Minutes

Washington State Technical Advisory Committee

Date | time 08/14/2023 09:30 AM Hybrid| Meeting called to order by Nick Vira

# In Attendance - 26

Roylene Comes at Night, Nick Vira, Misty Seaboldt, Brandy Reed, Michael Crowder, Brad Riehle, Angela Reseland, Rachel Mazzacavallo, Michelle Hennings, Dan Calvert, Carlee Elliott, Jon Kenning, Robert Compton, Dan Larson, John George, Robert Evans, Larry Johnson, Nikki Guillot, Aubrey Hoxie, Randy Reed, Cameron Stoflet, Allison Halpern, Mike Baden, Ron Cummings, Stuart Crane, Ryan Williams, Frank Wright.

# ANNOUNCEMENT

**Introduction & Housekeeping by** **Nick Vira, State Partnership Liaison**

**Opening Remarks – Roylene Comes at Night, NRCS WA, State Conservationist**

Welcome everyone. Input, feedback needed for adjustment FY24 from this group.

Today’s meeting goal: Updates & Wrapping up for FY23 and moving to FY24.

Shared new FY funding level of 20 billion dollars.

Expressed that we need better practices for a better future, communication between NRCS and partners. Enhanced advertising outreach. Need producers to establish applications with new people and new groups. Opportunities to talk to tribes and producers to further the conservation to another level.

**Nick Vira, NRCS WA, Partnership Liaison**

Local Work Group (LWG) Update: Proposed LWG determination of allocation with 11 proposals, which as a total funding of over $45 million. LWG reports for 2023 are included in the meeting materials. For next year we are looking to convene meetings earlier in the year and conclude by the end of May. National Water Quality Imitative Watersheds will only be considered if proposed by a LWG. All meeting dates will need to be set within a month of the FY24 LWG announcement.

National Water Quality Initiative Update: Whatcom County has watersheds have been discontinued due to participation saturation. Current watersheds receiving EQIP Funds are: Mill Creek (Walla Walla), Spring Creek/Union Flats (Whitman), and Crab Creek (Grant).

**Mike Baden, Regional Manager – North Central and Northeast, Washington State Conservation Commission**

General Updates: In the forming stages of furthering conservation districts’ riparian program Working with conservation districts to allocate funding for projects. **Action Item:** Contact Allison Halpern to join the advisory committee.

**Larry Johnson, P.E., NRCS WA, State Engineer**

Small Watershed Program Updates: New Farm Bill possibly will preserve funding increases for watershed programs. The original funding is already allocated and used on committed projects.

Anaerobic Digester Conservation Practice Updates: We have removed the $180k practiced cap for digestors and they are now only subject to the $450,000 Program Payment limitation. FY 25 funding is TBA.

**Bobby Evans, NRCS WA, State Resource Conservationist**

Prescribed Fire Updates: Two potential technical providers. We are building improved partner collaborative efforts.

Soil Health Subcommittee Updates: Building the compacity of soil health. Looking to Establishing practices and functionalities of the committee to move forward and to meet soil health goals. Looking at beyond nutrients and how we can support producers through soil health practices.

Cultural Resource Updates: Addressed the new WA State Archeologist, Grant Smith (Former East Area Cultural Resource Specialist). West and East areas established new positions for Cultural Resource Specialists.

**Carlee Elliott, NRCS WA, State Easement Program Coordinator**

Expanding ACEP-ALE (Grasslands of Special Significance) Areas: Reevaluated the policy to provide highly sensitive areas. Program policy will require consultation for the STAC to include expanded eligibility area. **Action Item**: Send comments to Nick Vira by September 1, 2023.

**Misty Seaboldt, NRCS WA, Area Program Specialist**

CSP State Priority Resource Concerns & Zones: Reduce lists of State Priority Resource Concerns from 8 individual lists to 2. Further we wanted to pull those lists from a small subset of Resource Concern Categories (RCC). STAC will approve the few lists and the smaller subset of RCC.

Continuous EQIP Signup Practices (Act Now) Overview: Act now will be implemented in WA for 100 and 200 level practices. This will be a first come first serve basis. Applications can be accepted, ranked, and funded all within a few weeks’ time. No waiting for Program timelines or batching periods. Advantages – Ranking of programs eliminated. Let producers know if they are in the program quicker. In and out the door – streamlining the process.

# ACTION NEEDED

Hearing from you! Input, feedback is critical for NRCS’s operation and the changes/ adjustment for FY24. Please help us to word out for doubling applications by next year, targeting audience/places to outreach ideas to us. Any input /feedback/comment to Nick Vira.

# Next Meeting

November 16, 2023. Location TBD.