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**Idaho State Technical Committee**

**March 2, 2021 @ 9:00am**

**Microsoft Teams Meeting**

*Attending*

Idaho Department of Lands

Nez Perce forestry division

Idaho Groundwater Appropriators

Ducks Unlimited

Rural Water Association

Idaho County SCD

US Forest Service

Bureau of Land Management

US Forest Service

Rural Development

Office of Species Conservation

Association of Idaho Cities

Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality

Congressman Fulcher’s Office

Senator Risch’s Office

IASCD/Ada SCD

Idaho State Dept. of Agriculture

Idaho Forest Growers

Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game

Idaho Dairymen’s Association

Welcome, Introductions, and opening remarks – Curtis Elke, State Conservationist, NRCS

* Staffing
  + Shared current staffing numbers, planned hires and the authorities we have to hire
  + Shared status of reorganization – Official date to start the implementation was Feb. 28, 2021
* FY202 roundup
  + EQIP numbers: Application, Contracts, Acres and Funds spent
  + CSP numbers: Application, Contracts, Acres and Funds spent
  + CSP-GCI numbers: Application, Contracts, Acres and Funds spent
  + RCPP EQIP 2014 numbers: Application, Contracts, Acres and Funds spent
* Fiscal Year 2021 Priorities
  + Outreach to the Tribes
  + Landscape/Watershed Level Planning
  + Results Oriented Conservation Implementation
  + Partnerships – strengthening and expanding where and how we can best utilize our partners’ talents
  + Provide outstanding customer service
* Customer Service
  + Shared how NRCS is planning to utilize the “Listen Better, Serve Better” framework, through customer feedback, analysis and implementation.
* Natural Disasters
  + Fire
  + Flood
* Water works
  + Overview of NRCS Idaho’s 3 PL-566 projects: Raft River, North Cache Valley and Cottonwood Creek
  + Big Pipe – Marysville Phase 5 update
  + WaterSmart projects: A2 and Hammett Project
* Interagency Partnerships
  + Cheatgrass Challenge
  + Shared Stewardship
  + Joint Chiefs
    - We’ll continue to promote the Joint Chiefs Program.
  + RCPP
    - The program has really taken a new path. Curtis detailed the changes in the process and how funding is set up.
    - Question from Lynn Tominaga: With the RCP program, is there a limit on the amount of money that can be applied for in the state or multiply state programs? In the past, there have been limits on the amount you can apply for. Answer: $10M cap for NRCS.
    - Question from Elaine: Regarding Fire Protections, are we ever going to get any funds for dip ponds?  
      Answer: Get from Curtis

**Presentation on Highly Erodible Lands (HEL) Compliance – Danny Morrison, Compliance Specialist, NRCS**

Changes have occurred recently with Wetland Compliance

Background on the c

Definition of a Farmed Definition

Tools that NRCS can use for Determination

Question from Sal about subsurface water

Presentation on EQIP Incentives, by NRCS Programs staff and State Resource Conservationist, NRCS

2021 EQIP CIC

Priority Area and Resource Concern Proposal

Need STAC to pick 3 Resource Concern Areas

Clarification questions asked

Committee members requested time to review and get back to NRCS. Friday deadline.

Conservation Partnership Program - NFWF

Wade Brown – Easements

Ranking and assessments

**News You Can Use – News Releases and national announcements, Mindi Rambo, Public Affairs- NRCS**

* FSA release (To be attached to notes)
* Brief glimpse at what is planned for Annual Report
* Rebooting Social Media at better coordinate and streamline information for our producers.

**Snow Water Report by Corey Loveland, Supervisory Hydrologist, NRCS**

Cheatgrass Challenge Update –

* Recap on last year’s selectees. Shared information on this year’s updated process.

Legislative Update

* Dirk Mendive – Rep. Fulcher’s Office

***Subcommittee reports***

**Forest Management** – Chris Town, State Forester, NRCS

* Discussion is underway to align NRCS and USFS definition for (45,000 acres and industrial mill)
  + Question from IDFG on timeline for deliberations and decisions?
  + Likely the next two to three months. NRCS Forester requests Input from STAC within the next 30 days.
* Shared Stewardship positions that are full time
* NRCS - Forest Management Plan Policy

**Irrigation and Energy** – Doug Higbee, State Design Engineer, NRCS   
Large Pipeline projects address:

* Water Consumption (Idaho’s ag water usage is second only to California)
* Power Consumption

Public Law 566 information and the location of PL566 projects on the NRCS Idaho website

Question on Standards and Specs on Well Decommissioning: Where in the process of updating is it?

Response: Question will be advanced on to State Conservation Engineer, Bruce Sandoval for answering

**Agronomy, Organic & Soil Health** – Travis Youngberg, State Agronomist and Shawn Nield, State Soil Scientist, NRCS

* Merged the Soil Health and Agronomy subcommittees last year
* 590 Nutrient Management practice update
* Job Approval Authorities update
* NRCS is working on a Job Sheet update for Cover Crops.
* The 808 interim practice standard (soil carbon amendment) has been made available. It was developed by NRCS California.
* Idaho held its first 5 for 5 video Soil Health Roundtable. First one went well. Second one on March 4. The premise is 5 slides and 5 minutes per speaker. Producers, Researchers, NRCS employees and ag industry have the opportunity to submit ideas and participate.

**Range** – Brendan Brazee, State Range Conservationist, NRCS

* Specifications and Standards updates are taking place to simplify and streamline the process
* New reference worksheets are to be developed
* The National Resources Inventory was explained – what it is and how the data it generates is utilized and why that is important for local and landscape level management.

**Water** – Maureen Pepper, State Water Quality Specialist, NRCS

* National Water Quality Imitative.
  + Background
  + Local collaboration
  + Local Watersheds
  + 2018 Farm Bill changes
    - Source Water Protection

**Wildlife and Fish** – Jennifer Skeldon, State Biologist, NRCS

* Habitat Restoration funding opportunities
  + Sage Grouse
  + Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators Conservation Fund
* Monarch
  + 2 populations – East and West
  + Population trending down
  + Precipitous decline since 2016
  + USFWS – listing warranted but precluded by higher priority species
  + Threats: Larval death (2% survival rate), Habitat loss, Pesticides, Climate change
  + NRCS produced literature is available: Tech Notes, Brochures. New 4-page brochure has been finalized and will be sent out for printing.

**Closeout: STAC Schedule for the upcoming calendar year – Lori Kassib, ASTC-Programs, NRCS**

* June 1, 2021
* August 7, 2021
* December 7, 2021

To add to distribution List:

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Elaine Sonnen