

# STAC Meeting March 23, 2017

24 people in attendance at 9 a.m.

SLT members: Morgan, Curtis, Shawn, Bruce, James, Mindi

NRCS staff: Travis

Welcome and Introductions by Curtis

Curtis tells joke – A Couple In Their 90s

Information sharing

Some decisions need to be made

You (those who participate in the STAC) can help my staff and I make decisions that meet the needs of our customers and you.

For introductions, Curtis asked everyone to provide their:

- Name
- Affiliation
- Years of Service
- #1 priority for Idaho – the majority of attendees' responses could be grouped under the following categories
  - Partnerships
  - Leveraging resources
  - Working lands for wildlife
  - Water quantity/water quality

Organizations in Attendance

- USFS – local and regional
- BLM
- Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Governor's Office of Species Conservation
- USFWS
- Rangeland Commission
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho State Department of Agriculture
- University of Idaho - Extension
- Idaho Ground Water Appropriators
- Idaho Department of Water Resources
- Nez Perce Tribe – Forest Manager
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- EPA
- Idaho Dairymen's Association
- Potato Growers
- Trout Unlimited
- Sen. Risch's office – Mike Matthews

Curtis speaks on listening to the confirmation hearing for Sonny Perdue.

Curtis covers federal hiring freeze.

Curtis covers Continuing Resolution.

Curtis mentions President's Budget proposal.

Curtis mentions Debt Ceiling.

Thank you to those stakeholders – for their confidence and faith in NRCS.

We need to reach as constituents and the relevance of what we do for their good and the good of our communities.

Curtis covers Governor Otter's letter requesting assistance from FSA and NRCS, ECP or EWP and questions of flooding.

Curtis mentions the white issue paper. Reads sections of it. Mentions the 11 current partners and other organizations are expressing interest. Lists the signatories.

Curtis quickly runs through the 9:15 to 10 a.m. agenda item.

Morgan presents power point on Programs

- FY 2016 round-up
  - Easements
  - EQIP
  - Special Projects
    - Across the State
    - Variety of Topics
      - Fire Prevention
      - LESA
      - Soil Health
      - Wildlife habitat
      - Erosion
      - Water Quality
      - Cheat Grass Control
        - Question raised by Brian Oakey about the product being used on the Shoshone project – if it is a particular one – there is a “stop sale” issue which should be considered

Curtis interjected regarding why we do special projects – as a way to get partner driven projects on the ground. RCPP is very competitive nationally. However, this sort of targeted funding is providing great conservation implementation.

**Sal Palazzo** (IDFG) asked about whether NRCS was developing narratives for the special projects so that the partners can know what they are and what they are promoting.

**Curtis:** Yes, a summarized document for all active RCPP and Special Projects will be sent to everyone.

Morgan covers RCPP projects currently funded in FY 2016 & 2017.

Brian Oakey (Idaho Dept. of Ag) brings up land use patterns changing – leads to changes in water use, flooding. Does the ranking process take that into consideration?

Curtis responded that we work to try to avoid funding conflicting practices.

Idaho Water Resources Board pointed out that while a lead partner is listed, there is often multiple stake holders involved in each process.

Curtis pointed out the system is also set up to create accountability.

Follow-up question asked for clarification as what is meant by accountability.

Curtis clarified.

NRCS is the final approver of design. Assuring all standards are met.

Teri Murrison (ISWCC) asked about flood irrigation projects and whether NRCS was funding flood irrigation

Curtis and mentioned the new flood irrigation initiative for Idaho and what benefits it will bring

It was announced the next meeting will be August 1, 2017.

Morgan asked them to vote on resource concerns.

**Question:** How much weight will be given to our votes? Only two commodity groups are represented at this meeting (Dairymen and Potato Growers)

**Curtis:** Yes and I need your help in recruiting more commodity groups to participate in the STAC. Both Dairy and Potato offered to assist Curtis with this.

**Mindi Rambo, NRCS PAS:** This will be an annual vote, so if more weight is given to Dairymen this year, we hope other groups will be encouraged to attend and advocate for their priorities next year.

**Sal P:** Is there an opportunity for a training session for the partners on CSP?

There is a high level of interest

Is there any tracking of the interest in easements following the shift to ACEP.

Sal P pointed out there is matching fatigue.

Teri concurred

Brian Oakey concurred

U of I concurred – percentage of time

Are indirect costs included?

Curtis will elevate those concerns to NHQ

Clarification on Top Resource Concerns Poster – what the definitions mean

During this process Curtis touches on the importance/function of the local-led workgroups.

“The local-led workgroup process is working very well in Idaho and has strengthened over the last two years. There are six local led workgroups in Idaho, one for each division.”

#### **Results of vote -- Top Five Resource Concerns:**

- Water Quality – 14 votes
- (tie) Degraded Plant Conditions and Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife – 12 votes each
- Soil Quality Degradation – 8 votes
- (tie) Soil Erosion and Insufficient water – 7 votes each

## **Congressional Update**

Mike Matthews from Sen. Risch’s office on D.C. update

Things have picked up rapidly since the first of the year

- American health Care Act

- Secretarial confirmation hearings
  - Ag Next week in the Senate is the hope
  - U.S. Trade Representative
  - Labor
- Supreme Court nomination hearings

New Congress, everything sort of resets

Sen. Risch – Small Business Committee – Chair

Regulatory reform

Other committees

- Foreign Affairs
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Ethics
- Intelligence

Sen. Crapo – Banking Committee chair

Appropriations

12 committees

Go through each one and vote on each one separately

Senator’s website

Senator celebrates National Ag Day

Five bills to bolster Idaho’s agricultural industry

SEPA (Sensible Environmental Protections Act)

Dairy Pride – getting rid of the “milk” in soy milk, etc.

Water Supply

Maritime slowdown

Death Tax repeal

Greater Sage Grouse Restoration and Protection Act

Ramping up scheduling for hearings/committees/etc for Farm Bill

No information on timeframe to debt ceiling

## Idaho Department of Agriculture

### *Environmental / Nutrient Management Plan program*

Animal Industries Section Manager, Mitchell Vermeer, 208-332-8550, [Mitchell.vermeer@isda.idaho.gov](mailto:Mitchell.vermeer@isda.idaho.gov)

Replaced old Idaho One Plan

Compatibility / interface

Entirely web based, can be accessed by most devices.

Straightforward design, not complicated

- Mapping – you can map out most fields in a couple of hours or less including overflow. Mapping stays-up-to-date with Google Maps (but can be switched to a different service if the need arises.
- Updateable – book values
- Accuracy – book values
- Question re: manure testing
  - Response: On-line tool for that is one of the top priorities for continuing development

- Praise for the Idaho Dairymen for encouraging producers to utilize testing as that could be a regulator requirement by Idaho.
- Variability – relate to water usage
- Visual
- <https://agrifloyd.agri.idaho.gov/NMP>
- Question related to solid separation, will this be coupled with record keeping?
  - Yes, it is another tool that is a high priority for development
- Is the soil sample tool available yet? We want to make this as dynamic as possible
- Book values are a big limitation on accuracy because they are estimates. IDA wants to be able to have people dial in information from the ground.

The presentation by Idaho Dept. of Ag was followed by a question session:

- EPA - Nitrogen and Phosphorous Issues
- Data – How do agencies avoid linking metadata to Personally Identifying Information (PII). We need the accuracy, but not the exposure.
- Local Conservation District Carolyn Firth is the program director
- PowerPoint presentation from the EPA on monitoring – testing

## FSA Program Update

Aaron Johnson, Acting State Director

Explained how Actings work in FSA

Overview of how FSA is set up

- 29 counties throughout state in 4 districts
- 2014 Farm Bill
  - Livestock
    - Disaster program
    - Livestock Forage Program
- Non Insured Crop
- ARC/PLC
- Conservation
  - CRP – Is this a continuous signup? No national decides the cycle.
  - SAFE – continuous application
  - CREP – question whether CREP applications are still open – yes. Continuous application cycle. Question on whether the payment is the same everywhere – based on whether on the type of irrigation
  - HELI – continuous application cycle

Maxing out on acres – it's going to get competitive

**Lynn Tominaga** – Water Users are working with FSA to raise the rental rate from \$120 to \$130. Made the recommendation in August 2017. Become 10-year contracts. Water Districts will match the increase.

Stats/Slides on CRP acreages, large number of acres coming out of CRP at end of FY2017  
Concerns about how/where to re-enroll CRP acres.

Becomes a choice between leaving it in cover with no \$\$\$ attached or put it back into production.

**Curtis** – this is concern for NRCS, especially in HEL areas.

Lower commodities prices may force those acres into grazing – is that an option? IDFG says a lot of these farmers are not equipped to make that switch.

Next Farm Bill could be vastly different

Presentation covers:

- Price Support
- Farm Loans
- Totals

FSA believes risk management will be a big thing in 2017. They expect a very busy year.

Questions?

What are you seeing for Dairy this year?

**Aaron Johnson:** Pretty quiet this year. Haven't seen a lot of interest, payment versus premium. Not seeing much more than catastrophic.

To qualify for FSA emergency loan do you need a federal declaration?

**Aaron Johnson:** For some things yes, for some things an administrative declaration will work.

We are about a month early. We don't know all the losses yet.

**Curtis:** We are working with FSA and other federal, state and local organizations in preparation for requests for assistance from affected producers.

## Open Forum

**Teri Murrison**

I'm going to give you a topic: What is the impact of cuts to funding?

Curtis addresses future funding uncertainty through 3 lens:

- CTA
- Currently Idaho-NRCS is at a 20% staffing reduction
- 500 partners advocating for conservation

June 1, 9 a.m. - Pheasants Forever, tour out of NRCS Burley Field Office – SGI projects, juniper removal

**IDL-** In 2010 all states were required to create a Forest Action Plan. Updates required by 2020.

Holistically looking at the forest – fire, water, insect, disease, etc.

Collaborations across the landscape.

**Fish and Wildlife** platform for 2018 Farm Bill was established.

IDFG working on Columbia Grouse proposal with FSA

Money for fencing off stack sheds

### **Water Quality Issues**

Treasure Valley 319 monies

It was suggested that getting private investment – re: Simplot to put their name on some of these efforts – could prove helpful

### **Highly Erodible Lands**

NRCS is working to partner with DOT to address fugitive dust in Idaho. Engaged with the SWCD as well. DOT engineers are putting together their list of priority areas. Looks like it will line up with the NRCS wind erosion models.

### **Other Topics**

**Curtis:** Food for Thought here – Invite members of the new administration to Idaho to see what we do.

#### **Responses:**

- Suggestion to work with Rick Waitley on “legislative” tours.  
Counterpoint – That may conflict with Ethics Rules.
- Would also serve to get members of Food Producers on board with STAC.  
Meeting with staffers is more effective than meeting with administration leads.

### **How do we effectively share information about the benefits of conservation with others?**

- Conservation Effects Assessment Project can help quantify the effectiveness of conservation. Every 5 years they survey producers, accesses NRI data.

### **Action Items**

- STAC Members to review ranking questions in preparation for discussion and voting at next STAC meeting on Aug. 1, 2017.
- NRCS to develop a handout of RCPP descriptions.
- NRCS to develop a handout of Special Project Descriptions.
- Curtis to address the issue of matching fatigue regarding programs and what is and is not covered as matchable to NRCS national leadership.