



United States Department of Agriculture

NEW MEXICO
NRCS STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Adobe Connect Net Meeting, April 22, 2020

Introductions:

Kenneth Branch welcomed everyone to the meeting. Kenneth mentioned the intent was to originally have separate meetings for a Farm Bill Roll Out for Partners and a State Technical Committee Meeting. However due to COVID-19 we combined the meetings.

State Conservationist Xavier Montoya Remarks:

Be flexible- NRCS has seen lots of changes, not only with the 2018 Farm Bill but with the COVID 19. We are following social distancing guidelines in our offices.

FSA State Executive Director Mike White Remarks:

Mike gave a brief introduction of himself. He noted a member of the FSA State Committee was on the call.

Programs: Kenneth Branch

Programs Farm Bill Roll Out:

Kenneth Branch and Ana Gomes presented the new components to EQIP and CD/CART in the 2018 Farm Bill- See attached slides titled "Farm Bill Roll Out for Partners EQIP- CART."

Athena Cholas reviewed the changes to the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program- See attached slides titled "State Technical Committee, ACEP,CSP, CIG."

For Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) the state technical committee needs to each year concur with the Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC). An opportunity to comment after the meeting will be provided or this may be discussed at a future state technical committee meeting in fiscal year 2020.

Kris Graham Chavez provided information on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)- see slides titled, "NM RCPP 4-22-2020.2"

Resource Technology: Steve Kadas (NRCS) and Joilynn Gray (FSA)

Steve Kadas, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, gave an overview of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In it he stated, CRP is a land conservation program that addressed both cropland and grasslands. In New Mexico the two most popular components part of CRP are "General CRP" and CRP Grasslands". General CRP addresses highly erodible or marginal croplands. It addresses multiple resources concerns such soil erosion, wildlife habitat, water quality and other issues. This is done by returning the land to a permanent grass cover. In other states, trees may be the appropriate permanent cover. This land cannot be used for agricultural production such a grazing. Grasslands CRP, however, is a working land conservation program for land currently in a permanent



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grass cover such as rangeland. Lands in this program may be use for grazing while following a conservation management plan. CRP agreements last 10-15 years and participants received an annual payment based on the acreage enrolled.

Farm Services Agency (FSA) is responsible for managing the program by setting sign-ups, taking applications, developing contracts and making payments. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for the technical side of the Program. This includes a developing conservation plans, practice standards, oversight of practice implementation and status reviews.

Joilynn Gray with FSA presented material regarding CRP- See attached slides titled, "NM_STechC_Meeting_FSA_20200422," for details.

Partner Updates:

New Mexico State Forestry- Andrew Frederick provided information on the New Mexico forest action plan. See attached plan titled "NM State Forestry Handout" for details.

Chat Questions and Verbal answers:

Andrew Frederick: <http://nmfap.org/>

Debbie Hughes: Does a producer have to wait a year to get a new CSP contract if they just had one end?

Kenneth Branch (verbal): For renewals if the participant chooses to not renew they will be ineligible for two years. Should the participant not be selected in renewal then the participant can immediately apply for the regular sign-up.

Debbie Hughes: How many proposals for Water Management did NM receive?

Kenneth Branch (verbal): New Mexico received approx. 30 applications.

Debbie Hughes: Where can we get more information about the new parts of CSP that now include state and federal land?

Kenneth Branch (verbal): State and Federal land can be included in a CSP contract if the land is part of the landowners operation and meet other land eligibility. We have a CRMP for federal land which is shorter than a CRMP for EQIP however it is our process to keep the federal agency informed. Information regarding CSP can be found on the state website



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Abe Franklin (NMED): Please summarize the Riparian CRP sub-program if there's time.

Answer will have to come at a later date

Scott Wilber: How were the priorities (especially geographic) determined for the ACEP program? Such a large national program shouldn't be limited to such a small geographic area within the state. Project eligibility and selection should be determined by a variety of factors such as prime soils, significant grasslands, significant riparian/wildlife habitat, natural/cultural resources, development pressures, partnerships and leveraging of NRCS resources.

Scott Wilber: Successful private land conservation depends on opportunities, partnerships, funding and capacity and shouldn't be limited to small geographic areas within the state.

Athena Cholas (verbal): The state does prioritize prime farmland in Valencia county and land in the floodplain along the Rio Grande. However, we have not set minimum thresholds for ranking so could fund parcels outside that priority area. Xavier and Kenneth Branch are supportive of asking for additional funding so we don't want to think in terms of scarcity and want to take the approach that as long as we continue to get good applications we will be asking for more funding.

Scott Wilber: Thanks for that clarification, Athena

Lesli Allison: How are wildlife priorities under grasslands CRP determined for NM?

Answer will have to come at a later date

Paula Garcia: I have a question - regarding acequia eligibility - is there guidance on having to gather SSN# from each landowner on the acequia? Does this apply to land grants also?

Kenneth Branch (verbal): If the acequia or land grant is a sub division of state or local govt (business code 9) the SS# of all the landowners will not need to be provided. Only the TIN of the acequia will be needed.

Cecilia Rosacker: I understand there are Technical Assistance funds that come with ACEP /ALE funding. I understand in other states the TA funds can be granted to partners. Is there any plan for using TA funds in this manner in NM?

Kenneth Branch (verbal): I can look into this and to see what kinds of agreements could be signed with partners for easement management.

Cecilia Rosacker: OK thank you.