

State Technical Committee Meeting – 12/6/2018

ALL POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS ARE ON THE WEBSITE.

**You can listen to the recording of the meeting by dialing:
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(There is a 5m blank time from the start of the recording to the beginning of the meeting. You can fast forward by pressing 9 & rewind by pressing 7.)

Attendees: Craig Derickson, Brad Soncksen, Tami Nordman, Sam Kazda, Jenny Prenosil, Brian Baskerville, Neil Dominy, Eric Zach, Elbert Traylor, Greg Whitmore, Dave Sands, Al Juhnke, Kent Zimmerman, Kelsi Wehrman, Dustin Wilcox, Jason Moudry, Dan Ruterberies, Chandler Schmidt, Mike Murphy, Joe Lally, Doug Klein, Steve Roth; **via phone:** Andrew Pierson, Kirstin Bailey, Rich Walters, Ginger Wilson, Boone McAfee, Mike McDonald, Heather Duncan.

Welcome and thank you for being here! – CRAIG DERICKSON, NRCS NE

- ❖ New Chief of NRCS – Matthew Lohr, Leonard Jordan (acting chief) is retiring
- ❖ Current CR lapses 12/7, a short 2-week extension is looking probable
- ❖ Waiting for new Farm Bill to pass
- ❖ FY2019: NRCS main goal is to achieve greater efficiency and streamlining services with customer service

PROGRAM UPDATES – Brad Soncksen, NRCS NE (Highlights)

❖ **EQIP –**

- **EQIP Fund Allocations in 2019 TBD**
- **FY 2019 Local Fund Pools**
 - Cropland – 23 Total
 - Grassland – 23 Total
 - Local Work Group Initiated
- **FY2019 Area Fund Pools**
 - **West**
 - Same as 2018
 - **Central**
 - Same as 2018

- **East**
 - Same as 2018
- **FY2019 STATE FUND POOLS**
 - **Special Initiatives – Nebraska**
 - Wildlife
 - Forestry General
 - Forestry Windbreak Renovation (EAB)
 - Seasonal High Tunnel
 - Animal Feeding Operations
 - Organic
 - Energy
 - Tribal
 - Conservation Activity Plans
 - Ephemeral Gully Control
 - LENRD Water Quality Area -Pierce County
 - Nebraska Water Quality Initiative
 - Long Pine Watershed
 - Shell Creek Watershed
 - Rangeland Health Demo Ranch (6 fund pools)
 - Working Lands for Wildlife
 - Target Species
 - Greater Prairie Chicken
 - American Burying Beetle
 - Project Goal
 - Use EQIP to modify current livestock grazing infrastructure to achieve desired habitat conditions and increased profitability
 - **Special Initiatives – National**
 - **NOTE: No funding for Ogallala Aquifer Initiative in FY2019**
 - Forestry Service Partnership
 - UNWNRD, MNNRD ULNRD
 - National Water Quality Initiative
 - Wahoo Creek – Saunders
 - Bazile Creek – Antelope, Pierce, Knox
 - Big Sandy Creek – Little Blue NRD
 - Turkey Creek – Lower Big Blue NRD
 - **Readiness Phase Project – 1 year**
- **RCPP –**
 - **FY15 RCPP Approvals – NE**
 - **State Fund Pool**
 - Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery

- 5 years
 - CPNRD, TPNRD, TMID, SCC, CDC
 - \$1.7 Million
- **National Fund Pool**
 - Regional Grassland Bird & Grazing Enhancement Initiative – NGPC
 - 5 years, 2015-2019
 - Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa
 - \$885,000.000 – NE Allocation
- **FY16 RCPP Approvals – NE**
 - **State Fund Pool**
 - Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife – NGPC
 - \$700,000.00
 - Lower Elkhorn Water and Soil Conservation Project
 - \$400,000.00
 - Republican Basin Conservation Partnership – LRNRD
 - \$2.1 million
- **FY17 RCPP Approvals – NE**
 - **State Fund Pool**
 - Divots in the Pivots
 - UBBNRD & RWBJV partners
 - Combination of ACEP-ALE, ACEP-WRE, and EQIP
 - \$1.8 million
 - **CRITICAL CONSERVATION AREA (CCA) Fund Pool**
 - Wahoo Creek Water Quality Sites 26 & 27 – LPNNRD
 - \$1.5 million
- **FY18 RCPP Approvals – NE**
 - **CRITICAL CONSERVATION AREA (CCA) Fund Pool**
 - Papillion Creek Site WP-1 Dam – PMRNRD
 - \$4.4 million
- **EQIP – FY2019 Time Lines**
 - **Application Cutoff date = November 16, 2018**
 - ALL FUND POOLS
 - **1st Ranking Deadline = December 14, 2018**
 - National Organic Initiative
 - High Tunnel System
 - Joint Chief’s Landscape Restoration Initiative
 - Nebraska Northwest Landscape Restoration
 - National Water Quality Initiative
 - Wahoo Creek – Saunders County
 - Bazile Creek – Antelope, Pierce, Knox Counties

- Big Sandy Creek – Little Blue NRD
- Working Lands for Wildlife
 - Sandhills Project
- Conservation Activity Plans (CAP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP)
 - Ogallala Aquifer and Platte River Recovery
 - Regional Grassland Bird and Grazing Land Enhancement
 - Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife
 - Republican Basin Conservation Partnership
- **2nd Ranking Deadline = January 15, 2019**
 - Area fund pools – Beginning Farmer (BFR) and Socially Disadvantaged (SD)
 - Wildlife Initiative Nebraska (WIN)
 - Nebraska Forestry Initiative
 - Nebraska Forestry Windbreak/Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Initiative
 - Animal Feeding Operations (AFO)
 - Energy
 - Tribal Initiative
 - Nebraska Water Quality Initiative
 - Long Pine Watershed
 - Shell Creek Watershed
 - Rangeland Health Demonstration Ranch (6 fund pools)
 - Lower Elkhorn NRD Water Quality Area – Pierce County
 - Ephemeral Gully Special Initiative
- **3rd Ranking Deadline = February 1, 2019**
 - Local fund pools (by NRD)
 - Cropland
 - Grassland
 - LWG – Initiated
- **4th Ranking Deadline = August 9, 2019**
 - Ephemeral Gully Special Initiative
- EQIP State Sub Committee Meeting
 - April 2019
- State Technical Committee Meetings
 - March 7, 2019
 - June 6, 2019
 - September 12, 2019
 - December 5, 2019

- Local Work Group Meetings – January/February
 - www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov
 - AGENDA ITEMS & TIME LINES:
 - Meetings Scheduled by December 28, 2018
 - Dates and Locations will be posted on NRCS website
 - Fund Pool - Ranking Tools – Screening Tools
 - Revised ranking process for FY2020 – CART
 - FY2020 Practice Payment Schedule – Deadlines
 - New component & cost updates – February 1, 2019
 - Regional scenario requests – March 1, 2019
 - Cost list development deadline – May 3, 2019
 - Practice Payment Schedule Completed – June 1, 2019

○ **PRACTICE PAYMENT SCHEDULE –**

- [USDA Website – State Payment Schedules](#)
 - Click on NE
- [Nebraska Payment Schedules](#)
 - [Click on EQIP](#)
- Went over a few scenarios found on the PP.
 - CLICK ON Practice Scenarios
 - Practice:
 - Scenario Description:
 - Scenario Cost Unit:

❖ **ACEP –**

○ **ACEP-ALE**

- **Combines purposes of FRPP & GRP**
- **Functions like FRPP**
- FY 17 Implementation
 - Application on 1 parcel – 633 acres
 - Entity holding Easement – NE Land Trust
 - Final Cost = \$95,000.00
 - Working to finalize payment and hoping entity can close by the end of the year.
- FY 18 (General) Implementation = \$250,000
 - 1 Application exceeded allocation – Funds returned
- RCPP – ALE
 - Application on 2 parcels – 316.5 acres
 - Entity Holding easement – Little Blue NRD
 - Estimated cost = \$275,000.00
 - Deeds being reviewed by the Deed Review Team
 - Benchmark and ALE plan on being written by the entity
 - Plan is to do appraisals after first of the year

- **ACEP-WRE**
 - **Retains purpose and function of WRP**
 - FY 17 Implementation
 - WRE
 - 10 approved
 - 1303 acres
 - \$2,336,485.00
 - WREP
 - 9 approved
 - 615 acres
 - \$2,119,005.00
 - 2 Easements have been closed
 - 3 Easements ready for closing by Title Company
 - Others waiting for additional funding, National Internal Control Reviews, title work, producers to decide if they wish to proceed, or other items.
 - FY 18 Implementation
 - Total FY18 Allocation = \$4.4 million
 - WRE Applications = 32 on 3317 acres
 - WREP applications = 4 on 128.8 acres
 - Estimated Cost = \$10 million
 - 11 offers to purchase – Accepted
 - WRE
 - 7 Approved
 - 901 acres
 - \$4,077,845.00
 - WREP
 - 4 Approved
 - 121 acres
 - \$422,156.00
 - Title reviews and Environmental Record Searches - completed
 - All are now Obligated agreements
 - Request for surveys bids has been sent out. Goal is to have all surveyed by Mid-May 2019
 - Deadline to close these easements is February 15, 2020
- **FY19 ACEP-WRE & ALE**
 - ACEP Sub-Committee Meeting – September 13, 2018
 - 2019 Market analysis and GARC Rates have been approved with some changes from what we submitted. We are going to have to do some appraisals in certain parts of the state and on certain land uses to proceed. It was determined there were not enough similar sales on certain land uses to make a good Market Analysis for GARC rates.

- Application cutoff date = November 1, 2018 was our initial cut-off date but with the new farm bill this will probably be changing, and we will have to publish it again with 30 days' notice. Until the farm bill is finalized we are not sure about this date.
 - Ranking cutoff date = February 1, 2019 initially. This will now depend on the application cut-off date and the time frames we get to complete the 2019 ACEP program.
- **FY19 ACEP-WRE Compensation**
 - The basis for the compensation offer for the easement will be the lowest of:
 - Fair market value as determined by an AWMA or appraisal
 - Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC)
 - An amount voluntarily offered by the landowner
 - The two maps in the PowerPoint are not officially approved.

❖ CSP –

- **Results of 2018 General Signup**
 - Applications = 460
 - Acres in Applications = 800,000
 - New contracts = 355
 - Acres in contracts = 709,617
- **Popular CSP Activities in 2018**
 - Prescribed Grazing
 - Cover Crops
 - Pest Management
 - Nutrient Management
 - Tree/Shrub Establishment
 - Herbaceous Weed Treatment
 - Conservation Cover – Pollinator seedings
- **2014 Farm Bill allows for a one-time renewal on expiring contracts (2019 Farm Bill TBD)**
 - Nebraska 2019-1 Renewals
 - 304 of 395 contract holders originally applied to renew
 - 263 current renewal applications
 - 66% of eligible contracts
- **NO 2019 ALLOCATIONS AUTHORIZED**
 - 2019-1 Renewal Obligations on HOLD
 - Renewals must be obligated before existing 2014-1 contract expires
 - Currently 12/31/2018
 - Currently 2014-1 contracts being modified to extend expiration dates to full 5-year statutory limit.
 - Promoting 2019 Funds only in contracts needing modifications to make 2018 payment. (Loss of Control of Land, Land enrolled in CRP/ACEP, etc.)

- No other 2019 Fund promotions allowed in current contracts.
- **2019-1 Payment Rates (unchanged from 2018)**
 - Existing Activity Payment *Number of resource concerns met at the time of application x \$350 (land use neutral). Land use rate x acres.
 - Crop and Pastured Cropland= \$7.50 per acre
 - Pasture = \$3.00 per acre
 - Range = \$1.00 per acre
 - Forest = \$0.50 per acre
 - Farmstead=\$7.50 per acre
 - Associated Agriculture Land=\$0.50 per acres
- **Currently Status of Payments for FY 2018**
 - 3,167 contracts eligible for 2018 Payment
 - 1,327 contracts remain to be paid
 - \$21,143,530.00
- **Nationally 80M+ acres enrolled since 2010**
- **Nebraska**
 - 5,811 Contracts
 - 11.2M acres
 - \$406M obligated
- **Future Enhancements**
 - States can submit requests for new enhancements
 - Accepted enhancements will be available for the 2020 signup

❖ **2018 FARM BILL**

- Possible revisions to FY19 EQIP and CSP implementation
 - House proposes to combine EQIP and CSP
 - “Streamlining” language in both House and Senate
 - New software under development to comply
 - Conservation Activity Ranking Tool (CART)

QUESTIONS & Comments

Q: We need to increase participation with landowners/participants. They need to testify what is working and what is not for people who are interested in applying for these programs. What better way to get direct feedback than from the participants themselves? Maybe add in a mail insert/pamphlet inviting landowners to education sessions.

WETLAND STREAMLING – NEIL DOMINY & BRIAN BASKERVILLE, NRCS

SEE POWERPOINT FOR MORE INFORMATION.

QUESTIONS & Comments

Q: Can this programming be used for other programs? Example: Migratory bird information in CRP contracts?

A: Yes! It's encrypted, but it is collaborative from multiple agencies, i.e. UNL < NRDs, etc.

Q: Are there technicians?

A: Yes. A technician will use data collectors (cell phones) because we can have infinite number of projects. The app is free, but you pay for a license and that's how we gather that data. We will be rolling this project starting out hopefully by the end of the week.

Q: How does this program work if you're in an area where there is little to no data coverage?

A: Tasks cache on the phone, so the network isn't necessary. It saves into your phone but will go through when you return to data coverage. It's almost like working on your phone in airplane mode.

Q: If there is a challenge by the producer, will there still be field investigations?

A: Yes. If there are reconsiderations on hydrology or boundaries, etc., we still can go to the field and do a field check.

Q: Is the imagery nate?

A: Yes, there are also historical conservation slides from UNL, with different years and locations. Basically, we have images from the 1930s until now of all of Nebraska. We are looking into new aerial technology to purchase. Long term, we expect to build out to make the pictures less fragmented and make it smoother and more state wide.

Q: We plan to have a BETA ready version ready by April 2019 for user/participant testing.

Q: FSA and NRCS combining under the same undersecretary has better understanding of who does what between agencies. With audit expectations, there has been too much focus on paperwork, but now we are moving towards more service-based goals.

Q: Pheasants forever – The objective behind CART is to be able to work from the office, have the tool available to take care of all the steps at the click of a button. Has there been any discussion on being able to do this from the field? What

about an app that people can use from the field? We like going to the field and farmers like us coming to the field.

A: Yes. It's been talked about. CART emerged out of necessity recently, but we are still trying to move forward, and one of the things being talked about is a mobile platform. This is a great compliment to precision agriculture, so you can expand on topics that are not productive to improve the entire process.

Q: NDEQ – Every couple of years, we send maps of impaired waters. We could use that as a layer. Digitally referencing would be so great. NERA – NE Resource Assessment is very similar

Q: Is this like RSET?

A: This is not the tool, but there are roots of RSET within it.

POTENTIAL PROGRAM RANKING CHANGES FOR 2020 – NEIL DOMINY, NRCS

❖ Conservation Application Ranking Tool (CART):

- CART will **merge** Traditional Conservation Planning with Current Program Delivery Creating a **Streamlined Approach** and more **Customer Friendly** Experience
- **Streamlined TA and FA Delivery**
 - **What this is supposed to do:**
 - Efficiently provide more data and information to planners and clients
 - Simplify the application process for both TA and FA
 - Simplify the planning process (TA) – especially for less “intensive” practices
 - Streamline the contracting process (FA)
 - **What this is NOT supposed to do:**
 - Eliminate the need for expertise and best professional judgement (decision SUPPORT not decision MAKING)
 - Eliminate the need for field visits and face-to-face conversations
 - Eliminate the need for site-specific assessments especially for high risk and high cost activities
 - **ALTERNATIVE**
 - GIS Based Planning and Program Delivery: CCBI & SVI Applications
 - Special Resource Concerns
 - Wildlife – ex. Sage Grouse
 - Vulnerability – Leaching
 - Vulnerability – Runoff
 - Erosion
 - Soils
 - Using Shapefiles:
 - Streamline Planning
 - Inventory and Analyze Resources with GIS Layers

- Allows the use of SVI and CCBI tools as planning resources
- Step-3 Resource Inventory
- Step-4 Analyze Resources:
 - BASIC QUESTIONS:
 - Streamline Planning
 - GIS Layers Provide Most Data Input
 - Established Benchmark Condition
 - Improves Consistency as resource data is static
 - Represents a Change in how Resource Concerns are defined.
 - Model Based
 - GIS and Risk Based
- Step-5 Formulate Alternatives
 - Practices that improve Water Quality
 - Nutrient Application Rate - Precision Application
 - Nutrient Management (590)
 - Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till (329)
 - Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Tillage (345)
 - Riparian Forest Buffer (391)
 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)
 - Sediment Basin (350)
- HOW WILL CART WORK? - Step-6 Evaluate Alternatives
 - Note: Changing practices immediately updates effects bars to compare various alternatives.
- Step-7 Make Decision:
 - User Friendly Plan
 - Future to include economics
 - Conservation Plans from:
 - State, local government
 - SWCD
 - Federal Agency
 - Third-Party (TSP)
 - Assesses rangeland or cropland
 - Can incorporated into a comprehensive planning document (conservation plan) for program enrollment
- Step-8 Ranking:
 - MULTIPLE FUNDING POOLS RANKED SIMULTANEOUSLY
 - Note: Changing practices immediately updates ranking and effects bars to compare various alternatives. This can be done for multiple applications (one application) and fund pools at one time.

- Locally-led Conservation
- Straightforward Conservation Practices
 - Conservation practices that are priority for Local Work Group, State Technical Committee, and are green-lighted for SHPO and T&E purposes. Can be planned from the office.
- Mid-Complex Conservation Practices
 - Conservation practices requiring a field visit. Nutrient Management for soil sample, Grassed Waterway to verify elevations, Irrigation Sprinkler System for coefficient of uniformity, Range Management for plant identification, etc.
- Complex Conservation Practices
 - These require in-field survey, detailed hydrology and hydraulic analysis, geological investigations, additional on-site investigations (e.g. Waste Storage, etc.)
- Efficient Planning and Program Delivery
 - Cropland
 - Soil Erosion – Residue Mgt.
 - Soil Quality – Cover Crop
 - Plant Degradation – Seasonal High Tunnel
 - Pasture
 - Water Quality – Fencing Cattle out of Stream and Providing Alternative Water Source
 - Plant Degradation – Incorporating Legumes, NWSG, or cover crops on 30% of grazing acres.
 - Forest
 - Plant degradation – recent Forest Management Plan
 - Refocus Science Investments
- Step-8 Practice Standards and Step-9 Evaluation:
 - EVALUATION
 - Technical-Science Based Conservation
 - NRCS Continue to lead in Practice Standards and Payment Schedule
 - Additional resources to evaluate the impact of conservation practices
 - Helps the agency better define “outcomes” of conservation practice installation
 - Precedent set with Edge of Field Monitoring, Habitat Monitoring, Pollinator Monitoring, etc.

○ **SUMMARY**

- Mandate to Streamline
- Focus on Customer Service
- Program Neutral
- Improving Science-Based Approach
- Implementation Strategy

QUESTIONS & Comments

Q: Did you talk about updated NRCS Interim Rule on Highly Erodible Land (HEL)?

A: No. I haven't seen the news release. This is basically a cleanup notice over wetland conservation issues that have been up in the air, but we will talk about it at the next State Tech. Meeting.

WRAP UP – CRAIG DERICKSON, NRCS

Please send any further questions or comments to Tami Nordman @ tami.nordman@ne.usda.gov

Future 2019 meetings will be the following dates:

March 7, 2019

June 6, 2019

September 12, 2019

December 5, 2019

All meetings will be held @ UNL Extension Office (444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, NE)