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Issue Paper for Oregon Technical Advisory Committee

Topic:	Roles and responsibilities for Oregon Technical Advisory Committee and Basin Work Groups in Oregon	
Presenter / Sponsor(s):	Bill White, NRCS, Leader for Programs	
Issue Statement:	Oregon has adapted national policy with respect to State Technical Advisory Committees (STAC) and Local Work Groups (LWG) to one of the Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (OTAC). Oregon is structure on Basin to better focus on watershed health issues. Oregon has an opportunity to improve this process through clarification of roles and responsibilities and communication throughout the system.	
Action Required:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review & Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice Requested	<input type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Other:: _____
Background:	<p>The USDA program delivery process is a locally led effort as the starting point for determining program tools that are needed locally with consideration of state and national considerations. The State Technical Advisory Committees (STAC) and the Local Work Group (LWG) are the essential elements to balance local needs with state and national considerations.</p> <p>STACs were establish in each State to assist in the technical considerations and to develop the technical guidelines necessary to implement conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (the 1985 Act), as amended. The LWG’s role is to represent the conservation needs developed by community stakeholders to tailor USDA programs and priorities to address local natural resource concerns.</p> <p>The USDA local work groups provide input to the NRCS State Conservationist, the FSA State Director and the State Technical Advisory Committee to help: to establish statewide USDA conservation program priorities and policy and to identify statewide priority resource concerns and conservation priority areas.</p> <p>Unlike the State Technical Committee, the USDA local work group is not exempt from Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). As a result, membership of the local work group is limited to Federal, State, county, tribal, or local government representatives. Despite the membership limitation, public participation is allowed and very much encouraged at local work group meetings.</p> <p>Once funding from a USDA program is approved for use at the local level, the USDA local work group establishes priorities for USDA conservation program delivery and coordinates the implementation of the USDA program portion of the community stakeholders' conservation action plan.</p>	
Progress / Current Status:	<p>In 1997, Oregon initiated its process of locally lead for EQIP. The NRCS Conservation Programs Manual was supplemented in 1998 defining Oregon’s process.</p> <p>The term Basin Work Group (BWG) is used in Oregon instead of the term Local Work Group. The BWG has the responsibilities and authorities designated to the Local Work Group in Parts 500 and 515 of the CPM.</p> <p>There are eight (8) designated BWGs in Oregon. These geographic boundaries are the same as the Oregon Association of Conservation District (OACD) Area and the NRCS Basin boundaries.</p> <p>BWGs are encouraged to meet as often as needed but will be required to hold scheduled meetings to address 1996 Farm Bill program requirements. Copies of meeting minutes are sent to the NRCS State Conservationist and FSA State Executive Director.</p> <p>The BWG may designate a 3 to 5 member administrative committees to act on items needing attention between meetings. These items could include such things as</p>	

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	<p>responses to state or national requests for information, program development recommendations, and administrative issues such as requests for payment limitation waivers. As a minimum, the administrative committee contains a representative from the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), FSA, and NRCS. Any actions taken by this Administrative Committee are reviewed by the BWG and documented in the next BWG minutes.</p> <p>The BWG may recognize and utilize local action groups (LAG) to facilitate conservation activities below the Basin level. These local action groups can serve as the catalyst to solicit input on resource conditions and needs. The LAG may use a variety of relevant sources such as SWCDs, County Office Committees (COC), NRCS, FSA, watershed councils, grower groups cooperative Extension, Indian Tribes, landowners/operators, private industry, and environmental groups. The local action group may represent a geographic boundary such as a county, district, watershed, etc.</p> <p>Tasks the LAGs may assist with include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sponsor local meetings to obtain input. ▪ Assess natural resource conditions and needs. ▪ Recommend geographic priority areas, natural resource priority areas. ▪ Recommend and establish eligible practice (FOTG). ▪ Recommend /establish incentives (systems, % cost share, and \$ rates). ▪ Identify priorities and opportunities. ▪ Develop individual ranking criteria for EQIP Geographic priority areas ▪ Develop local application for an evaluation process including application-ranking criteria. ▪ Develop, recommend, and implement education proposals. ▪ Conduct public outreach and information efforts (i.e., USDA Service Center newsletters) ▪ Identify the need for new and innovative conservation practices. ▪ Prioritize / evaluate individual plans / contracts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technical / Staff Recommendation: 	<p>Continuation of the current process of OTAC and BWG with a commitment to better communication of the actions and outcomes of the each group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OTAC provides advice and oversight on how Farm Bill programs are implemented in Oregon. ▪ OTAC provides advice concerning broad directions for Farm Bill programs and assisting in coordination of other Federal, State, local, public and private activities as they relate to the OTAC charge. ▪ Programmatic implementation decisions to carry on the programs should be delegated to the BWG and the designated conservationist. ▪ NRCS state conservationist will ensure programmatic consistency within Oregon and with neighboring states. ▪ NRCS state conservationist will update roles and responsibilities based on 2002 Farm Bill.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attachment: 	