**Opening/Introductions** -- Rusty opened the meeting. (See attached list of attendees.)

- Agenda presented and no additions.
- Rusty’s opening
  - Benefits of the local work group meetings – next meeting we will discuss LWG Recommendations to afford the group time to digest and think over what they heard
  - Bobbie’s question of next year’s timeline and Rusty’s explanation
  - Staffing – 3 DC Retired & our GIS Specialist. Wiggins back as an ACES employee; ACES Geologist to help out Chris Carls; 3 recent grads hired, two DC positions advertised; 4 Pathways Students (summer interns) hired; SRC to be advertised soon; tribal liaison soon as well as SSS; Soil Conservationist in Lander; GIS Specialist. Rusty tried to explain the hiring process to the group—how only certain positions can be advertised in certain months. State Forestry offered to help us out if need be. Bobbie commented that this inability to hire except in certain months is certainly an issue and one she will bring up to NACD.
  - FY19 Programs – We were aggressive in obligating as soon as possible. We streamlined as much as possible. To prepare for new FB, we got the national subaccounts funded as soon as possible (NWQI, SGI). Very early batching date. We were on pace to achieve that and then new FB was signed and stopped all actions. General EQIP – December batching date, fast paced, obligate by May and then again, new FB put the brakes on obligation. Our best intentions were derailed by the new FB. We are now only about 40% obligated. Probably about 95% applications ready to go. Some foresight for FY20—challenges with new FB. Resources and Programs has went to field for reviews and just worked hard to make process easier and quicker while still maintaining high quality.
  - Division I – Kristin Tilley – About 30 people. Still prefer money allocated by county rather than division, (1) Water; water mgmt. Priority areas – watershed designation – dry creek, sprinkler applications. General feedback – negative changes on the pivot payment. Significant cancellation increase. Want it changed back to linear feet. Letter from a producer LWG is check the box rather than addressing issues. Concerned about water quality vs chemicals; land use plans; appreciation in being included in NRCS trainings. Bobbie asked if there is organized efforts to address the sediment in Big Horn Lake -.Focus on the dam issue doesn’t address downstream.
  - Division II – priorities are attached, no other concerns.
  - Division III – Mike Henn – Each county held meeting. 1. Graz mgmt.; irrigation mgmt.; water qual; invasive species; streambank protection; soil quality; forest health; fish wildlife habitat; excessive erosion; wetlands; preservation of conversation ag to non-ag land; energy. Two groups encourage NRCS to continue per acres basis on pivot payments; EWP NRCS needs to look at ways to restructure the program; less state subaccounts; Bobbie asked a question that I could not hear.
  - Division IV – Zach Byram – 1. Degraded plant condition; 2   Recommendations – Increasing monies for addressing invasive grasses; increasing tech support for engineering staff; more guidance or assistance in interpreting the migratory bird act. Options for assistance.
  - Division V – Ed Chatfield - Division V - would like to provide the following feedback to the State Technical Committee:
    Many attendees would like to see a process to be developed to provide public input regarding NRCS program specifications and standards prior to them being finalized.
    It was recommended that NRCS streamline the process for current resource concerns, as opposed to having to wait several years. CRP was a difficult process to navigate from a producer standpoint, and the program guidelines presented challenges to landowners. Therefore, it is recommended that NRCS provide better clarification and simplification of programs and guidelines in general, and that resource concerns be addressed under appropriate programs.
Appreciation was made known for the cap placed on the total amount of acres of cover crops enrolled into one contract per year.

The 2019 Program Guidance and Practice Payment Rates for Eligible Conservation Practices document has conflicting language when compared to the current standard. Currently practice 340, Cover Crop, specifies that cover crops may not be planted in succession. The current standard, dated February 2018, does not include any such language. The proposed DRAFT standard with a date of September 2018, states cover crops are not to be planted in succession. How can program/payment guidance reference and require practice implementation to follow a DRAFT standard that has not been adopted yet?

Lastly, NRCS program allocation priorities for Division V accounts were determined and are as follows:

- Grazing management / water development; Soil health; Forestry
  - Division VI – Michelle Huntington – Resource Concerns – Water quality, livestock production limitation, excess/insufficient water; degraded habitat for F&W; Energy; Air Quality. Concerns – Remove water history requirement from EQIP; migratory bird act (develop an MOU with F&W to investigate and sign off on project areas; irrigation issues – sprinkler systems 5% incidental acres and 2-5 years history; pivot payments back to feet vs acre; irrigation system design – be more flexible; LEPA (Low Energy Precision Ag) & LESA (Low Energy Sprinkler Application) need to be added to the payment practice document. Mark Hogan came up to discuss Migratory Bird Act – Guidance document. Anita says NRCS guidance doesn’t match guidance from other agencies. Oil and Gas and BLM uses the guidance differently than Kelly?? Who uses different guidance. BLM surveys and does work. Mark says we should look at the guidance document. He believes there is a disconnect between the interpretation of the Act. Brian – Contact me! Encourage your people to talk to me and I will certainly assist. We can work around it but we have to talk!

- Division VII – Joe Parsons – same as last year. Concerns: Recommend Wyoming policy be changed to allow for EQIP contract obligation before NEPA approval if it is clear that the NEPA process will be completed in time for project implementation; Recommend removing the requirement for prescribed burning in forestry EQIP contracts which should result in more participation and getting more conservation on the ground; Recommend requiring only one escape ramp in 10-12’ diameter tire tanks. Bobbie’s commented about she would really like to have partner representation on the FOTG Committee. Rusty clarified NEPA process. Our process is fairly simple but if there is a mix of fed and private – BLM process complicates this process.

- Division VIII – Shaun Kirkwood – Pivot payment. Bobbie asked if weed and pest was at the meeting? No.

PROGRAMS UPDATE

- Katie provided an easement update
  - FY 2019 ALE Applications
  - Previous Year ALE Contracts
  - Easement Monitoring
  - Explanation of Easement Support Specialist (ESS)
  - Draft Ranking FY2020
  - GARC

- Jamison gave an update on advanced payments.
  - 50% of the contracted amount is allowed in the advanced payment
  - Available for Historically Underserved producers only.

- Jamison gave an update on RCPP
  - Sign up for NEW RCPP projects, coming out later this summer.
  - New policy is being drafted, states have not received it yet.
  - If you have an existing RCPP project and you would like to continue doing that project there will be an offer to continue on with it, those offers should come next year.
    - Joe Parsons asked if he should be applying for a new RCPP for the same thing or wait until the funds are offered to continue old ones. (for the current RCPP’s that have exhausted all of their funds).
• Kresta let everyone know that the RCPP funding will be different with the new farm bill rules. Eligibility may change when we receive new guidance from the farm bill.

• Andi gave a CSP update
  o GCI Update – 11,500 potentially eligible base acres in Wyoming. 5 priority resource concerns need to be picked by the STAC for NRCS to send back in to HQ. A producer needs to meet at least one of the resource concerns. Zack suggested leaving Air Quality out. Email Andi if there are any questions on this.
  o General CSP – No allocation received by Wyoming yet. We will get a monetary amount this year instead of acres.
    ▪ Working through eligibility on 30 CSP Applications now.
    ▪ CSP will be evaluated differently once we receive new farm bill guidance.

• NWQI – Next STAC Meeting there will be a presentation about the plan for the future.
• New Ranking Tool – CART (Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool) – Used across the country, SHAPE files, etc, records data. Producers won’t have to apply for multiple programs, the tool will pick whatever programs their data dictates. Is the tool for producers or office staff? Right now, NRCS and partners. It will explain better what we are doing for them and our rationale. How are the data layers going to be used? How much will the data rule the decision? Brian and the man asking the question start a side conversation that is so quiet I cannot hear.
• Programs – Farm Bill Comment period. We will get it to Bobbie and she can get it out to the districts.
• Division Funding State Sub-accounts (put numbers in here)
• EWP – Three areas Johnson, Sheridan, Washakie designated. Anita wanted to know if the DSR for Johnson Co has changed? Kresta will check and get back to her.
• RFP for watershed and operations program. (Chuck’s message to me today).
• We will go to training for the new Farm Bill for our staff and then we can begin rolling out how the new programs will look.
• Anita – Options for a sub-committee to hash out the acres vs feet……….we present at the next meeting. Kresta wants Jamison to spearhead the committee
• Next meeting August 20. Minutes to the group by July 15.