

**USDA Nebraska State Technical Committee
Lancaster Extension Education Center, Lincoln NE
Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 1PM
Meeting Minutes**

(Attendees are listed on pages 4 and 5)

Welcome, introductions and opening comments – Brad Soncksen, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

Brad welcomed the committee and thanked everyone for their attendance.

Announcements:

- Changes to the agenda: Tim Haakenstad and Craig Derickson were not able to make the meeting today.
- Handouts: NRCS Year-end Report and Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers (HWFR) Claims Process.
- An HWFR Claims Process announcement was made, and flyers were presented. 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. USDA Secretary Vilsack has asked for our assistance in publicizing the settlement. If anyone is interested in pursuing the VOLUNTARY claims process then they should begin by either going online at www.farmersclaims.gov or by contacting the claims call center at 1-888-508-4429.
- The Nebraska Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (NFSCC) unanimously voted at their meeting on October 17, 2012 to serve as the “Forestry Subcommittee” of the State Technical Committee.
- Farm Bill Update: No news yet, but the House and Senate are eager to begin discussions and look at developing a 5 year Farm Bill; nothing will happen this week.

FY2012 Conservation Program Review – Brad Soncksen, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (PowerPoint presentation)

- We can operate at the same budget levels as we did last year- we have limited authority to operate on some of our programs.
- We have had great success with CSP in Nebraska. We did not receive money for general applications for WHIP, and we do not expect to receive funds this year. If we do receive funding for this program it would be for the black-footed ferret. The entire state minus the eastern 1/3 could be eligible. There would be a payment for the farmer to maintain grass (deferred grazing) and encourage prairie dog habitat.
- EQIP-We have not done a lot of terraces this year with the drought. In the places where the practice could not be implemented, we have rescheduled and will allow the practice to be

implemented next year. Although EQIP is a continuous application process, the first cutoff date will be December 21, 2012.

- Resource concerns-the local work groups have a lot of say in how funds will be distributed in the local resource priorities.
- Organic, High Tunnel, On Farm Energy, NWQI and Ogallala special initiatives will be approved again this year – it is important that we promote these programs because we apply for funding after receiving the applications.
- Energy audits- we are really lacking TSPs who can take the training and perform the On Farm Energy Audits. Tim Haakenstad, NRCS State Conservation Engineer, is working hard to identify folks who have the ability to complete these tasks.
- Last year we had 4 watersheds approved under the NWQI, and we may have an opportunity to approve more this year.
- We had a lot of good applications in the medium priority areas for the Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI) last year. We were able to fund most of those applications after all of the applications in the high priority areas were approved.

2012 Census of Agriculture – Dean Groskurth, Director National Agricultural Statistics Service

(PowerPoint presentation)

- Very soon, USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service will be focused on encouraging all farmers and ranchers to respond to the 2012 Census of Agriculture.
- The Census of Agriculture is conducted only once every five years across our country’s farmland and agricultural communities.
- While the Census is particularly vital for folks in rural America, it’s important to remember that well-informed policy decisions have a positive impact for all of us. Even for families in our biggest cities, a strong rural America means an abundant food supply, cleaner water, extraordinary outdoor recreation, and more. That’s why it couldn’t be more important to make sure that all of our nation’s farmers and farmland are accurately accounted for.
- NASS mails the Census of Agriculture in mid-December with a return deadline of February 4, 2013. Here are three ways you can help now and through the next few months:
 1. Use Census promotional materials.
 2. Share Census facts with producers.
 3. Encourage farmers and ranchers to respond. Remind producers they can easily and securely respond online after they receive their census form at www.agcensus.usda.gov . For questions or help completing their form, direct respondents to NASS at (888) 424-7828.

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

- Contacts for LiDAR distribution or further questions:
 - Shandy Bittle, NRCS GIS Specialist at Shandy.bittle@ne.usda.gov or 402-437-4020
 - Neil Dominy, NRCS State Soil Scientist at neil.dominy@ne.usda.gov or 402-437-4113
- The data is usually delivered to us in August or September.

Soil Health Updates – Shaun Vickers, NRCS State Resource Conservationist (PowerPoint presentation)

- 2012 represents a fundamental change in how conservation is being applied to the land in Nebraska;
- Cereal Rye being flown on by helicopter and drilled into drainage ways in areas where waterways have traditionally been used;
- Cereal Rye is also being used on very steep cropland slopes to control erosion on fields in which terraces have traditionally been the practice of choice to control this problem;
- This year we updated the single species and multi species cover crop practice scenarios. This is the first year that we needed to do this in conjunction with our other Northern Plains States (ND, SD, and KS);
- NRCS is looking for a full-time Soil health Specialist to implement the National Soil Health Initiative;
- The cost of winter rye is double what it was last year. Therefore the single species cost share rate has also doubled;
- Radishes and turnips work well to scavenge nitrogen and loosen the soil;
- All over the state cover crops and no-till are popping up and doing a great job with maintaining soil health and controlling erosion.

590 Standard Update – Renee Hancock, NRCS Water Quality Specialist (PowerPoint presentation)

- We have a draft 590 and S-590;
- In a month or so we will have a subcommittee meeting to go over the standard in detail and get feedback;
- Phosphorus Index- we have been working with UNL;
- Application of manure to frozen or snow covered landscape- we would like to pursue “daily application maps;” the cost of this type of service is estimated at \$40,000 to start up and \$30,000 annually;
- As planners, we need to actively work with producers determine low risk vs high risk;
- Nebraska already had nitrogen leaching assessments, so in a lot of ways Nebraska is ahead of the game.

Closing comments – Brad Soncksen, NRCS

- USDA is now working with urban farms and local community groups to provide NRCS funding through EQIP for High Tunnels; a farm tract number is required.
- If a Farm Bill is passed, we will begin working with our subcommittee process.

Meeting adjourned 2:39PM

The next State Technical meeting will be held February 27, 2013.

Nebraska State Technical Committee Meeting Attendees: November 28, 2012

Andy Baker	Natural Resources Officer-Winnebago Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bob Bettger	Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
Brad Soncksen	NRCS-Assistant State Conservationist/Programs
Burdette Piening	Nebraska Grain Sorghum Producers
Corey Wilkinson	Agrium Advanced Technologies
Damon Frizzell	Environmental Protection Agency
Dave Griffith	NRCS- Water Resources Planner/NDEQ Liaison
Dayle Williamson	US Senator Ben Nelson's Office
Dean Groskurth	National Agricultural Statistics Service
Dennis Adams	Nebraska Forest Service
Don McCabe	Nebraska Farmer
Duane Hovorka	Nebraska Wildlife Federation
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Elbert Traylor	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
Eric Zach	Nebraska Game & Parks
Felix Kitto	Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska
Gene Zuerlein	Nebraska Game & Parks
Greg Reisdorff	Farm Service Agency
Heather Hansen	DOI, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Winnebago Agency
Jan Windscheffel	NETAFIM

Jerry McDonald	Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever
Jim Langtry	U.S. Geological Survey
John Mayberger	NRCS- CSP Program Manager
Ken Rahjes	Congressman Adrian Smith's Office
Kenny Dinan	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Lindsey Salestrom	Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Martin Massengale	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Megan Baker	NRCS-Executive Assistant
Mike Crosley	Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska
Neil Dominy	NRCS-State Soil Scientist
Patrick Hartman	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
Paul Johnston	Nebraska Farm Bureau
Paul Zillig	Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
Renee Hancock	NRCS- Water Quality Specialist
Rich Torpin	NRCS- EQIP/WHIP Program Manager
Scott Richert	Nebraska Soybean Association
Shaun Vickers	NRCS-State Resource Conservationist
Susan Whitfield	No More Empty Pots