

**Idaho State Technical Committee
December 5, 2017 @ 9:00am**

**Idaho State NRCS Office
9173 W Barnes Drive, Boise, Idaho 83709**

Welcome and Introductions – Bruce Sandoval, Acting State Conservationist, NRCS

In attendance were representatives from: Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game, Idaho Dept of Water Resources, Idaho Dept of Environmental Quality, Ducks Unlimited, Idaho Dept. of Lands, Idaho Assoc. of Soil Conservation Districts, Ada Soil Conservation District, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Forest Owners Association, Idaho Groundwater Appropriators, Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Dairymen's Association, Governor's Office of Species Conservation, and Trout Unlimited.

Bruce Sandoval presented remarks from NRCS State Conservationist for Idaho Curtis Elke about FY 2018 NRCS Priorities.

- Question were asked about updates to the Special Projects programs about what qualifies as a special project and whether partner proposed projects come to the NRCS State Office or the local field office. Sandoval noted that guidance will be coming from the Programs Division that would address those questions.
- In addition, the STAC will be sent the news release about the Special Projects application period when it is issued. It will also be posted on the NRCS Idaho website.

Morgan Bennetts, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS, oversaw a discussion about the addition of ACEP-ALE Priority Areas, including:

- Expanding the Craters of the Moon Priority Area
- Boundary County additive area is key migratory corridor for wildlife
- West Camas Prairie additive area is migratory corridor for SGI and big game overwintering sites
 - The question was raised as to how often will the priority areas be reviewed. Morgan responded that it would be done annually, like at the same time we do other reviews, such as payment rates.
- Release will be coming out shortly

Morgan also discussed the changes to the EQIP calendar, explaining how the dates had changed and why.

New RCPP Projects for FY18 – We have not received information about the FY18 projects national has selected.

During a brief presentation on groundwater recharge, the representatives from Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game and Ducks Unlimited raised the issue as to whether the STAC come up with decisions that could be elevated to NRCS leadership about practices covered under EQIP that are creating additional to wildlife resource concerns (ie flood irrigation to sprinkler) to be addressed through ranking process. The representative from

Idaho Dairymen's Association countered that there were tremendous gains related to preventing nutrient loss and sediment loss through conversion. This led to discussion as to whether it is possible to target areas for NOT doing practices? An alternative -- incentivizing historic practices, like flood irrigation, in areas where it makes sense -- was put forth.

James Eller, State Resource Conservationist noted that under NRCS policy we are not to create another resource concern when we address one. He noted that we may have been underestimating the other resource concerns as related to sprinkler irrigation. He suggested the best way to address this issue would be to:

- Create suite of mitigation practices
- Create a subcommittee to assist with that process.

The representative from IDFG noted that it's a nuanced topic, and IDFG isn't looking for an all or nothing decision, but rather an ongoing conversation along with increased awareness.

This overall discussion led into the State Technical Sub-Committees. The representative from the Nature Conservancy suggested moving to a working group model as opposed to a subcommittee model. After some discussion about the purpose of the subcommittees and how they would be utilized in the future, the group's recommendation to the State Conservationist is to use both subcommittees and a working group that can be assembled on an ad hoc basis from the STAC membership. The working group model would be especially helpful on issues that cross subcommittee areas of focus -- such as the conversion from flood to sprinkler irrigation and its impacts to wildlife and the state's aquifers.

There was general discussion about why the subcommittees were currently populated and it was noted that it was possible and encouraged that people could join both at the meeting and in the future if they were interested. It was also noted that

- Get a member from each of the Local-Led working groups to participate
- Work on increasing participation in the general STAC as well

Following a break a Round Table Session, let each of the attendees know what their organizations are up to:

- EPA -- New regional Administrator (political appointee out of Alaska)
- USFS -- Timber management is becoming a bigger issue -- ramping up targets, but no more funds or people
- DEQ -- State has finally put some money into non-point source pollution management, open announcement period in July
 - Agricultural ranching -- 7 applications, more than anticipated. 4 were funded.
 - Lower Boise -- watershed council meeting
 - Rock Creek -- outside of Grangeville
 - Mica Creek -- feeds Lake CdA
 - Stargazer Wetlands -- SE of Twin Falls
 - BMPS, fencing, alternate water sources
 - Progress report to legislature in the spring, also seeking clearer guidance on timing.
- IDL -- Revision of Statewide Forest Plan
 - Assessment portion is underway

- BLM and Farm Bureau are participating as is IDFG and their partners, Kirk Selmire from NRCS
 - Kirk is also appointed to another IDL committee
- Grants available, preproposals are being taken. Really looking for cross boundary projects, especially with USFS
- Ada SCD – Farm land preservation continues to be a concern
 - Conservation farm – NRCS, City of Boise, Ada SCD
 - Grant program -- Communities in Conservation
- IASCD – try to get more SCD reps to the NRCS STAC meetings.
- OSC – Working on SGI plan amendments, not blow it open, but refine the details – the Idaho Plan
- IDWR – RCPP project, wanted to get an idea of what the STAC is about and the partners
 - Application process in May
- Idaho Dairymen’s Association – phosphorus indexing rule making, how to merge that with NRCS requirements for a Nutrient Management Plan
 - 5 year role out period, tied to the current state requirement of an NMP every 5 years.
- IDFG – SGI (Marsing, Mountain Home, Burley)
- DU – Working wetlands, flood irrigation practices and restoration of the CdA Basin
- USFWS – Dept. State Supervisor position filled
- TU – 3 RCPP projects, supportive of the Eastern Snake River Plain one as well
 - Groundwater is an issue for them
- Idaho Forest Owners Association – Set up to keep tabs on what is happening that affects private forest land owners
- Idaho Groundwater Appropriators – Settlement agreement – magnetic flow meters on every well
 - Average cost of installation is \$6,000.
 - 4,900 wells on the ESRP
 - About 50-55% of wells are metered now
 - Deadline is 2018 – state is threatening legal action against those who do not have them on their wells.
 - Question to Lynn: What is the life span of the meters?
 - Answer from Lynn: 6 to 8 % failure rate, but over 5 years typically. In the 6 to 8 year period, they will need to be refurbished or replaced.
 - 13 different types of meters but they all have the same issues.

Next State Technical Meeting – April 3, 2018

- Meeting date may conflict with NRCS responsibilities. Date will be reviewed and any changes will be communicated to the State Technical Advisory Committee.