

**Missouri State Technical Committee  
Natural Resources State Committee Meeting  
8:30am – 12:30pm, Wednesday, June 26, 2019**

**Moderator: Brad McCord, State Outreach Coordinator**

Meeting called to order at 9:00am by Brad McCord. McCord thanked everyone for attending and asked attendees to introduce themselves. McCord introduced State Conservationist J.R. Flores for opening remarks.

**Flores** welcomed everyone in attendance and stated how much he values everyone attending. He addressed the flood efforts and how important it is to NRCS. He discussed the partnership he has with Brent Hampe and introduced him.

**Brent Hampe, Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director**

Gave a recognition for their partnership and coordination for recent events in the state. He also thanked and welcomed everyone attending the meeting.

**McCord** took over and reviewed the summary of the Natural Resources Sub-committee which was held in March. He then introduced Marty Comstock for updates on the flood programs.

**NRCS Flood Response - Marty Comstock, NRCS State Conservationist Engineer, State Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) Manager (presentation included)**

Marty Comstock updated everyone with information about the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP). He also introduced some of the important factors for the program. Stated applicants must have a local sponsor and must be made prior to the EWP deadline.

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) update - George Henshaw, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (Presentation Included)**

George Henshaw presented an overview of the on the strikeforce and the emergency drought initiatives. He discussed and outlined graphs attached to his presentation regarding EQIP funds and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Missouri's success with CSP in fiscal year 2019. George asked for input from the committee regarding the top 5 resource concerns that should be a priority for CSP in Missouri for fiscal year 2020. The list of 10 resource concerns was reviewed. The list of resource concerns is listed below, the current top 5 priority resource concerns are bolded below:

**Soil Erosion**

**Soil Quality Degradation**

**Water Quality Degradation**

**Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat**

**Degraded Plant Condition**

Livestock Production Limitation

Insufficient Water

Excess Water

Air Quality Impacts

Inefficient Energy Use

The group discussed current projects and CSP presentation renewals. Any recommendations for changes to the top 5 priority resource concerns for CSP in Missouri will have a chance to be discussed after all the presentations.

### **FSA Update – Allen Powell, Conservation Program Specialist (Presentation Included)**

Presented information as concerns the current status of the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). A map was distributed which showed the counties that are currently offering ECP. This map included 5 counties in NWMO that were approved due to flooding from the storm events in late April. There are 25 counties that are conducting an ECP sign up due to flooding from May storms and several counties in southwest Missouri that have been approved due to tornado damage. It was pointed out that local FSA County Committees must review areas that are subject to frequent severe flood/storm damage as ECP cost share is intended only for major events that are not considered to be reoccurring frequently or the damage to farmland would be maintenance.

Discussed the current CRP Sign Up for only certain Continuous practices. It was stated that many changes that were outlined the most recent Farm Bill have not been implemented yet and that it is anticipated that a General Sign Up will be conducted this winter with an estimated start date of December 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Participant Discussion included:**

Meeting participant asked why some counties that have been designated as a declared Presidential or Secretarial disaster county but were not showing up as an ECP approved county. Powell responded that ECP is not contingent on those designations and the local FSA County Committee determines if ECP will be offered. The local County Committee is required to look at certain parameters such as: if the affected areas subject to frequent flooding and suffer severe damage from that flooding, if the damage that has been received able to be fixed using a producers' normal equipment or considered as routine maintenance activities and finally ECP only covers farmland it does allow for any cost share on levees.

Question was asked about the CRP General signup, such as what would the rules be and why it was taking so long? FSA response was the current Continuous Sign Up was using the policies that were in place at the end of FY2018. There were several changes outlined in the Farm Bill and the agency is developing policies for those changes.

Question about a situation with a 15-year CRP contract expiring at the end of the FY and is not eligible to be offered during this Continuous CRP sign up period, what are the options? Powell responded that the next General Sign Up is not planned to be held until December. Until final policy is issued, we really don't have any information to offer about the next General Sign Up. Unless some policy is issued prior to September 30, 2019 which discusses how that future sign up will be conducted, producers will be able to utilize expired CRP acreage however they choose beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) update - Chris Hamilton, Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources**

A brief overview of the program was provided describing the two components: WRE and ALE. The committee was informed ACEP would follow 2019 Farm bill regulations and policies in FY2020. Ranking criteria was discussed, the committee was provided a weblink to the 2019 ranking worksheets for WRE and ALE. Easement compensation was reviewed, and Hamilton explained that each GARC value was approved for a maximum stated number of acres; applications exceeding the max acres require an appraisal. The subcommittee was asked to provide questions and comments regarding easement compensation and ranking to the State Conservationist July 15.

### **Water Quality Priorities - Steve Hefner, Natural Resource Specialist**

A brief overview on the new Farm Bill, informed the state technical committee that 10% of conservation funding now must be directed toward source water protection. Reported details of a sub-committee meeting between the Department of Natural Resources, Missouri Rural Water Association, American Water Works Association, and EPA regarding 2020 strategies and candidate watershed projects. Briefed the state technical committee on current status of candidate watershed projects which include preemptive projects, assistance to

on-going efforts, and new start-up efforts to address source water. Following the presentation, one additional watershed nomination came from the floor for consideration.

## **Partner Updates**

### **Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) update – David Baker**

Provided an update on activities for the State of Missouri.

### **Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Private Lands Division update – Lisa Potter**

Provided an overview of recent activities within the Private Lands Program of MDC.

### **Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Soil and Water Program update – Jim Plassmeyer**

Provided an update of the Soil and Water Program cost share activities.

## **Open Discussion**

Committee members were concerned on some of the eligibility for different programs. Henshaw responded that each program has its guidelines and those guidelines determine whether the eligibility is approved.

Committee member addressed that Forest Health should be on the resource concerns. Henshaw made it clear that it is added just not in that vocabulary.

Committee member commented is there RCPP? We are currently working with MRBI and NHQ requiring two years of work in Hough. RCPP is a submitted request and we are currently waiting on the announcement so that partners to submit proposals.

The committee also commented what are the future views in ten years? Flores stated that we are currently working with different groups to receive their input as well as looking at what the Farm Bill holds as we look forward to the future.

Flores adjourned the meeting and appreciated everyone that attended. If there were any other questions or remarks to address please send feedback by July 19, 2019.