**Idaho State Technical Committee**

**June 1, 2021 @ 9:00am**

**Microsoft Teams Meeting**

[Click here to join the meeting](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YzZmZTYxZDctYjRjNS00ZTEwLWFmZWItMjcxYTVmY2Y5NjZj%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22e316dd2a-7fed-4774-8fba-cb3bbf7f2473%22%7d)

Attendees

* Idaho Groundwater Appropriators
* Senator Risch’s office
* Rep. Fulcher’s office
* Couer d’Alene Tribal rep
* Nez Perce Tribal rep
* Idaho Forest Owners Association
* Office of Species Conservation
* Association of Idaho Cities
* U. of Idaho
* Idaho Dept. of Lands
* Nation Agricultural Statistics Service
* Idaho Rural Water Association
* Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality
* EPA Region 10
* Farm Service Agency
* Shoshone-Bannock Tribal rep
* US Forest Service
* Idaho Dairymen’s Association

**NRCS Priorities under new Administration, ID NRCS Hiring** – Curtis Elke, State Conservationist, NRCS

We have a New Chief – Terry Crosby. He has more than 40 years of experience and even served as a Deputy State Conservationist in Idaho.

National Priorities

* Urban Ag
* Climate Smart Ag
* High Tunnels

Planned Hires

* New Urban Ag person
* Additional Public Affairs person
* Certified Engineering Technicians
* Agronomists
* Soil Conservationists

Partnering is paying off to help keep our forests and rangelands healthy and we need to keep up the efforts.

Reinvigorating Conservation Planning

There are two goals for Idaho

* Putting together a folder with the landowner that fully outlines and prioritizes their resource concerns
* Put effort into more effective plans

We are planning an upcoming Conservation Bootcamp for planners – virtual classes and field days

* Partner employees (e.g. SCD employees) and newer NRCS employees may participate as space allows
* Anyone who wants to inquire or participate in training should send a request to Greg Becker.

The Action Plan was developed by Committee that included a Landowner, Conservation District member, NRCS retiree, tribal representative. Committee members often had multiple areas of expertise they brought to the process.

**Cheatgrass Challenge Update** – Greg Becker, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS

2021 Proposals (PowerPoint provided by Josh Uriarte)

5 of 6 funded (6th has been invited to resubmit for 2022) In ranked order:

* Reynolds Creek Annual Grass Treatment
* Cave Canyon and Badger Fire Post Fire Cheatgrass Treatment
* Lemhi-Upper birch Creek Cheatgrass Challenge Project
* Ketchum Ranger District-Sagebrush Ecosystem Recovery Project
* Lower Birch Creek Annual Grass Mitigation Phase 1
* Curlew Cheatgrass Analysis and Treatment Plan (not funded)

June 4 deadline to collect individual applications for EQIP dollars under Challenge

Projects take 1 to 3 years

Most are built off successes that were funded in 2020

* Question about certification of people applying pesticides as part of Challenge Programs

**EQIP Incentives** – Lindsay Markegard, Acting EQIP Manager, NRCS

EQIP CIC rollout explanation - A stepping stone between classic EQIP and classic Conservation Stewardship programs – include both practices and enhancements (PowerPoint)

**PL566 and Water Projects** – Dan Murdock, Acting State Engineer, NRCS (PowerPoint)

Watershed Projects have three phases

* Planning
* Design
* Construction

3 current projects

* Raft River
* North Cache Valley (formerly Cub River) – project straddles Idaho/Utah border
* City of Cottonwood

Funding Big Water Projects

* EQIP-Water Smart Initiatives (new national process)
* EQIP for Water Management Entities (new in 2018 Farm Bill
* RCPP

Marysville Project is an example of a basin-wide project that can be done in phases as funding becomes available.

**Wind Erosion Issues, Shawn Nield, State Soil Scientist, NRCS (PowerPoint)**

Wind Erosion is still an issue. We’ve improved but there is still room to get better.

2018-2020 – Wind Erosion Prevention Corridors Initiative– Partnership with Idaho Transportation Department

More than $300,000 in cost share provided for the two years the initiative ran

Mike Mathews – The book “Worst Hard Time” talks about the Dust Bowl and managing wind erosion

Matt Fisher – C’dA: What drove the initial reduction? Why hasn’t there been a steady reduction since?

Shawn response:

* Food Security Act came into force around that time
* Only so much NRCS can do (monies and data)
* There is a question as to whether we are losing track of the legacy of adoption of practices – practices still being implemented, though not through Farm bill programs

Maureen Pepper – Practices are good for addressing both erosion and water quality

How do partners who want to get involved start? Give Shawn a call to talk about what can be done, but RCPP can help on the program side.

**Compliance Report** – Trudy Pink, Compliance Specialist, NRCS

Compliance team consists of two HEL specialists and two Resource Conservationists who ensure Farm Bill participants are in compliance with the requirements of the Food Security Act.

*Area East*

* 7 HEL whistleblower complaints – 6 field visits have taken place
* 6 wetland determinations
* 2 whistleblower complains
* 7 pending wetland investigations

*Area West*

* 9 wetland determinations
* Keeping an eye on problematic hydric soils (hydric soils that don’t show the usual characteristics)
* Staff working on a rubric for lateral effects of drainages into wetlands.

We are working with customers to help them stay in compliance, we are not on a witch hunt.

**Local Workgroup Meetings** – Lori Kassib, ASTC-Programs, NRCS

Earlier EQIP signups are hoped for – November rather than December

In order to help set priorities – Move the LLWG meetings into Fall, potentially some would be held in August

(get dates from Lori to include)

Hope to do a combination of remote and in-person meetings

We are working to reduce the number of funding pools in order to have more funds that are directed through the LLWGs. Anticipate $15M total funds directed through the LLWGs in FY2021

**Partner Updates**

*Dirk Mendive* – Staff changes in Congressman’s D.C. office

* Concerns with the wildfire season
* Mike Simpson’s dam removal proposal on the Lower Snake.

*Mike Mathews* – Staff changes in Senator’s local office

* Senator reads the Water Supply Outlook Report every month

*For Congressional delegation from Idaho Groundwater Appropriators*

* Drought concerns – 19 counties drought declarations/disaster
* Groundwater recharge

*EPA* – Changes in staffing including new permanent director Matt Zelag

*IDA* – National Dairy goal Net Zero by 2050 on air emissions, a big thing is getting current data

We will be in touch to look into CIG – new manure treatment technologies vermiculture

*Blaine Soil Conservation District* – engineering staff availability

Cd’A – NRCS project updates

* EQIP – 4K ponderosa pines planted along Hangman’s Creek last week and 2K trees last fall
* Wetland Reserve Easement on St. Joe River – engineering structure

Closing

This back and forth communication is important.

Bruce Sandoval will step in as the lead for STAC for the next two years.

STAC Schedule for the upcoming calendar year –

September 7, 2021

December 7, 2021

*Please note: This agenda is subject to change.*