NRCS Alaska State Technical Advisory Committee

May 18, 2021 - Hosted on Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

1. Aleya Brinkman
2. Carrie Brophil
3. Trevor Dobell
4. Jodie Anderson
5. Joanne Kuykendall
6. Steven Holley
7. Kyle Robillard
8. Jennifer Latusek-Nabholz
9. Ryan Maroney
10. Alan McBee
11. Denise Miller
12. Mitchell Michaud
13. Tyler Mockta
14. Meg Mueller
15. Charley Palmer
16. Braden Pitcher
17. Tom Harris
18. Pamela Voeller
19. Scott Crockett
20. Tracy Robillard
21. Amanda Crowe

Payment Schedule Scenario Archiving

NRCS Alaska has requested an exemption from the national NRCS policy in which we are required to archive conservation payment scenarios. We were granted approval for this exemption. This is a benefit to Alaska as we now can use previous payment scenarios without going through the additional administrative burden of the archiving process.

808 Soil Carbon Amendment Practice
NRCS is evaluating the use of biochar and other carbon amendments to improve soil conditions and is introducing a new conservation practice for Alaska called 808- Soil Carbon Amendment. Aside from biochar, other carbon amendments include wood chips, sawdust, pulverized paper, bagasse, or distillation residue to meet the conservation objective.

The STAC has agreed to proceed with introducing this practice to Alaska and make it available to producers working with NRCS via its financial assistance programs.

### Hydrology Indicators for the ID of Farmed Wetlands

In August of 2020 USDA issued a final rule for farmed wetland indicators for the Farm Bill. Alaska has been using the national wetland hydrology indicators. A farmed wetland is a wetland that had already been farmed prior to 1985.

NRCS is recommending that we continue using the national wetland hydrology indicators.

There are only 5 farmed wetlands in the state of Alaska. They are all relatively small. There are few instances of wetlands being farmed in Alaska.

### Programs Update – Amanda Crowe

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** NRCS Alaska had our first EQIP sign up and we were able to preapprove $5.8 million in applications. Our initial EQIP budget this year is $8.8 million. We offered a second sign up with a deadline of May 14 and are currently working through those applications on pre-approvals.

**Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG):** We are also awaiting the Conservation Innovation Grants proposals for the state-level competition. The deadline for proposals was May 14. CIG does not fund “research” projects but can help with field trials and on-farm demonstrations. The state CIG focused exclusively on soil health.

The national CIG on-farm trial competition is open through June 21. The national CIG classic competition is open through July 19.

**Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** Alaska had an application deadline March 26. We are currently working on initial preapprovals and field verifications.
Local Working Groups Decision Support Tool Results

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. Review the handouts provided. These findings were presented at the meeting and followed up by a live data collection exercise to get input from the STAC about the state natural resource priorities.