

Idaho State Technical Committee Meeting Minutes
December 4th, 2018

In attendance:

- Curtis Elke, James Eller, Bruce Sandoval, Margaret Henderson, all NRCS
- University of Idaho
- USDA Forest Service
- University of Idaho Extension
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Idaho Office of Species Conservation
- Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Army Corps of Engineers - Idaho
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Idaho Forest Owners Association
- Idaho Dairy Association
- The Nature Conservancy
- Nez Pierce Tribe
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Ducks Unlimited

Introductions by Curtis Elke, Idaho State Conservationist

News from USDA NRCS:

- NRCS has a new Chief, Matthew J. Lohr. Chief Lohr's bio was provided to committee members.
- Idaho NRCS is working on an Invasive Initiative that is cheatgrass focused. This is a multi-state initiative that Wyoming has signed on to. NRCS is looking for priority areas that are not overtaken by cheatgrass and where the impact will be greatest.
- NRCS of the Future: 56 different action items NRCS is working on to make government faster, friendly and easier.
- Ron Brooks shared program information – FY19 EQIP early sign-up contracting period for fund pools. Applications taken and ranked early during sign up for high-tunnels, organic, Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs), going to get ranked and funded more quickly. This allows practices to be implemented a lot sooner. FY19 EQIP will be delivered same as FY18. Still developing guidance for field offices but looking at January application deadline, ranking in Spring 2019 and obligation in early June.
- Curtis shared his plan to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for areas where NRCS needs assistance and that partners might be interested in doing for us. Depending on what the final products NRCS needs are he may offer anywhere from \$500k to 1.5 million in contracts. No match would be needed but those submitting proposals must have the technical skills to do the job from start to finish. Areas being considered for RFPs include:
 - Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans and structural designs (waste storage, roofs, etc.) for Winter Feeding Operations/Animal Feeding Operation/Confined Animal Feeding Operation = Potentially 10+ projects
 - Easement monitoring

- Irrigation system design – potentially 20 designs in Divisions 3 – 6 (encompassing southern Idaho)
- Streambank projects – potentially 8 projects
- Beaver Dam analogs
- Outreach and success stories – professions videography/photography to tell our story
- Irrigation Water Management plans – potentially 23 projects
- DMS/Data entry contract management
- Conservation Reserve Program – Mid contract management
- Idaho NRCS has entered into an agreement with the state of Washington for Frank Garigilo to provide forestry assistance. A second agreement will allow us to utilize a Compliance Specialist (Highly Erodible Lands and wetland) retained by Washington NRCS to represent Idaho NRCS at National Appeals Division hearings, provide training, etc.
- NRCS is working through an agreement with Turkey Federation to provide a forester.
- The Food Production and Conservation mission area of the USDA (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency) will hire 9,888 nationwide in a phased format that follow the fiscal quarters.
- Idaho NRCS is looking for assistance with Wetland Reserve Program and Wetland Reserve Easements.
- Idaho NRCS is looking to hire Pathways interns in engineering and soil conservationist interns. If you know of any students with an ag background who is interested in working for NRCS, encourage them to apply on USAJobs.gov or have them contact Bruce Sandoval, NRCS State Engineer.

USDA FSA report:

- Charles Newhouse, Farm Program Chief introduced himself to the group.
- FSA is looking to appoint a State Director for Idaho. This is a politically appointed position.
- Jenny Peirsol, FSA Program specialist, provided a handout on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract expirations. 2014 Farm Bill has expired, and FSA has no authority to accept new offers, do any revisions or cost share payments at local level. All revisions and payments have to go through the state office.
- Annual rental rates in the new Farm Bill will continue to go lower. Discussions still being held on CRP and Farm Bill at the national level.

State Technical Committee Member Priorities:

- Invasive annuals
 - Annual grass initiatives by partners
 - Wildfire Rehab – especially in Sage Grouse region. Acres left untreated.
Resources needed – \$ to purchase seed or chemical during critical stage.

Barriers – education don't know what to do – need to find ways to put available funds in agreements that are nimble and can be applied quickly – don't leave \$ on the table. Awareness of what resources are available and where to find i.e. Website. How can we pool our resources? Recommended to invite Teri Murrison to next meeting to give presentation on a website where a lot of collaboration has already been documented. Contact information and website will be sent to all STAC members at a later date.
 - All Agencies need to come together at the same time and join together on rehab plans.

- Tribes – Riparian Restoration. Long term goals – Upper Hangman Creek and Chinnock Salmon
- University of Idaho – CAFÉ (Diary) Initiative. Support dairy industry and environment issues. Build Research Diary in the Twin Falls area.
 - Idaho Dairymen’s Association (IDA) partnering to purchase 640 acres for the CAFÉ project. IDA looking to NRCS to provide funding for lagoon liners repair.
- Hazardous Fuel reduction
- Native plant nursery and collecting native plant seed and stockpiling for reforestation.
- ID Dept of Lands – updating Forest Action plan. Finishing up assessment phase. Shared stewardship with forest service to develop ID initiatives in Boise National Forest and Payette I-90 corridor to reduce fire threats have been identified. Funds will be needed to provide treatment to reduce threats. Planning and Zoning to reduce fire threats.
- Corp of Engineers – Water Rule forthcoming. Post wildfire risk analysis -changing risk on landscape after a burn. Silver Jackets can help with analysis and facilitate assistance.
- High Valley Project; Bogus Basin; French Hazard – Forest Service focus will be vegetative management and fuels. Depressed timber market.
- Agricultural initiative – focusing on soil health and water quality in Snake River region. Cover crop, conservation tillage, build soil health.
- Pheasants Forever – Precision Agriculture
- Idaho Department Fish and Game -Sage grouse Initiative; Easement monitoring and restoration in northern Idaho; Flood irrigation promotion; CRP and SAFE; Soil Health/Cover Crops
- University of Idaho Extension - Soil Health in Magic Valley; Encourage locally-led groups to include Extension community development specialists in the locally-led process. Invasive Initiative – particularly pest and integrated pest management; Irrigation Water Management – shared onion success story; Urban and small acreage development
- Idaho office of U.S. Fish and Wildlife - Idaho Rangeland Partnership grant
- Air quality; focus on fire reduction; climate change; use biomass as energy and haul away instead of burning during such a narrow window.
- Education/Conservation planning for ‘Ranchette’ landowners.

Committee Reports – committees haven’t been meeting, so there were no reports. Recommendation to have sub-committees meet in the morning before the STAC meeting and the STAC meet in the afternoon. Subcommittees will provide a report at the STAC meeting.

If anyone wants to be on sub-committee, contact Idaho NRCS Public Affairs Specialist Mindi Rambo at mindi.rambo@id.usda.gov .

Next meeting will be held April 4th, 2019 at the Idaho NRCS State Office