

**State Technical Committee Meeting  
December 4, 2014**

Jeff Burwell, Idaho State Conservationist, welcomed the group.	
<b>Round Robin</b>	Meeting attendees introduced themselves and gave brief comments about what they were currently working on.
<b>Farm Service Agency Update</b> Sherrie Brooks, FSA Program Specialist	<p>FSA has a new State Executive: Mark Samson. FSA staff provided a brief update on the CRP and SAFE programs. Idaho's SAFE program is the largest in the US and has the largest single project at 119,000 acres targeting sharp-tailed grouse.</p> <p>Farm Service Agency and Idaho Department of Fish and Game presented recommended changes to Conservation Reserve Program standard practice. The changes would clarify vague wording to help in project planning. Also IDFG proposed expanding the SAFE area to include Twin Falls County.</p> <p>The committee had no questions or issues regarding proposed changes. The proposal will be presented to other groups for input before a final decision is made.</p>
<b>NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)</b> Trisha Cracroft, NRCS State Biologist	<p>NRCS explained the Working Lands for Wildlife program. Nationally, WLFW targets 7 species that would benefit from voluntary conservation on private lands. In Idaho greater sage grouse is the target species for the program. The program is meant to provide predictability to producers with WLFW contracts if the species of concern is listed as threatened or endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. More info is online at: <a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1047545.pdf">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1047545.pdf</a></p> <p>Kathleen Hendricks from Fish and Wildlife Service said partners can input information on projects that benefit sage grouse to the Service.</p>
<b>Soil Health Demo</b> Marlon Winger, NRCS State Agronomist	<p>Marlon conducted a soil health demonstration and presented information about soil function. The slake test showed how an undisturbed soil clod held together in water as opposed to a clod from frequently tilled soil.</p> <p>Marlon discussed how to improve soil health through disturbing soil less, keeping soil covered, keeping a growing root in soil year round, and growing diverse crops/plants.</p>
<b>Conservation Compliance Requirement</b> Gene Schock, NRCS State Resource Conservationist	<p>Gene updated the group on conservation compliance requirements for highly erodible land and wetland conservation. The 2014 Farm Bill recoupled the requirement for conservation compliance provisions with Farm Bill crop insurance subsidies. Producers participating in most programs administered by the Risk Management Agency (RMA), FSA, and NRCS are required to comply with the provisions. Anyone that requests benefits must certify that they comply with highly erodible land regulation. Information about compliance requirements is under development. It will be available online at <a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/compliance">www.nrcs.usda.gov/compliance</a>.</p>
<b>Programs – 2008</b>	Reviewed how 2008 Farm Bill funds were spent in Idaho and highlighted

<p><b>Farm Bill</b> Kris Berg, Asst. State Conservation for Programs</p>	<p>some changes with the 2014 Farm Bill.</p> <p>National Water Quality Initiative focused on 3 watersheds in Lower Boise River. Still enough work in the area to keep these 3 watersheds as the priority area.</p>
<p><b>Programs – 2014 Farm Bill</b></p>	<p>2014 Farm Bill combined several programs to streamline conservation programs (like the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program and EQIP) and targets resources to areas with highest need.</p> <p>The new farm bill formed critical conservation areas under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Idaho is in the Columbia River Basin CCA for the Pacific Northwest.</p>
<p><b>Programs – Conservation Stewardship Program</b> Rob Fredericksen, program coordinator</p>	<p>New with this farm bill is that producers must address 2 priority resource concerns and agree to meet 2 more. We selected 5 resource concerns relevant to Idaho to use in the ranking process.</p> <p>For 2015 set up 2 geographic priority areas: Agricultural land (pasture, range, hay and cropland) and forestland. If you want to change areas for 2016, let Rob know.</p> <p>Comment: is there an opportunity to consolidate the lengthy list of enhancements to focus on soil health?</p>
<p><b>Programs - RCPP</b></p>	<p>A new program is the Resource Conservation Partnership. It combined the Agriculture Water Enhancement and Cooperative Conservation Partnership Programs. The goal of the new program is to leverage funding through partnerships.</p>
<p><b>Programs - Irrigation Eligibility</b></p>	<p>Proposed that if more than 10% of land being brought under irrigation is new to crops, the entire irrigation system is ineligible.</p> <p>There was no opposition to the proposal.</p>
<p><b>Programs - Local Working Group Meetings</b></p>	<p>Each division held local working group meetings to get feedback on top resources priorities. Ron Brooks presented feedback on top resource priorities for each division.</p> <p>Comment: Some resource concerns were prioritized by LWGs with limited representation from partners. There may be some areas where treating one resource concern may negatively impact another resource concern.</p>
<p><b>Programs – Easements</b> Wade Brown, Easement Coordinator</p>	<p>Idaho focused on perpetual easements although the 2008 farm bill allowed several lengths.</p> <p>Current issue with some Grassland Reserve Programs open easement is access across BLM land to the area under easement.</p>
<p><b>Subcommittees</b></p>	<p>We passed around a list of 2009 subcommittee members for edits and corrections.</p> <p>We have 13 specialized subcommittees to focus on particular state topics and issues. Kris suggested consolidating subcommittees and the group agreed.</p> <p>EQIP, WHIP and CSP were consolidated into 'Farm Bill Programs'; Wildlife, Fish and Easements were combined into 'Wildlife &amp; Fish'; Tillage and Integrated Pest Management were combined into 'Soil Health'; Irrigation and Energy were combined and called 'Irrigation and Energy'. Forest Management, Range, and Organic remain on their own.</p>