Kankakee Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) should begin in FY24 with potential for RCPP easements. <p>Financial Assistant Programs Updates:</p> <p><u>EQIP IRA FY'23 (as of 8/24/2023)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$3,726,446 Allocation ➤ 71 contracts funded. ➤ 94.7% of the allocation is very close obligated. ➤ 345 applications are backlogged. <p><u>CSP IRA FY'23 (as of 8/24/2023)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$4,300,053 Allocation ➤ 55 contracts preapproved. ➤ 95.7% of the allocation is very close to obligated. ➤ 0 applications are backlogged. <p><u>EQIP Classic FY'23 (as of 8/17/2023)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$31,536,276 Allocation ➤ 867 contracts funded. ➤ 99.5% of the allocation is obligated. ➤ 1261 applications are backlogged. <p><u>CSP Classic FY'23 (as of 8/17/2023)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$12,700,000 Allocation ➤ 185 contracts funded. ➤ 74.1% of the allocation is obligated. ➤ 2 applications are backlogged. 		
<p>Indiana Source Water Protection Area Sub-Committee Recommendations</p> <p>Shannon Zezula</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shannon Zezula reviewed attendees who participated in the sub-committee and expressed gratitude for those who participated. See the attached presentation - Farm Bill 2018 was discussed which included the background on identifying local priority areas for drinking water protection throughout the state. Increased payment rate for practices that relate to water quality and quantity and protecting drinking water resources. Mentioned targeted approach of farm bill specially watersheds. NRCS national headquarters set a limit of no more than 20% of a state's land base can be selected for high priority areas. Tracking and reporting on source water protection was reviewed including brief on Tier 1 and Tier 2 specifics listed on Farm Bill 2018. - SZ shared Indiana Historical Obligations in Source Water Protection Areas from FY20 through FY23 reviewing goals set versus goals met and exceeded expectations. - Changes recommended: <p>Recommendation #1- HUC- Indiana priority HUC 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prioritize 303d listed streams that feed surface water SWPAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ginger Davis provided these data. ➤ Prioritize SWPAs that are of critical importance to a significant number of individuals (i.e., Patoka Lake) or have had recurring water quality issues (i.e., John Hayes Lake in Washington Co.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Toby Days provided these data. <p>Recommendation #2 SWPA High Priority Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Add 351 Well Decommissioning to previous year's High Priority Practices, and provide higher ranking for applications with High Priority Practices <p>The full Indiana State Technical Committee concurred with both recommendations.</p>		
<p>FSA Updates</p> <p>Jason Kishton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed September 25th deadline for CRP Forest Management Incentives clients to make into the FSA office and seek extensions. - Jason mentioned general sign up that takes place once a year and provided broad overview of specifics on inclusions for different programs. - FSA will lead a discussion of updating the CRP General Signup Conservation Priority Areas (CPAs) in the near future, as needed. 		
<p>Upcoming Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get The Dirt: Urban and Small Farm Soil Health Conference, Tuesday, September 12, 2023 Registration: https://bit.ly/get-the-dirt23 		
<p>4. Action Items</p>			
<p>Action</p>	<p>Assigned</p>	<p>Due Date</p>	<p>Status</p>
<p>1 No Action Items</p>			