

LWG--- Local work Group

6 November 2024

Minidoka McGregor Building

Minutes

Those In Attendance:

Rob Cottle – East Cassia SWCD
Kurt Heward – East Cassia SWCD
Brogan Higley – East Cassia SWCD
Steve Ward – East Cassia SWCD
Luke Stevenson – Minidoka SWCD

Dusty Wilkins – Minidoka SWCD
Richard Kunau – West Cassia SWCD
Jordan Searle – West Cassia SWCD
Megan Satterwhite – Idaho Dairywomen
Katlyn Scarrow – Idaho Dairywomen
Ellie Burken – Pheasants Forever

David Mabey – NRCS
Carolyn Firth – ISWCC
Sharon Hardy – SWCD admin
Doreen McMurray – SWCD admin
Rachelle Osterhout – SWCD admin

Meeting called to order by Co-Vice-Chairman Dusty Wilkins at 10:04 AM with a welcome and some general LWG information regarding voting. It was announced that everyone in attendance can have a voice in discussions, but each organization represented at the meeting gets only one vote. He then opened elections and nominations for Chairman and co-Vice-Chairmen. Richard Kunau nominated Jordan Searle as one of the Vice-Chairman. Rob Cottle seconded the motion. Motion Carried. Richard Kunau nominated Brogan Higley as the other Vice-Chairman. Rob Cottle seconded the motion. Motion carried. Jordan Searle nominated Dusty Wilkins as Chairman. Luke Stevenson seconded the motion. Motion carried. Introductions were made around the room. The time was then turned over to David Mabey who served as facilitator.

2024-25 LWG Officers

Chairman – Dusty Wilkins (Minidoka SWCD)
Vice Chairman – Jordan Searle (West Cassia SWCD)
Co-Vice Chairman – Brogan Higley (East Cassia SWCD)

David discussed the purpose of the Local Work Group and discussed each pocket of money we can receive funding from including EQIP and CSP funds. This committee will identify needs and priorities within Cassia & Minidoka Counties and decide which conservation concerns will get top priority. Submitted projects will be ranked in order of their compliance to this committee's priority list.

David reviewed the NRCS verbiage and described differences in the categories of Water Quality and Water Quantity. He also discussed how the funding pools are organized. Animal projects such as Sage Grouse, Migratory Big Game, CAFO's, AFO's, as well as Air Quality project money comes directly from a state fund and not from this Team 12 EQIP fund. The Water Management Entity (WME) is also a state fund pool that can be accessed for larger water projects. IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) money will also be available to be used for Water Quality and soil health projects.

The 2023/24 priorities included: 1) Water Quality. 2) Water Quantity. 3) Soil Health (Cover Crops). 4) High Tunnels. 5) Habitat. The 2023/24 fiscal year summary included 22 funded projects and \$1.7 million spent plus 3 extra CSP projects for a total of \$1.9 million spent on qualifying projects. All submitted projects were funded.

After some discussion on local needs, the committee voted on their top priorities/concerns. They are:

- #1) Source Water Depletion (with ditch to pipe being the top priority)
- #2) Wind and Water Erosion (use of Cover Crops and other measures)
- #3) Soil Quality Limitation (soil health, cover crops)
- #4) Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen loss (cover crops)
- #5) Degraded Plant Condition (Range re-habilitation, Invasive species control, high tunnels)
- #6) Livestock Production Limitation (Range re-habilitation, water for livestock)
- #7) Storage & Handling of Pollutants (Ag waste)
- #8) Terrestrial Habitat (Pollinators)

The committee took a short break for lunch provided by the Soil & Water Conservation Districts and then continued discussion on funding pool appropriation. Ranking categories for 2024/25 (categories and percentages of funding) will fall under 2 categories: EQIP and IRA. The following percentages for funding were decided:

EQIP Fund Pool

High Tunnels – Up to 5% (or \$30,000 max) of the total Team EQIP allocation reserved.

Water Quantity Projects – 90% of remaining total Team EQIP allocation after High Tunnels.

Habitat Projects – 10% of remaining total Team EQIP allocation after High Tunnels.

IRA Fund Pool

Water Quality/Soil Health – 100% of total Team IRA allocation.

Applications are accepted and assigned points based upon the Local Work Group committee's priorities and funding allotments for this year. Projects that meet the highest points get funded.

Any remaining funds in each fund pool, after all respective applications are funded, will be consolidated and go to the next eligible application(s) in the Water Quantity fund pool.

There will be a ceiling cap of 320 acres per year, not to exceed 3 years in a cover crop project – active immediately. (by unanimous vote).

Meeting adjourned 1:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Doreen McMurray – East Cassia SWCD & West Cassia SWCD Admin

Sharon Hardy - Minidoka SWCD Admin