Proposed Washington NRCS Team Boundary Adjustments

Organizational Structure

Why Are We Talking About Restructuring?

- The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memorandum in March 2017 to provide guidance on how agencies can reform and reduce the size of their workforce.
- We were directed in the OMB memo to begin restructuring activities by aligning our operational plans and initiatives with the President’s 2018 budget.
- The President’s budget proposed decreasing or eliminating funding for many programs across the federal government and included a 21% decrease in funding for Agriculture.
- The OMB directive directed agencies to begin taking immediate actions to achieve workforce reductions and cost savings.

Current National Issues

- FPAC and the Department are suggesting a 90/10 staffing ratio, where 90% of staff are in the field and customer-facing.
- FPAC is recommending 10:1 employee to supervisor ratio.
- FPAC is asking states to look at any situations where offices are less than 30 miles apart and consider closing offices.
- We have received a staffing cap of 159 employees (we were originally at 205, more than 20% decrease in staffing).

Washington State Specific Issues:

- It has been a struggle for the Northwest Team to service the Olympic Peninsula due to difficulty in traveling to the area.
- The Colville Tribe is serviced by two different areas and two different field offices.
- Benton County Conservation District has argued that their resource concerns better align with another team.
- The Longview and Zillah Field Offices are less than 30 miles from another field office.
- The Vancouver Field Office location is not ideal.
- We have many vacancies in key positions.
- 45% capacity for engineering.
- 62 vacancies under 210 organization chart.

Decisions:

There were two questions that the leadership team considered.

- Do we need to change the organizational boundaries to better meet the needs of our customers and get the right staff in the right places?
- If it weren’t for these changes coming down from the national level, would we have changed our organizational/boundary structure anyway?

After much discussion among leadership and information gathered at the roundtable meetings, leadership is confident that we can meet our needs by implementing minor adjustments to a few team boundaries and revising our organizational chart. We believe these changes are in our best interest. It
is our opinion that there are a lot of good things about our current structure and we do not need to make dramatic changes. We are suggesting a fine tuning approach rather than a major overhaul.

To that end, leadership is suggesting the following option. At this time, it is only an option and nothing has been decided. Once leadership makes the final decision, we will need to seek national approval.

**Suggested Changes in the Organizational Chart (see attached organization chart):**

- The District Conservationists (DC) collaborated with the Area Conservationists to develop a proposed organizational structure. Leadership discussed the proposal and suggested minor adjustments as well as added an additional seven positions to the DC’s proposed chart.
- Leadership based the organizational chart on 162 staff years rather than 159.
- Current staffed positions that do not appear on the organizational chart will be removed after the employee vacates their position.
- No one will lose their job.
- No one will be direct reassigned or made to move.

**Suggested Changes to Team Boundaries (see attached map):**

- Port Angeles will be switched from the Northwest Team to the Puget Sound Team.
- Ferry County (Republic Field Office) will be incorporated into a new team that encompasses the entire Colville Reservation plus all of Ferry County, and the entire team will be in the Central Area.
- The Zillah Field Office will be closed and services moved to the Yakima Field Office.
- The Longview Field Office will be closed and services moved to one office that services Clark, Skamania, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties.
- The Renton Field Office will be closed and employees moved to the Lake Stevens Field Office.

**Staffing Priority:**

- NHQ continues to change what they consider priority positions.
- NHQ asked for all our priorities to get us to 159.
- When we submitted our top three priority positions last quarter, only one was advertised – West Area Conservationist.
- We currently are filling 4-5 positions through voluntary reassignments.
- 27 positions listed below are vacant using the proposed organizational chart to get us to 162.
- We will advertise the top 3 first, but we submitted all vacancies to make us whole.
- Resource conservationist positions will be changed to soil conservationists to meet NHQ recruitment and fill priorities.

**Order of vacancy priorities:**

1. East area Cultural Resources Specialist
2. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Waterville
3. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Port Angeles
4. Soil Conservationist Technician GS-5/7 – Colville
5. Business Support Specialist – Spokane State Office
6. East Area Engineer (vice Scott)
7. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Yakima
8. Soil Conservationist GS-9 – Everson
9. Soil Conservationist GS-11, Lake Stevens
10. Soil Conservationist GS-9, Ephrata
11. Soil Conservationist GS-9 – Colville
12. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Ellensburg
13. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Colfax
14. Engineering Technician Everson
15. Central Area Engineer – Ephrata
16. East Area Engineering Technician GS-9
17. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Chehalis
18. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Bremerton
19. Soil Conservationist GS-9 – Walla Walla
20. Soil Conservationist GS-9 – Waterville
21. Soil Conservationist GS-9 – Ephrata
22. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Dayton
23. West Area Programs Specialist
24. Rangeland Management Specialist GS-9 – Goldendale
25. Soil Conservationist GS-11 – Ritzville
26. Central Area Engineer – Yakima
27. Civil Engineering Technician - Ephrata

Comment Period:

We are presenting this material as an option to all Washington NRCS employees to consider. We would like to hear your feedback on our proposal. Please review the information and get comments back to leadership by May 23, 2018.

We are looking for your feedback on the following;

- Have we kept the right jobs?
- Is this meeting the needs of our customers and our agency? (be objective)

Employee are encouraged to comment through Employee Connect (an email that goes directly to the state conservationist), through your supervisor, or talk to members of leadership at the all employee meeting in Leavenworth. In June, the State Leadership Team will review employee comments and make a final decision on what changes to implement.

Timeline and National Approval:

The recently approved Omnibus Bill requires congressional approval if we decide to move forward with our proposed changes. Congressional approval will take a considerable amount of time and we have been told that it will take up to two years to receive approval. To get the ball rolling we will need to prepare a 10/10 package that outlines all of the changes that we want to implement and submit it to national office for approval.