Meeting Location: Colorado Department of Agriculture Offices  
San Juan and Arkansas Conference Rooms  
305 Interlocken Parkway, Broomfield, CO 80021  
Members Present: See attached list of attendees (Attachment 1)

*Welcome – Clint Evans, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)*
- Welcomed and thanked everyone for attending.  
- Introductions made around the room and with partners listening via teleconference.  
- Clint provided a brief update on the Farm Bill and the status within the House of Representatives and Senate.  He also gave a brief update on Colorado NRCS staffing and the potential shift to resource teams.  
- Clint listed several agreements and the positive impact those are having in Colorado in getting conservation on the ground.

*Conservation Programs Update – Cindy Vukasin, Farm Services Agency (FSA)*
- FSA is on hold for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign-up however there are a few of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) sign-ups that are still accepting applications.  
- In fiscal year (FY) 2018 FSA will have 16 counties with more than 46,700 acres that will expire under CRP; in FY 2019, 19 counties will have more than 29,700 acres released; and in FY 2020, 29 counties will have more than 629,900 acres expire.  
- FSA has requested National Headquarters funds for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to assist with fencing, structures, and debris removal; the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) to help with feed; and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) to help with cattle loss.

*Drought Update and Water Forecast for 2018 – Gene Backhaus and Lexi Landers, NRCS*
- Gene noted that Colorado has reached the D4 status in the southwest part of Colorado and D3 in the southeast.  Gene recommended that everyone take a look at the NIDIS (National Integrated Drought Information System) on the Colorado Climate Center website.  
- Lexi presented the 2018 water forecast and the current conditions of each watershed and the anticipated snowpack results for the rest of 2018.  She noted this was a typical year for a La Niña weather pattern.  
- Both presentations showed that there is more moisture in the northern half of the state and that the summer water availability will be greatly restricted in the southern watersheds.

*Resource Stewardship Evaluation Tool (RSET) – Gene Backhaus, NRCS*
- Gene provided a printout that the tool developed to show producers which resource concerns are being positively impacted and where to target additional conservation efforts to improve the overall impact of their system management.  This could be used to help with ranking of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications in the future.
Colorado State Technical Committee Meeting
Minutes
April 19, 2018

Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Update – Gene Backhaus, NRCS
- Gene provided a list of the standards and specifications that were updated in FY 2018 or that are in the process of being updated.

Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDOA) Update – Commissioner Don Brown, CDOA
- Commissioner Brown provided a brief update on the impacts of the changes in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as well as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, will have on Colorado agriculture. Commissioner Brown noted that over 50% of the ag products in Colorado leave the U.S. and that of that 50%, 50% goes directly to other countries via NAFTA.
- Commissioner Brown has a meeting scheduled with Secretary Perdue in May.

EQIP Update – Becky Ross, Kindra Brandner, and Gene Backhaus, NRCS
- Becky stated that Colorado NRCS would like to update the ranking criteria and reduce the number of EQIP fund pools that are being managed (currently over 80) to spend the over $34 million in Financial Assistance that was received in FY 2018. Colorado NRCS would also like to get a feel from the committee as to how much funding should be set aside for Targeted Conservation Proposals (TCPs).
- The history of the TCPs has seen the numbers more than double from FY 2017 to FY 2018 with a major increase in forestry proposals. While this is good, we need to realize that if more of the TCPs are funded, this will reduce the dollars available in the general fund pools. Clint asked the group to consider providing a recommendation on the cap for EQIP dollars going to TCPs.
- Kindra provided an overview of where the EQIP dollars have been spent over the last three years across Colorado. This included National Landscape Initiatives, state initiatives, general sign-ups, and TCP areas. Kindra noted that with 80 fund pools, NRCS is limited to the number of people that can be reached and that in FY 2018, NRCS has over 1600 applications and are expected to fund only 600.
- Becky and Gene shared the list of Resource Concerns and asked that each participant select their #1 concern for each resource area (soil, water, air, plant, animal, and energy) and return those by May 18th to Becky. NRCS would then consolidate the list and ask the group to then narrow it down to the top 10 priority resource concerns for the future. This would potentially help NRCS reduce the number of fund pools as we target specific resource concerns and the suite of conservation practices through EQIP. This would also allow other groups in the committee to also use those same priority resource concerns if they desired.

Next Meeting
Proposed dates for a July 2018 webinar will be sent to the committee via a Doodle poll.
Closing Comments – Clint Evans, NRCS

Clint reviewed the action items:

- NRCS will schedule a webinar in June to provide a live demonstration of the RSET;
- Clint asked if Colorado Cattleman’s would provide an update on their Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project; and
- Rachel Murph, NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist, will conduct a demonstration of the LandPKS (Land-Potential Knowledge System) during our July webinar.

Attachments
List of attendees
Water Forecast Presentation
Resource Concern Definitions
RSET Printout
EQIP Summary Presentation