

State Technical Committee
Wildlife Conservation Partners Meeting
August 30th, 2017

Meeting start 1 pm.

Members of the Committee with special interest in wildlife begin discussion following brief introductions. Santiago thanked the group for making the time to provide feedback on NRCS wildlife conservation programs.

The Santiago provided discussion items on Farm Bill programs.

Working Lands for Wildlife (EQIP 2017)

- LPCI – 6 new contracts, new hire Amber Brown, PF Partner Biologist,
- SWFL – zero new contracts,
 - APHIS is moving forward with efforts to partner with NRCS on the WLFW – SWFL program as a result of a recent court finding (Center for Biological Diversity, et al vs. Tom Vilsack, et al).
 - Susan Rich suggested that NRCS partner with the Greater Rio Grande Alliance and other existing partnerships to increase private land owner participation in WLFW-SWFL.
- Cutthroat Trout (NRCS CO) approved for the WLFW initiative. Invited NRCS NM to participate and offer conservation opportunities for the Rio Grande Cutthroat trout.
 - Brief discussions with NRCS field staff and Partners – NMDGF, Trout Unlimited, and others have indicated positive feedback although much work must be done to bring people together, planning, program eligibility potential challenges, and developing sound proposals to benefit the resource.

Discussion on NRCS New Mexico Wildlife Plan (2014-2017)

- Needs updating. Santiago provided an overview on this state level document which guides field level planners in wildlife conservation. NRCS NM has incorporated and/or adopted the NMDGF's "Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy", the key rare or declining habitats of New Mexico with associated at risk wildlife (fish) as the document utilized in planning and assessment for wildlife conservation activities.
 - The NMDGF has recently updated the CWCS or now called, "State Wildlife Action Plan", 22Nov. 2016.
 - All Member present agreed to revise/update the NRCS New Mexico Wildlife Plan to reflect all updates within the NMDGF's State Wildlife Action Plan.

Discussion on updating NRCS Conservation Practice 643, Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats to add additional definition to Playas and Xeric Riparian habitat type. The present definitions found with the NRCS New Mexico do not reflect the type of Playa's found within the southern shortgrass prairie eco region. Christopher Rustay has been working with Santiago and the NRCS staff Clovis/Portales on Playa lake restoration conservation opportunities and all agree that a proper definition needs to be included as well as all potential conservation practices which may benefit these opportunities.

Gwen Kolb mentioned that her staff needs training on NRCS programs in order to assist NRCS in delivering wildlife conservation to private landowners. She asked if NRCS would provide this training to her staff and all interested partners. Gwen said that her staff needs to know these programs as they (USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program) are supposed to assist NRCS in the delivery of their conservation programs. Bob Osborn, NMDGF, agreed that his private land biologist would also benefit.

Susan Rich, NM State Forestry, mentioned that specific forestland NRCS program fact sheets would assist her staff in outreach efforts with landowners.

Michelle Christman, USFWS, discussed new habitat management guidelines recently published by Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:15 pm.