

STAC Meeting Notes

Aug 8, 2024

Moses Lake, WA Called to order at 9:30 am

- **Introduction-** Nick Vira, NRCS State Partnership Liaison
 - 28 Attendee's in person or virtual: Randell Chipman, Lee Hammer, Mike Baden, Keith Griswald, Heather Went, Lynnell Knehans, Nick Goodman, Kirstin Tharp, Nick Vera, Roylene Comes at Night, Angela Reseland, Merissa Dominguez, Robert Evans, Kyrre Flege, Matt Harris, Dan Calvert, Daryl Williams, Robert Compton, Brandy Reed, Larry Cochren, Anna Lael, Stan Hoffman, Stuart Crane, Nathaniel Sinkert, Cameron Stoflet, Megan Stewart, Johnathan Erickson, Kristina Ribellia.
- **Opening Remarks-** Roylene Comes at Night, NRCS WA. State Conservationist.
 - FY24 review,
 - All notices of funding opportunities (NOFO) have been put on hold, this included the request for partner assistance. State asked for notice of intent form potential applicants and are working through a process to explore contribution agreements. Had 8 interested partners.
 - 2300 applications this year, Sept 16th is due date.
 - IRA funding will increase next Fiscal Year.
 - Staffing increased, 180 now 210 is the goal.
 - Washinton NRCS Tribal Liaison has retired and we currently have a temporary Tribal Liaison, Merissa Dominguez from NRCS South Dakota.
- **Locally Led Conservation** updates- Nick Vira, State Partnership Liaison
 - Work group update: [here](#).
 - IRA Project Awards
 - 12 new proposals submitted
 - 5 new projects funded: \$6.3 million
 - Palouse LWG: \$2 million
 - Northeast LWG: Forest Health and Wildfire \$1.3 million
 - South Central (2): Range \$660,000, Soil Health and Cropland \$1million
 - West Palouse: Forest health and Wildfire approx. \$1 million
 - Also 9 renewals from last year
 - LWG will be the same for FY2025, but for FY2026 NRCS has proposed to reduce each LWG team down to one EQIP fund pool (instead of the current 2 fund pools per LWG). **ACTION ITEM:** Please send any comments on this proposed change to Nick Vira (nick.vira@usda.gov) by August 23rd, 2024.
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 - Key Dates
 - LWG Kickoff (remote meeting) November 5, 2024
 - Meeting dates set Jan 15, 2025, Meetings Held by May 16 2025
 - Reports due (by NRCS D.C.) May 30, 2025
 - IRA Project Proposals Due (by LWG Chair) May 30, 2025

- **Programs Update-** Keith Griswald, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist
 - Wetland Reserve Easement update
 - “GARC” Geographic Area Rate Cap =CARC look at the [Washington State Technical Advisory Committee | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/technical-advisory-committee/natural-resources-conservation-service)
 - Questions and comments by Aug 23rd to Nick Vira or Keith Griswald

FY25 NRCS-WA GARC Proposal

1. The FY2025 ACEP-WRE GARC value for permanent easement offers will be **85% of the individually appraised fair market value of the subject property, not to exceed \$5,000/acre**, unless there are federal or state threatened and endangered (T&E) species present or if the site is considered essential habitat for species recovery.
2. In those cases that **T&E species are present, there will be a hold down of \$10,000/acre**. (The \$5,000/acre figure is the maximum set forth in policy, unless the state establishes a justification for a higher amount).
3. The FY2025 compensation for 30-yr easements, 30-yr tribal land use contracts and WRE-reserved grazing rights easements be set at **75% of the individually appraised fair market value of the subject property, not to exceed \$5,000/acre, without any exceptions**. Washington NRCS may allow the Reserved Grazing Right option on any new ACEP-WRE enrollments only if Threatened & Endangered (T&E) species are present, the T&E species identified is heavily dependent on early successional habitat wetland community and is concurred in writing for the official case file by the Washington NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC-P), State Resource Conservationist (SRC), and State Conservationist (STC). WRE-reserved grazing rights easement compensation on 30-year easements and 30-year tribal land use contracts will be 75% of the calculated 30-year compensation value, not to exceed \$5,000/acre, without exceptions.

- Next FY25 Draft EQIP
 - Application streamlining
 - Lumping fund pools together
 - CIC going to one fund pool Statewide Wildlife
 - LWG- allocations general EQIP funds moving to 75%-25%, FY26 move to one fund pool.
 - Proposed EQIP changes
 - Deleting Internal Combustion Engine practice, Historically Underserved, Sentinel Lands, Statewide Soil Heath fund pools.
 - Merge all state wildlife into one fund pool
 - Olympia Oyster, Aquatic, Terrestrial
 - Change name from Covered Cropping to High or Low Tunnel fund pool
 - Change name of Wildfire Recovery to Disaster Recovery fund pool
 - If Adopted reduction of 10 fund pools in FY25 and 8 in FY26 equals faster applications.

- Change in LWG financial allocation
 - Previously 18% of total general EQIP allocation went to LWG's
 - Proposing increasing to 25% per LWG
 - For FY 26, change to only 1 LWG fund pool per LWG
 - ***Also have IRA fund pool proposal opportunity***
- **If you have comments or questions send to Keith or Nick by Aug 23, 2024**
- Act Now Update and review
 - FY24 EQIP Act Now fund pools
 - Disaster fund pools becoming Act now so they can be done faster.

Drinking Water Providers Partnership- James Capurso, US Forest Service, Regional Fisheries Biologist.

- Goals- Restore and protect drinking water
- Anyone can apply in WA or OR.
- <https://geoinstitute.org/initiatives/dwpp/>
- Justice 40 emphasizes services for under privileged communities to help protect and restore drinking water
 - Hoffman, Stan (DOH) stan.hoffman@doh.wa.gov [Local Assistance Grant Program Guidelines\(wa.gov\)](#) WA.

Farm Service Agency Update- Jon Wyss, FSA State Executive Director

- **FIRES and CRP:** Need to have agriculture land documented as such to get correct acreages reported to get funding for fire damage.
 - Helps with replacing hay for livestock
 - Emergency grazing on CRP land.
- Jon asked if we should permit haying and grazing statewide or just areas on fire now, if we do statewide everyone can hay or graze, even if they were not impacted. As result it was discussed to limit to just counties of need because of the state of emergency. For comments, please contact Jon at jon.wyss2@usda.gov
 - STAC suggest asking for approval for emergency haying and grazing on CRP in affected counties: Ferry, Okanogan, Asotin
- Douglas County will not have CRP starting next year due to acreage caps, for the next three years. CREP will be offered as an alternative and FSA is working with SCC's Brian Cochran.
- CREP audit is almost done, challenges continue. Kudos to Bobby Evans
- Will be requesting changes to language around the signing of CRP contracts by CDs

- **Prescribed Burn** – Nick Vira NRCS State Partnership Liaison
 - Need Technical Service Providers (TSP) for writing and developing burn plans please contact Nick
 - NRCS is ready to pay for burn plans but lacks qualified TSPs
- **Ecological Sciences** Update- Bobby Evans, NRCS State Resource Conservationist.
 - Fund pool update
 - Grazing updates
 - Updated documents for fencing
 - <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>
 - Biology Practices Updated with one or more documents updates: 390,396,399,420,578,644,645,647
 - Several Biology Tech Notes Updated. Updates can be found in E=FOTG
 - Forestry Updates in progress: 384,666,660,612
 - Grazing Updates: 382,512 – several documents updated for each
 - Small Farm and Urban Updates: 328,621,325,336,558
 - Cover Crop and Mulching Calculators being updates currently
- **Closing remarks** from Roylene, NRCS WA. State Conservationist.
 - Number of deadline dates
 - Reducing fund pools
 - Preparing for another increase and provide feedback
- Meeting adjourned 2:00 pm.
- The next STAC meeting is **NOVEMBER 7th**!