

State Technical Committee Meeting – September 22, 2016

Participants: Mary Podoll, Jill Howard, Todd Hagel, Ron Herr, Tracy Dove, Jarvis Keney, Tanya Koch, Kresta Faabord, Beth Burdolski, NRCS; Trace Hanson, WRSCD; Edward Kessel, ND Grain Growers; Rachel Bush, Pheasants Forever; Tom Claeys, ND Forest Service; Dennis Miller, LAND, Rick Warhurst, ND Natural Resources Trust; Greg Sandness, NDDH; Brad Olson, NDFSA; Patsy Crooke, USACE-NDRO; Steve Best, NDSWC; Brian Mager, NDSWC, Cindy Solberg, USDGA, Ben Varnson, NCWRD; Paul Thomas, ND Corn Growers; Terry Allbee, NDNRT; Eric Rosenquist, TNC

NRCS State Conservationist – Mary Podoll

Welcomed all participants and turned the meeting over to FSA to discuss CRP Management - Plan and Timeline.

FSA – Brad Olson

Discussed the CRP Enrollment Cap. Currently CRP enrollment is very close to the acreage cap. FSA had to have all offers submitted to NRCS by September 9th for conservation planning. The approval process has been suspended until further notice. Continuous CRP Signup 50 begins October 15 but FSA cannot approve the offers or submit to NRCS for planning until further notice. There are currently 23 different CRP conservation practices with enrolled acreages in North Dakota. There are 9 different mid-contract management activities authorized in North Dakota; however not all 9 activities can be conducted on every practice. Brad proposed that NRCS form a subcommittee to:

- Align mid-contract management activities
- Consider different activities for various practices

Anyone willing to volunteer for the subcommittee can email either Brad Olson (FSA) or Jill Howard (NRCS) by October 3, 2016.

Discussed the following FSA recommendations:

1. Litter removal – allow participant to keep forage from all practices (national policy doesn't allow this) It was suggested the STC write a letter to show support for litter removal on ineligible practices.
2. Heavy Harrow – to allow this activity on CP 27 (FWP wetland acreage), as well as CP30 and CP42.
3. Vertical tillage – to allow this activity on practices that are allowed heavy harrowing (CP2, CP18B & C, CP25, CP28).
4. Management frequency – require management activities for newly seeded contracts be on an as-needed-basis, and for re-enrolled contracts to be done at beginning of contract period. (National policy requires at least 1 mid-contract management activity be done in year 5 or 6 of the contract period).
5. Rotary mowing – to allow this activity on all grass practices.

Under MCM Litter Removal, FSA would pay cost-share to producers to remove and destroy the cover at \$12.50 per acre.

- Unless the practice is eligible for managed haying.
- If managed hayed, then the annual payment is reduced by 25%.
- The current EIS does not address a haying activity of the ineligible CP's.
- However, the EIS does address a one-time use of those practices under Emergency Haying provisions. The EIS states a one-time use under emergency conditions did not have any long lasting significant impacts to those practices.

- Suggestion – State Technical Committee write letter to show support for litter removal on ineligible practices. Submit scientific data to show why this activity is beneficial to the stand and wildlife. Allow managed haying to be conducted on ineligible practices, one-time during life of contract, and apply a payment reduction, rather than paying cost-share assistance.

NRCS State Conservationist – Mary Podoll

Talked about the history of NRCS since 1935 and how it has evolved to a growing nationwide program that has enrolled more than 70 million acres CSP of production agriculture and forest lands. Went over benefits of CSP.

Coordination with other NRCS Programs will strengthen CSP's connection to the agency's conservation planning operations. This approach integrates CSP into the continuum of assistance we offer, instead of it being the more isolated program approach that it has been in the past. Updates to CSP provide more effective ways to engage practices and enhancements and align them with the agronomy and ecology of farming and ranching and ultimately help promote more sustainable production.

In order to target what is important to North Dakota, we value input and feedback from Partners and Stakeholders. This is essential for effective program delivery, results and future improvements. We are ramping up training for our staff so as we move on, they are more prepared to answer questions and provide needed information. Partners and Stakeholders interested in providing input can do so by calling:

701-530-2000
Todd Hagel, ASTC-Programs
Ron Herr, CSP Program Manager
Mary Podoll, STC

NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs – Todd Hagel

Extended a thank you to the Program Staff for their effort to work together as a team effort. Gave an overview of the Programs Summary for FY 16. Talked about the 2017 EQIP Proposed Funds Distribution. These estimates were based on FY2016. Other funding may be received for National Priorities such as HB/Pollinator, PPWGRP, SGI, NWQI, etc. Regarding CSP, NRCS is looking at 5 Targeted Resource concerns: RRV, East River, West River, Beginning Farmer and LRF. Landowner will need to meet 2 out of 5 resource concerns in order to move forward.

Discussed the 2017 Proposed Local Questions. Local level is to come up with a minimum of 1 question (resources based). Discussed if we need to ask forestry questions and which questions will generate enough points that would gain enough points to allow producer to go into CSP.

NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Compliance – Jenny Heglund

Wetland mitigation banking is the restoration, creation or enhancement of wetlands for the purpose of compensating for impacts to wetlands at another location. This was put into the 2014 Farm Bill

to make sure there was an option that was affordable for producers. During the 2016 NRCS Mitigation Banking Project, NRCS received 24 applications from potential partners. NRCS funded projects for over \$7 million in 10 states. Projects were selected by:

- Extent of wetland compliance workload in target area
- Applicant experience
- Potential to provide wetland credits within two years.

North Dakota, sponsored by Dakota Wetland Partners, LLC, was one of 10 states that was awarded funding. Contracts are being sent to National Headquarters and will be signed in October. Mitigation Banking started in North Dakota and is now expanding into South Dakota. The project will develop a statewide Umbrella Mitigation Bank Instrument along with two (2) mitigation “Bank Sites” (“Red River Basin” and “Missouri River Basin – Southern Zone”). Site selection will focus on temporary, seasonal, isolated, cropped wetlands. Sites with wetlands that can be restored will be given priority. Bank Sites will be protected by an easement and held and enforced by a qualified third party. The Bank Sites will be monitored for a minimum of three (3) years, with annual reporting to the NRCS.

NDGF - Greg Link

North Dakota’s first Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy was approved in October 2005. The purpose of this plan was to conserve rare, at-risk, and declining species and to provide conservation measures to help reverse or stem decline of Species of Conservation Priority. It is cheaper to prevent loss than to bring back from brink. At that time 100 species were identified as Conservation priority. Species in 2015 plan increased from 100 to 114. Today we have statutory authority to take care of nearly 400 species. North Dakota was allocated 45-70 million dollars/year (FY03-FY15). There have been 60 projects over the last 13 years with 26 different partners. Unlike hunted species, management for nongame species, historically received no dedicated funding and 80% of fish and wildlife in North Dakota are nongame. NDGF will be updating plan every 5 years. It was asked if 10 years is too long to be doing this. Greg said they are just getting the plan worked out and getting things into action. Gaining momentum does take time. Kevin Kading, NDGF commented this can tie into other efforts. EQIP and CSP can help enhance this so we can definitely work together on this. Plan can be found on NDGFD website: <https://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/swap>

See presentation materials – also posted.