

**State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
July 24, 2013**

Welcome and Introductions

Sherre Copeland opened the meeting with introductions of attendees. She gave a brief overview of the agenda.

2014 Local Working Group (LWG) Input and Statewide Perspectives – Peter Bautista, Jeff Harlow, Doug Allen
Jeff Harlow – The LWG packets for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 were reviewed and a report was generated. An overview of the report was given. This same process will be used for FY 2014.

NWQI – need to coordinate with DOE to identify watersheds for this program. We may be able to add watershed(s) – not replace

CIG – GHG – we couldn't use all of the funds – money had to be turned back

Working Lands for Wildlife FY13 (WHIP)

- May, 2013, requested funding of \$320,000.
- No participation under CRP or CSP
- Westside counties funding only for wildlife habitat
- May request additional funding
- No call for further input on what animals to add

FY13 Easement Program

WRP – Close to \$2.8 million will be obligated for restoration activities (existing easements/cost-share agreements). Hoping to get one or two easements

GRP – Pocket Gopher (around Joint Base Lewis McChord) – requested \$2.4 million

FRPP – Approximately \$3.7 million in funds will be obligated in five counties. STAC input is needed to determine priority areas process for funding and help in reviewing ranking questions for FY14 applications.

Comment – concerned about lack of funding for forestry. Only 20 percent of the budget goes to forestry. LWG can't help if funds don't get to them. What can we do for small forest owners?

Reply – work with LWG to address this issue; also with your local district conservationist. The state conservationist has a goal of 50 percent of EQIP allocations going to the LWGs.

Peter Bautista – The LWGs met in January, 2013 for the annual Kick-off meeting. The State Resource Assessment was updated based on comments received from this meeting. Peter reviewed the LWG priorities for treatment acres by resource concerns and percent allocated by resource concerns. LWGs were asked to target three resource concern priorities.

Sequestration deduces the budget by ten percent. Washington did fairly well because of planning. No furloughs or closing of programs.

TA is driven by workload data from prior year. Waiting to hear what the budget will be.

Doug Allen – Doug held a discussion about planning for FY 2015. Discussion focused on the following topics:

- Development of templates for LWG use

- Top three resource concerns
- Screening tool to promote RMS planning
- Allocation process
- Partner assistance

Screening Tool

In FY 2014, the screening tool will give ranking of high, medium, low

Question – High ranking – does it have to address a high priority resource concern?

Answer – Yes

Allocation Process

Question – How many producers have an RMS plan?

Answer – (Bonda Habets) maybe one percent have a RMS plan

Question – Will this be available for TechReg to do plan?

Answer – Potentially.

RMS Planning

This is an inventory and analysis of Soil Water Air Plants Animals Energy of an area, not the whole farm, with alternatives provided for all resource concerns. WA Strategic Plan FY14 is to spend 25 percent of Program funds on those who have an existing RMS plan

Partner Assistance

NRCS may need assistance because RMS planning will increase workload and there is currently no State Technical Service Providers available.

There is a need to develop a sub-committee for easements.

ACTION – STAC Member – those interested in serving on easement sub-committee should contact Sherre Copeland.

ACTION – Sherre Copeland Post LWG reports to the state webpage. Send email to STAC members on where to find the information on the website.

ACTION – STAC Members – send comments/concerns to Jeff Harlow and Doug Allen

Note - The annual LWG kick-off meeting that is typically held in January may be moved to November to coincide with the WACD meeting.

Nutrient Management Update and Water Quality Tech Note 2 Review of Comments – Tracy Hanger

Tracy reviewed the changes made to the August 2006 and December 2011 National Nutrient Management Standard. Changes made pertain to:

- Applications to frozen, snow-covered or saturated soils
- Sheet, rill and wind erosion, both, must be managed to protect water quality
- Phosphorus risk assessment is required to remove the VHigh Category and set a cut off value.

- Nutrient Management in accordance with land-grant university guidelines
- Nitrogen leaching index assessment as an NRCS WebSoilSurvey report
- Emerging strategies or technologies such as precision agriculture, enhanced-efficiency fertilizers, organic crop production, etc.
- 4Rs concept of site-specific nutrient management planning
- Biosolids as a potential source of plant nutrients
- Removal of EPA regulations, 40CFR Parts 403 (pretreatment) and 503 (biosolids)

We should have the final Nutrient Management Standard available for the STAC meeting in September, 2013.

Question – What is the status of the phosphorus index update?

Answer – Revisions will go out in October, 2013. There will be very little change of Phosphorus Index for FY14. A new version of should be out for testing in the next month. We hope to have the final version available in October, 2014, FY15.

Biology Technical Note 14, Review of Comments – Tim Dring

Tim gave a briefing on the comments received regarding this Tech Note. He mentioned that this Tech Note is a guidance document, not a regulation tool. Tech Note 14 will be used for assessing wildlife, not just fish, on all land uses. This is mainly an update of the NRCS 2002 Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG). We need to have a conversation with FSA regarding CREP buffers. Tech Note will possibly be finalized by October 1. Comments are still being accepted.

- Comments were received from government and non-government entities.
- Concerns about regulatory agencies and interest groups discouraging people from participating in NRCS programs.
- Suggestion was made to make definitions more clear regarding planning units, cover for wildlife and historical water source. Time is working on this.

NRCS has held six workshops across the state (two in each area) on how to use Tech Note 14. SVAP was included in the workshops. Landowner was present at each workshop. Five of the six landowners would be willing to look at buffer width on their land. Issues that came up were for more clarification on certain items. These items are now being worked on.

Question - Were any done on fish-bearing streams?

Answer – Four were fish-bearing; one was intermittent

Question – Concern on the length of time to run through Tech Note 14 for planners. How can they get this accomplished?

Answer – During the workshops it didn't seem to take any longer than before. SVAP has gotten longer.

Comment (Bonda Habets) – Our new Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI) requires an SVAP assessment for all landuses if streams are adjacent to the planning unit; Cropland, Forest, Range, Pasture, Landscape, Farmstead

Question – What was the main concern from landowners that participated in the workshops?

Answer – Width of land taken out of production

Question – Will this lead to changes in the 391 standard?

Answer – It will be updated when a new National Standard comes out.

Question – Has this been made clear to stakeholders?

Answer – We have tried to make it clear

Question – Are buffers that are recommended a no touch zone?

Answer – It would be our recommendation to be a no touch zone with a suggestion to have a gate for occasional use once every four or five years. We are not a regulatory agency.

Question – Will 391 go through a sub-committee?

Answer – If the state resource conservationist sees a need for one.

Comment (Bonda Habets) – **Federal Register Notice** is currently being prepared and edited

Greetings

There are 10 draft National conservation practice standards available for review and comment this month. They are:

441d1 – Irrigation system, Microirrigation (contact Jerry Walker, 817-509-3387 if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

447d1 – Irrigation Tailwater Recovery (contact Peter Robinson, 503-273-2417 if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

449d1 – Irrigation Water Management (contact Peter Robinson if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

457d1 – Mine Shaft and Adit Closing (contact Alica Ketchem, 804-287-1654, if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

543d1 – Land Reclamation, Abandoned Mined Land (contact Alica Ketchem, 804-287-1654, if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

560d1 – Access Road (contact Alica Ketchem, 804-287-1654, if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

575d1 – Travel Ways (contact Alica Ketchem, 804-287-1654, if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

600d1 – Terrace (contact Tony Funderburk, 817-509-3289 if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

614d1 – Watering Facility (contact Alica Ketchem, 804-287-1654, if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

642d1 – Water Well (contact John Moore, 202-720-0115 if you have questions about the technical content of this standard.)

In addition to these draft standards, the Engineering discipline is proposing to remove 455 – Land Reclamation, Toxic Discharge Control, from the National Handbook of

Conservation Practices, since there is no evidence that it is being used. Contact Bill Reck, 336-370-3353, if you have any questions about this.

Copies of these draft National conservation practice standards may be downloaded from:

<ftp://pact.sc.egov.usda.gov/practice-standards/standard-development/draft/aug-13/>

Note that this is a change from the previous server address where draft standards were posted.

The review period for these draft National conservation practice standards will run through September 6, 2013. Please make your comments directly in the document using the “Track Changes” feature in MS-Word. Send your comments to [Bill Kuenstler](#), so that we can maintain an archive of all comments received.

If you have any problems downloading these files, or if you have questions about the conservation practice standard review process, don't hesitate to contact me. As always, thank you for helping bring the latest technology to our field offices.

Bill

Bill Kuenstler, Conservation Agronomist, Central National Technology Support Center
817-509-3363

Notice change to the Residue and Tillage Management Practices: No Till (no longer Direct Seed or Strip till) and Mulch till is now Reduced Till

Status of Mazama Pocket Gopher – Sherre Copeland

It was decided to defer this discussion until the rule is open for comment. Hope to have more information at the September, 2013 meeting.

Roundtable and Closing

Comment – Would like to see more face-to-face meetings.

Question – will VTCs be used for meetings?

Answer – Yes. Working on doing this at our Olympia and Ephrata locations

Question – Can an example of Phosphorus Index be sent out?

Answer – It can be found on the NRCS website under STAC, Nutrient Management Sub-committee, Water Quality Tech Note 2

Next meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2013.