

Topics for Discussion and Input from Local Work Groups

Currently NRCS accepts EQIP program applications for replacement of irrigation hardware such as center pivots, side roll sprinklers, gated pipe, and for land leveling. These applications are ranked and batched with other applications including the conversion of surface irrigation to sprinkler systems. The environmental benefits of replacing an irrigation system with a similar system usually result in lower ranking due to reduced water conservation benefits. These projects however, often have significant energy conservation benefits associated with more efficient pumps and motors. Energy conservation is a resource concern that is often overlooked in our ranking and local resource priorities. To fully evaluate

1. Should NRCS develop a local fund pool for irrigation system replacement that includes energy enhancement practices such as pump replacement in the ranking criteria?

Or

2. Should NRCS look at energy enhancement practices and projects as a separate fund pool.

and

3. What other conservation practices could be targeted for energy conservation enhancements.

NOTE: An energy audit must be completed before applying for financial assistance to assess the energy efficiency benefits prior to funding of projects

The control of noxious and invasive plants is a high priority for conservation districts and local work groups across the state. Traditional methods for control of noxious and invasive weeds are costly and require time and persistence of the landowners.

Realizing that current funding is limited to address this widespread problem and with future budgetary pressures:

1. Under what circumstances should NRCS be involved with the control of noxious and invasive species that would provide the largest public benefit for each dollar spent?
 2. What land use(s) should have the highest priority for weed control?
 3. What do you think should be the minimum NRCS payment rate to appropriately contribute to meet the weed control goals? Why?
 4. Should NRCS require a partnership agreement with contract participants, county weed boards, CWMA's, and NRCS?
 5. Should participants be required to address other identified resource concerns on the land being treated for noxious/invasive species?
 6. Should targeted grazing be considered as a cost share practice to control weeds? Why?
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How can NRCS improve our outreach efforts?

1. Are we reaching all of the customers we should be reaching?
 2. If not, why not?
 3. How can we encourage participation in NRCS programs?
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Restoring stream corridors and riparian areas improves water quality, protects wildlife habitat, and provides other environmental benefits.

1. Are resource concerns in stream corridors and riparian areas being adequately addressed with existing fund pools?
 2. Should NRCS create separate local fund pools to address resource concerns in riparian and fish/wildlife habitat areas?
 3. If so, would these fund pools be utilized at the local level?
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Restoring fire damaged ecosystems and treating Pinyon Juniper encroached rangelands are two vastly different types of projects than the traditional rangeland treatments of fencing, livestock watering facilities and grazing management. Costs are high for participants to implement ecological restoration activities associated with fire damaged lands and PJ encroachment.

1. Should NRCS consider creating separate fund pools for these issues?
 2. How can NRCS encourage producers to implement these types of land treatments?
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At the last State Technical Committee meeting, the issue of irrigated land being converted to non-irrigated land was discussed. There are some instances where this conversion was prompted by a landowner selling water rights to municipalities or other uses and abandoning the land without returning it to a suitable or viable native cover. There was some discussion that NRCS should not participate in providing funds for the protection of the land as it may promote the practice of selling water and reducing agricultural productivity.

1. Should NRCS provide financial assistance funding to landowners to protect/restore the abandoned land?

If yes,

- Is this an identified resource problem in your districts?
- a. What would be a suitable funding level rate?
 - b. What guidelines should be established?
 - c. How can local work groups be involved?

If no,

- a. What can local work groups do to prevent erosion, weed infestations, and other resource problems from occurring, in these situations?
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Currently there are no applicants or entities (State/Local/NGO) with matching funds to participate in the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). Nevada received \$3.1M which will be reallocated to other States if not spent here.

1. How can Conservation Districts and Local Workgroups assist in creation of a grassroots effort to restore a viable matching source, such as the State or a non-governmental organization, to effectively utilize the FRPP program in Nevada?
 2. What could NRCS do to assist you with these efforts?
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NRCS in Nevada has had recent success working with producers to implement practices on public lands. Some states have a "Public Lands Fund Pool" where funds can be specifically targeted for land treatment on public lands.

1. Should NRCS create "Public Lands Fund Pool"?
 2. Would a "Public Lands Fund Pool" expand our collective efforts to treat grazing lands in Nevada?
 3. What are the positive implications of creating the fund pool?
 4. What are the negative implications of creating the fund pool?
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Land treatment projects on public lands also require additional coordination of multiple federal agencies and State resource management agencies. NRCS values our long time historical partnership with Conservation Districts and would like CD's to take an active role in land management decisions within their respective districts.

1. What role or involvement do you, as CD and local work group members, view as vitally important to maintain your unique presence in land management decisions on both private and public lands?
 2. How can you assist in providing leadership at the local level?
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Thank you for your participation!
Input in other USDA program and natural resource issues is also welcome.