

State Technical Committee
March 22, 2016

Welcome and Update, Mary Podoll

Discussion:
none

FY16 NRCS Programs Update, Todd Hagel

Discussion:

- How many producers are frustrated being capped out when it comes to CSP monetary limits?
 - Have not heard any concerns
- Is there still interest in easement programs?
 - Yes, there are currently about 500 offers.

Mitigation, Jennifer Heglund

Discussion:

- Does the mitigated area need to stay in the same watershed?
- If we do a mitigation project, are mitigation acres considered part of permanent easement?
 - As long as it is needed, it will be protected in bank status.
- If dried out, can they be used for production?
 - It would depend on how the plan was developed.
- 404 permit and mitigation – Army Corps of Engineers has other things with 404. Because there are two different bank instruments, the agencies need to work together.
- Does it go by HGM or Acres?
 - By law, there must be a 1 to 1 minimum. It is matched to functions.
- Is NRCS providing financial assistance for mitigation banks?
 - NRCS provides technical assistance only – not in assistance in purchasing land.
- When purchasing credits, where does the money go?
 - It goes to the producer who has the bank.

Discussion, Mary Podoll
Hiring more engineers including a hydrologist.
Risk maps

Discussion:

Risk maps need to be sent out to agencies/concerned groups. Need to verify whether they are accessible on the NRCS website.

- Focus is to preserve the revenue generating capacity of land.
- Avoid growth of chemically resistant weeds.
- Water spots cannot be used.
 - There is a need to develop methods that are more water savvy and efficient.
- More working land solutions.
 - Engaging producers
 - Voluntary program incentives
 - Financial incentives
 - All to achieve more conservation outcomes.
- Wetland acres are 20% less productive
 - Need to provide solutions that allow for both wetland and farmland
 - Less either/or situations.
- More efficient use of fertilizer and pesticide use with regards to water quality.
- Preventing erosion
- Partnering is key
- Many species are in trouble because their habitats are disappearing.
- Working on partnerships with farmers.
- Overlapping the benefits of programs – water and crops, etc.
- Need to set differences aside and work together as agencies.
- Continuing incentive based and flexible programs
- Working together

CRP Haying/Grazing and Midcontract Mgmt, Brad Olson

Discussion:

- Concern about producers – Is there anyway the CRP programs could be more simplified for the producers? It is a good program, but hard on the farmers.
- Almost at enrollment limit on CRP in current farm bill.
- Could haying/grazing cycles be simplified more? Different cycles, 100% of the field (over 20 acres)?
 - Keep in mind minimum stubble heights.

- Mid contract management has incentive. If haying/grazing, 25% of the income will be lost, but it can be used for forage.
- Farmer standpoint – 1 in 3 years sounds best for haying/grazing frequency, as well as doing 100% in one year.
- What is the significance of the 20 acre threshold?
- Subcommittee – said 1 in 3 management or 1 in 2 routine
- Should vertical tillage be allowed?
 - Would be beneficial and help with leveling
 - Will disturb but not erosion-wise.
 - Less soil disturbance than disking
 - Pulls more easily, even in wet spots so it won't leave ruts.
 - Aerates the ground and allows for a better seed bit.
 - Is there Science to show vertical tillage is better?
 - Not currently, could do one.

There needs to be a consensus on grazing/haying cycles, 100% of field, and vertical tillage. Email Brad by end of business on Friday, March 25.

Results as per Brad Olson (via email responses):

Managed Harvesting of CRP – for contracts approved between September 26, 2006 through February 6, 2014, allow producers to modify their CPO to change the managed harvesting frequency to once every three years.

Routine grazing of CRP – For contracts approved after July 28, 2010 through February 6, 2014, allow producers to modify their CPO to change the routine grazing frequency to once every other year.

Mid-Contract Management of CRP – remove the acreage limitation for contracts with more than 20.0 acres and allow up to 100% of the acreage to have this activity performed in the year(s) planned according to the CPO. This will also require a modification of the CPO, if the producer wishes to change the amount of acres to do MCM on in a given year.

Mid-Contract Management of CRP – allow the usage of vertical tillage implements for CRP practices that allow disking as a mid-contract management activity.

Updated Lateral Effects Estimates, Christi Fisher

Discussion:
none