

WYOMING STATE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 21, 2016

Members present:

Larry Bentley, WDA
John Crisp, WSFD
Bryan Anderson, WSFD
Rigo Lopez, NRCS
Dave Pellatz, Producer
Tim Morrison, MCD
Mary Thoman, SCCD
Jim Cochran, LCCD
Rigo Lopez, NRCS
Rusty Schwartz, NRCS
Ronnie Givens, Wind River Reservation
Larry Miller, Wind River Reservation
Michelle Huntington, CCCD
Don McDowell, LFLCD
Steve Poitras, NRCS
Nancy Tarver, Campbell County
Steve Wolff, WSEO
James Bauchert, NRCS
Reg Phillips, Dubois-Crowheart Conservation District
Cheryl Mandich, American Bird Conservancy
Wayne Garman, CCNRD
Ben Bigalke, NRCS
Clayton Schmitz, NRCS
Butch Parks, Jackson Hole Land Trust
Laura Schweitzer, Wyoming State Forestry
Mary Schrader, NRCS
Tony Hoch, LRCD
Holly Kennedy, Wyoming Farm Bureau
Amy Hendrickson, Wyoming Wool Growers
Ann Cotton, NRCS
Scott Cotton, UWES
Richard Garrett, TNC
Cindy Hottel, FSA
Astrid Martinez, NRCS
Grant Stumbough, NRCS

Members via teleconference:

Bob Mountain, USFS
Mark Hogan, USFWS
Bobbie Frank, WACD
Julie Kraft, SCWP

Summer Schulz, GRVLT
Brent Lathrop, TNC
Bob Mountain, USFS
Jill Frankforter, USGS
Richard Garrett, TNC
Robert Maul, CCCD
Liz Long, JHLT

Grant Stumbough, NRCS Partnership Liaison started the meeting at 10:15 AM with introductions around the room, discussed the agenda, and introduced Astrid Martinez, Wyoming State Conservationist.

State Conservationist Update

Astrid then welcomed the group and provided an NRCS program update to include the following:

NOT OFFICIAL NUMBERS

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

- Agricultural Land Easement (ALE):
 - \$2,788,588 total obligation
 - General: \$1,803,200; 8,648 acres
 - Sage-grouse: \$ 985,388; 3,725 acres

Climate Change (EQIP)

- Funds were received in FY2016 by each state to increase NRCS EQIP conservation practice activities and to provide greater resilience to vulnerabilities of U.S. Agriculture caused by a changing climate. A select group of NRCS conservation practices were designated to help mitigate the effects of global climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or increasing carbon sequestration in soils and perennial biomass.
 - WY Allocation - \$747,955
 - Total potential obligated \$705,858.00
 - Received \$1,540,678 request in applications
 - Applications have been selected for pre-approval; working thru the review process

EQIP Obligation status

EQIP General

- WY Allocation- \$6,995,160
- Total potential obligation- \$6,967,821.56

Salinity

- WY Allocation-\$131, 404
- Total potential obligation- \$160,814

NWQI

- WY Allocation- \$668,189
- Total potential obligation \$666,017

WLFW, Sage-grouse:

- WY Allocation- \$2,504,221
- Total potential obligation \$2,388,478

Conservation Stewardship Program – total pre-approved 36,860.4 acres
 Potential funding obligation- \$405,254

- General: 4,300.5 acres
- LCI - Ogallala Aquifer: 992.6 acres
- LCI - Sage-grouse: 36,860.4 acres

Total Funds Obligated in EQIP programs: \$10,888,988

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

- WY subaccounts will include: Windbreaks/Shelterbelts, Invasive Species (Russian Olive/Salt Cedar) and Seasonal High Tunnel
 - \$98,037 – obligated

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) \$1.4 mi per year at state level

- Continuing to work on funded RCPP projects in state
- Application signup held in FY2016 for multi-state project with UT
- FY2016 – funded one proposal
- FY2017 – asked 3 pre-proposals back to submit full proposals

Total in EQIP, CSP and AMA programs- \$11,392,279.6

Total with RCPP- \$12,792,279.6

James Bauchert, NRCS State Soil Scientist provided a brief update as follows:

Soils:

The 2016 Soil Survey Mapping season was very successful.
 WY had 9 details mapping soils for the summer: 7 from out of state and 2 Resource Soil Scientists.
 WY had 2 CESU students assisting with ESD development.
 Soil mapping acre accomplishments are:
 Carbon Co. – 106,500 ac.
 Lincoln Co. – 161,100 ac.
 Park Co. – 65,281 ac.
 Sublette Co. – 35,000 ac.
 Sweetwater Co. – 7,500 ac.

Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) moved to provisional status:

MLRA 32 – 3,350,000 ac.
 MLRA 34A – 12,747,500 ac.

Personnel – Pinedale fully staffed; Powell lost 1 employee and gained 1 employee

Emergency Watershed Program (EWP):

In 2016 we received funding of \$1.4M for 10 EWP projects:
 3 projects are completed (1 exigency, 2 non-exigency)
 7 projects in progress (all non-exigency)
 6 projects have not yet been funded

Astrid and Clayton requested a recommendation from the STAC regarding the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. NRCS currently consults USFWS on an as needed basis regarding projects that could have a potential impact on nesting migratory birds. NRCS is looking for a recommendation from that STAC on pursuing a MOU with USFWS rather than the process we currently implement and use for compliance with MBTA. The consensus of the STAC was to continue with the current process.

Local Work Group Reports and Recommendations

Grant Stumbough explained the state is divided into nine divisions and each division has a local work group that meets at least once a year. Local work groups consist of landowners, Conservation Districts, and other local, state, and federal agency representatives and have two primary responsibilities to include providing recommendations on how NRCS can improve programs and services and to identify priority resource concerns within their division. The STAC was encouraged to ask questions, make comments, and provide input regarding local work group recommendations. NRCS will be formally responding to LWG recommendations as per national policy requirements. Astrid will strongly consider all LWG recommendations and will work with her Leadership Team in making final decisions in regards to changes to state policies. However, recommendations that require changes to the Farm Bill will require congressional action.

Each Local Work Group (LWG) was then asked to provide a report of local resource priorities and program recommendations as a result of recent meetings.

Division 1 (Big Horn, Park and Washakie)

Presenter: Tim Morrison, Meeteetse Conservation District Manager

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Request a planner or another NRCS full time in the Lovell Office.
- Provide support in obtaining additional National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) program assistance to address water quality concerns in Big Horn and Washakie counties
- Provide support in obtaining Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) assistance to address water quality concerns.
- Work with Bridger Plant materials to initiate new cultivars or native plantings to stabilize streambanks after Russian olive control.
- Schedule more soil quality training workshops for LWGs and Districts.
- Use NRCS dollars to cost share new bacteria cheat grass control method (*Pseudomonas fluorescens*).
- Incorporate NRCS drainage practices into Division 1 subaccount.

Division 2 (Fremont and Hot Springs)

Presenter: Reg Phillips, Dubois/Crowheart Conservation District Supervisor

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Bacteria soil amendments to control cheatgrass needs to be added to the NRCS cost share list.
- More education on the soil health is needed in Division 2.
- ALE – landowners do not like the lengthy and complex management plan that is involved.
 - Does not take access concerns into consideration...too much management and labor involved.
 - Perpetuity scares a lot of landowners in regards to the ALE program.
 - Conversion of agriculture is a huge problem but division 2 feels that easements are not an effective way to resolve the problem and another approach or program is needed.
- NRCS should allow effective grazing plans to be developed on continuous CRP contracts.
- Need more engineering support and additional dollars allocated and spent on StreamBank/Riparian Area Protection projects and programs.
- Additional dollars need to be allocated and spent on Irrigation Water Management as this is the number 1 issue in Division 2. In addition, small acre producers are ranked lower for program funding which in many situations can be the major cause of irrigation water management concerns.
- All Divisions should be allowed additional dollars for additional subaccounts to address specific resource concerns.
- The ratio of applications to funded contracts needs to be equitable at local, state, and national subaccount levels. For example, only 3 out of 18 of division subaccount applications were funded in FY 2015 in Hot Springs County, whereas nearly all of the state subaccount applications were funded.
- TMDLs should only be required on specific reaches or tributaries where impairments are found rather than a TMDL being required for the entire watershed.
- TMDL classification standard should not continually blame livestock for water quality impairments without supporting scientific data.
- Determine how NRCS and Conservation Districts can address the 303(d) impaired water body issue to ensure that producers can continue agricultural production.
- Work with the Wyoming Water Development Commission (WWDC) to get Level 1 water development study implemented. Determine how farm bill programs can be used in conjunction with WWDC programs.
- Need more engineering assistance for all NRCS programs
- NRCS should recognize that BLM grazing plan should meet the minimal criteria for NRCS grazing plans.
- Reinstate the waiver process for AGI requirements to resolve the common grazing allotment land control issue. For example, one producer within the allotment who does not meet the AGI requirement can preclude the application and funding of NRCS range improvement practices that are needed for the entire common allotment.

Division 3 (Lincoln, Sublette, Sweetwater, Teton, and Uinta)

Presenter: Mary Thoman, Sweetwater County Conservation District Supervisor

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- NRCS requires grazing management plans before Sage grouse improvement practices and other conservation practices can be implemented which creates problems for large

acres or big grazing allotments where the development of grazing plans requires a tremendous amount of time creating a hardship for limited NRCS field staff.

- BLM can develop the grazing plan but required inventories cannot be completed by NRCS due to lack of time.
- More technical assistance and planners are needed.
 - More TA dollars needed
- Need to resolve compatibility issues between BLM and NRCS regarding SGI monitoring protocols. BLM and NRCS need to schedule a meeting to discuss Sagegrouse monitoring protocols and to resolve any differences.
- Need more education and information regarding DEQ/EPA programs to include the Nutrient Task Force and the Green River Basin Watershed Landscape planning process.
- Division 3 has concerns with EPA raising the water quality standard during high flow periods from May 1st to September 28 which is during the “recreation use” timeframe. During high flow periods, streams have a tendency to contain more animal waste, sedimentation, and other impairments due to water out of streambanks and in floodplains which collects more waste/etc. than during average flow periods.
- A partnership approach to monitor vegetation on BLM and Forest Service riparian areas is critical – Explore the use of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture’s RHAP program.
 - Need realistic expectations
- Recommend reauthorizing the Grazing Reserve Program (GRP) program to avoid the requirement for easement perpetuity.
- WRE program is too restrictive...not much participation
 - Need to be allowed to hay and graze under an approved plan under consultation from the FWS.
- Completing soil surveys is a huge priority in Sweetwater County. Soil surveys are key in completing ecological site descriptions for the purpose of developing effective grazing and conservation plans.
- Need to change the title to “soil health” rather than “soil quality.”
- Local building codes will not allow hoop houses to be constructed in Teton County and the town of Rock Springs.
 - NRCS should provide guidelines for building in different counties
- Change grazing lands practices to 75% instead of 70% payment rate.

STAC Recommendations from Lincoln County Conservation District:

ISSUE #1 - Districts understand that NRCS policy states that DUNS, SAM are required for entities, and that entities are required to renew the SAM.gov registration annually.

We present the following facts and recommendations through the southwest WY Local Work Group.

- FACT – An EQIP contract holder within Teton County was sent SPAM emails, as well as phone calls notifying him that his SAM was not complete. They told him that he may be forced to repay the money he received. They offered to finalize his registration for \$500. He almost provided his credit card info as requested for fear of having to pay back \$80,000. However, luckily he checked with NRCS field office. Field office verified his registration was active and that the caller is wrong. During the SAM.gov registration process, this client selected the option that he “does not authorize my entity’s information to be displayed in SAM’s public search.”
- FACT – Selecting the “does not authorize my entity’s information to be displayed in SAM’s public search” option when registering with SAM.gov does not keep an entity’s information private from third parties.

- FACT – Once an entity completes the SAM.gov registration, they become a target of scams, even if the entity selects “does not authorize my entity’s information to be displayed in SAM’s public search.”
- FACT – The government websites are susceptible to hackers, as proven in 2015. These websites require producers to enter all of their private information, including bank account info, tax ID numbers, addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- FACT – Producers are told by NRCS that SAM.gov is free. But after numerous emails and possibly phone calls telling them otherwise, they start questioning who to believe. The fear of the government asking for money back is real, and some producers start believing the SPAM messages they are receiving.
- Recommendation – It is our opinion that this if the US Government is going to require entities participating with NRCS to register on these websites, then the US Government is obligated to make the websites secure. We are aware that NRCS does not control the websites nor their security. We recommend you inform the districts of what steps WY NRCS has taken to bring this issue to the attention of the individuals making NRCS policy. We recommend you inform the districts of what actions WY NRCS has taken to resolve this issue.
- Recommendation – NRCS postpone the DUNS / SAM.gov requirement until the government presents a secure option. Producers should not be subjected to scams for following NRCS policy.

ISSUE #2 - Districts understand that NRCS policy states that DUNS, SAM are required for entities, and that entities are required to renew the SAM.gov registration annually. It is the understanding of the Conservation Districts that NRCS programs are meant to be equally accessible to all.

- FACT - Many of today’s producers are not proficient in the use of computers and the internet. In addition, many of today’s producers do not speak English as their primary language.
- FACT – According to the Federal Service help desk, the SAM.gov website is not available in any other languages other than English.
- FACT – A producer is required to have computer access to register with SAM.gov.
- Recommendation – NRCS postpone the DUNS / SAM.gov requirement until the government presents an option that is both:

- equally accessible to producers with and without computer efficiency, and available in more languages than English.

ISSUE #3 - NRCS requires some degree of resource inventory and conservation planning to be completed prior to contracting NRCS grazing practices. With the current farm bill, the NRCS offers significant Sage Grouse Initiative funds each year. However, this money is inaccessible to producers without a completed inventory.

The permittees of the Granger Lease, located in Lincoln, Uinta, and Sweetwater counties, would like to develop a grazing management plan that could be used to support their infrastructure needs of water developments and cross fences. The Granger lease is a checkerboard of public / private land, containing >260,000 acres of private land, 20 occupied leks, and approximately 180,000 acres of SG core area.

The majority of the areas within this allotment are over 2 hours from the nearest NRCS office. In addition, there are other leases west of the Granger Lease that contain greater than 100,000 acres of checkerboard land within the Sage Priority Area. Even with an additional employee(s), NRCS does not have the staff to complete the inventories on allotments such as these.

For producers that want to apply for Sage Grouse funds, applying for a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) may be the only vehicle to get an inventory completed. However, the most that NRCS will pay for a CAP grazing management plan is \$5247 for a plan “greater than 5000 acres.”

It is the understanding of the local NRCS office that CAPs are set nationally and are exactly the same for the entire country. In addition, it is our understanding that national discipline lead has complete authority to revise the CAP rates. Last year, WY submitted data showing that this payment rate is insufficient for these producers with large, checkerboard allotments in SW Wyoming, but no action was taken.

- FACT - NRCS does not have the staff to complete grazing plans in a timely manner (Less than 2 years) that meet NRCS standards and specs on large pastures (50,000 to > 100,000 acres).
- FACT – The CAP payment is far too low for producers to be able to hire a Technical Service Provider to obtain a grazing plan that meets NRCS standards and specs.
- FACT – If the operators of these larger pastures were to hire a Technical Service Provider to obtain a grazing plan, it would put a significant financial hardship on their operation, even with the \$5247 of assistance available from NRCS.
- Resulting issue – Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) funds are inaccessible to large pasture holders in SW Wyoming, even though they are located in Sage Grouse Core Areas.

Recommendation: NRCS needs to decide whether or not NRCS wants to prioritize Sage Grouse / Grazing Management projects on these checkerboard lands in SW Wyoming. If deemed a priority, NRCS needs to add a CAP payment scenario that reimburses producers at a rate of approximately 65-75% of the cost. If not a new CAP payment scenario, perhaps NRCS can present another solution(s) to the districts regarding how these large inventories can get completed in a timely manner for willing landowners. It seems that Sage grouse funds should be available to all willing producers located in Sage Grouse Core Areas, and not just the producers with smaller pastures.

Issue # 4 - The Local Work Group process was functional when we met at the county level.

Conservation districts and attendees felt that the decisions made at the Local Work Group Meeting had an effect on what resource concerns to prioritize, and subsequently which specific projects were likely to get funded.

The current process does not seem to be working. Meeting face to face is not feasible. Local work group members cannot justify driving 3 hours or more to attend a non-local meeting. In addition, attendees are not confident that their input will affect the prioritization of local resource concerns. We admit we do not have a solution to this NRCS regional funding requirement. We are curious if other regions have expressed the same concern, and if so what can NRCS do to address the issue?

Practice Payment Percentage Rates:

The group recommended the grazing lands payment percentage rate be changed to 75% to keep consistent with other percentages.

Division 4 (Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan)

Presenter: Bob Maul, Campbell County Conservation District Supervisor

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Add fat head minnows as a contractible item. The impact from West Nile Virus has the potential to be really significant. Fat head minnows can have a significant benefit by reducing mosquito larvae in stock reservoirs/tanks/ponds. Currently they are not listed as a cost-share item. It would be beneficial to allow this practice to be part of the toolkit.
- Continued need to reevaluate SGI cost-share and deferment practices particularly in regards to the 15 month grazing deferment required for option 2.

Division 5 (Crook and Weston)

Presenter: Wayne Garman, Crook County Natural Resource District Supervisor

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Need more state flexibility in determining how NRCS dollars are allocated and spent. For example, applications that are complete and address a priority resource concern and/or are ranked equal to prior submitted applications should have funds allocated on a similar timeline and not have to wait until the prior application has been fully allocated. In addition, applications in drought areas should be given a higher priority especially if those applications address drought issues.
- Recommend changing the Payment Percentage Rate for Grazing from 70% to 60%.
- More NRCS water quality dollars are needed to adequately address water quality impairments on the Belle Fourche River (on the 303 d list) and the entire watershed.
- Landowners and Conservation Districts need more education on the cause and effect of streambank erosion, bank stability, and water quality. More outreach is also needed to inform landowners and other resource managers on how to properly manage and conserve streambanks and riparian areas. The Forest Service is currently using Multiple Indicator Monitoring to evaluate the streambanks and are willing to assist in training efforts.
- Need more education and outreach to landowners, Conservation Districts and other resource managers on how NRCS conservation easements work and their benefits.
- Need more soil health education and outreach in the Division. NRCS should incorporate more soil health practices into Forestry contracts with landowners.
- Need more NRCS Forestry dollars to adequately address beetle concerns and forestry resiliency.
- Need more state and national outreach on Division's innovative management strategies and practices they are using to effectively control the pine beetle as other areas within the state and other states could greatly benefit by adopting similar state-of-the-art approaches.
- More information, education, and outreach is needed about the costs and benefits of solar pumps and the potential of using other renewable energy sources.
- The new bacteria soil amendment used to control cheatgrass needs to be added to the NRCS cost share list
- NRCS needs to collaborate more with the BLM to manage cheatgrass other invasive species.
- More local control is needed in the implementation of NRCS programs.

Practice Payment Percentage Rates:

- The Grazing land payment percentage rate was recommended to be reduced from 70% to 60%. This would allow the allotted dollars to be stretched farther to help fund more projects and to ensure that the landowner has some buy in for the project.

Division 6 (Converse, Natrona, and Niobrara)

Presenter: Michelle Huntington, Converse County Conservation District Manager

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Allocate additional dollars to each division subaccount to provide more flexibility and enable NRCS programs to be more “locally led.”
- More research is recommended to address scientific concerns associated with the 15 month grazing deferment required for option 2 for the SGI program. Division 6 questions if the 15 month deferment is practicable for livestock producers or based on science.
- Explore options of either considering the establishment of another state subaccount for 303 d listed streams to adequately address water quality concerns or giving 303(d) streams less points (ie. 40-10 points) to ensure other water quality projects are able to compete. Potentially make stream “quality” the resource concern rather than 303(d) streams the issue.
- Carbodies used to protect streambanks has caused some problems within division boundaries. Landowners have asked county commissioners and others what they can do address the concern as this violates state water quality regulations. Potentially utilize the Streambank Stabilization Program to assist in addressing this resource concern.
- West Nile Virus concerns and potential negative impact on Sage Grouse numbers. Need to control and treat mosquito infestations to assist in reducing West Nile Virus outbreaks.
- Use NRCS dollars to cost share new bacteria cheat grass control method (*Pseudomonas fluorescens*). Also need to be able to use on State lands.

Division 7 (Albany and Carbon)

Presenter: Tony Hoch, Laramie Rivers Conservation District Manager

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Group felt some of last year’s recommendations were adequately responded too, but the recommendation on splitting the 528-prescribed grazing requirements were not adequately responded to by the NRCS.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services personnel mentioned that the Migratory Bird timing stipulations are being pushed harder by the NRCS at this point than U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. Originally, the Migratory Bird timing stipulations were brought on by the CRP program due to haying on large fields. However, the restriction has been carried over to almost all projects that have Migratory Bird habitat. This has created backlash within the project planning and group wants to recommend that we revisit this timing stipulation and how it should be applied to projects.
- The group briefly discussed Soil Survey progress within Carbon County. Astrid Martinez took last year’s recommendations and now we are potentially going to have detailees this year. Group wants to continue to look for other avenues of getting soils mapped in County.
- Group stated that NRCS establish a payment rate for winter-use storage tanks. Some projects in Carbon County have required buried storage tanks with livestock pipelines to help reduce riparian use by livestock on rivers during the spring and winter months. Currently, the storage tank payment rate only reflect <25% of actual cost. Group suggested creating a scenario for winter storage tank for next year’s payment rate schedule.
- As it pertains to streambank projects-there have been some better recommendations on how NRCS should pay for streambank restoration. Chris Gauthier is recommending to the

NRCS State Technical Committee the following as a solution for fair payment for streambank restoration

- (\$1.35 x Bank-Full Width x Length of Treatment)
- Group had some confusion between what the energy resource concern really meant. Asked for clarification.

Division 8 (Goshen, Laramie, and Platte)

Presenter: Jim Cochran, Laramie County Conservation District Manager

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Conservation District Supervisors need to have more project or contract oversight.
- Increase the conversion of cropland acres to permanent vegetation to reduce wind erosion and improve soil health.
 - Potentially use the new CRP grasslands program for conversion purposes.
 - More flexibility is needed to allow livestock grazing during the Nesting period.
 - Need to determine responsibilities for both FSA and NRCS regarding management of the program. Currently roles are unclear making it difficult for landowners to participate in the program.
- Need to increase NRCS engineering staff efficiency to meet water quality project completion timelines.
- Technical assistance for water quality projects needs to be prioritized based on resource needs – cost share and non-cost share projects both need to be addressed and given equal attention.
- NRCS water quality technical requirements need to be the same as DEQ technical requirements.
 - Landowners believe that NRCS is over-engineering projects and therefore cost prohibitive.
- NRCS Irrigation Water Management (IWM) practices are old and outdated.
 - Need a technical standards that are compatible with modern technology
 - For example NRCS needs to cost share on electronic monitoring systems for pivots—real time
- Currently there is a lack of NRCS technical assistance for designing streambank stabilization projects which is creating frustration with landowners.
- The CRP grasslands program needs to be used for the prevention of the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural use and should be ranked for this purpose.
- Recommend that STAC adopt a “no net loss of grazing lands.”
- Implementation of the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program is inefficient and extremely timely which is creating frustration with landowners.
- Laramie County has identified several mistakes in their soil survey which will require a complete new survey to make the necessary corrections. The primary concern with the current survey is that the soils are much more erosive than mapped.
- Additional cover crops are needed to control wind erosion and improve soil health within the Division.

- Conservation Districts and landowners would like more information and details concerning the Ducks Unlimited Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) in Southeastern Wyoming.
 - Conservation districts need to be aware of RCPP applications within their district and also given the opportunity to provide input regarding the implementation of RCPP projects.
 - Districts need to be able to “sign off” on all RCPP applications or at least be consulted with before final approval.
- Conservation Districts would like to have more education on the RCPP program.
- NRCS residue management and no till standards needs to be updated to be compatible with the new soil health initiative.
- Work with FSA to improve CRP seeding requirements to enhance bird habitat.
- Identify funding sources for NRCS to hire another Pheasants Forever technician to assist with habitat improvements – supervisor of this position needs to be identified to avoid confusion.
- Black Footed Ferret introduction may be suitable in some areas but certainly not in all regions of Wyoming
 - Boundaries need to be addressed – how to keep the ferrets contained.
 - Need to protect neighboring lands from Black Tailed Prairie Dog infestations.
 - Buffer zones needs to be public lands.

Division 9 (Wind River Reservation)

Presenter: Steve Poitras, NRCS Tribal Liaison

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Recommend the Wind River Indian Reservation be able to utilize AMA dollars for Irrigation delivery infrastructure needs.
- Recommend that the cap on pivot irrigation systems be raised from the current \$50,000 to a higher dollar amount for Historically Underserved applicants to be consistent with Wyoming Bulletin No: Wy440-16-04.
- Need more flexibility in the 528 grazing practice to accommodate producer rangeland needs. For example, a variance from the 3 pasture rotation requirement for water development on rangelands would helpful in situations where only 1 pasture exists.
- Request support and assistance to potentially drill a deep well or artesian well on reservation property where a pipeline gravity flow system could be installed to distribute livestock water. A viable grazing plan could then be developed.
 - Recommend that AMA, RCPP, or FWS dollars be used as matching funds.
 - Recommend support for the LWG to pursue Wyoming Water Development Commission funding to conduct a long term water study.
- Recommend that oil companies agree to drill water wells for livestock water as a requirement of their oil and gas lease.
- Recommend that NRCS return to paying for dry water wells if the geology report indicated water was present
- Need assistance in determining what is required to utilize abandoned oil wells for livestock water development.

- Recommend that NRCS reinstate the wetland restoration program to promote and enhance wetland functions.
- Recommend that NRCS cost share on rangeland perimeter fences when a conservation benefit can be demonstrated.
- Recommend that a waiver be provided to the irrigation district for the “must have irrigated 2 of the last 5 years” requirement for irrigation cost share assistance.
 - Currently there is 10,000 to 12,000 acres of idle land on the reservation which needs to be developed into agricultural land.

Review and Prioritize State Resource Concerns

Grant Stumbough explained the importance of the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) prioritized list of resource concerns to assist in determining state program priorities and to ensure that Wyoming NRCS is addressing resource concerns that are important to the State and Local Work Groups (LWG). The list is prioritized every year to accommodate any new resource concerns. The list is based on a weighted average of all nine (9) LWG resource concern priorities and then initially compiled as a draft list. The initial list had errors and was later corrected. The corrected draft list was then discussed and there was no additions, modifications, or deletions (each Division’s Resource Priorities are attached). However, since the original list was incorrect, the below corrected list will be considered for approval at the next STAC meeting.

Draft 2016 State Technical Advisory Committee Prioritized Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Land Management
2. Irrigation Water Management
3. Water Quality
4. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
5. Soil Quality
6. Invasive Species
7. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
8. Wetlands
9. Excessive Erosion
10. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Use
11. Forest Health
12. Energy

Conservation Easement Update and Subcommittee Recommendations

Ben Bigalke, NRCS Easement Specialist gave a Wyoming easement update via power point presentation and then handed out, explained, and answered questions regarding the easement subcommittee’s recommendations concerning the ACEP ranking and eligibility worksheets. The power point presentation and ACEP ranking and eligibility worksheets are attached. After a brief discussion and minor grammatical changes, the STAC agreed to move forward with the easement subcommittee’s recommendations. Ben also reviewed the 2017 Easement Compensation for the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Enrollments and asked the committee for input or comments. Upon hearing no negative comments, the committee agreed to move forward with the 2017 Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARCs) to determine WRE easement

compensation in Wyoming. Ben also asked if other STAC members would like to serve on the easement subcommittee to obtain more input and different viewpoints in making program recommendations. Please contact either Astrid or Grant if you would like to serve on this subcommittee.

Farm Service Agency Update

Cindy Hottel, FSA provided a Farm Service Agency update (see attached). The STAC recommended that the three mid-contract management choices for producers participating in CRP be moved forward.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Update

Mary Schrader, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs presented a power point presentation to explain the new provisions of the CSP program (see attached). Mary also asked if any STAC members would like to serve on the CSP subcommittee to contact either Astrid Martinez or Grant Stumbough. Purpose of the subcommittee will be to make program and ranking criteria recommendations.

Roundtable Discussion

Don McDowell asked if any landowners were signing up to participate in the Southeast Wyoming RCPP program sponsored by Ducks Unlimited. Astrid explained that landowners interested in participating in the RCPP program could sign up at their local NRCS Field Office or contact their local Ducks Unlimited representative.

Holly Kennedy asked why NRCS criteria is more restrictive than DEQ criteria for feedlot animal waste systems, specifically in requiring retention ponds. The answer is NRCS and DEQ are essentially the same for confinement facilities, there are difference for non-confinement facilities. The following is a comparison of the DEQ criteria Chapter 11 "Design and Construction Standards for Sewerage Systems" and NRCS FOTG Conservation Practice Standard CPS-313 "Waste Storage Structures" and CSP-635 "Vegetated Treatment Area".

First, it is should be noted that the NRCS General Manual and Field Office Technical Guide practices standards require that NRCS follow state laws, rules and regulations. Therefore is DEQ requirement are more restrictive then they have to be followed.

For containment facilities:

- The minimum storage requirement for detention structure (pumped out within 15 day) on feedlots for NRCS and DEQ criteria are the same. Both require the containment facility to hold the 25 year 24 hour storm runoff.
- Both required additional storage volume accounting for solids accumulation if settling basins are not used above the storage containment. DEQ requires 10 % volume be added, NRCS does not specify a percentage, but designer usually use 10% to 15%.
- Both NRCS and DEQ requires that the storage of the 25 year precipitation that falls on the pond during the storm event.
- DEQ requires 1.5 foot of freeboard above the high water level, NRCS requires 1 foot freeboard.
- Both require a spillway for flows in excess of the 25 year storm.
- Both require diversion of clean water away from the 25 year 24 hour storm runoff event.

- DEQ requires the bypass of stream and river of the 100 year storm event around the containment facility, NRCS requires the 25 year storm event.
- Both NRCS and DEQ require additional storage be added to the waste containment facility if the waste is unable to be pumped out in the 15 day time period.

For non-containment system:

- DEQ does not have any specific design criteria spelled out in their criteria. It does state that “other systems” will be evaluated on a case by case basis. They may require the designer meet some or all of the requirements for a confined system. As a minimum the 25 year 24 hour storm event is addressed.
- NRCS criteria follows the CPS 635 Vegetated Treatment Area. Some of the requirements are as follows:
 - Treat the runoff from the 25 year 24 hour storm event.
 - Address water balance and nutrient balance of the treatment area.
 - Divert uncontaminated water from the site.
 - Meet slope restriction for the area.
 - Grade land to maintain sheet flow for the length of the treatment.
 - Locate outside of areas where treatment water may infiltration high water table.
 - Locate outside the 25 year flood plain elevation.

Closing:

Astrid closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their participation.