

EQIP SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES: April 18, 2018

- Attendees: BURDETTE PIERNEG, ERIC ZACH, SCOTT WESSEL, BOB BETTGER, MIKE SOUSEK, ELBERT TRAYLOR, CARLA MCCULLOUGH, MIKE MCDONALD, TIM KALKOWSKI, JOHN DUPLISSIS, LARRY HUDKINS, BUFFALO BRUCE, ED HUBBS, ANDREW BAKER, MARCIA TROMPKE, WALLY VALASEK, RITCH NELSON, CRAIG DERICKSON, JACOB BLIVEN, BRAD SONCKSEN, RICH TORPIN, SAM KAZDA, TAMI NORDMAN, GEORGE CUNNINGHAM, GREG SHANAHAN

Notes

- Conservation Program Participation – Nebraska
 - Mike Sousek
 - Will all of the NRD allocation funds be spent? How is it allocated?
 - All of the funds will be spent regardless if there is a trickling from one NRD to another, and there is an allocation formula used that takes different resource concerns, size of land, etc. into consideration
 - Each NRD gets a percentage of the allocation
 - Nebraska is a mirror of the national allocation
 - Is “need” a factor in the allocation?
 - Brad: Does not look at need/demand really; Rich: yes, after the smoke clears and we have slippage
- Local Work Group Recommendations
 - The planning process for rankings and contracts will be more heavily emphasized this year (FPAC)
 - Question: Would you define “limitation” for livestock production limitation?
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 - Comment: Concerned that people may not understand these Recommendations and resource concerns at a LWG level
- Brush Management
 - Larry Hudkins: brush management is vital for Nebraska Cattlemen.
- Ogallala
 - Craig Derickson
 - This project is in generation two now. From 2010-2014 we were getting it funded and now from 2014-2018 we have a new Farm Bill that cut funding by 2/3
 - RFP based process
 - Little Blue, Upper Big Blue, Central Platte and Middle Republican are getting funding
 - Bob Bettger
 - The issues change over time; there was a large shift in priorities
 - Example: water quantity (quality?) in the 90s
 - Rich Torpin
 - This is mainly because of the issues being addressed and worked on through the years

- Marcia Trompke
 - Pivot corners seem to be working, compared to half swing pivots and gate swing pipes? SDIs on corners for efficiency
 - There are 3 demonstration sites
 - Problem is large upfront cost
- Bob Bettger
 - Tile
 - Swamp buster restrictions
 - Wetland determination
 - Tile has increased dramatically the past 3-5 years
 - Drainage districts in other states
 - We need incentives for new technology
- NPNRD getting a NWQI Project
 - Watershed plan is required but they don't currently have one
 - Voluntarily sponsored plan
- Rich Torpin
 - Thoughts on reducing the # of fund pools (LBBNRD, LCNRD & SPNRD)
 - No comments from the group
- Craig Derickson
 - We tend to get four times the requests for EQIP funds compared to what's available
- Elbert Traylor
 - Is there a time limit on these practices?
 - Craig: Contracts are 3-5 years usually, but we cannot police what upkeep is done after the contract expires
 - Maybe we can combine agencies for funding
 - Could we dock points on conversion in the rankings?
 - Bigger money incentives for cover crops because there are rewards in the soil quality but not in the paycheck quantity
 - Row cropping is financially competitive with cover cropping
- Can we suggest an economic analysis by NRCS with impact on acres/property tax impact?
 - Cover crops
 - Forestry
 - EQIP impact with CSP
 - Study by Black from Illinois
- Livestock Shelter Structures
 - Larry Hudkins
 - Metal is quickest
 - Only reason for using wood would be if it's built using local cedar
 - Problem: livestock would chew on/eat the treated wood
 - Could incentivize local cedar
 - Andy Baker
 - This is a temporary idea
 - Don't see it as a negative necessarily but there is not a big societal benefit from this practice

- Practice 528 – New livestock deferment scenario that starts June 1 and allows early season grazing of cool season grass. Payment reduced accordingly from full season payment
 - Unanimous yes
- New Scenarios (Not offered in 2018)
 - Rock Drains as an approved underground outlet practice
 - Limestone collection areas for rain
 - Have engineers look at this
 - In lieu of terraces
- Planted crops
 - Rules are from 2014 so RMA is current and we are not
 - Need to update our establishment rules
 - Crop insurance
 - Farm credit
 - Wide open to interpretation
- Trees
 - Can we get the county road personnel to be better about removing small trees?
 - Benefits of animals eating trees and brush
 - Goats!
 - Ex: Custer county man with leafy spurge has 5000 some goats for management
 - Sheep (Hay Springs)
 - Cows
 - Marcia: keep small trees out by burning
 - Fuel is the issue
 - NRDs need to take control of this
 - Eastern red cedars need to be a priority
 - Overrun
 - Epidemic
 - John Duplissis
 - Some 200,000 trees sold but way more seedlings grow
 - Larry Hudkins
 - We need funding and personnel for chemical spot treatment of trees
 - Training/certification would be required
 - Hard to get a burn permit in Lancaster county
 - Tim Kalkowski: Eastern red cedar is a game changer
 - Effects ranking and should be a priority
 - Burning is the best option for control
- Generational Transition
 - Need to educate up and coming farmers and producers on these topics to keep change momentum
 - Points, seminars, economic benefits, mentors, etc.

CSP SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES: April 18, 2018

- Attendees: CRAIG DERICKSON, GREG SHANAHAN, BRAD SONCKSEN, SAM KAZDA, JOHN MAYBERGER, SCOTT HEINEMANN, MIKE MCDONALD, WALLY VALASEK, CARLA MCCULLOUGH, ELBERT TRAYLOR, LARRY HODKINS, BURDETTE PIERNING, BOB BETTGER, BUFFALO BRUCE, JENNY PRENOSIL, GEORGE CUNNINGHAM, ERIC ZACH, SCOTT WESSEL

Notes

- Perspective
 - Craig Derickson
 - There will be a new perspective on CSP in 2019 moving forward
 - Adding new enhancements
 - Pay will mimic 2017
 - “It will be business as usual until we hear different”
 - Authorized by congress until 2022
 - Brad Soncksen
 - Feel free to call us with any questions or concerns
 - State Technical Committee Meeting
 - June 7th, Extension office
- CSP
 - Larry Hudkins
 - Concerned with the number of eligible land contracts versus the number of people who actually apply
 - With cut off dates and restrictions it’s easier to take your chance in general sign ups instead
 - You lose flexibility
 - Example: couldn’t plant wheat recently because he did in 2013
 - John Mayberger
 - CSP has a lot to do with going above and beyond what you are already doing in order to better the land
- Target Resource concerns
 - Is there a committee to decide what’s important?
 - Prior to 2017
 - We haven’t changed them for 2018
- Minimum Threshold Eligibility
 - General Signups
 - Soil erosion
 - Water quality degradation
 - Degraded plant condition
 - Fish and Wildlife
 - Livestock production limitation
 - “MEET OR EXCEED”

- Resource Concerns
 - Scott Heinemann
 - Been turned away at Field Offices because he is already doing certain aspects of CSP
 - There is not enough communication between the field offices and the producers
 - John Mayberger
 - We just had a programs workshop throughout the state
 - News releases
 - Historically underserved data
 - Activities list for planners
 - Craig Derickson:
 - Communication methods have changed
 - Social media is a huge aspect now
 - Larry Hudkins: Rural Radio network would be a great resource to use
 - Weekly FSA emails, leverage with them
 - Mike McDonald:
 - The website is so hard to navigate for producers
 - John Mayberger: We will talk to our website person, Joanna Pope
 - National versus state supplements can get blurred
 - What is the conversation with EQIP like?
 - There is overlap/alignment
 - Cannot pay for 1 thing twice
 - CSP Job Sheets and enhancements
 - Ex: cover crops
 - You can plant different crops on different programs
 - Is there a way to have shared accountability between NRCS and the producer that they are not just trying to make money and that they will continue to take care of the land?
 - Craig Derickson: yes, follow up is a principle that we need to do better on, and will.

WILDLIFE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES: April 18, 2018

- Attendees: RICH TORPIN, RITCH NELSON, ERIC ZACH, SAM KAZDA, KIM COPENHAVER, GREG REISDORFF, JENNY PRENOSIL, BRAD SONCKSEN, CRAIG DERICKSON, GEORGE CUNNINGHAM, BOB BETTGER, ANDREW BAKER, SCOTT WESSEL, RYAN LODGE, CHAD CHRISTIANSEN, ANDREW PIERSON, BUFFALO BRUCE

Notes

- Artificial Windbreaks from EQIP meeting
 - Ranchers & Cattlemen are so for this idea
- Working Lands for Wildlife – Nelson
 - Pheasants forever: proposal to national to receive grant \$ for hiring biologists in area
 - Rainwater Basin: submitted companion grant to National Fish and Wildlife
 - Hire prescribed burn coordinator to work with producers and fire department
 - Brush management and infrastructure
- Nebraska is working with multiple states, but we are a single state program
- Beetles: there will be work done this year and next year
 - Nothing specific right now – rangeland health and improved grazing
 - Ex: wet meadow; recommend management if it comes up, but no specifics
- Scott: Grazing construction
 - low density/low canopy
- 10-15 new land owners interested
- February: 2 day workshop
 - landowners with properties in land area in the map on previous slide
 - resource (G&P, FWS, Sandhills, NRCS, WLFW, University of Montana, etc.)
- Very positive reaction from landowners (engaged)
 - Sandhills: fire needs to happen
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
 - Rumors are RCPP may return
 - House draft has RCPP moving towards stand alone program (now 7% from EQIP/ACEP)
 - Mandatory funding of \$250 million a year
 - Administered by NRCS, could add CRP
 - Different entities can have proposals in RCPP
 - Goal: enhance grasslands
 - Iowa: grouse
 - Missouri: quail/grasslands
 - Kansas & Nebraska: quail (Bob White conservation)
 - Thayer and Jefferson Counties
 - Rattlesnakes
 - Threshold scores (100?)
 - Automatically approved within fund code for Grassland Bird
 - Goal: Incentivize multi species cover crop
 - Use after wheat to get added value from wheat acres
 - Southwest corner of NE: Hitchcock, Red Willow & Furnas Counties
 - Nelson: Pheasant research attempting to look at how birds might use alternative cover type?

- Wasn't the purpose, but it was an opportunistic way to look at alternative cover
 - Attempting to get more diversity from last year that were planted in May
 - Added value from grazing cover crops
 - No payment caps last year when corn prices dropped
 - Payment cap this year, so no forgone income; less applications
 - PL-566 watershed funding for the Wahoo Creek (CCA)
 - Bob: Landowners are interested in these projects to save water (Divots & Pivots)
 - Nebraska Northwest Landscape Restoration
 - Joint Chiefs
 - NRCS & Forestry
- Questions
 - What is critical conservation fun pool? – George Cunningham
 - Grouping areas into regions to increase pools to pull from
 - Targeting certain areas for different concerns nationally
 - If this is carried into next Farm Bill, Working Lands for Wildlife could expand to the Great Plains if other states were interested and opportunities for Great Plains Screen Fishes (?)
 - RCPP contributions and more flexible with \$
 - Buffalo Bruce: what projects were involved within the national forests?
 - Joint Chief:
 - Address aftermath of major fire (pine ridge)
 - Follow up work post fire, standing dead timber, fence reconstruction & fuels reduction (small pines, cedars, etc.)
 - Establish firebreaks (opportunity)
 - Address future wildfire risk and fuels reduction
 - Eastern red cedar encroachment (thinning)
- Wildlife Initiative Ranking Tools
 - People are using WIN for brush management because they did not make it into general fund pool in Torpin's opinion maybe?
 - See Middle Republican NRD note comments
 - Nelson:
 - WHIP 15 years ago
 - How does this project that is still valuable on grazing lands differ from a resource priority standpoint vs. EQIP grazing livestock production, etc. to avoid crossover
 - Habitat Evaluation Worksheet
 - Composition
 - Management
 - Utilization rate (light, moderate, heavy etc.)
 - Haven't had a universal decree about WIN; should there be more specific criteria?
 - George: what is this program's practices principally?
 - Varies; but benefits multiple species; comparing apples to oranges. Need universal criteria
 - Are the majority of contracts more eastern cedars? Just one NRD?
 - TSP burn plans to be implemented
 - North Platte

- Mechanical and Fire (BUL) group of applications rose to the top
 - Look at biologically unique landscapes for rankings (BULs)
- TSP Writing burn plans. Wouldn't that automatically give you CAP points on rankings?
 - This is implementing it, so it doesn't count
- Did we have projects with wetland restoration enhancements didn't get funded because of invasive species?
 - Not to our knowledge due to no analysis done
 - Anything stream corridor connectivity wetland water resources should bump it up a few notches due to bang to the buck (Kim Copenhaver)
- How competitive is the money in this category (WIN)? Do you need to look at value judgements (aka priorities for the state)? Andy
 - A lot do not meet standards, below threshold
 - Was there a QAR? Ryan Lodge
 - Nelson: big point drop offs that are noticeable
 - There was a surge in burning associated contracts this year
 - Went down to 129 points; 3 were above 100
 - This is a unique year; have usually funded down to low scores
 - Ran out of money
 - Look at what practices have and have not been funded, and take that into account before making ranking decisions for moving up the scale
 - Scott: WHIP
 - Was there a handful of priorities that created ranking tool (broad) so no one stood out head and shoulders above the rest
 - Nelson: state WHIP plan that included multiple land types
 - Current: modified to reflect WHIP but there are still apples and oranges
- Being equitable with grasslands (Nelson)
 - Has each office equally planned for prescribed grazing?
- Were the changes to the points system in last few years?
 - Ex- grass seedings used to be top priority and other concerns couldn't compete
 - Times are changing and so are the rankings and guidelines
- Kim: Focusing closer on stream quarters would increase the wildlife population and diversity that would benefit the environment
 - We do buffers and filter strips to kind of balance that
 - Rich showed the rankings from Protracts for WIN
 - LWGs made comments on funding allocations, negatively
- Nelson: Do we actually give BULs points or is it just enhancing natural legacy plan?
 - Being in a BUL makes a big difference; should we only be focused on BULs? (Biological Unique Landscape)
 - Geography matters but isn't a deciding factor because you can do the same practices right outside of the BUL: Scott Wessel
 - Project has to benefit purpose
- Wildlife biologists look at WIN applications: Nelson, Ryan Lodge & Chad Christiansen

- Partner or Agency biologists must approve WINs
- The WIN worksheet is required as a part of the checklist by the State office to be obligated
- Application cutoff dates
 - November 15th recommendation
 - Increase applications with short term turn around
 - September 30 cut off with Farm Bill Limitations? Greg Reisdorff
 - Not specific cut off; it's continuous (EQIP)
 - CRP cannot take more applications on September 30... does that apply to WIN?
 - Brad: we have to have funds obligated by September 30th
 - With agreements, the money is already there for the next year
 - Nelson: will there be CRP grassland cutoffs?
 - Greg: "3 dates we plan for, get to the deadline to announce, and then it stops"
 - February, March or April?
 - Eric Zach: CRP expirations/extensions?
 - Greg: 43,000 acres expiring