



**USDA Nebraska State Technical Committee  
Tuesday, March 5, 2013, 1PM  
Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome, introductions and opening comments – Craig Derickson, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist**

Craig welcomed the committee and thanked everyone for their attendance. (Attendees are listed on pages 4-6)

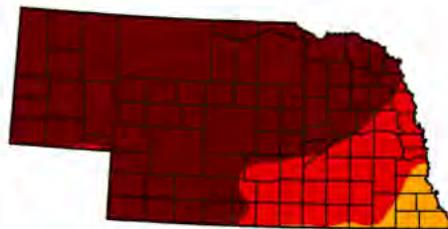
- Sequestration/Budget Update: USDA NRCS has been preparing for budget cut-backs for the last couple of years. The agency is working hard to save as much money as we can for further cuts that may come in the future. NRCS is not preparing for furloughs for employees at this time. Employees would be given a 30 notice if furloughs were to be required.
- We have an Acting Chief, Jason Weller, who is working well and is optimistic about our future. The current Continuing Resolution will expire at the end of this month, March 27; however, I am confident that things will be good for NRCS, and we will continue to accomplish great work with all of our conservation partners.
- Nebraska Drought Status:

**U.S. Drought Monitor  
Nebraska**

**March 5, 2013**  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

*Drought Conditions (Percent Area)*

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	96.10	76.76
Last Week (02/26/2013 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	96.10	76.94
3 Months Ago (12/04/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	96.15	77.46
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	96.20	77.46
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	97.94	73.25
One Year Ago (02/28/2012 map)	80.83	19.17	3.06	0.03	0.00	0.00



*Intensify:*



*The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.*

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, March 7, 2013

Matthew Rosencrans, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

**FY2013 Conservation Program Overview – Brad Soncksen, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs** (See included PowerPoint presentation)

- Grazing Management is one of the primary EQIP practices NRCS funds due to a requirement that 60% of EQIP funds target livestock production practices.
- Irrigation is another highly funded practice in Nebraska.
- When the opportunity to receive more funding arises, we can always use it for EQIP because we always have far more applications than initial funding to support. Additional funding is often provided when we have more qualified applicants on hand.
- This will be the first year we spend all the funding we received for our Organic initiative, \$250,000.
- Nebraska did receive funding this year for the endangered Black Footed Ferret through the Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative. **NOTE: All funds for this initiative were recently pulled from NE and distributed to other States within the Black footed ferret region.**
- We are not enrolling any new acres in WRP yet; although we may receive additional funding this year.
- Local work group meetings will take place in June, and Subcommittee meetings will be held in July 2013. An announcement will be placed in the newspaper 30 days prior to the subcommittee meetings. We would like everyone's input in these meetings.
- The next State Technical committee meeting will be held in August 2013.
- Requests for FY13 EQIP funding for soil erosion is \$9.7 M. This includes funding for terraces, ponds, and irrigation; in grazing we are getting a lot of applications in deferment. Solar pumps are also eligible.

**Irrigation Water Management – Tim Haakenstad, State Conservation Engineer**

- There are three levels of payment we are providing for irrigation water management: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced.
- Record keeping such as tracking rainfall, flow meters, and soil moisture will be required to receive an irrigation water management payment.
- NRCS in Nebraska is actively looking for people who have the knowledge and skills to become certified energy auditors.
- The next step for NRCS is to increase our employee's knowledge of new technologies.
- NRCS encourages continuous applications for our programs.

**Farm Service Agency Programs Update – Greg Reisdorff, FSA Program Specialist** (See included PowerPoint presentation)

- General Signup for CRP has been announced for May 20-June 14, 2013.
- A Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers (HWFR) Claims Process announcement was made. A settlement has been announced for Hispanic and women customers who believe the USDA improperly denied farm loan benefits to them between 1981 and 2000. If anyone is interested in pursuing the VOLUNTARY claims process then they should begin by either going online at [www.farmersclaims.gov](http://www.farmersclaims.gov) or by contacting the claims call center at 1-888-508-4429. HWFR claims reporting closes March 25, 2013.

- There could be up to 5 days of furlough for FSA employees between April 1 and the end of the fiscal year.

**Comments:**

There continues to be concern about planting/seeding in dry soil.

Larry Hudkins, Nebraska Cattlemen, stated that July 16 is too late to declare Emergency Grazing; hopefully this can be announced earlier this year if the drought persists.

**LiDAR Update – Neil Dominy, NRCS State Soil Scientist** (See included PowerPoint presentation)

- What is LiDAR? Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure variable distances to the Earth. LiDAR can provide three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics accurate to within approximately two feet.
- Contacts for LiDAR distribution or further questions:
  - For current data: Shandy Bittle, NRCS GIS Specialist at [Shandy.bittle@ne.usda.gov](mailto:Shandy.bittle@ne.usda.gov) or 402-437-4020
  - For future collections: Nathan Watermeier, Coordinator, GIS Council, Office of the Chief Information Officer at [Nathan.Watermeier@nebraska.gov](mailto:Nathan.Watermeier@nebraska.gov) or 402-471-3206
- Final flights will be complete by April or May and the data should be available in July.

**Soil Health, Prescribed Burning Practices, and 590 Nutrient Management Standard – Shaun Vickers, NRCS State Resource Conservationist** (See included PowerPoint presentation)

- Drought across much of the Midwest battered last fall's harvest of native grass seed, creating some shortages and higher prices for many varieties commonly used seeds. Grass seeds such as Indiangrass, Sand Bluestem, and Little Bluestem are very difficult to find right now.
- Soil Health is the Hot Topic right now. NRCS is coordinating with UNL and our National Office to provide Soil Health training this spring and summer.
- NRCS is looking for a full-time Soil health Specialist to implement the National Soil Health Initiative.
- NRCS is not likely to perform prescribed burning this year, especially if drought conditions persist. NRCS will continue to reduce the RISK involved with our employees and partners. Nebraska NRCS has distributed new guidelines in the form of an NRCS Bulletin, and Doug Whisenhunt, NRCS State Prescribed Burn Specialist, will be the only NRCS person allowed to be present during any prescribed burn.
- We have issued the 590 and S-590 conservation practice standard thanks to a lot of involvement and support from our partners such as NDEQ, Cattlemen, crop consultants and UNL.

**Comment:**

**Q**-Some practices require burning, what considerations will be required? **A**-NRCS will look into further details to determine how the minimum moisture the soil must contain in order to burn.

**Forestry Subcommittee Report – Dennis Adams, Nebraska Forest Service** (See the handouts provided)

- The 1990 farm bill was the first that included a Forestry Title which authorized the Forest Stewardship Program to address non-industrial private forest issues.
- A briefing sheet was provided for LB 634: Nebraska Wildfire Control Act of 2013.
- Contact information for the Nebraska Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (NFSCC) Members was provided in a handout.
- The effects of drought on tree planting success in 2012 were devastating. Last year was one of the worst years in Nebraska’s history for drought and planting success reflected this.
- Removal of forestland has accelerated because of high land and commodity prices.
- Tree sales are down significantly.

**Closing comments – Craig Derickson, NRCS**

- Craig thanked everyone again for their participation and encouraged committee members to contact NRCS staff at any time with additional questions or concerns.
- The next State Technical meeting will be held in August 2013.

**Nebraska State Technical Committee Meeting Attendees: March 5, 2013 (55 Total)**

*	<b>Designates call-in participant</b>
Andy Baker	Bureau of Indian Affairs-Winnebago Agency
Barth Crouch	Playa Lakes Joint Venture
Ben Mullarkey	Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center
Brad Lubben	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Brad Soncksen	NRCS-Assistant State Conservationist/Programs
Burdette Piening	Grain Sorghum Board
*Charles Isom	Congressman Lee Terry’s Office
*Charles Wortmann	University of Nebraska Lincoln
Courtney Ruwe	Senator Deb Fischer’s Office
Craig Derickson	USDA-NRCS State Conservationist
Curt Friesen	Nebraska Corn Board
*Damon Frizzell	Environmental Protection Agency

Dave Griffith	NRCS- Water Resources Planner/NDEQ Liaison
Dave Stock	Stock Seed
*Dean Mathisen	Congressman Lee Terry's Office
Dennis Adams	Nebraska Forest Service
Don McCabe	Nebraska Farmer
Elbert Traylor	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
Eric Zach	Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
Felix Kitto	Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska
Greg Reisdorff	Farm Service Agency
Greg Whitmore	Nebraska Corn Growers Association
Jack Daniel	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
*Jared McJunkin	National Wild Turkey Federation
Jason Moudry	Lower Loup Natural Resources District
Jason McCauley	Bureau of Indian Affairs
Jerry McDonald	Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever
*John Brogan	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Ken Lamb	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
*Ken Rahjes	Congressman Adrian Smith's Office
*Kenny Dinan	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Kent Zimmerman	Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
Larry Hudkins	Nebraska Cattlemen
Lavaine Moore	Farm Service Agency
Lee Ickes	Santee Sioux Nation

Lindsey Salestrom	Nebraska Department of Agriculture
*Marcia Trompke	Central Public Power & Irrigation District
Megan Baker	NRCS-Executive Assistant
Mike Crosley	Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska
Neil Dominy	NRCS-State Soil Scientist
*Neil Moseman	Senator Deb Fischer's Office
*Pam Potthoff	Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
Patrick Hartman	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
*Pete Davis	US EPA Region & US EPA Region 7
Ralph Pieke	Lower Platte North Natural Resources District
Richard Janing	Nebraska State Grange
*Richard Miller	Bureau of Land Management
Scott Richert	Nebraska Soybean Association
Shaun Vickers	NRCS-State Resource Conservationist
Tami Nordman	NRCS-Administrative Assistant
Terry Julesgard	Lower Niobrara Natural Resources District
Tim Haakenstad	NRCS-State Conservation Engineer
Tom Dorn	University of Nebraska Lincoln-Lancaster County Extension
Tom Trehitt	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
Wally Valsek	Soil and Water Conservation Society