Colorado State Technical Committee Meeting Minutes  
November 2, 2017

Meeting Location: San Juan and Arkansas Conference Rooms  
Colorado Department of Agriculture Offices  
305 Interlocken Parkway, Broomfield, CO 80021

Members Present: See attached list of attendees (attachment 1)

Welcome – Randy Randall, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
- Welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for attending.  
- Around the room partner introductions.

NRCS Conservation Program Review – Dawn Jackson, NRCS  
- 2017 Program Review  
  - Power point presentation indicated total dollars that were obligated in 2017 for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).
  - Presentation included information on the 10 most contracted structural practices in 2017.
- 2018 Program Adjustments  
  - Minimal adjustments are planned for any of the conservation programs in 2018. This will enable an earlier program rollout and provide for consistency in the final year of the 2014 Farm Bill conservation program implementation. The Fiscal Year 2018 application cut-off deadline for EQIP will be in December.
  - The Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) was reviewed and recommendations or considerations were solicited from those in attendance. The historic rate has been 80% of the Fair Market Value (FMV) as determined by individual appraisal, not to exceed $4,000 per acre. No recommendations or considerations were given for adjusting this rate in 2018.

Group Breakouts: What did the information provided tell you about conservation work in Colorado? What do you want to know about the conservation work in Colorado? And how can NRCS improve customer service delivery?  
- What do we really buy with those funds? Are there ties to conservation services?
- Connect to partner programs to help understand the relationship between federal, state, and local partnerships.
- Put the information in context with the nation, region, state, area, or local office.
- Pictures of projects are always nice.
- Put acres in context rather than just the number. Example: Compare acres enrolled to the size of a state or county, etc.
- We need to get the information to all producers, particularly those that aren’t common program participants.
- Customer Service - local NRCS offices may not know the full latitude that can be exercised in program opportunities.
- Would like to see more program opportunities within Farm Service Agency (FSA) and NRCS that help provide a transition for expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands.
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- State level attendance by Clint or Dawn at watershed meetings is desired to help grassroots level partners better understand program opportunities and rules.
- Discuss uniqueness of conservation delivery or activities in the different areas of the state.
- Increase monitoring and assessments, and bring in partner assessments to tell another part of the story.
- Partners need to know how much conservation is needed to help advocate for the programs. Examples: X number of producers need served, X percentage of market.
- Discuss the benefits beyond the dollars and acres.
- Concerned about more dollars spent and less help to get it all implemented.
- Administrative transformation has been a burden to partners and doesn’t seem more efficient.
- Conservation should be performance based making it attractive to producers that want to effect a change on their land.
- Consider more contribution agreements with partners to help fill gaps in customer service.
- Consider a “work unit” concept (grouping neighboring offices to manage as one unit) vs the small 1-2 person offices where staff would set appointments with producers rather than producers walking in for assistance. Overall, want to maintain technical staffing to provide “boots on the ground” assistance to producers.
- Important to have a consistent person to work with throughout a project rather than changing faces which happens with short-term details.
- NRCS is a trusted agency and needs to retain its role as technical experts.

Wildlife Sub-Committee Update – Ken Morgan, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
- Ken read the recommendations from the sub-committee meeting minutes. (See attached.)

USDA ARS Center for Agricultural Resources Research (CARR) Presentation – Daren Harmel, ARS Director
- Information presentation was given for awareness of the research and activities carried out by ARS at the Fort Collins, Greeley, Nunn, and Cheyenne Wyoming centers. (See attached presentation.)

Next Meeting
April 5, 2018

Closing Comments
Clint Evans thanked everyone for their participation and stated that NRCS will evaluate the committee’s input and recommendations for implementation of the conservation programs and technical assistance.

Attachments
- List of attendees
- NRCS Program Review Power Point
- Wildlife Sub Committee Meeting Minutes
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- USDA ARS CARR Power Point