NRCS Alaska State Technical Advisory Committee

November 18, 2021 - Hosted on Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

1. James Majetich
2. Carrie Brophil
3. Charles Parker
4. Scott Crockett
5. Teri Diamond
6. Ann Fischer
7. Grayson Wallis
8. Marie Jamison
9. Jenny Stoneking
10. Jesse Godbold
11. Kyra Wagner
12. Laurie Stuart
13. Ashley List
14. Molly Gillespie
15. Charley Palmer
16. Phil Kaspari
17. Katherine Russell
18. Erin Sturdivant
19. Theo Garcia
20. Sydney Thielke
21. Tom Harris
22. Tony Gallegos
23. Karen Linnell
24. Tikaan Gilbreath
25. Amanda Crowe
26. Trevor Noble
27. Joni Schargenberg
28. Kyle Robillard
29. Kera Venhuizen
30. Robert Carter
31. Karin Sonnen
32. Samia Savell
33. Holly Prendeville
34. Jon Oestreich
35. Meg Mueller  
36. Ryan Maroney  
37. Joeanne Kuykendall  
38. Jackie Kragel  
39. Michelle Jezeski  
40. David Ianson  
41. Christina Trimingham  
42. Bruce Cain

**Introductions – Scott Crockett**

Around the room introductions from all participants. Introducing Ann Fischer – Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships. Discussion on growing staff for NRCS technical advisory and continuing to hire new staff.

**Programs Update – Amanda Crowe, Jackie Kragel**

EQIP Program is one of the most popular programs in Alaska. During FY21, 7.7 million dollars was spent on EQIP for conservation on private land, which is the fourth highest over recent years. Historically EQIP dollars are 61-90% spent on disadvantaged groups. The CSP directs payments to maintain conservation on a farm or ranch or enhance current practices. In FY21, $415,692 was spent on CSP Program. The top practices in 2021 in terms of dollar value are tree/shrub establishment and forest stand improvement. The RCPP currently has four active contracts. ACEP has grown ALE by 90 acres at a cost of $794,000. GARC is used in calculating valuation for program contracts, specifically 80% fair market value. Requesting to raise GARC to $5,200 per acre.

**Climate Change – Scott Crockett**

The USDA is beginning to focus on climate change in agriculture. Alaska is very vulnerable to climate change due to our cold soils and permafrost, however it provides many new opportunities as well. The average temperature has risen substantially over the last 50 years, and the furthest north you go, the larger the increase. Annual precipitation has also increased significantly. Permafrost thawing presents a number of issues for many villages, as well as late freezing along the Bering Sea, which increases the amount of coastal erosion and other issues. Fire risk also increases with higher summer temperatures. However, some opportunities will increase with a longer growing season. More information is available on the NRCS website.
Climate Hub - Holly Prendeville

The Climate Hub is an interagency organization that also works with the Forestry Service and a number of partners. The Climate Hub has created the Alaska Garden Helper to help individuals plan their garden as well as Adaptation Resources for Agriculture in response to climate change in Alaska and Climate Risk Management Practices for Natural Resources. The Climate Hub is working on climate awareness and literacy in Alaska, updating drought metrics for Alaska, and reforestation.

New Initiative on Climate Partnership/Discussion on Climate Change - Scott Crockett

33 NRCS Conservation Practices and 81 CSP Enhancements have been identifies to deliver quantifiable climate solutions. NRCS recognizes that conservation is voluntary and locally driven. The agency is focused on moving towards addressing climate change.

Discussion:
In Delta, winters are getting warmer, more rain is happening in August which pushes grain harvest later. Throughout Alaska, salmon streams are getting hotter, however king salmon growth is growing massively in the Great Lakes due to conservation practices. NRCS has been working on fish passageways in Alaska, among other things, however NRCS is limited due to statues directing funding to private lands. There has been extreme variation in weather which has a big effect on fisheries. Hay farmers have been having issues due to increased rain. Peonies are also feeling effects. In recent years fires have been increasing in intensity.

Local Working Groups - Scott Crockett

Local work groups provide a local voice to help NRCS identify and address natural resource concerns in communities across the state. Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and Tribal Conservation Districts (TCDs) play a critical role in this process.

Develops conservation needs assessment identifying broad conservation goals. Recommends USDA conservation program application and funding criteria, assists NRCS and the conservation district with public outreach, identifies educational; and producers training needs and recommends program policy to the State Technical Advisory.
The committee addresses providing input on federal conservation programs, information analysis and recommendations on USDA conservation practices, identifies emerging natural resource concerns, makes recommendations to State Conservationist on requests from local working groups, and assists on public outreach.

Ranking tools are based upon funding usage efficiency. The ranking tool is set up to award more points to applications and address priorities identified at the local level. All responses are compiled and used to tweak the ranking tool to focus on submissions from the local level.

Find more information on the AK Local Work Groups at:
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ak/technical/stc/f36fd7e6-3ac5-4f13-b032-fb8fcf8eae98/