

October 24, 2019 Alaska NRCS State Technical Meeting

State Resource Conservationist, Scott Crockett:

- Welcome, for those who may not know, I am the technical steward of the Alaska State Technical Committee Meetings.
- Alaska NRCS is going to three State Technical Committee meetings per year, starting in January, May, and then in the Fall.
- Alan McBee has accepted the State Conservationist position in Alaska. He is available to speak with us today via teleconference.

State Conservationist, Alan McBee

Thanks for coming to this meeting. I am originally from New Mexico and have been with the agency for 16 years. During my time I have worked in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Washington State. I am familiar with tribal outreach and representation.

This week I am attending the National Leadership Team Meeting in Minnesota. Leadership is providing updates regarding the agencies main message. NRCS will be adopting change to provide greater focus on our ability to implement the farm bill, we will be improving our internal processes to reduce red tape and improve our customer service. We heard positive messages regarding national numbers which may allow us to hire more help. The big message came from Chief Lohr, whose focus remains customer service. I am very excited to start work in and for Alaska.

My back ground is Range Science and I have a history of working in all land use types in the Western US.

Karen Linnell - when will you be here.

I am in MN this week then will return to Washington state to finalize the move with family. My family and I should arrive sometime the week before Thanksgiving.

Scott - Introductions:

Steven Holly, AVI, Angela Peter, ATCA, Karen Linnell, Theo Garcia, Charlie ??, St of Alaska, Ryan Maroney, NRCS, Mark Lower, FWS, Dan Parent US Forest Service, Trevor DoBell-Carlsson, St. of Alaska, Forest Service, Jessica Lene, NRCS, Cory Cole, NRCS, Michelle Jezeski, NRCS, Tom Harris, Eric Johnson, State of AK, Dave S. DIV AG Tyler, Amanda Crowe, NRCS, Denise Miller, NRCS, Ashley Wood, Bryan Scoresby, FSA, Ronalda Angasan, AVI, Will Putman, Rob Carter PMC, Christi Cincotta, Tyonek TCD.

Attending via VTC:

Homer Field Office - Don McNamara, Oceanside Farms, Chris Rainwater, AACD, Pam Voeller, Karin Sonnen, NRCS, Kyra Wagner, and Devony Lehner, Homer SWCD.

Kenai Field Office – Meg Mueller, Alicia Greene, Dave Ianson, NRCS

Fairbanks Field Office - Joanne Kuykendall

Delta Field Office - Ryan Johnson, Dean Houchen, NRCS, and Bryce Wrigley, Salcha-Delta SWCD.

Scott

Agenda Items today include topics requested by previous attendees of NRCS State Technical Committee Meetings. (NSTCM)

New Farm Bill roll out training will be Dec 9. NRCS is still formulating rules for programs we administer.

Huge change in Conservation Planning and Application - Conservation Desktop and Conservation Activity Ranking Tool (CART). The new tools are a more efficient way to do conservation planning – Denise will provide some details.

The Department has allowed us to increase the number of FTE (staff) nationwide. We hope to see some improvement and streamlining in the hiring process.

Your input is welcome. If the discussion goes into greater depth than we can cover today, we can table the issue and possibly schedule a sub-committee meeting.

Assistant State Conservationist – Programs, Amanda Crowe

CART - Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool

- Set of business practices to streamline conservation planning and program delivery
- Program neutral integrated software
- CART will replace many of the individual tools we use today for planning and programs and house them in one application
- CA portion
 - It integrates the four resource assessment methods in the National Planning Procedures Handbook. CART assists planners to analyze the resource data captured in the inventory (which is done on the farm) and help determine if planning criteria is met. It's important to remember that CART is just a tool - the planner can override the CART determination.
- RT portion
 - Program language is changing
- FY-2019:
 - Protracts => EQIP Sub-Accounts and Allocations
 - Protracts => AERT (National, State, and Local Questions)
 - Easements => Ranking Worksheet (National and State Questions)
- FY-2020:
 - CART => Ranking Pools (National, State, and Local....)
 - Funds Manager => Spending Plans (delayed for FY-2021)
 - Ranking Pools will evaluate the client's application in 5 main areas:
 - CART allows consideration of Pool Priorities for funding under all applicable Ranking Pools

- CART will remove duplicate applications - nationwide is 30-50,000
- **OUTCOMES**
 - NRCS is under pressure to "define outcomes" with our conservation investments
 - CART captures existing vs planned conditions by field, tract, farm, watershed, area, and state - data which is currently in individual client folders - but not in a way that is easy to compile.

EQIP 2020

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the most widely utilized conservation program in Alaska. This program allows us to address resource concerns by providing financial incentives to producers to install conservation practices.
- We are currently waiting for the EQIP rule to be published before we can announce a sign-up. Thus, at this time we are unsure what the EQIP timelines will look like for FY20.

Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs)

- Conservation plan to address a specific natural resource need, typically tied to a specific land use
- For example –
- Nutrient Management Plan 104
- Forest Management Plan 106
- Grazing Management Plan 110
- Agricultural Energy Management 128
- Developed by Technical Service Providers – not NRCS
- TSPs are individuals or businesses that have technical expertise in conservation planning and design for specific conservation activities. TSPs must be approved by NRCS.

FY20 we will have 2 new CAPS: Energy Design (136) and Soil Health (116)

- Energy Design
 - Helps NRCS and clients transition to a more energy efficient agricultural operations
 - Examples could include lighting improvement, heating upgrades, and pumping plant efficiencies
 - Includes Inventory, Evaluation, and Design
 - Client needs to already have an Energy CAP and Audit that meets our standards
 - Client would utilize the Energy Design CAP if they want assistance with the design of the practices recommended in their audit.
 - In the Inventory and Evaluation stage alternatives would be developed with energy savings calculated for each alternative, the client would then determine what practices they would like to implement
 - There would be a pre-design concurrence with the TSP, client, and NRCS
 - Then the TSP would design the practices meeting all the items in the Conservation Practice Standard Statement of Deliverables.
- Soil Health
 - Purpose is to identify and document soil health resource concerns, problems, and opportunities and to develop an adaptive soil health management plan
 - Addressing the following resource concerns:
 - Soil organic matter depletion
 - Compaction
 - Soil organism habitat loss or degradation

- Aggregate instability
- Concentration of salts or other chemicals
- This will apply to annual and perennial cropland. It does NOT apply to pasture, rangeland, or forestland.

Joint Chiefs' Initiative

- Opportunity to partner with the Forest Service to apply conservation to both public and private lands for addressing landscape-scape priorities.
- The Joint Landscape Restoration Initiative addresses the health and resiliency of forest and rangeland ecosystems by providing 3 years' worth of funding to projects aimed at:
 - 1) reducing and mitigating wildfire threats to communities and landowners,
 - 2) protecting water quality and supply for communities and industry, and
 - 3) improving habitat quality for at-risk or ecosystem surrogate species.
- Utilizes EQIP dollars to complete the NRCS portion of the work
- Currently a call for proposals - due November 1st

Conservation Stewardship Program - Grassland Conservation Initiative

- Farm Service Agency determines which base acres qualify as eligible land - Alaska has a short list of those who meet the eligibility.
- The purpose of the CSP-GCI is to assist producers in:
 - protecting grazing uses;
 - conserving and improving soil, water, and wildlife resources;
 - and achieving related conservation values.
- The payment that participants will receive is meant to offset the loss of base payments that that participants are no longer eligible to receive on eligible acres. As such there is no expectation for improved performance, but rather an expectation that participants will maintain the permanent vegetative cover that currently exists rather than returning the ground to crop production.
- NRCS will develop a conservation stewardship plan for the eligible acres - the three main criteria include:
 - managing and controlling invasive species,
 - maintaining permanent cover,
 - manage the applicable acres to meet or exceed one priority resource concern
- Soil Erosion, Soil Quality Degradation, Water Quality Degradation, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Air Quality Impacts, Degraded Plant Condition and Livestock Production Limitation. One of these must currently be being met or will meet or exceed the stewardship level by the date on which the contract expires.

Eric Johnson – How is CRP going to interact? *Amanda* - That is currently unknown.

Charles Parker - So we will be going from 90 plans to 1 plan.

Push from congress. What is the work being conducted on the landscape? What are we gaining by this? It will be more efficient reporting. So many practices, how much soil was saved. What did we get from nutrient management...?

USDA Forest Service, Natural Resources Specialist – Daniel Parrent

- Forest Service Business part of the Farm Bill, section 538 is about an effort to create or expand products to create some of the products installed wood energy heating across the state.
- In 2020, the Forest Service will invest up to \$8 million in grants for projects designed to expand wood products and wood energy markets that support sustainable forest management, particularly in areas of high wildfire risk. The grants are available through the agency's Wood Innovations Program.
- By investing in wood innovation projects, we also invest in the health and safety of rural communities. The grants are beneficial to local economies, too.
- The deadline for submitting grant applications is Jan. 15, 2020. Information on how to apply is available on the [Wood Innovations homepage](#).
- It is an effort to create or expand products to install wood energy heating across the state. Last month in copper river basin Victory Bible Camp, Mentasta Lake, Tok, Delta, and Chistochina have utilized this wood innovation.
- Grant on the street application deadline middle of January fund timber innovations' broad range. Multi story building out of panels 40 x 20 w prefabbed panels in the lower 48- last 10 wood energy has worked for us. They are now allowed purchase of a boiler.
- LINKS:

<https://www.fs.fed.us/news/releases/usda-forest-service-celebrates-timber-innovation-day-announcing-8-million-expand-wood>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/naspf/programs/wood-education-and-resource-center/wood-innovations-home>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/naspf/programs/wood-education-and-resource-center/2020-wood-innovations-program-request-proposals>

Charles Parker, AVI – The wood energy program was beneficial – a great program with lots of additional benefits.

Tom Harris, Tyonek example at Keppler Bridge it is an added value. Treatment and assembly of these bridges are done by hand.

Scott

- Geographic rate caps. States are required to review Geographic rate caps at the NSTCM.
- Permanent easements are a way to protect ecologically-important land or threatened agricultural land in perpetuity.

- Wetland Reserve Enhancement (WRE) is a component of ACEP, the main easement program for NRCS.
- There has not been a lot of interest for WRE in Alaska as few eligible wetlands are in danger of development.
- Easements are the right of certain use over a property. Conservation easements allows us to purchase the development rights and certain other use rights of a property to conserve it's agricultural or ecological functions.
- ACEP Ag land easements, we purchase the development rights so that the land always stays in agricultural production.
- With ACEP wetland reserve easements, we purchase all rights, except the land owner maintains the right to quiet enjoyment and recreational use as well as limited grazing.
- Under WRE, NRCS will cover 100% of the cost to restore the land as well, for instance, if the wetland has been altered from its natural state.
- In Alaska, NRCS sets the easement compensation cost using a Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC). The rate cap we settled on was 80% of the fair market value (FMV) not to exceed \$5000 / acre. The per acre cap ensures that compensations are fair and equitable across the state.

Karen Linnell - Glennallen land prices are more like \$10K / acre - K Linnell.

Scott

- Valuation is based on property values. The fair market value will show differences in price for a plot of land you can develop versus a muskeg that has little commercial, agricultural or development value.

Theo Garcia -Is the NRCS GARC set using historic data?

Scott, yes, NRCS uses national property appraisal methods. (Scott said he believes that three appraisals are averaged, but that is not correct. An appraiser appraises the property under consideration and the NRCS National Appraiser evaluates the appraisal. If the land owner(s)/applying partner dispute the appraisal, appeal rights apply.)

- NRCS uses historic borough land tax records to determine the GARC cap of \$5K per acre.
- The State Conservation has the authority to change the GARC values. If that is a concern, we can schedule a sub-committee meeting to discuss the matter further.

Tom Harris - suggested we use International Right of Way Association as an appraiser.

Scott

- Alaska NRCS has received around \$500K in ACEP funds over the last several years.
- Great Land and Farmland Trust both hold conservation easements in the Mat Su Valley.
- Alaska has not historically used our full allocation.

- Applicants must match NRCS funds 50/50.
- Last year, there were no applications for NRCS easement funding due to a lack of matching funds.
- Land owners may contribute to the project by accepting a lower price for the easement land rights. For instance, if the appraised value is \$1 mill, the landowner may accept \$800K to ensure the easement purchase is approved.

Acting Tribal Liaison - Ryan Maroney

- Regional Conservationist Partnership Program (RCPP) roll-out: [Announcement of Program Funding \(APF\)](#) for \$300M in FY'19 RCPP projects of which half of the funds are reserved for critical conservation areas in the Lower 48 states.
- Applications must be coordinated with NRCS RCPP coordinator Kristi Harper or assistant coordinator Ryan Maroney and be submitted through the RCPP Portal by Dec 3rd.
- Accessing the RCPP Portal requires Level II e-authentication. The new Farm Bill RCPP program rules set requirements on the total allowable percentage of the budget that can be allocated for Financial Assistance (FA) and Technical Assistance (TA).
- Specifically, 70% or more of the budget must go to FA (EQIP, CSP, etc.) and of the remaining 30% or less of the budget must follow these requirements: 5% retained by NRCS; No more than 7% can be spent toward partner led activities; the remaining 18% must be used for implementation and will be accessible only to partners with required qualifications.
- The new RCPP rules significantly restrict Enhancement TA expenditures and may limit some partner interest in Alaska.
- A list of Frequently Asked Questions about FY'19 RCPP as well as past Webinar slides are available on the [How to Apply to RCPP website](#).

Scott

- Program rules are established by Congress, and the State Conservationist does not have the authority to change program rules.

Rangeland Management Specialist - Karin Sonnen

Range Monitoring

Good Morning, I am Karin Sonnen, Alaska NRCS Rangeland Specialist. I am in the Homer Field Office. I have been fortunate to work here for the last 23 years in this amazing state for this wonderful agency, and I am excited to talk with you about a new project NRCS has taken on. I will give a very brief history of reindeer in Alaska. Reindeer were introduced to the Seward peninsula in 1892 by Rev. Sheldon Jackson to supply the people a source of protein. He believed that native people were at risk of starving.

Reindeer numbers grew and the industry flourished. There is a history of meat production and wet velvet antler production with booms and busts over the next 100 years. At its largest, there were estimated to be 650,000 reindeer in Alaska.

That number has decreased significantly due to many factors. We now have an estimated 12,000 to 20,000 reindeer in Alaska. You can see on the map the areas that are considered grazed rangeland in the state, with the reindeer range in red and the rangeland grazed by other animals in blue. More of the state than shows on this map was once grazed by reindeer, but more recently, these are the reindeer range areas, and they total about 22 million acres.

The Seward Peninsula is the largest contiguous area of reindeer range in Alaska and is broken into 15 different grazing permit areas ranging from 400,000 to over one million acres in size.

The NRCS, and SCS before we became the NRCS, has been working and assisting the reindeer herders on the Seward Peninsula for over 50 years. In the late 1970's the State of Alaska paid for the SCS to inventory and map the vegetation of the reindeer ranges on the Seward Peninsula for better information and management of those ranges. The mapping broke out areas based on their potential production values, soil, aspect, elevation, slope, and other factors that caused a certain vegetation community to be supported. These were called "range sites" back then and are now more commonly referred to as "ecological sites."

After 8 years of work, the SCS published this information, which included yearly production values of vegetation in pounds per acre and total lichen production values. Additionally, fabulous maps were produced on USGS topographic base maps over the entire peninsula. This was an amazing undertaking. Entire summers were devoted to field work in a remote camp with a helicopter, crew, and cook, gathering data and mapping this remote and vast part of Alaska. These maps are accurate and excellent, and to this day I prefer to use them to navigate by helicopter to a given location on the peninsula.

The maps now have been digitized so acres of each ecological site can be calculated when determining forage estimates for a given area. The lichen supporting areas are shown on these maps with stipples or dots.

Lichen are a key species for reindeer grazing and management. Lichen allow reindeer and caribou to survive harsh and long winters when the plants are dormant, and their nutritive value is largely below frozen ground. Lichen make up a large percentage of the diet of reindeer and caribou in the winter months, as their nutritive value remains above the ground. Lichen do not have roots or a vascular system that moves carbohydrates above and below ground depending on the season, like plants do. The reindeer and caribou have special gut bacteria that allow lichen to be digested and make use of the energy the lichen provide.

Lichen will show utilization before plants, as they are a preferred species and are slow growing. We also can know a lot about the grazing history of an area based on the lichens present, their growth form, the total length of a given species and the percent live length compared with the total length. This can tell us what kind of grazing occurred in the past and how intense it likely was.

Once we complete an assessment, we develop maps to help better understand the condition of the rangeland. Each map gives us different information about the condition of the grazing land and the need for rest or readiness for grazing, as well as the amount of forage present.

We can then take this information and come up with a management strategy. Each range has different characteristics with different predator issues, terrain, and rivers that all can affect the management plan. The reindeer herders are the experts in knowing this kind of information and how to plan work or know if a plan will not work. We work with the herders to come up with something that will work for them, the land, and the herd.

A grazing management plan may typically include one or two summer units and several winter units to rotate the deer through, as lichen need more time to recover (years) and grow more slowly than plants. There will be more winter units established to provide that needed recovery.

We have a large hole in our data and understanding in that we do not know the rate of recovery for lichen. Past studies from over 50 years ago tell us rates of recovery from 50 to 100 years. However, a few of us who have worked on the range a couple decades believe we are seeing faster recovery rates on lichen areas that have been heavily grazed.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Reindeer Research Program took on a graduate student to help answer these questions. In 2011, Graduate Student Kara Moore finished her thesis describing the establishment of large grazing exclosures on the Seward Peninsula to fill this gap in our knowledge.

The Reindeer Research Program took the lead on the establishment of 24 exclosures with funding provided by the Bureau of Land Management and technical assistance provided from NRCS. A variety of lichen supporting ecological sites with varying degrees of grazing pressure were selected to locate these exclosures and establish small plots within and outside of the exclosures.

These exclosures were placed on both state land and BLM managed land on the southwestern Seward Peninsula.

Exclosures are large, consisting of twelve eight foot by eight-foot panels that are set on the ground and attached to each other in a circular fashion. Permanent plots are marked inside and outside and are in the exact same place for each exclosure, making it simple to locate them and know where to safely step.

The plots established on the outside of the exclosures give a good comparison of grazed and un-grazed ground over time.

The small plots are four feet by four feet and are set to be photographed with a high-resolution camera every five years. A 1.5 foot by 2 foot - point intersect frame is also located over these same plots, and has 50 points to identify and monitor per plot. These point frame species monitoring is set to be read every 10 years and are more time intensive than the photographing.

UAF-RRP was to lead the monitoring effort with BLM and NRCS providing botany expertise and some transportation to the exclosures as funds allowed.

The University has been cutting budgets for many years. That combined with the State of Alaska's cuts in funding the university system has caused the Reindeer Research Program to come apart. They no longer have their reindeer herd or funding to support employees, not to mention any funds for monitoring of these long-term exclosures. This was discussed at the Alaska Reindeer Council meeting in March of 2019. Agencies were asked to step up and help with the housing of this data and the monitoring. This study and several others that has been financially supported by NRCS is critical information that is incredibly valuable to rangeland management in Alaska.

An MOU or Memorandum of Understanding had been established for this exclosures project early in the process, and so NRCS agreed to house several of the data sets including the data for the exclosures. Additionally, NRCS will try and help with monitoring as funding allows. This involves about 16 exclosures on State land. The BLM agreed to take on the monitoring of the remaining exclosures that are on BLM-managed land.

The location of the exclosures is seen on this map, with the BLM supported exclosures in yellow and the NRCS supported exclosures in green. While completing field work this summer, a few of the exclosures were found to be down.

This is the equipment needed for maintaining and photographing the exclosures /plots, which is what we attempted to do this late summer. Up in the top left corner are "duck-bill" anchors, something new we are trying with our helicopter weight limitations. Rebar, which has been used for the exclosure establishment, is not feasible for shoring up the exclosures with guy wires. We used these duck bills and tension strainers to pull sagging corners back to vertical.

When exclosures were constructed, guy wires were placed at every other panel junction, but it became clear that they were needed at each junction. This was a big part of the maintenance done this summer.

In addition, the existing guy wires were re-set. Being attached to rebar stakes, it seems like the rebar is absorbing heat and melting the permafrost around where the rebar is pounded into. They were all easy to pull out and were pounded back into the ground. If the duck-bill anchors work, we may eventually replace the rebar stakes with them. They seemed to hold well after they were pounded in, and we used them to pull the sagging panels back up.

We did come across a few of these, which was disheartening. The one on the left was likely due to an avalanche, and the one on the right, just due to winds and weather. We did try and lift the panels back up on the exclosures on the right, but it would have probably taken a strong crew of five to or so people. We will have to strategize at our meeting in November on what is next for these exclosures that are no longer functioning.

We learned a tremendous amount while completing this field work and have a lot of small changes to implement to be sure we are getting dependable excellent data while keeping time

and helicopter costs to a minimum. We found this setup to be ok for someone six feet tall, but very difficult for someone who is five foot two. Additionally, the camera needs to be replaced as it was terribly undependable – which was not known by us until we returned to the office and downloaded the photos.

Of the exclosures NRCS is working to maintain and monitor, you can see the exclosures we reached and reinforced in blue, and the ones we did not get to in red. We are hopeful to have some funding in 2020 to get the remaining exclosures reinforced so we don't have any more collapses, and photographed as well, to get the information we need to answer the questions we have on lichen recovery.

Acting Tribal Liaison – Ryan Maroney

Moist Air Incubation

NRCS has been requested by several individuals and entities to support moist air incubation of salmonid eggs as a means of fisheries enhancement and/or restoration. Specifically, the agency has been requested to develop practice scenarios and payment schedules to support moist air incubation through Farm Bill financial assistance programs for private lands. This request is articulated in a 2019 white paper prepared by Alaska Village Initiatives and submitted to NRCS that identifies moist air incubation as a traditional practice of Alaskan Natives and requests “*all Federal and State agencies assist in the reintroduction of Moist Air Incubation as a sustainable solution to depleted salmon runs in any village that requests assistance.*” NRCS is eager to adopt traditional conservation practices and our [Indigenous Stewardship Methods and NRCS Conservation Practices](#) guide is a valuable aide; however, two barriers prevent NRCS from assisting directly with these requests:

1. No Identified NRCS Resource Concern:

NRCS utilizes a [9 step Conservation Planning process](#) to identify, address and monitor treatments of resource concerns. Of the over 30 identified [Alaska resource concerns and planning criteria](#) identified in the Field Office Technical Guide, there is only one resource concern connected to fish and wildlife. That resource concern is #22 – Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife – Habitat Degradation. NRCS Alaska has addressed the resource concern of inadequate habitat in numerous projects around the state including projects that benefit salmon species by improving their habitat. In Wisconsin, the [Lac Du Flambeau tribe have improved aquaculture ponds](#) with NRCS technical and financial assistance. Nowhere, to our knowledge, has NRCS technical or financial assistance been utilized for moist air incubation and/or planting in-stream of salmon eggs. In summary, NRCS has conservation practices to address fish habitat including fish passage, stream bank vegetation, stream alignment, and even aquaculture ponds, but the agency is not able to directly enhance fish populations by providing financial assistance for moist air incubation of salmonid eggs.

2. Permitting Requirements Complex

All NRCS conservation plans and financial and technical assistance must comply with Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws, regulations and permit requirements. From a

conversation with Brian Ashton, we understand that the process for obtaining a permit to harvest salmon eggs, utilize moist air incubation and subsequently plant salmon eggs in Alaska waters is not streamlined and difficult for individuals or small entities. Partners seeking federal assistance to manage and enhance fisheries may be better served by contacting other federal agencies - including NOAA Fisheries and the US Fish and Wildlife Service - that have the necessary authorities and resources that NRCS does not.

State Soil Scientist - Cory Cole

Soil Survey status:

- The gray area is NOTCOM (not complete); approximately 300 million acres. There is coarse STATSGO data available for this area (low intensity mapping). Blue areas have been SSURGO certified and are available for use. Green areas are currently in progress.
- Potential for Digital soil mapping project on Kodiak since there has been a significant amount of data collected
- Yakutat Area and Togiak National Wildlife Refuge-Aklun Mountains Area Surveys have been recently completed and posted to Web Soil Survey.
- Regional Soil Survey Office is back in Alaska. Jessica Lene is the new Regional Director in Wasilla.
- 137 soil survey boundaries have been recently developed and uploaded to Web Soil Survey. Nearly 100 new soil survey areas were identified and will be used for Soil and Plant Science Division short- and long-range planning
- Contact Cory Cole if you have requests for soil survey in your area and if you have the need for a soil interpretation that isn't currently available on Web Soil Survey

Soil Health in Alaska

- Many projects nearing end. Technical specialists and University staff are assisting with data analysis. Publications are being written and will be used for development of related Technical Notes for planner use.
- Currently developing a Soil Health Team for AK NRCS. Reach out to Cory Cole if interested in participating on the Team.
-

State GIS Specialist – Denise Miller

- Our current planning software is approximately 15 years old.
- Nationally this movement started several years ago with the Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative whose goal was to have more efficient, effective and sustainable business model for delivering conservation assistance across the nation.
- CD and CART are parts. CD/CART highlights include: more efficient planning, streamline and standardize technical assistance, allow more time for our clients through reducing duplication of work.
- CD/CART are national products so every NRCS office will be using this technology the same way. These programs also allow for easier means of reporting outcomes.

- CD is a switch from Esri's ArcMap to a web-based system and is a paradigm shift in how we do our conservation mapping. CD is an integrated system with our national planning database and layers published into ArcGIS Online and GeoPortal, which is our online geospatial data layer repository behind the USDA firewall.
- We can also link to other published web services through it. Moving to the web-based CD system, allows for continuous improvements, improved workflows, and we are not tied to a specific software.
- CD does allow exported data to industry standard formats. It does require our USDA network for access due to the PII information we encounter.
- The CD conservation plan map, soils map and inventory reports were shown.
- Other products include the conservation plan record of decision which outlines the what, where and when of conservation practices tied to the application/contract.
- CD/CART have unparalleled support, testing and feedback from across all levels of the agency – from field office to national headquarters. CD/CART will integrate several existing current programs into a single location for staff.
- CD is currently undergoing final testing before release in early November.

Ryan anyone working as a Certified Planner – requires the use of a Government Computer and Linc pass for access.

Scott

- The new Conservation Desktop system will allow us to get back to our technical responsibilities.
- Subcommittee meeting planned, Scott will send out info.

These handouts are available by contacting Dee Covalt by email phillma.covalt@usda.gov

- 1) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Frequently Asked Questions
- 2) Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARCs)
- 3) Range Monitoring - Reindeer Herds in Alaska
- 4) Alaska Soil Survey and Soil Health Updates
- 5) Conservation Desktop (CD) and Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)
- 6) USDA Forest Service 2020 WIG Press Release

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