NRCS-Wyoming State Technical Advisory Committee
Minutes of Nov 19, 2019 Meeting

1. Roll Call

- The NRCS-WY State Technical Advisory Committee meeting met by telecon at 9:00 am, Tuesday, November 19, 2019. It lasted approximately one hour.
- **NRCS Attendees:** Kresta Faaborg, James Bauchert, Lee Erickson, John Hartung, Jamison Jewkes, Lynn Cornia, Fred Harrell, Chuck Schmitt, Katelyn Vaporis, Justin Ross, Rusty Schwartz, Andi Meyer, Tiffany Hayes, Ben Bonella, Tim Kellogg, Jeff Goats, Keela Deaton
- **Partner Attendees:** Travis Osmond (Weed & Pest), Dennis Sun (WYLR), Lois Van MARK (FSA), Dan Rice (WACD), Shanon Sims (WACD), Michelle Huntington (CCCD), Mark Hogan (USFWS), Dave Pellatz (TGB-PEA), Bobbie Frank (WACD), Bud Spellman (City of Cheyenne), Justin Caudill (WyoDeptAg)

2. STAC Subcommittees, Kresta Faaborg, Kresta.faaborg@usda.gov, ASTC-Programs

- Thanks to everyone that volunteered to be part of a subcommittee.
- Notify fred.harrell@usda.gov if you do not see your name on a subcommittee for which you want to volunteer.
- An NRCS lead for each subcommittee will reach out to members of their committees within the next days/weeks to set up times to go over specific items of that committee. Leads will dive into what specific tasks are required and will report back to the STAC with findings and recommendations to the full STAC. Those recommendations will get incorporated into the way NRCS does business for the coming year.
- Subcommittees will continue to meet to provide continuous input to the STAC.

3. Resource Update, John Hartung, john.hartung2@usda.gov, Acting ASTC-Resources

- SRC Position advertised and closed; awaiting applicant list. John’s detail expires Feb 15.
- Governor’s invasive species initiative: Governor Gordon has assembled a committee to address invasive species in Wyoming. John is on the technical team; Astrid Martinez and Brian Jensen are on the policy team. The first meeting was held in Lander on Oct 30. The goal is to come up with a document to implement across the state around May/June 2020. Astrid and the State Conservationist in Idaho, Curtis Elke, put together an initiative called Cheatgrass Challenge. The goal is to combine this effort with the Governor’s initiative to double efforts to combat invasive annuals in the state.
- IRMA (Integrated Resource Management Analyst), an NRCS concept developed by WyGISC. Allows cultural resources to evaluate project areas, as well as biological assessments. Future plans include cultural resources to work better with SHPO for records searches and incorporate the state engineer.
- GUS (Grazing Utilizing System) developed by WyGISC.
  - Version 1.0: Available within the next couple months. Will allow better understanding of livestock water development. It takes into account slope and distance through GIS to show the effective area that is covered in a pasture. Will show how much of the pasture is not being used due to slope and distance.
  - Future Version 2.0: Will allow figuring stocking rates based on water utilization.
- Soil Health and Cover Crops update
Developing Soil health assessment card designed to assist the field in determining soil health related resource concerns. Once concerns are identified, the next step is to determine items like seed mix, seed numbers, seeding dates, etc.

- Continued work with Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA) and Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD) development across the state in 2019. Wyoming has 11 large acre MLRAs (17 total). Work was done in 60A (Black Hills area), 58B (East side of the Big Horns, Sheridan/Gillette/Buffalo/Casper), 34A (Southwest Wyoming), 32 (Big Horn basin), and 43B (Wind River Mountains). Ecological site descriptions are being developed, reviewed or updated and will go to a provisional status (draft working document to be revised as needed).

- New for this year, all practice standards are reviewed and adopted or modified as needed. Nationally, there are 171 practice standards, 69 of those are for ecological science, and 102 engineering practices. NRCS-WY has adopted 168 of those standards. Standard 420 (Wildlife Habitat Planting) also likely to be adopted in Wyoming.

- Resource concerns: previously 44 resource concerns, currently 47 resource concerns.

- 2019 Training update: conducted 4 range/SGI trainings in High Plains area.

- Planned 2020 Training: range/SGI training in Rocky Mountain area; Forestry Training, Lodge Pole Pine; UTV Safety Training; Forestry Practice revisions

- National Resources Inventory for 2019: 277 total segments completed (162 on BLM, 103 on private/non-federal land, 12 on pasture)

- NRI for 2020: Segments have been received and work has begun on those segments.

- Conservation Desktop Deployment: deployed on Oct 10, intended to replace ToolKit. ToolKit will turn off March 12 and totally disabled by March 31.
  - CD Training will occur between Dec 3-Jan 15.

4. Programs Update, Kresta Faaborg, Kresta.faaborg@usda.gov, ASTC-Programs

- CSP Update, Andi Meyer, andi.meyer@usda.gov
  - See attached CSP and 2018 Farm Bill presentation

- NWQI Update, Andi Meyer
  - Changes to NWQI will be addressed in the related STAC Subcommittee.

- Easement Update, Katelyn Vaporis, Katelyn.vaporis@usda.gov
  - FY2019 review: 10 easement applications, 9 funded. Of the 9, 2 were general ALE, 4 SGI ALE, 3 RCPP ALE. Total of obligated federal funds $9,768,125 for 13,204 total acres.
  - FY2020 allocations have not yet been received for acquisition of easements, but funds are available for management of existing easement contracts.
  - Please submit completed applications as you receive them, if possible, to allow ample review time before the deadline is set.
  - Looking for additional volunteers for the easement subcommittee.

- RCPP Update, Jamison Jewkes, jamison.jewkes@usda.gov
  - 2019 proposal deadline is 5 pm EST Dec. 3 submitted through RCPP portal.

- EQIP Update, Lee Erickson, lee.erickson@usda.gov
  - Awaiting final rule to be published for comment.

- General Update, Kresta Faaborg
  - Awaiting final rules for EQIP, Easements, RCPP. Currently with OMB for final review/adjustments.
Farm Bill training: Dec 9 for program/resource staff. Farm Bill training in January for NRCS-WY employees; may open to partners if permitted after rules are published.

5. Staffing Update, James Bauchert, james.bauchert@usda.gov, ASTC-Management & Strategy

- Jeff Goats is the new State Soil Scientist for NRCS-WY. Will work out of Colorado while relocation is in process.
- Expect to fill soon: Tribal Liaison for Fort Washakie, State Resource Conservationist, and Stream Engineer
- Wyoming is a priority state for fulfilling positions. Nationally, NRCS is approved for an overall staffing increase; unknown as to the exact increase to expect for Wyoming.

6. High Plains Update, Rusty Schwartz, rusty.schwartz@usda.gov

- Mason Peebles is the new DC in Cheyenne
- 5 Rangeland Management positions advertised; currently doing interviews. Selections will occur this week.
- Still vacant: Civil Engineering Technician in Saratoga; Rangeland Management Specialist in Kaycee.
- Gearing up for FY20 program year; expecting a lot of changes.
- Streamlining the review process from pre-approval to obligation. Will require a renewed emphasis on conservation planning done up front.
- Goshen County tunnel collapse: will participate and assist in any way we can. Awaiting decisions on the final fix; this will determine how NRCS may be able to assist.
- CRP: will see increase workload across some offices, (Laramie, Platte, Goshen).
- Ventenata/Medusahead initiative is gaining traction. Ventenata discovered in larger areas in the northern part of the area. Ventenata is identified as a reducer in sage grouse habitat, so some sage grouse funds (not all) will go toward that, along with some portion of an additional $1 million requested by Astrid.

7. Rocky Mountain Update, Tiffany Hayes, tiffany.hayes@usda.gov

- Afton DC position advertised
- Reviewing interviews for the Fort Washakie position
- 2 new Pathways hires expected for next summer
- Holden Hergert is the new DC in Thermopolis
- Prioritizing planning and conducting inventories now. Restructure screening to help planners prioritize better.
- For 2019 $7.5 million in 119 contracts over 158,000 acres.

8. Final Comments

- Notify Fred Harrell, fred.harrell@gmail.com of any edits needed to names/emails on the subcommittees
- Notify Fred to be added to the Press Release and NRCS-WY monthly updates
- Bobbie Frank: requests a state-wide VTC/webinar regarding results of Farm Bill training to provide overview to districts