

State Technical Committee (STC) Meeting

May 17, 2023

Tony Sunseri, State Conservationist, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to allow our partners to provide feedback. In an effort to ensure this opportunity is being met, we are doing something different at the STC Meetings. We will be setting up breakout rooms for programs, urban, and technical (which will include the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program). We will have agency liaisons to answer questions and feedback on the topics. You can move between the breakout sessions if you would like. Please be sure to ask any questions you may have. This opportunity is to help me serve our state better and in making good investments across South Dakota (SD) and with STC feedback for the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) investment efforts for improving the local resource concerns. Also, by expanding our partners through agreements and staffing capacity. We currently have a staffing cap of 300-314 and hoping to expand to 340 to meet the workload. Currently, we are sending out the Conservation Collaboration Cooperative Agreements (CCCA) and Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) opportunities as we move forward. We also are working on a NRCS Road Map to Success for IRA and will be scheduling three sessions (Town Halls) across the state to gather feedback in the developing of our Strategic Plan which will be a five-year plan.

Congressional Representatives – Rebecca Herman, Senator Rounds Office, Sioux Falls, – Waiting to see to about the debt ceiling and Farm Bill and the spending. Looking forward to break-out sessions.

Conservation Reserve Program – Owen Fagerhaug, Program Manager presented on behalf of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) on the status CRP and CREP sign-ups. Currently Continuous CRP, Big Sioux River Watershed, James River Watershed, Oglala Sioux Tribal CREP, Rosebud Sioux Tribal CREP, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal CREP and Grassland CRP sign-up. General CRP sign-up concluded and FSA is waiting on the results being announced. Continuous and CREP sign-ups are ongoing. Grassland CRP sign-up concludes on May 26, 2023.

Soil Health Update – Kent Vlieger, Soil Health Quality Specialist, provided an update on the topic. See handout. July 12 Soil Health Day.

Partnerships – Colette Kessler, Assistant State Conservation for Partnerships, working with partners. Later in the agenda on the Partnerships reports.

Conservation Collaboration Cooperative Agreements (CCCA) – The South Dakota CCCA starting in January and closed on May 6. We received 20 proposals. These proposals total to approximate \$17 million dollars. We will be reviewing and ranking these proposals to see what resource concerns they meet.

Conservation Innovation Grant announcement should be released soon and will be open for 30 days. Colette Kessler suggested that you go to grant.gov to ensure your account is set up and may also browse the site in regard to other efforts that are going across the state.

Trudy Ecoffey, Executive Director of [Tanka Fund](#) will be joining the STC Meeting to share happenings, expectations, and how NRCS and partners can assist for success of the SDSU and Tanka Fund (and the other partners) [USDA Climate-Smart Commodities Initiative grant](#). Trudy

will need to be leaving the State Technical Committee meeting by 10:50 MT/11:50 CT. Colette will decide based on time schedule if Trudy visits at ~11:00 CT 'Agreements Update' section or at the 12:15 CT 'Partnerships Topics' session. [Online agenda](#).

Trudy may share a handout or presentation material in case can be included in next month's minutes etc. The Grass is Greener on the Other Side – PowerPoint – Darrel has the slide show.

Tanka Funds Mission – See the enrollment requirements for producers.

Program Updates

Environment Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – See the handout. Tentatively numbers for Fiscal Year 2023. Jennifer indicated that we are not done funding at this time.

IRA – Climate and the IRA – See Carrie's handout. See the numbers for each of the programs Nationally. The practices that are designated as climate mitigation practices that we can utilize the IRA funding for. We can facilitate these practices to manage the mitigation for the climate.

- EQIP – targeting fund son primary land use in FY203
- EQIP – piloting the ACT Now process in FY2023
- CSP – General by Resource Unit and beginning farmer and socially disadvantaged
- RCPP targeting for proposals for climate mitigation.
- ACEP – national signup

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)- Val Dupraz, CSP Coordinator, provided an update on the topic on annual basis.

2018-2022 Active or Completed Contracts

- 1,281 Contracts on just over 2.6 million acres
- Over 36.5 million dollars in annual payments for FY2022

2023 Renewal and General Sign-up Applications

- 984 applications were not funded in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 and were deferred to FY 2023 with additional applications received prior to the December 9th batching date. FY2023 has provided opportunity for the following obligations:
 - CSP-2023 Renewals funded 85 applications across 234,334 acres with \$10,927,238*.
 - CSP-Classic funded 97 applications across 227,000 acres with \$14,352,729*.
 - CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative (CSP-GCI) obligated 33 contracts across 1,916 acres with \$172,405.

*Greater than 20% allocation was obligated to Historically Underserved Participants (Beginning Farmer and/or Socially Disadvantaged applicants)

2023 CSP-Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

- SD received \$4,868,467 in funding. Application selection is in progress.
- Obligation date for IRA obligations is July 14, 2023.

2024 Renewal Applications

- FY 2019 contracts are expiring on 12/31/2023 and are eligible for renewal.
 - Approximately 245 contracts covering 713,657 acres.
 - Sign up date was April 28th, 2023.
 - Obligation Date: December 2023.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program – Matt Morlock, RCPP Coordinator, provided an update on the program.

RCPP Classic Project Updates

- Big Sioux Project #1853
 - Obligating 13 projects
 - \$171,516.04 in funding
- NE Glacial Lakes Project #2391
 - Obligating 1 project
- Building Ranch Resiliency in SD and NE #2406(WWF)
 - Batching Period Currently Open
 - May 1 – June 1
- Conservation Easements in the Black Hills #2743 (SD ALT)
 - Programmatic Partnership Agreement in Place
 - Developing Supplemental Agreements
- Lewis and Clark/Lower James WQ Project #2276 (JRWDD)
 - Supplemental Agreement submitted to National Headquarters (NHQ)

RCPP Alternative Funding FA Project Updates

- Scaling Soil Health in the Prairie Pothole Region #2189 (DU)
 - 17 projects moving forward for funding
- Expanding Soil Health Through Carbon Markets #2644 (ACE)
 - Currently taking applications
 - Belle Fourche River Watershed
 - Six contracts
 - 20 new contracts and working on closing out this contract.

Upcoming

- New Notice of Funding Opportunity

- Release – May 18, 2023
- Trainings
 - Staff – May 23, 2023^d
 - Partners – May 24 and June 7, 2023
- State Level Review Committee Needed – the next STC Meeting we will be looking individuals interested in volunteering for this opportunity.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Brandon Kottke, Easement Coordinator, provided an update on the program. The easements are not selected for funding under the Farm Bill and will be run through the IRA. We have nine applications for the Agricultural Land Easement; however, the selection is being made at NHQ and not by the state.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Application Summary

FY2023 WRE Applications		
Status	Total Acres	Number of Applications
Cancelled	386	3
30-year	-	
Permanent	-	3
Ineligible	318	3
30-year	-	0
Permanent	-	3
Eligible	5504	39
30-year	372	3
30-year RGR	100	1
30-year conversion	80	1
Permanent	3860	26
Permanent RGR	1092	4
Total	6208	45

Projected FY2023 WRE Agreements
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Fund Code	Total Acres		Number of Tentative Agreements
Permanent RGR	190		1
Permanent	527	\$2,996,521	6
30 Year RGR	100		1
Total	817	\$3,300,000	8

FY2023 ALE Applications		
Status	Total Acres	Number of Applications
Program Agreement-	10,000	8
Parcel Selection	1000	1

****RGR- Reserved Grazing Rights**

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) - Update _ Jennifer Wurtz, EQIP Coordinator, provided an update.

Technical Updates – Jessica Michalski State Resource Conservationist, provided an update on the efforts working on the technical side of the agency. The ecological sciences work with the engineering section to review conservation practice standards (CPS) twice a year usually in April and October. In the breakout sessions, staff will be covering any changes that have been made to these CPS and technical notes. Our staff also work hand-and-hand with the program staff. More detailed information will be provided in the breakout session. Brandon Walter, State Biologist, will be reporting for ecological sciences, Joy Cordier-Jensen, Ag Engineer, for engineering, and Andy Oxford, Acting State Soil Scientist for soils. More detailed information will be presented in the breakout sessions.

Partnership Reports -

Smithsonian’s Shorebird Collective – Jessica Howell provided an update on the topic. See the handout. Share a link to the handout and Jessica’s contact information.

Matt Gottub is the new coordinator for Pheasants Forever. Matt started in his position May 1. Pierre.

Bruce Toay, Ducks Unlimited, 2400 acres in SD and restoring marginal cropland back to grass. Second sign-up and 17 apps for RCPP and in the process to rank those for the next year.

Wrapping up the component. Three state proposal. Grazing Land Initiative. – looking to find ways for livestock producers to get water facilities and manage grasslands.

Events – SDACD Area Meetings are scheduled for the month of June. The schedule for these meetings are as follows:

Hills

Tuesday, June 13 beginning at 2 p.m. (MST) at Outdoor Campus. No meal.

Vermillion-Big Sioux Area Area Director Election

Wednesday, June 14 beginning at 9:30 a.m. CST at Howard. Lunch information to be provided.

South James-Missouri

Wednesday, June 14, beginning at 11:45 a.m. with lunch at Blarney's. Meeting starts at 1 p.m.

Northwest area

June 15 beginning at 10 a.m. MST at Faith Community Center.

Prairie Area Director Election

Tuesday, June 20 beginning at 9:30 a.m. MST/10:30 a.m. CST at Turner Community Center in Murdo, SD.

North Missouri Area Director Election

Tuesday, June 20 beginning at 5:30 p.m. CST at Lebanon American Legion in Lebanon, SD. Meal arrangement information will be forthcoming.

Coteau

Wednesday, June 21 beginning at 9 a.m. CST at Webster Courthouse. Registration begins at 8:50 a.m.

Break-Out Sessions

Urban Breakout Session – Jessica Michalski, State Resource Conservationist, served as the lead for this session.

Programs Breakout Session – Jennifer Wurtz, EQIP Coordinator, served as the lead for this session. Jennifer covered IRA funding allocation efforts, ways of improving producer and partnership relationships, and making these efforts more stream-lined moving forward. The break out ended with the panel agreeing more program-specific meetings should be scheduled in the near future.

Technical Breakout Session - Brandon Walter, Biologist, served as the lead for this session. Brandon reported that staff (ecological sciences and engineering) have been updating conservation practices standards. Below is the link to access the notice that was distributed with these updates.

[NOTICE_506-Section I and IV Update.pdf](#)

[Range Tech Note 1.pdf](#)

Joy Cordier-Jensen, Ag Engineer, stated that the engineering CPS were also updated and below is the link for these updates.

[NOTICE_504-Updated Engineering Conservation Practice Standard.pdf](#)

Joy- Cordier-Jensen Engineering side – Notice 504 – include the link for the language.

Soils – There was no update for soils.

Mark Norton, Department of Game, Fish and Parks, asked the question in regard to grassland CRP and its requirements. Brandon indicated that he currently working on preparing the SD Bulletin on that topic and the conservation practice standard 528. The bulletin should be issued soon.

The meeting was adjourned.

JOSIE MICHALSKI
Recorder