

NEBRASKA STAC MEETING MINUTES

December 7, 2023

1:00 - 2:45 p.m.

100 Centennial Mall N. RM 397B

Lincoln, NE 68508

[YOUTUBE RECORDING LINK](#)

ATTENDEES: Camilla Kerner, Rob Lawson, Tami Nordman, Conor Ward, Jami Thoene, Fred Stevens, Marty Norton, John Mayberger, Kevin Hutsell, Ann McPherrin, John Mayberger, Katie Hickle, Kent Zimmerman, Al Juhnke, Samantha Smith, Elbert Traylor, David Schroeder;

VIA TEAMS: Beth Arens, Kelly Brunkhorst, Burdette Piening, Chandler Schmidt, Dan Ross, Dan Ruterbories, David Potter, Neil Dominy, Emily Woockman, Steve Fairbairn, Bill Gresham, Timothy Griffin, Andrew Houser, Jenny Prenosil, Kalee Olson, Kira Cooney, Kole Pederson, Kristie Freudenburg, Patrick Lechner, Mark Brohman, Shawn McVey, Mary Reece, Craig Romary, Steven Jara, Jami Thoene, Carlos Villarreal, Wade Ellwanger, Britt Weiser, Bryce Puck, Jessica Russell, Ele Nugent, John Rissetto, Dustin Wilcox, Kira Cooney, Buffalo Bruce;

VIA PHOHE: Tim Kalkowski, Mike Crosley.

FUTURE Meetings: *(POSSIBLE IN NEW BUIDLING)*

- ❖ MARCH 7, 2024
- ❖ JUNE 13, 2024
- ❖ SEPTEMBER 5, 2024
- ❖ DECEMBER 5, 2024

WELCOME & OPENING COMMENTS: *Robert Lawson - NRCS State Conservationist*

- Agenda Review
- UPDATES ON NRCS STAFF:
 - Neil Dominy is back in Nebraska from a 4-month detail.
 - Brad Sonksen retired last month.
 - Cammie Kerner is Acting until March.
 - There was an internal Programs Workshop for our NRCS employees at the end of October.

- RCPP Projects Announced – Early November.
 - 2 NE led projects.
 - Twin Platte NRD
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Encourage partners to visit w/ Rob or Neil on potential future projects.
- Soil Conservation Technician positions open
 - 11 locations in the state
 - Job Announcements open Dec. 6 & Closes Dec. 18, 2023.

 **CONSERVATION PROGRAMS UPDATE:** *Camilla Kerner - NRCS Acting ASTC-Programs*

- **SEE SLIDES & HANDOUT attached. HIGHLIGHTED Points below.**
- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
 - EQIP & CSP
 - November 17, 2023 - Application Cut-off
 - ACT NOW Application Cut-off Announcement is MARCH 1, 2024
 - Any IRA eligible applications taken up until the November 17 general application cut-off, and any IRA eligible application received after that, will be processed, and ranked in EQIP and CSP IRA ACT NOW by order of application received.
 - Once eligibility is met –
 - EQIP: 10 business days to assess and rank the application.
 - CSP: 20 business days to assess and rank the application.
 - Preapprovals in ACT NOW pools will be conducted weekly by state office.
 - Once the application is preapproved – 10 business days to obligate for EQIP and CSP once applicant states their intent to proceed (5 days).
- IRA Implementation
 - Key Points
 - One or more core practices or activities on the 2024 CSAF list must be planned in a contract.
 - Facilitating practices and activities can receive payment but must directly support a core practice addressing climate change in the contract.
 - IRA and non-IRA funds cannot be combined in a contract.
 - Practices and activities must be implemented, and payments completed prior to September 30, 2031. Look at shorter contract lengths.


- Wahoo Creek
 - Applications 9
 - Funding - \$268,515.52
- Turkey Creek
 - Applications 22
 - Funding - \$352,426.62
- Big Sandy Creek
 - Applications 7
 - Funding - \$503,466.60
- ***NEW* - BOW CREEK**
 - **Planning phase**
 - **Bow Creek NRD Area w/ Lewis & Clark NRD**
 - **Plan Development FY24**
 - **Recruiting producers & determining interests & working with partners**
 - **NO FY24 Funding**
- **LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS WILL BE COMING UP AFTER THE 1ST OF THE YEAR, SO PLEASE GET YOUR INPUT IN BY ATTENDING.**
- **CHANGES TO 314 AND TO 315 (SEE SLIDES)**
 - **314 – Multiple treatments allowed within practice of lifespan (10yrs)**
 - **315 – Herbaceous Weed Treatment**
 - **Multiple treatments allowed withing practice of lifespan (10yrs)**
 - **Allows payment for treatment of Noxious weeds.**
- **NEW EQIP PRACTICE INCENTIVE FOR PAYMENT IN 2024 (SEE SLIDES)**
 - **Annual Forages for Grazing Systems (810)**
 - **Scenario 24**
 - **Scenario 28**
 - **Herbicide for Annual Grass & Broadleaf weed control on rangelands**
 - **Prescribed Grazing**
 - **Required on all RANGLAND practices.**

Q: Dan Ruterbories – Was nutrient management eligible under IRA?

A: Conor – Yes Nutrient Management is an eligible Ira core practice.

Q: Kaley Olson – Is ACT-NOW being used as an internal term or public term? The Center usually tries to help promote this information, so are you saying to producers.. come in & apply now?

A: Conor – ACT NOW can be used as a public facing term, but the messaging to the public on what it is should be that it's an extended funding opportunity. The process itself is meant to be an internal expedited process in getting contracts and funds obligated at a faster rate than is typical. Kaley & Conor will work via email to send out a letter.

 **RCPP & INITIATIVES PROJECTS UPDATE** – Fred Stevens - NRCS Programs Specialist

- (SEE SLIDES FOR MORE INFORMATION)
 - RCPP Projects
 - NEW FY23
 - Project #3294
 - Project #3374
 - Project #3290
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Q: Chandler Schmidt – When is the application period for NWQI or for the planning part? Last year you said that there would be no new applications accepted? Why now & what changed?

A: Rob – Nothing has changed, interested party needs to get with your District Conservationist. All packets need to be submitted in July an application and plan take several months to complete. We are always open to conversations about new projects. Elbert Traylor with NDEE also added that Bow Creek was already in the planning process for NWQI.

 **FSA REVIEW:** Patrick Lechner – FSA PROGRAMS CHIEF

- Signup Results
 - SU59 – Continuous (SAFE)
 - 1,173 offers
 - 191 approved
 - SU50 General Signup
 - 621 Offers
 - 499 Approved
 - 104 in COMPLETE Status
 - SU205 – CRP Grasslands
 - 1117 offers
 - 1063 approved
 - Some still pending
- NO NEW CONTRACTS UNTIL APPROVAL FROM HQ.
- ECP Updates
 - ECP-Snow Removal - **NEW**
 - **Authorizing ECP for Snow Removal – 11/29/2023**
 - **Enable access to feed**
 - **Enable access to water**
 - **Enable access to livestock**
 - **Conditions of Snow Removal**
 - **REQUESTING TO IMPLEMENT**

- If a county meets any of the three criteria, COC may send a request to implement ECP for snow removal to the State Office.
 - Minimal criteria will be 12in of snow.
 - Reviewed other two criteria.
 -
 - National Approval to implement required on a county-by-county basis.
 - Retroactive to October 2022. (FY2023)
 - Eligible Snow Removal Activity
 - Provide access to food, water, and livestock access roads.
 - Starts at 12 inches of snow to 30 inches of snow.
 - Next category is 30 inches of snow and up.
 - Ineligible Land and Activity
 - Public Roads
 - Bales scattered in the field, not stacked.
 - Clear snow around homestead and for personal transportation.
- LAVAIN MOORE WILL BE RETIRING AT THE END OF DECEMBER.

 **NRCS GROUNDWATER RECHARGE:** Marty Norton - NRCS Civil Engineer & Kevin Hutsell – NRCS State Irrigation Engineer

- See Slides for more information.
- Reason this Program is being presented to you.
- Background...
 - Groundwater accounts for roughly **40%** of CA's water supply in **non-drought years** compared to upwards of **60%** during **drought years**.
 - Drought in recent years have caused significant depletion of groundwater levels.
 - CA water agencies have built basins to capture water in rainy years to enable groundwater recharge.
 - One CA Irrigation District doubled the amount of water it diverts by working with farmers willing to take excess during this past year's above average rainfall.
 - The idea of using farmland as stormwater runoff surge capacity is catching on.
 - Groundwater depletion recognized by NRCS as a Resource Concern.
 - CA NRCS Recharge Pilot Program
 - Interim Groundwater Recharge Practices
 - 815 – Groundwater Recharge Basin or Trench
 - Structural Practice for permanent feature (15 years) – land dedicated to recharge
 - 817 – On Farm Recharge

- Management Practice in tandem with agriculture
 - Conditions Where Practice Applies
 - Potential Supporting Practices
 - Under Criteria Section
 - Monitoring Requirements
 - Assessment Requirements
- REVIEWED FINACIAL ASSISTANCE (Total Scenario Costs)
- Moving Forward...
 - FY2024 – review pilot program data at National Headquarters and adopt groundwater recharge conservation practices into FOTG.
 - FY2025 – groundwater recharge conservation practices available for financial assistance (EQIP funding) Nationwide

Q: Katie Hickle – Structural Practices and Farm Management Practices, will contracts be longer than 1 year?

A: Kevin Hutsell – We will work with programs to determine if contracts should be 1-year, 3-year contracts or something else.

A: Elbert’s comments – Groundwater recharge could be partnered with Rainwater Basin Project. DNR surface water division would be interested in developing use of this standard.

 **PARTNER UPDATES:**

- Craig Romery – NE DEPT OF AG.
 - Nebraska Buffer Strip Program funding is still available. I am more than willing to provide information to NRCS field staff and others on the program, however, information on rental rates, practices involved, and general program process is at https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/buffer_strip.html (or bit.ly/NDABuffer)
- Elbert introduced the NEW Source Program Coordinator
 - Katie Hickel

 **WRAP UP - LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS COMING UP**

- **NEXT MEETING WILL PROBABLY NOT BE IN THE DENNEY FEDERAL BUILDING & WLL PROBABLY BE IN OUR NEW BUILDING, SO PLEASE WATCH THE LOCATION ON INVITE.**