

State Technical Committee Meeting – 12/03/2020

**ALL POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS
ARE ON THE [WEBSITE](#).
& the video can be found on our [YouTube](#) page.**

Attendees: Tami Nordman, Craig Derickson, Brad Soncksen, Neil Dominy, Carlos Villarreal, Adam Smith, Dan Ruterbories, David Potter, Mike McDonald, Eric Zach, Buffalo Bruce, Troy Kash-Brown, Kyle Hauschild, Burdette Piening, Dustin Wilcox, Brad Weaver, Judy Trent, Josh Wehrbein, Kenny Dinan, Curt Becker, Nick Streff, Ele Nugent, Andrea Hartman, Pat O'Brien, Steve Karloff, Dusty Way, Kent Zimmerman, George Cunningham, Al Junke, Marcia Trompke, Mark Brohman, Mike Murphy, Steve Roth, Brad Lubben, Rick Rasby, John Hansen, Scott Merritt, Rich Walters, Bill Armburst, Riley Hackbart, Wilhelmena, Andy Bishop, Corey Kin, Bryce, Steve, Annette Sudbeck, Andrew Pierson, George Cunningham, Jamie Petersen, Joanna Pope, Jeremiah Schutz, Tyler Durre, Alex Urbana, Jenny Prenosil, Cathy Mills, Conor Ward, Ryan Lodge, Doug Klein, Judy Trent, Renee Hancock, Lavaine Moore, Tom Schleif, Jana Ingwerson-Laws, Shawna O, Rich Nelson, Britt Weiser.

WELCOME AND THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE! – Craig Derickson, State Conservationist

- ❖ We are still doing virtual & will continue to do so until we are safe to see each other in person.
- ❖ View these meetings as an important opportunity for the Stakeholders & Partners to learn firsthand about USDA plans for programs deliveries & priorities.
- ❖ Excellent opportunity for those same Stakeholders & Partners to provide us feedback on program deliveries & priorities.
- ❖ Went over the Agenda

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS UPDATES - Brad Soncksen, NRCS

- ❖ **CSP**
 - CSP Nebraska
 - Results of 2020 CSP Classic signup
 - Applications = 910
 - Contracts = 125
 - Contract Acres = 305,000 (estimated)
 - Results of 2020 GCI signups
 - New contracts = 199
 - Contract acres = 10,425
 - Obligated funds = \$938,000,00.00
 - Results of 2020-1 Renewal signup
 - Applications = 258
 - Contracts = 95
 - Contract acres = 177,000
 - Obligated funds = \$7.8 Million

- 2020 CSP Annual Payments
 - All FY 2020 approved contracts - **November 6, 2020**
 - CSP-Renewal, CSP-Classic, and CSP-GCI
 - Active contracts approved in FY 2015 – FY2019 where participant elects to receive payment in CY 2020 - **November 6, 2020**
 - Active contracts approved in FY 2015 – FY2019 where participant elects to receive payment in CY 2021 - **February 5, 2021**
 - Total Active CSP Contracts – December 2020
 - Contracts = 2,703
 - Contract Acres = 5,075,994
 - Obligated funds = \$200,832,906.00
 - FY2021 Allocations
 - CSP Classic = \$7.85 Million
 - CSP Renewal = \$7.8 Million
 - CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative = \$255,000.00
 - FY2021 Applications and funding projection
 - Classic = 1116 7%
 - Renewal = 289 27%
 - GCI = 70 100%
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❖ ACEP

- **FY2020 ACEP - Nebraska**
 - ACEP-WRE
 - 5, New agreements: 9
 - New acres: 1,156
 - Obligated: \$4,061,295.00
 - Closed ACEP-WRE Easements: 11
 - Acres: 1057
 - Easement Acquisition Dollars: \$3,101,158.00
 - ACEP-ALE
 - New agreements: 1
 - New acres: 8914
 - Obligated: \$2,950,000.00
 - Closed ACEP-ALE Easements: 2
 - Acres: 4039
 - Federal Easement Acquisition Dollars: \$675,010.00
 - RCPP-ACEP-WRE
 - New Agreements: 1
 - New Acres: 47
 - Obligation: \$133,205.00
 - RCPP-ACEP-ALE
 - Closed RCPP-ALE Easements: 5
 - Acres: 655
 - Federal Share of Easement Acquisition; \$668,495.00
 - EWP – Floodplain Easement Program
 - Eligible Applications: 21
 - Acres: 5590
 - Estimated Requested funding: \$20,313,085.00

- Applications approved for possible agreements: 7
 - Estimated Acres: 4501
 - Estimated Funding needed: \$16,526,641.00
 - **FY2021 ACEP - Nebraska**
 - Application cutoff date – October 1, 2020
 - WRE Applications = 37, Acres = 5,347
 - ALE Applications = 0
 - Appraisals will determine Fair Market Value
 - Compensation rate for 30-year easements is 75% of permanent easement value
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❖ EQIP

- **EQIP -NE**
 - **Total Active EQIP Contracts – December 2020**
 - **Contracts = 2,400**
 - **Contract Acres = 912,000**
 - **Obligated funds = \$75.5 million**
- **EQIP Allocation FY2021**
 - **2021 Mandatory Distribution**
 - **Source Water Protection – 10%**
 - **Wildlife Initiative – 10%**
 - **Historically Underserved – 10%**
 - **Livestock – 50%**
 - **FY2020 STATEWIDE FUND POOLS**
 - Seasonal High Tunnel
 - Organic
 - Energy
 - Conservation Activity Plans
 - Animal Feeding Operations
 - Tribal
 - HEL Treatment
 - **Disaster**
 - **FY2021 PARTNERSHIP FUND POOLS**
 - National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
 - 3 Projects = \$1.8 million
 - Water Smart (Bureau of Reclamation)
 - 2 Projects – URNRD = \$250,000.00
MRNRD = \$500,000.00
 - Forest Service (Joint Chiefs)
 - 1 Project – UNWNRD, MNNRD, ULNRD = \$400,000.00
 - **FY2021 General EQIP Allocation = \$21.1 Million**
 - Wildlife (10%) = \$2.4 Million
 - Historically Underserved (10%) = \$2.4 Million
 - Source Water Protection (10%) = \$2.4 Million
 - Animal Feeding Operations = \$1.0 Million
 - Disaster = \$1.0 Million
 - HEL Treatment = \$300,000.00
 - Conservation Activity Plans = \$200,000.00
 - Working Lands for Wildlife = \$100,000.00

- High Tunnels = \$100,000.00
 - Organic = \$100,000.00
 - Tribal = \$100,000.00
 - Energy = \$25,000.00
- EQUIP HIGH PRIORITY PRACTICES
 - State Conservationists, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, have the **option to select up to 10 high priority practices, which may receive increased payment rates**. A high priority practice must meet one of the following criteria:
 - Addresses specific causes of impairment relating to **excessive nutrients in ground or surface water**;
 - Addresses the conservation of water, to advance **drought mitigation and declining aquifers**;
 - Meets other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans; or
 - Is geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.

*** Selection of practices to receive higher payment should incentivize conservation practices that have high potential for conservation but are underutilized.**

- Maximum of 10 practices allowed
 - 328 -Conservation Crop Rotation
 - 338 –Prescribed Burning
 - 386 –Field Border
 - 391 –Riparian Forest Buffer
 - 393 –Filter Strip
 - 420 –Wildlife Habitat Planting
 - 472 –Access Control
 - 590 –Nutrient Management
 - 595 –Pest Management
 - 657 –Wetland Restoration

❖ SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

- **Source Water Protection Practice List: *Practices with potential up to 90% c/s rate.**
 - 327 - Conservation Cover
 - 328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
 - 332 - Contour Buffer Strips
 - 340 - Cover Crop
 - 342 - Critical Area Planting
 - 355 - Well Water Testing
 - 386 - Field Border
 - 390 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover
 - 391- Riparian Forest Buffer
 - 393 - Filter Strip
 - 412 - Grassed Waterway
 - 449 - Irrigation Water Management
 - 590 - Nutrient Management
 - 635 - Vegetated Treatment Area
 - 656 - Constructed Wetland
 - 351 - Water Well Decommissioning
 - 430 - Irrigation Pipeline
 - 441 - Irrigation System, Micro irrigation
 - 442 - Sprinkler System
 - 512 - Forage and Biomass Planting
 - 550 - Range Planting
 - 595 - Integrated Pest Management
 - 657 - Wetland Restoration

❖ NRCS Partnership Initiatives & Grants

- **Core Principles:**
 - **Innovation**
 - **Partner Contributions**
 - **Impact**
 - **Partnerships & Management**
- **RCPP**
 - **Existing Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects in Nebraska**
 - Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery – CPNRD & TPNRD
 - \$ 1.7 million
 - 1-year extension approved
 - Expired 05/13/2020
 - PPA (Programmatic Partnership Agreement)
 - Agreement negotiated and signed prior to May 2021
 - 5-year agreement to 2026 for \$2.7 million
 - Regional Grassland Bird & Grazing Enhancement Initiative – NGPC
 - Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa
 - \$ 885,000.00 (Nebraska allocation)
 - Expired 09/30/2020
 - Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife – NGPC
 - Initial Allocation = \$700,000.00
 - Expires: 12/31/2020
 - Approved for FY20 Renewal
 - Agreement for 5 years into 2025 recently signed
 - Next signup FY2021
 - Republican Basin Conservation Partnership – LRNRD, MRNRD, URNRD
 - \$2.1 million allocated
 - Additional FA approved = \$500,000.00
 - Received one year no cost extension Expires: 08/08/2021
 - Divots in the Pivots – UBBNRD/RWBJV
 - Combination of ACEP-ALE, ACEP-WRE and EQIP
 - \$1.8 million
 - Expires 09/30/2022
 - Wahoo Creek Water Quality Sites 26 & 27 – LPNRD
 - \$1.5 million
 - Active Status
 - Papillion Creek Site WP-1 Dam – PMNRD
 - **\$4.4 million**
 - Active Status
 - **FY 2020 AWARDS (FY19 APF)**
 - 4 proposals received involving Nebraska
 - Awarded 1 RCPP project announced mid-April 2020
 - Programmatic Partnership Agreement (PPA) executed December 2020 with TNC.
 - Resilient Future for NE Soils
 - TNC – Lead Partner
 - \$4.4 Million
 - \$3.1 Million Fa
 - Potential 5yr project

- **Proposal Deadlines/Award Announcements**
 - **FY 2020 RCPP-AFA – proposals were due May 29th in portal**
 - **One Nebraska project selected**
 - **FY 2021 RCPP-AFA – funding announcement release in December 2020.**
 - **Awarded RCPP-AFA – 2021 (10 Projects were funded)**
 - **Nebraska Forest Restoration Partnership Priority Forest Areas**
 - **FY 2020/2021 RCPP Classic funding announcement released August 6, 2020**
 - Grants.gov: **USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPPC-21-NOFO0001033**
 - Proposals due date was extended to November 30, 2020
 - Awards announced March 2021

❖ **CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS (CIG)**

- **National CIG**
 - Funds the development of promising approaches and technologies—which may or may not be successful!
 - Funding rarely provided directly to producers
 - Projects often include small-scale pilots or demonstrations
 - National and State competitions
- **2019 National CIGs – in Nebraska**
 - University of Nebraska – Accelerating adoption of water conservation technologies and management practices through innovative engagement programming (Testing Ag Performance Solutions - TAPS) (**\$850,000.00** - NE, OK, CO, KS)
 - MAD Agriculture – Combining innovative finance with carbon farm planning and training to scale conservation with organic crop and carbon markets. (**\$817,000.00** - MT, NE, CO)
 - University of Hawaii – Forecasting daily reference evapotranspiration and rainfall for water resources conservation and sustainable agriculture. (**\$900,000.00** - HI, GU, NE, CA, MP)
- **2020 National CIGs**
 - Official Announcement of Awards after December
- **CIG On-Farm Trials**
 - Funds the implementation and evaluation of innovative approaches, systems, and practices that we know provide a conservation benefit.
 - Funding must be provided directly to producers to offset implementation risk.
 - Partners must complete both conservation and economic evaluations.
 - Soil Health Demo Trial awardees must agree to use consistent assessment methods.
 - National competition only.
 - **2019 On-Farm Trials funding announcement released May 15, 2019**
 - University of Nebraska – Adoption of Precision Ag Nitrogen Management through Nebraska On-Farm Research Network (**\$1,267,747** – NE)
 - Soil & Water Conservation Society - Advancing precision ag & soil health with retailers (**\$1,453,232** – NE, KS, IA)
 - Colorado Conservation Tillage Association – Farmers for Advancing Regenerative Management Systems (FARMS) (**\$1,672,546** – CO, KS, NE)
 - National Fish & Wildlife Foundation – Measures of holistic soil health management – Cooperate Supply Chain (**\$3,000,000** – IN, MI, OH, NY, PA, TX, NM, KS, NE, ID, UT)
 - **2020 On-Farm Trials were due 5/29/2020**
 - Michigan State University – Reduce N fertilizer losses through N application rates & replacing row crop with restored native vegetation. (**\$2,571,064** – MI, IA, IN, IL, NE, SD, KS, MS, TX, VA, MO)
 - University of Illinois – Deploy data intensive crop management system based on on-farm precision experiments (**\$4,000,000** – ID, IL, LA, MN, MT, NE, SD, TX, WA)

- North Carolina State University – Adds new row crop farmers to existing network of producers for online learning. (**\$2,003,778** – VT, PA, MD, NH, OH, VA, TN, NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, AR, WI, IN, SD, KS, **NE**, OK, TX, IA, MO)
 - **National Funding Announcements for 2021**
 - **National Classic – TBD (early spring)**
 - **On-Farm Trials – TBD (early spring)**
 - **Information and Funding Announcements:**
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/>
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❖ **VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS and HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM (VPA-HIP)**

- Competitive Grants Program through grants.gov
 - The primary objective of the VPA-HIP is to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, under programs implemented by State or tribal governments.
 - NE Game & Parks received this three-year grant for FY21 because of the well-established Open Fields & Water Program (OFW).
 - \$3,000,000.00 Federal Funds
 - \$500,000.00 Non-Federal Funds
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❖ **EQIP WaterSMART Landscape Conservation Initiative**

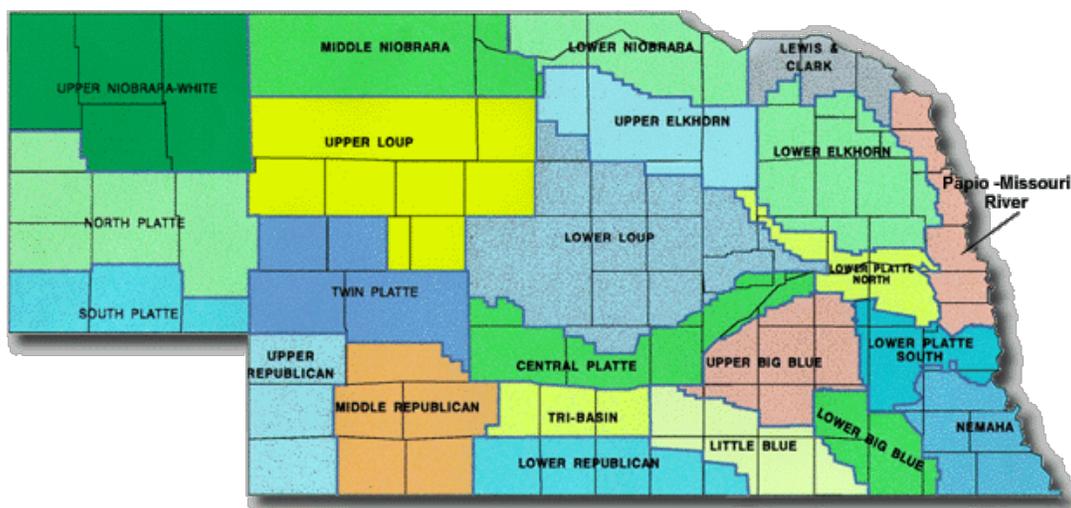
- The EQIP WaterSMART Landscape Conservation Initiative supplements the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program –Water Conservation and Efficiency Grants.
 - **FY21 Proposals:**
 - **Middle Republican NRD \$ 500,000**
 - Priority Resource Concern: Irrigation Water Use Inefficiency
 - Reduced consumptive use within the Quick Response Area
 - **Upper Republican NRD \$ 250,000**
 - **Improve water efficiency applied & annual reduction of water use.**
 - Priority Resource Concerns:
 - Irrigation Water Use Inefficiency
 - Nutrients Transported to Groundwater
 - Plant Productivity and Health
 - **Information about the EQIP WaterSMART Initiative at the National NRCS Landscape Initiatives website:**
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/initiatives/>
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❖ **National Water Quality Initiative**

- Wahoo Creek – Saunders - Lower Platte North NRD
 - Bazile Creek – Antelope, Pierce, Knox - LENRD, LCNRD, UENRD
 - Big Sandy Creek – Little Blue NRD
 - Turkey Creek – Lower Big Blue NRD
 - FY2021 NWQI Allocation = \$1.8 Million
 - Big Sandy = \$285,000.00
 - Wahoo Creek = \$0.00
 - Bazile Creek = \$855,000.00
 - Turkey Creek = \$712,000.00
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❖ **FY 2021 LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS –**

- Meetings completed in January/February 2021



- **LOCAL WORK GROUP AGENDA ITEMS:**
 - Priority Resource Concerns
 - Fund Pools - Ranking Tools – Screening Tools
 - Practice Payment Schedule
 - Local issues

GRANTS & AGREEMENTS COMPLETED FACT SHEETS - Neil Dominy, Asst. State Conservationist – Partnership & Initiatives, NRCS

- ❖ Discussed his new position
- ❖ Facts Sheets are online
 - If you would like to learn more, Neil is available for more questions.
- ❖ Expected timelines for Grants & Agreements
 - **Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)**
 - **Announcement for Public Funding (APF) Deadlines –**
 - National CIG Competitions – generally Late Winter/Early Spring
 - On-Farm Trial Competitions – generally Late Winter/Early Spring
 - State CIG’s – generally announced (a month) prior to National and OFT CIG’s
 - **Applications Due within 30 days of posted APF.**
 - **Announcement of Awards – Summer**
 - **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**
 - **NFO (Notice of Funding Opportunity) Posted/Deadlines**
 - RCPP Classic – FY 2021/22 expected to be available Late Summer with Partner Proposal deadline of Late Fall
 - RCPP AFA – FY 2021 NFO expected to be available December 2020 and Partner Proposal deadline of late winter-probably February.
 - RCPP Renewals – FY 2021 applications will be requested late FY 2021
 - **Conservation Collaboration Grant or Agreement (CCGA)**
 - **Announcement for Public Funding (APF) Deadlines –**
 - Spring to early summer
 - **Applications Due within 30 days of posted APF.**
 - **Announcement of Awards – Summer**

RCPP AWARD “NEBRASKA FOREST RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP” - Adam Smith, Rural Forestry Programs Director, Nebraska Forest Service

- ❖ Key Challenges
 - Lack of forest regeneration
 - Shifting forest composition
 - Loss of rural tree canopy cover
 - Decline of windbreak condition

- ❖ Traditional Forests
- ❖ Trees outside of Forests

- ❖ Oak Forest Decline
 - Oak forests need fire for regeneration
 - Significant concern across US for the future of oak forests
 - In absence of fire...
 - Redcedar is unmanaged
 - Hackberry thrives on shaded forest floor

- ❖ Cottonwood Forest Decline
 - Natural flooding deposited sand and silt, ideal seedling establishment
 - Shift towards shade tolerant species
 - In absence of flooding...
 - Redcedar is unmanaged
 - Hackberry thrives on shaded forest floor

- ❖ Windbreak Decline
 - Large-scale planting began in the 1930s
 - Continued age-driven decline
 - Pest and disease pressure
 - Climate variability

- ❖ Financial Assistance
 - No EQIP sign-up required
 - Continuous, open “enrollment”

- ❖ Partners and Roles
 - RESTORE – RENOVATE – RECOVER
 - Leverage statewide network of Nebraska natural resource organizations to provide technical and financial resources to landowners to restore the quality, sustainability and resiliency of Nebraska’s trees and forests

- ❖ The Partnership
 - NRD
 - Program available in participating NRDs
 - Lead implementation of tree planting practices
 - Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
 - Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation
 - Tree/Shrub Establishment
 - Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
 - Utilize their local cost docket to set prices and declare funded practices
 - Funding administered through existing NRD program processes

 - NFS and NGPC
 - Program available in identified priority areas

- Based on NFS Priority Forest Landscapes and NGPC Biologically Unique Landscapes
 - Lead implementation of forest management practices
 - Forest Stand Improvement
 - Fence
 - Practice costs based on statewide EQIP payment schedule
 - NRCS
 - Verifying landowner eligibility
 - HEL compliance
 - Wetland conservation compliance
 - Historically underserved certification
 - Provide farm tract number
- ❖ Landowner Outreach and Capacity Building
- Workshops
 - “Walk in the Woods”
 - Technical Trainings
 - Hands-on Technology Transfer
 - Landowner Research
 - Tree and forest management goes beyond financial assistance
 - Goals:
 - Engage landowners in forest stewardship
 - Empower landowners to make confident management decisions
 - Activities Planned
 - Hands-on tech transfer workshops
 - Basic forest management workshops (emphasizing specific topics such as wildlife habitat)
 - “Walk in the Woods” showcasing planned or completed management projects
 - Statewide Capacity Building
 - Forestry is not a common specialty across Nebraska natural resource organizations
 - Or for Nebraska landowners
 - Statewide significant staffing changes/recent hires
 - Goals:
 - Increase the capacity of natural resource professionals to identify management needs and prescribe management activities
 - Increase collaboration and interaction between organizations
 - Activities Planned
 - Technical trainings for natural resource professionals
 - leveraging the expertise of NFS, NRDs, NGPC, NRCS, USFS to better meet the needs of landowners
 - **UPCOMING ONLINE WINDBREAK SERIES**
- ❖ Current Status and Outlook
- Current Status
 - NFS and UNL are reviewing and completing entries into Programmatic Partnership Agreement
 - NRDs are providing partnership and programmatic details to NFS
 - Including 2021 cost docket to be used
 - Beginning discussions about outreach and promotion
 - NFS and NGPC are identifying potential project for Forest Stand Improvement
 - NFS developing online portal for practice plans
 - NFS planning online windbreak technical training series
 - To begin early 2021

- Significant early interest from landowners and partners
 - Future Outlook
 - Planning for program agreements in place in January
 - Identifying projects and planning for future cost-share awards (i.e. spring 2021 windbreak plantings) can begin now
 - Outreach and promotional information provided to partners
 - Expect programmatic and process training to begin in January
 - Working in the online practice plan portal
 - Developing practice plans
 - Certifying projects
 - Documenting progress
 - Submitting reimbursement invoices (NRDs)
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Q: What percent of trees outside the forest are unwanted cedar stands?

A: Imagery or data that was used is statewide & was 1-meter vegetation classification that is available to anyone. This shows whether it is treed or not treed, therefore we do not have level of data to show us that.

Q: Will use of Eastern Red Cedars be limited in this program or even prohibited in some parts of the state?

A: Following the policies of the Eastern red cedar use, put into effect by NRCS & leaving it up to those NRDS to implement their windbreak establishments & conservation tree programs, based on how they already would. No new restrictions or changes from last year.

Q: Will chemical treatment be used in forest stand improvement?

A: Yes, that will be a component that is fundable.

Q: Why is the Missouri River not part of the Cottonwood priority area given the massive loss of Cottonwood forest from the Missouri River floodplain?

A: These are the priority areas or the watershed boundaries, there is no distinction between Oak or Cotton wood priority area. Funding is eligible for the Missouri River.

Q: Dr. Twidwell highlighted the Central Grasslands Strategy during the last State Technical Committee. This presentation highlighted priority areas for control of Eastern Red Cedar. Will these priority areas be lower priority for windbreak renovation? If we are expending EQIP to control Eastern Red Cedar would it not make sense to not expend additional funds to renovate the seed source in these priority landscapes?

A: We are not making any sort of specific guidance or changing how these programs work based on ERC. If funding the established windbreak & including ERC is allowable practice within NRCS or NRD, we will not tell them not to do it in their own NRD.

Q: Do we need a clear policy on Eastern Red Cedar in NE that applies across all NRCS related programs so that all programs work together seamlessly?

A: We are working within the boundaries of the NRCS programs we have & the policies that were put in place last year. If we need to resend the policy please let us know & this is something we can discuss.

Q: Eastern Red Cedar and shade tolerant species were identified as one of the major threats to Cottonwood Gallery Woodland/Savanna Communities as part of this presentation. Is there a potential buffer distance for eastern red cedar plantings/windbreak renovation away from riparian woodlands to try to limit eastern red cedar invasion into these priority Forest Communities? Could the buffer be used to adjust or limit the amount of cost-share available?

A: I believe this is an opportunity to look back at the field office technical guide for best management practices for processing of establishing a windbreak. Parts of establishing a windbreak or any natural resources project is taking in the consideration the potential impacts of other not target issues. Not sure a buffer is the answer, or another concept is if you are doing any tree planting near the Missouri river. I think this opens the door for some discussion on how to update that or utilizing rocky mountain juniper as a replacement when we can, however we are seeing some issues we don't normally see with ERC. As we are adjusting how to put a windbreak on the landscape, because really our goal is to establish these tree systems, so we do not put ourselves in a position where we are creating another issue.

Q: Do not Red Cedars spread by Birds sitting in trees? So buffers are not workable?

A: Birds are the vector for spreading the Red Cedar berries around the state, however we are not going to take away establishing a windbreak in an area from the farmer as there is an applied management.

Q: I hope your technical training series is recorded and will be available for public use.

A: Absolutely, since this is a significant time block in the afternoon & spread out into 4 days, we are asking our presenters to record their 40m presentations & those will be provided during the technical workshops. Then there will be time for discussion, all of that will be recorded & then sent out.

Q: As far as management of the ERC or other unmanageable trees, what about using goats, sheep or those types of livestock in order to graze or deal with removing the berries or trees that are females that produce the berries?

A: I think those could be & have been used in a small scale & these are double benefits to help. This is a crucial management, but can we do this or implement this when the trees are small?

NE SOILS PROGRAM, WETLAND COMPLIANCE, GIS & TECHNOLOGY - Carlos Villarreal, State Soil Scientist, NRCS

❖ NE State Soils Section

- **State Soil Scientist:**
 - **Carlos Villarreal**
 - Introduced himself.
- **Assistant State Soil Scientist:**
 - **Patrick Cowsert**
- **Soil Scientists:**
 - **Tyler Durre**
 - **Riley Hackbart**
 - **Alex Urban**
 - **Josh Wehrbein**
- **Programs:**
 - Technical Soil Services
 - Helping FO with their questions
 - Working with partners in the field
 - Soil Health
 - Wetland Compliance

- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- **NE Soil Health Program**
 - **State Soil Health Specialist – Aaron Hird**
 - Partnerships
 - UNL’s Soil Health Clinics
 - Eastern Nebraska’s Soil Health Conference
 - NE’s On Farm Research Network
 - UNL Soil Color and Soil Organic Carbon Relationships
 - Neat tool for producers and our Field Staff.
 - UNL IANR Impact of Land Use on Deep Soil Organic Carbon Dynamics in NE
 - UNL IANR Developing an Interactive Soil Health Research Site Map for NE to Understand the Soil Health Gap
 - Gives us a benchmark for soil data for Nebraska.
 - Soil Water Movement Study (Nemaha County, NE)
 - Dynamic Soil Properties (DSP)
 - Research oriented measurement
 - Over 30 Research Sites across the state
 - Organic carbon
 - Bulk density
 - Nebraska NRCS Soil Health Initiative
 - **Impacts of USDA Conservation Programs on Cover Crop Acres**
 - The conservation efforts by NRCS is reflected in 8.9% of the total cover crop acres in Nebraska.
 - This practice is used to control erosion, add fertility and organic material to the soil, improve soil tilth, and increase infiltration and aeration of the soil.
 - In 2020 the NE Soil Health team has prioritized outreach & partnerships, while adapting to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The team used innovative approaches to providing soil health trainings and hosting soil health workshops for NRCS Conservation planners, partners & producers across the state.
 - Additionally, the team inventoried soil health physical, chemical & biological properties from over 25 study sites representing Nebraska’s cropland & rangelands.
 - In these challenging times the team will continue to promote natural resource conservation in Nebraska with ranchers and farmers.
- WETLANDS COMPLIANCE TEAM
 - Compliance Coordinator – Corey King
 - Wetland Team works exclusively on wetland determinations, reconsiderations, and restorations/mitigation requests.
 - 13 biologists/soil scientists throughout Eastern and Central Nebraska
 - Nebraska receives about 2,350 wetland determinations annually.
 - WETLANDS TEAM SUCCESS:
 - Reducing the workload
 - The increase in staff correlates directly with the increase in the number of determinations completed.
 - NRCS will continue to improve the wetland determination process to assist agriculture producers in Nebraska as effectively as possible.
- Goals for FY 2021 – Soils/TSS
 1. **Increase involvement with MLRA Soil Survey Activities**
 - Management and Technical Team Meetings
 - Field visits and Quality Assurance Reviews
 - State Soils Staff assistance
 2. **Provide Conservation Activity Reports to increase awareness of planned practices and involved soils**

- Assist in project design
- 3. **Share Web Soil Survey metrics with Nebraska Leadership**
 - What information is being accessed
 - Location and size of Area of Interests
- 4. **Review Current Available Interpretations**
 - Developed interpretations not available in WSS
- Goals for FY 2021 – GIS
 - **Expand online presence using ArcGIS Online platform**
 - Soil Health and Conservation Planning Success Stories
 - Streamline data sharing with partners and cooperators
 - **Develop and Implement Performance Monitoring Tools**
 - Analyze trends in Contract Management, Customer Service, Practice Implementation
 - Integrated Data for Enterprise Analysis (IDEA)
 - Monitor program and high priority areas for environmental impacts
 - **Improve/Integrate in-field data collection**
 - Review available data collection methods
 - Solicit feedback from end-user
 - Provide training to field staff
- ArcGIS Online
 - Example of AGOL platform
 - Soil Water District that is equivalent to an NRD.
 - Identified the priority resource concerns at LWG
 - Top 3 shown in the diagram.
 - Easy way to share this with the State Technical Committee
- Soil Health presentations might just be a thing in the future so that this committee can get some involvement.

CRP SIGNUPS UPDATE & NEW EMERGENCY HAYING & GRAZING APPROVED COUNTIES IDENTIFIED – *Doug Klein, FSA*

❖ FSA CRP Signups

- Continuous Signup #55
 - Ongoing
- General Signup #56
 - January 4 – February 12, 2021
- Grasslands Signup #203
 - March 15 – April 23
- Anticipating the CREP signup
 - One of the major hold ups is trying to adjust the soil rental rates for single irrigated, currently using pivoted vs gravitated irrigated rate & need to go to a single irrigated rate.
- Had a quick sub-committee meeting last week about conservation priority areas & they were submitted to the National Office last week. This was a very short turn around, so glad we got those submitted.
- Practice Incentive Program (PIP)
 - The payments had gone down to 5%, but for 2021 it will go up to 20%.

- The Pollinator SAFE project has had a lot of National adjustments
 - Current proposal that was submitted in June/July 2020
 - The project has been withdrawn.

Q: What is the status of the Migratory Bird SAFE?

A: This was pulled because it was under a ranking criteria and it's a combination of NE/KS. Had to send in a proposals or recommendation to how was going to rank them, but not call it ranking criteria. These were pushed in last week & should get back to KS/NE to what options or changes will come about for a process using irrigated rental rates. Waiting on National to get back.

Q: Do you need any additional information from the partners for the Migratory Bird SAFE and is there a timeline?

A: At this time no, as we have not been contacted by the National Office. Once we do then partners will be contacted & what we need to follow up with.

❖ A BIG THANK YOU TO CRAIG FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK & DEDICATION TO THE NEBRASKA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE & THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE STATE OF NEBRASKA.

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

FUTURE 2021 MEETINGS:

- ❖ March 4, 2021
- ❖ June 3, 2021
- ❖ September 9, 2021
- ❖ December 2, 2021