

**Colorado State Technical Committee Meeting**  
Century Link Learning and Conference Center – Lakewood, CO  
October 12, 2011

Meeting Held By: Phyllis Ann Philipps, State Conservationist, NRCS  
Eugene Backhaus, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS

Meeting Presenters: Eugene Backhaus, NRCS  
Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS  
Dawn Jackson, NRCS  
Greg Sundstrom, CSFS  
Melissa Payan, EPA  
Steve Park, NRCS

Billy Merritt, FSA  
Seth Gallagher, CDOW  
Phyllis Woodford, CDPHE  
Harley Ernst, GLCI & CACD  
Jim Peterson, EPA

Minutes by: Charlene Lucero

Welcome - Phyllis Ann Philipps, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Welcomed everyone and clarified the role of the advisory of the State Technical Committee.
- Briefly talked about her experience in Washington, DC.
- Emphasized targeting funding areas and work together and get something done.

Follow up – Eugene Backhaus, State Resource Conservationist

- NRCS has new and revised practices that were sent out for review Tuesday, October 11, 2011. These practices will be up for discussion at the next State Technical Committee meeting.
- Currently looking for input on Energy and Air Quality resource impacts when applying practices, the deadline for input will be October 31, 2011.
- Requested participation on Energy subcommittee members.
  - Possible Nominees: Francisco Flores, Colorado Carbon Fund; Ravi Malhorta, ICast; John Andrews, NRCS, as chairman; Eric Lane, ; Joe Dudta, Colorado Forest Service; R.E. Vann, USFS, and Tim Macklin, WGA.
  - Possible Water Resources Subcommittee , Nominees: Steve Miller, CWCD; Hannah Holm, Mesa College; Reagan Waskom, Colorado Water Institute; Donny McBee; Mike Sullivan, DWR; Randy Ristau; Jason Peel, NRCS; Katie Radke, Colorado Division of Water Resources; and Bud Mackelburg.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Report and Discussion

Billy Merritt, FSA Agriculture and Program Specialist

- Reviewed FSA's website and contact information. Website can be accessed [here](#).
- CRP update. Reviewed general sign up 41 – refer to PowerPoint (PP) for statistics.
- Updates on CP-33 – requested more acres and got more acres (refer to PP) for the counties included.
- Currently a new Farm Bill is being written, get your voice heard.
- Update on Emergency haying and grazing of CRP that was implemented in South East Colorado. CRP Emergency Haying and Emergency grazing were extended one month,

Emergency haying extensions were authorized until September 30. Emergency grazing extensions were authorized until October 31. For the approved Counties

- Participating in the Governor's Agricultural Impact Task Force due to drought conditions.
- BCAP (Biomass Crop Assistance Program) did not receive procedure or funding to implement matching payments for woody bio-mass.
- ECP (Emergency Conservation program) ECP allocations are currently \$120 million short of submitted ECP requests.

#### State Technical Committee Structure Reports and Discussions

##### **Energy Report:** Dawn Jackson, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

- One energy audit done. Would like to increase the number of availability to get energy audits done.
- Currently working on getting this going here in Colorado.

Q: Is Public aware of how these energy audits can be beneficial?

A: We should step up our outreach on this to have the public aware. Public affairs can help get the word out.

Energy audits have a program for application and that is the Energy incentive program.

##### **Wildlife Report:** Seth Gallagher, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

- Presented Lesser Prairie Chicken Report- refer to PowerPoint presentation.
- Program focuses on NRCS programs.
- One item was presented to State Technical Committee.
  - Lesser Prairie Chicken (LEPC) Action Area change – areas in Colorado that are eligible for initiative program. Would like for the STC to discuss filling in the gap and refer to map for action area that is on slide 4 of PP presentation.
  - Looking at concurrence on the LPC action map to connect the area in East Baca County.
  - STC recommendation: Concurrence with adaptation, this is under recommendation.
- Addressed Sage Grouse Initiative.
- CRP proposal was to get CP 25 on the ground for rare and declining habitats and restoring habitats. Subcommittee worked on presentation and will present at Spring 2012 STC meeting.
- CP33 Bobwhite Quail Buffers – had program for a while but with partnership we got some acres on the ground. Need some monitoring on these buffer counts.
- Mid Contract management – Concern with primary nesting dates March 15-July 15. Nesting period is long and we are looking for options on trying to change the primary nesting dates. This is specific to CRP. Benefits outweigh the negative by the change in dates. Open for discussion.
- Private Lands Biologist in CO – Partnership agreement. Currently have 12 biologists

Discussion and comments:

Q: Are you recommending making the action map a safe eligible area?

A: We need to get clarification on the map. That is the ultimate goal. Shape files are in the works.

Q: Regarding mid-contract management, can we encourage the agency to do winter grazing on CRP fields?

A: There are two options regarding the grazing periods. First is two 60-day grazing periods and second is one 120 day period. Currently July 16 - Sept 30 is the allowed grazing period. Could do a different period but has to be done through STC with final approval by FSA STC.

Comment from JD Wright: I would like to split the grazing period into two 60 days. It beats disking the land and this would enhance the fields.

Other comments: Try to introduce some pollinator species and test projects.

Wildlife Subcommittee will work on the 60/60 split and work on the primary nesting season. Do we want to change the dates? Group is still working on that portion and working with mid-contract management. How do we word the EA?

**Forestry Report:** Greg Sundstrom, Colorado State Forest Service

- Easement Programs – 5 forest land owners participating in program.
- Best Management practices had 8-10 partners involved in this audit back in 2008 and went back this fall to determine if they were effective.
- We depend on our partners when federal funds are involved.
- Forest Roads manual was a collaborated project that came out great. Just another tool in the toolbox. Sharing our technical knowledge.
- Joint Forestry team moving forward on strategic plan.

**Air Quality:** Phyllis Woodford, CDPHE

- Reviewed a long list of NRCS practices and identified missing information to make recommendations to the State Technical Committee.
- Scoring Recommendations from the Air Quality Subcommittee. Refer to handout, this is available on website.
- There are a couple of areas that are too broad and could be broken out. This would help land owner get credit for applications.
- There are a number of requirements that ranchers need to follow.
- Discussion on some considerations for new practice recommendations.
- Discussed Overarching Recommendations – refer to PP presentation.
- Next steps for the subcommittee – identify unintended consequences and tradeoffs, next meeting Dec. 9 2011

Q: How are NRCS practices related to Air Quality?

A: It is based on a conservation plan and then ranked or scored, then dollar values that are linked to the practices. Priorities play a major part; there are yes and no questions that are used for each subaccount.

Oil Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures

Melissa Payan and Jim Peterson, EPA, Oil Program Coordinator

- Reviewed information for farmers. Please refer to handout.

- SPCC plans should be made by a professional engineer. Inspect tanks often because a spill can still happen in dry locations.
- Need to provide appropriate containment. Ask yourself, if this tank leaks how can I keep it from traveling off my land. Confine the spill and then clean it out. Go out and get a spill kit, cat litter will work just as well as Betonite.
- Reviewed what should be in a spill plan. Refer to PowerPoint presentation for specifics.

Q: What is the cost?

A: \$825 - \$2500 per SPCC plan also containers and containments can run the amount up.

Q: Is there a deadline date for SCCC plans?

A: Yes, November 10<sup>th</sup>.

- All contact information is on PowerPoint presentation.

### Programs Update

Dawn Jackson, NRCS, Assistant STC for Programs

- Dawn presented PowerPoint presentation. Presentation can be found on STC link
- Call for Recommendations if funding is reduced.

Q: Is there a per contract average?

A: No not now, we have in the past. \$100,000 payments on average per contract. Soil Health \$30,000 average.

Comments:

- ❖ Reduce the amount per contract and have initiative for practice.
- ❖ Reduce the number practices.

Q: How can they pick the right practices to focus on?.

A: We can look at each watershed and what landowner wants to treat.

- ❖ The multiplier is commonly 50% and some are 65%, maybe reduce the multiplier.

- GARCs – Q: Is STC willing to review these by email?

A: We will send out rates to STC for comments.

- Organics – No comments on Organics

- Discussed 2013 Programs – proposal to change deadline to July 1, 2012. This would give field office an idea on what applications can be done and work on plans before..... Give plenty of time for contractors and permitting times ready to go and better contract implementation. We have a 20% cancellation rate currently. What are the comments for new deadline? Usually deadlines are in December.

Comments:

- ❖ Great idea for new deadline date.

Q: Does completion date get affected?

A: No it still gives you 12 months for completion.

- Small scale initiatives – have initiative at a local level instead of at the conservation district. The resource should dictate the size of your project and interest of concern.

Q: How does this targeted approach differentiate from the CCPI?

A: Typically these are large in scale, but will work in the same way and be similar in its approach. CCPI is nationally driven, Colorado can target the area to have real impact on a resource concern. If you have a targeted approach you will see real impact.

Q: How can we plan on outreaching to the district?

A: The expectation is still through the local districts to market the initiative.

Q: Do we have a percentage of funds?

A: We still don't know what the amount will be.

Partnership Opportunity – Questions/comments to think about

- What do you what do to with these dollars?
- Are there some areas to work some easements not just thinking of EQIP. Will that help open up in other programs?
- Prioritize the goals on a target area.
- Is this a onetime issue or would it be continued? It is tied to a proposal and possible build on. New group new problem.

### Grazing

Harley Ernst, CACD,

- Grazing Land subcommittee – Is working on getting a grazing land initiative and working with other organizations to promote grazing land.
- Working on monitoring program.
- GLCI meeting Sunday before CACD meeting. CACD meeting scheduled for November. CACD director resigned and currently looking for replacement.
- Also thanked NRCS for the partnership with CACD.

### K & T Soils Changes

Steve Park, NRCS, State Soil Scientist

#### Get PP presentation.

- Refer to PowerPoint for status of Colorado Soil Survey Information. Currently working on forest service lands to get digital information.
- No longer using the soil survey hard copies and can be accessed on line on Official Soil Services Description. Can make maps and run reports for the common user wanting information. Soil Data Mart is used for our specialist.
- K&T factors – refer to PowerPoint for definition and importance.
- Changes have resulted in some soil data inconsistencies across the nation. Currently engaged in the update phase of soil survey nationally. Some counties have really old data

and other have new data. There is some disconnect between the counties. Criteria's have expanded over the years and a lot of appeals, lawsuit....

- Resolution is on PowerPoint slide and result in consistent values based on soil properties.
- NASIS – defined in PP.
- Current status, testing is completed. Waiting for Chief White on when and how to post the new data. Impact on K factors and T factors stats presented.

Q: How does this affect conservation planning?

A: No changes to existing plans. New plans need to use new data. Changes and modifications to existing plans will be required to use new data.

Q: Are you still taking soil samples?

A: Yes, we are taking samples. Now we are taking baseline levels. We are also doing carbon site samples and different soil groups and that will give us a carbon sites. Help to quantify the changes in carbon in conservation practices and track changes. Soil mapping will have standard names and feed into FSA.

- K&T apply to all soils not only croplands. Do not differentiate the same across the board.

Q: Is soil sampling deeper than before?

A: Not necessary, but gathering more information from the soil.

### Open Discussion

Regarding Small Scale Initiatives –

Q: What is the next step, did we decide on this?

A: Just wanted to introduce and plant the seed, we need to start thinking ahead.

- Steve Ryder, introduced himself as the new State Weed Coordinator.

Comments:

- ❖ We need to start an Introduction of agriculture commodities. We should be focused toward the commodities. Protecting our resources and having a sustainable farm.
- ❖ Wildlife plays a vital role in protecting our resources.

### Closing Comments

- Phyllis Ann Philipps thanked all meeting participants for their input.
- Next meeting date and location is to be determined.
- All presentations can be found at [NRCS Colorado Technical Resources website](#)