

USDA Local Work Group Meeting Minutes for Washington County

November 16, 2023

Attending:

Chris Phinney, Resource Conservationist NRCS

Steve Follette, Supervisor & Forester

Geneva Duncan Frost, Forester & Blueberry grower Associate Supervisor

Tim Tabbutt, Supervisor & Blueberry grower

Jeffery Orchard, Supervisor & Wet land Specialist Retired

Ronald Ramsay, Blueberry grower, Forest land owner and Retired Educator

Al May, Supervisor, farmer/Forest land owner

Rachel White U of M Cooperative Extension

Nate Pennell, District Manager, Retired Rancher/Farmer/Teacher

The meeting was opened by District Chair, Steve Follette. Each person introduced themselves. The purpose of the meeting was explained by Chris Phinney Resource Conservationist, NRCS. Chris handed out a written slide show to each person which he had prepared for this meeting.

Chris gave an overview of past use of NRCS programs, contracts and project which were reviewed in detail.

Chris reviewed current priorities FY24 funds and activities. He reviewed the past three years of trends and implementation. He then discussed FY24 allocations and changes and then discussed FY25 allocations, changes and decision making process.

The slide show explained the purpose of the local Working Group and the FY2023 priorities which Chris explained in detail.

Chris explained the funding work flow including deadlines. He explained the FY2024 Programs available. Under EQIP the details of the State Pools and Local Pools of funding were explained as well as the past three years of program history here in Washington County.

He noted trends, observations, and gave details of how NRCS funding works.

Chris noted FY2024 Local Pool Ranking. Chris explained the Forestry State Ranking Questions and the Cropland State Ranking Questions. Traditionally, these two programs are the most popular in Washington County.

Much discussion with all participating and concluding the following:

FY24 Local High Tunnel funds (10%) to be moved to Local Cropland for FY24

FY25 Local Resource Concern Priorities remain unchanged

FY25 Local Pool Allocation being recommended:

Cropland 65%

Forestry 35%.

A general discussion of Local Ranking Questions occurred at this 2023 USDA Local Work Group Meeting. Final decisions on FY25 Local pool ranking questions will be decided next month.

Everyone was thanked for their participation, information and suggestions.

Meeting closed at 2pm.

Nathan Pennell, Note Taker