

LWG--- Local work Group

9 November 2022

Minidoka McGregor Building 10:15 a.m.

Minutes

Those In Attendance:

Dinah Reaney – NRCS, Rob Cottle - East Cassia SWCD, Brian Kossman - Minidoka SWCD,
John Guthrie – Idaho Fish and Game, Brooke Morgan – Pheasants Forever, David Mabey -NRCS,
Jordan Searle – West Cassia SWCD, Mark Webb – East Cassia SWCD, Kathy Poulton – West Cassia SWCD,
Sharon Hardy –Admin Minidoka SWCD, Carolyn Firth – ISWCC, Kyle Bowers – West Cassia SWCD,
Hannah Sanders – East Cassia SWCD, Rulon Spear – East Cassia, Richard Kunau – West Cassia,
Rachelle Osterhout – East & West Cassia SWCD,
Doreen McMurray – East & West Cassia SWCD,

Online Attendees:

Mark Olsen – NRCS, Mareen Pepper – NRCS, Gwen Taylor – NRCS,
Deej Brown – NRCS Urban Soil Development specialist

Meeting called to order by Chairman Brian Kossman, with a welcome and opened elections and nominations for Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary. The group discussed having a Chairman and 2 Vice-Chairmen which would consist of one person from each of the three Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Mark Webb of East Cassia was nominated and elected as Chairman, Kathy Poulton of West Cassia was nominated and elected as one of the Vice-Chairmen, and Dusty Wilkins of Minidoka was nominated and elected as one of the Vice-Chairmen.

It was decided that everyone who attends the Local Work Group meeting gets one vote and a voice on discussions and decisions. The time was then turned over to David Mabey, who on very short notice, is stepping in as the facilitator today.

Cassia and Minidoka County funding is based upon findings of this committee. Most of the focus will be to the EQIP program – determining where money and work should go. We know costs are going up and the big question is, “Are the projects matching or keeping up with those costs?”

FY ending September 2022 had 11 contracts using \$661,562.00 but a lot of funds went to the Sage Grouse initiative and RCPP = (Regional Conservation Partners Programs).

Last years’ priorities/concerns were:

- #1 Water Quality – nutrients transfer to ground & surface water.
- #2 Water Quantity - inefficient water, ground water depletion.
- #3 Soil Quality Degradation – habitat loss or degradation, aggregate instability.
- #4 Soil Erosion – wind, sheet & rill erosion.
- #5 Degraded plant Conditions – plant productivity & health.

Applications are accepted and assigned points based upon the committee’s priorities. Projects that meet the highest points get funded. The Group here today needs to identify the top 3 concerns. And ratings of which order or concern they want considered most important.

For 2023, the group decided the order of importance and areas to consider are:

- #1 Water Quantity
- #2 Water Quality
- #3 Soil Quality and degradation
- #4 Soil Erosion
- #5 Habitat

Committee wants to consider how to apply money for special projects such as a Ditch Conversion to be considered as a stand-alone funding project. The group is asking for consideration on projects with less tillage and more money towards implementing and trying different practices such as keeping cover on the soil which equals more moisture, and possibly forage crops, while using compost and nutrients to lesson the cost of chemicals. Committee likes having 2 qualifiers for project consideration.

It would be helpful if there were a better system in place for timing of when CRP or other projects must or must not be planted. The policy should work with the local landowners not against them. Precision farming and advance practices could be a criterion for qualification.

There is a voiced concern of urban sprawl and are there conservation easements in our area.

Acronyms often used: EQIP = Environmental Quality Incentives Program

RCPP = Regional Conservations Partnership Program

CSP = Conservation Stewardship Program

NWQI = National Water Quality Incentives

Discussion was about how the ranking of funding and money should happen. They want to address the Raft River Water Recharge Project at the LWG 2023 meeting. The current group could reach out to those involved in the Raft River Recharge Project to have them attend the 2023 LWG meeting. Those invited should be agencies and land owners involved in the project, and this group should request special funding in addition to our allotted funding that will be available.

Ranking categories for 2023 (categories and percentages of funding)

70% Irrigated cropland

25% Range/pastures which could include public land

5% Dry cropland

If there is money remaining in the pool, disperse as per this definition: Funds not spent in a funding pool will go to the next application with the most resources concerns addressed and highest priority resource concerns addressed as first screening no matter which funding pool. Repeat until funds are expended. Emphasis on water quantity over quality for FY2023 cover crop is the icing on the cake for decisions.

Review of ranking questions: Need to meet 2 of the requirements – except in special projects such as Ditch to pipe and apply for additional money as per request – one of the questions to consider needs to be soil type when making those changes.

Meeting adjourned 1:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Sharon Hardy - Minidoka Admin, Doreen McMurray – East & West Cassia Admin.

December 8, 2023 Meeting to Amend the November LWG Minutes.

McGregor building. – Rupert Idaho.

Present: Dusty Wilkins (Minidoka SWCD), David Mabey (NRCS), and Sharon Hardy (Admin for Minidoka SWCD), and on the conference call Mark Webb (East Cassia SWCD) and Kathy Poulton (West Cassia SWCD).

2:35 pm A motion by Kathy Poulton with a second by Dusty Wilkins to Amend the Local Work Group minutes of November 9, 2023. They need to include items mentioned in the meeting that were not written on the white board. These topics were: stock watering projects and degradation of plants projects which could include projects like LESA and high tunnels.

For projects to be considered, 2 PRC qualifiers are required except in the case of Ditch to Pipeline, LESA, and High Tunnels. These 3 types of projects are the exception to the rule and will only require 1 PRC to be met.

Also note that Ditch to Pipeline projects are considered in a separate fund pool category, only to receive funding if the additional funding request is awarded.

There are now 7 qualifiers or priority Areas.

In the category of CSP – it is to be noted that nothing was discussed at the November 9th meeting as time did not allow.

Chairman Mark Webb asked Vice Chairman Dusty Wilkins to sign the documents.

Also noted there is specific language or format that NRCS needs to use in the forms which as a committee did not have, so to reconcile the minutes to the forms these changes needed to be made. Meeting adjourned 3:00 pm.

Corrections and additions submitted by Sharon Hardy and Doreen McMurray.