

NRCS
Local Work Group
August 9, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Chair Esser. Present were David Olson, Stephen Kvigne, Wade Dull, Rick Lange, Dennis Pozega, Adam Achenbach, Gary Harden, and Dave Troester.

Rick Lange presented last year's minutes. Olson made the motion to approve the minutes, Esser seconded.

Rick reported on the WHIP and EQUIP program. There was nearly \$400,000 worth of contracts written in 2011 in 12 contracts; nearly \$300,000 more than the initial local allocation. Enough slippage money from area, state, and national pools was available. Not planning on any big changes for 2012. There are 3 good WHIP applications for 2011, but the program is underfunded and do not expect them to be funded. EQIP ranking applications are ranked on national questions that local NRCS has no control over, state questions that allow some input from local NRCS, and of course, local questions that are developed by the LWG. The 2012 local questions will carry more weight than last year, which will help us get to the projects we feel are most important.

The grazing pool was discussed. Large amount of land in Crawford County is owned by nonproduction landowners. Many being converted to row crops. Hoping to get additional money in the Kickapoo Valley for grazing through an EQIP Partner Initiative for the Mississippi River Basin and hope to cost share on the main practices that go into grazing systems out of this allocation. If this was done first, then the local grazing pool could be used for rip rap or various other pasture projects that do not necessarily support the grazing process.

Do not yet have a 2012 list of state practices, rates, or projected pool allocations. Reviewed last year's practices and concerns. The LWG recommend only a few small changes.

Priority practices. Reviewed last year's list and which were the high, medium, and low priority practices. Discussion on switching or adding any other practices that seem more important.

Local Ranking Questions for Cropland. Last year's questions were reviewed. Discussion on these questions and ranking practices followed. The LWG agreed again that the highest soil loss should be the highest priority project. All of the questions are awarded points. Cropland Pool and Grazing Pool are allocated before it comes to the county. Discussion on pasture ranking and cropland ranking followed.

Recommendations for forestry applications. Sign up for forestry practices compete on area wide basis. Applications are taken locally, then ranked at the area office and selected for funding from there. Contract are developed locally. If any questions are added to the ranking sheet from LWG, all 11 counties will ranked using that question. The LWG recommended one area question for this practice regarding livestock exclusion.

Farmstead ranking for manure storage was next. There are more applicants anticipated this year. Discussion on any new recommendations followed.

An area pool for specialty crops is also created. The committee recommended adding pollinator habitat for the orchards to the list of area questions. They also recommended expanding the definition of specialty crops.

Discussion on the future of EQIP and WHIP.

Dull moved to adjourn, Olson seconded.